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NAVC International Scholar Program Extends Worldwide Reach of NAVC

ORLANDO, FL—Fernando Chávez Zapata, DVM, Medical Director at the Clínica Veterinaria Bertchi in Lima, Peru, has learned, trained and worked at universities and veterinary hospitals in the United States for short periods throughout his career. So it seems only natural that he would be selected as one of two International Scholars at the NAVC Conference 2013 in January.

"Ninety percent of my practice caseload is dermatology patients and I've learned a great deal about treating skin disease through my training in the United States," says Dr. Chávez Zapata. Attending the NAVC Conference gave him the chance to catch up on many other topics he deals with in practice, such as osteoarthritis management, parasite control and practice management. "One of the best things about the NAVC Conference is that in a single place you have the opportunity to learn about all of the veterinary specialty areas," says Dr. Chávez Zapata. "I was thrilled to bring new knowledge about standards, checklists, protocols and specific treatments back to my team in Peru."

Each year, the NAVC International Scholar program awards up to three veterinarians from Latin America, Eastern Europe and/or the Middle East with complimentary NAVC Conference registration and conference proceedings as well as travel expenses, six days' per diem funds, and hotel accommodations. Since the program was conceived in 1996, more than 30 veterinarians from around the world have attended the conference as part of the International Scholar program.

"It was a great honor to be chosen to attend the largest convention in the world. I had the opportunity to attend lectures on countless veterinary specialties, see and learn about the wonderful products and equipment that are available and meet wonderful new people," says Dr. Chávez Zapata. "I thoroughly enjoyed myself."

In addition to attending lectures, one of Dr. Chávez Zapata's main goals in attending the NAVC Conference was to see how a first-rate educational experience is run. "The educational experience in Peru has improved in recent years, especially with the Latin American Veterinary Conference in Lima," says Dr. Chávez Zapata. "But as a long-time conference organizer myself, it was very important for me to gain behind-the-scenes insight into large-scale conference protocols, planning and organization so I can apply that knowledge to improve future conferences for colleagues in my country."

Indeed, in addition to demonstrated leadership qualities, two of the main criteria for selecting candidates for the International Scholar program are prior experience with veterinary continuing education (CE) programs at home and the potential to use the NAVC experience to foster improved veterinary CE in their home country or region. "I learned how to deal with a number of issues that we generally don't consider in our conferences," says Dr. Chávez Zapata, "such as proper handling and disposal of lab animals, accident prevention and security concerns."

According to Colin Burrows, BVetMed, PhD, DACVIM, HonFRCVS, Executive Ambassador of International Affairs for NAVC, "The International Scholar program builds an invaluable network of professional educators by providing backstage insight into what it takes to host a successful veterinary conference." He believes the program has benefitted a number of countries in terms of giving people models and mentors to better educate their local veterinary colleagues. "Ultimately, by improving the education of veterinarians around the world we are advancing our biggest goal, which is to help animals," says Dr. Burrows.

It's fair to say that Dr. Chávez Zapata was uniformly impressed with the science, staff and social events at the conference. During his time in Orlando, he toured the Exhibit Hall, took Behind the Scenes tours and enjoyed the comedy of Tom Papa during the opening ceremony. "The Exhibit Hall gave me the opportunity to see and touch the latest equipment first-hand," recalls Dr. Chávez Zapata. "I came home with several new tools to help the animals in my practice."

Complete details on the other NAVC Conference 2013 International Scholars can be found at NAVC.com/InternationalScholars.

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Founded in 1982 and headquartered in Gainesville, Florida, the North American Veterinary Community (NAVC) is a nonprofit organization that provides world-class professional development for the global veterinary healthcare community. The organization's largest educational initiative, the annual NAVC Conference, hosts 16,000 attendees and 350 speakers from more than 70 countries each year. Other educational offerings include the NAVC Institute, NAVC Expeditions and *Clinician's Brief*, the official journal of the NAVC. The NAVC's international conference partners include the Latin American Veterinary Conference (LAVC), the Southern European Veterinary Conference (SEVC) and the Asian Pacific Veterinary Conference (APVC). Visit NAVC.com for more information.