Preface

Surgical Complications

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Guest Editor

“Although today we are spared the horror of operations without anesthesia and the misery of mortality from uncontrolled hospital gangrene, we still find there are other problems that we have to face with steadfastness, self-control and intensity of purpose if we are to achieve that very great contentment and happiness in successful treatment of our patients . . . . I remember at an early stage of our development of the surgery of mitral valve stenosis, about 1948 or 1949, we had four successive deaths in one ward. Despair stalked before us and everyone’s morale was low. I recall saying to my team that we could only do one of two things, give up or go on; that it was impossible to give up as we were certainly in the right; the only thing therefore, that we should do was go on. This we did and had 30 consecutive successful cases. Tenacity of purpose must be accompanied by serenity of purpose and a surgeon requires this serenity in addition to technical dexterity.”

— Sir Russel Brock, MS, FRCS (Eng), FRACS (Hon.), FACS (Hon.), from “Philosophy of Surgery,” an address given upon his receipt of the Gairdner Foundation International Award in 1961 and published in the Canad Med Assoc J 1962;86:370-2.

This quotation, from a pioneer in open heart surgery, reflects an ongoing trend in veterinary surgery. As we continue to achieve technological advancements in both diagnosis and treatment of surgical disease, surgeons will continually be challenged with new and more complicated procedures that will, initially, have a steep learning curve. As an introduction to this excellent series of articles concerning surgical complications in veterinary surgery, I think that it is appropriate to point out that, although complications must give us pause and compel us to improve, they must not be allowed to create a feeling of self-doubt that prevents us from achieving our ultimate goal: successful care for our patients. I would like to thank the authors for
their own “tenacity of purpose” in continuing to improve our approach to veterinary surgery.

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