



McMASTER & HEAP
VETERINARY PRACTICE

LET'S CALL IN THE SPECIALISTS...

Recently our son Connor, who is a veterinarian, had the privilege to work alongside two of NZL's finest surgeons at McMaster & Heap Vets. This doesn't happen very often, but Connor was between jobs and had a month in Christchurch, and it just so happened we'd lined the surgeries up.



Dara waiting patiently for her stifle surgery

First up was on the delightful Dara, a 10 year old Labrador cross with Hip Dysplasia and stifle disease. Dara is now living in Geraldine, so a big trip for mum and dog. Originally we organised Dr Helen Milner to surgically correct the subluxated and osteoarthritic hip but two weeks before the scheduled surgery, Dara had pulled up lame due to torn ACL ligaments in the stifle. So it was decided on the day of surgery, that the stifle was giving her more pain and discomfort, so Connor scrubbed in and saw Helen doing what she does best. Suffice to say the surgery was a huge success and Dara is back to normal activity levels, pain free and enjoying life in the country. If the hip ends up being problematic for her we will schedule another surgery, but for now she's doing great.



Connor assisting Dr Andrew Worth in Altezza - Grace's thoracic surgery to repair a PDA

Dr Andrew Worth (Specialist Small Animal Surgeon at Massey University) happened to be in town for Altezza - Grace's thoracic surgery to repair a Congenital PDA (Patent Ductus Arteriosus). Just so happened I had my 33rd Veterinary reunion, held at our home, and so we had 33 vets all in one spot for a weekend. Was enormous fun, seeing classmates I hadn't seen since we graduated. We are all doing a variety of careers within the veterinary industry and most of us are still working.... hard! Altezza's mum was very hesitate to fly her anywhere for surgery as she had the beginnings of heart disease from the PDA and is a very anxious puppy anyway.



Altezza - Grace before surgery



My 1991 fellow veterinary graduates. What a memorable class it was

Also not having her insured yet, meant referral to a specialist hospital was out of the question.

Altezza's congenital PDA meant that left sided oxygenated blood was flowing into the right sided lungs and not circulating around the body, potentially leading to congestive heart failure. No medications could fix this mechanical problem, she required thoracic surgery to ligate the vessel that should have closed off naturally once she was born. This surgery is most definitely for the specialists so we were so lucky to have Andrew in town and our superb anaesthetic team. PDAs can be difficult to detect therefore can go undetected until the patient goes into congestive heart failure. Dr Richard Lucy, performed Echocardiography at MMH and diagnosed her condition. Altezza recovered excellently and to date is just like a normal puppy, enjoying her life to the fullest with no more medications required.

Connor was very fortunate to assist these experienced surgeons. Connor is going down the path of specialisation in the small animal surgical field so any experience working alongside the best is always so valuable. Connor has now started his next internship, a straight surgical one for a year, at Greencross Veterinary Hospital in Melbourne. He'll be working alongside two surgeons and many other specialists in a very busy referral and first opinion practice where they teach the 4th year Melbourne Vet students.

So now we have two sons in Melbourne. Isaac is a second year at Melbourne Uni, studying Politics and English. Lots of excuses now to cross the Tasman and play mum for the weekend, wining and dining them and CBD shopping sprees.



Isaac and I in Melbourne catching the train after a night out

This article highlights the fact that at MMH vets we try our very best for the patient and the client, finding solutions that are doable and manageable financially for the client, yet still doing our very best for our patient. There are always options available and it's about flexibility and great communication, deciding as a collaborative team what's going to work best.

Dr Michele McMaster

