



Jockey Club College of Veterinary
Medicine and Life Sciences

香港城市大學
City University of Hong Kong
in collaboration with Cornell University



Howse Williams
何韋律師行

VETERINARY LEGAL SERIES

2024-2025

Our online seminar will

cover various key areas of veterinary legal practice. The speakers are lawyers from Howse Williams (HW), providing much-needed professional legal support for veterinarians, veterinary nurses, assistants, and students.

Topics Covered

- Talk 1: Record Keeping
- Talk 2: Informed Consent
- Talk 3: Dealing with complaints & De-escalating complaints and Irrational Clients
- Talk 4: Dealing with VSB disciplinary issues
- Talk 5: Employment issues for veterinary surgeons
- Talk 6: Defamation and social media
- Talk 7: Special Circumstances

Date: November 2024 to May 2025

Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Mode: Webinar only

Fee:

Veterinarians: HKD450

Veterinary Nurses/ Technicians/ Assistants: HKD250

CityUHK Staff: HKD150

CityUHK Students: Free

2 CPD POINTS EACH TOPIC FROM THE VETERINARY SURGEONS BOARD OF HONG KONG

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Speakers



Mr Chris Howse
Partner (Medicolegal team) Howse Williams

Chris was admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 1981 after being seconded by the London office of a city law firm, Richards Butler, to build up its Hong Kong office.

He was the Senior Partner and Managing Partner of the Hong Kong office of Richards Butler until December 2011. Following the takeover of Richards Butler Hong Kong by an American law firm he set up Howse Williams on 1 January 2012 with a large number of partners and solicitors from the Hong Kong office of Richards Butler. The firm is now one of the largest independent law firms in Hong Kong.

Chris is experienced in a wide range of commercial litigation. He has extensive insurance experience, particularly in relation to the defence of professional negligence claims. Chris is the head of the firm's medico-legal team. He started to undertake medico-legal work in 1985. He has been providing professional advice and assistance to doctors, dentists and other healthcare professionals and to the private hospitals of Hong Kong on a wide range of medico-legal issues for over 30 years. His firm have been panel lawyers for the Medical Protection Society and Dental Protection Ltd. since the mid-1980s.



Dr Bernard Murphy
Partner, (Medicolegal team), Howse Williams

A medically qualified solicitor, Bernard represents healthcare organisations, doctors, dentists, veterinary surgeons and other healthcare professionals across a range of practice areas.

Bernard supports clients in Medical Council, Dental Council and Veterinary Surgeons Board disciplinary proceedings and coroners investigations, from the commencement of investigations through to appearing on behalf of clients at disciplinary inquiries and coroners inquests.

An Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Accident and Emergency Medicine Academic Unit, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Bernard teaches on the university's Master of Science Programme in Prehospital and Emergency Care and on the Postgraduate Diploma in Prehospital and Emergency Care. Bernard also provides expert witness training to doctors, dentists and other healthcare professionals involved/interested in expert witness work.

A graduate of Aberdeen University Medical School, before qualifying as a lawyer Bernard practised medicine for more than ten years, the majority of that time in Hong Kong and China. During and following his medical training, Bernard worked as a doctor in NHS hospitals in the UK. Bernard worked in the field of emergency medical evacuation in China and Hong Kong between 1995 and 1999. He has also worked in private medical practice in Hong Kong.

Since 2008, Bernard has been a Member of the Faculty of Forensic Legal Medicine, Royal College of Physicians UK. In 2021 he received a Foundation Fellowship (Dento-legal Adviser) of the Faculty of Forensic Legal Medicine, Royal College of Physicians UK.



Ms Patricia Yeung
Partner (Employment) Howse Williams

Patricia has focused on employment law since qualifying as a solicitor in 2011, and her experience in employment matters is now widely recognised in Hong Kong. Patricia heads up HW's employment team, which consists of two partners (including Patricia) and three associates. Patricia regularly

advises employers and senior executives on both contentious and non-contentious employment matters. Her clients include airlines, education providers, insurers and financial services providers.

Patricia's practice covers a wide range of work, including drafting employment contracts, handbooks and policies, terminations and advising upon the enforcement of post-termination restrictions and confidentiality obligations. She and her team frequently advise on the employment aspects of M&A deals and business transfers.

Many of Patricia's clients operate in the financial services sector, and she frequently negotiates exit packages in relation to high-level employees of banks, brokerages and insurance companies. Patricia also advises upon the employment issues arising from discrimination and harassment, personal data related matters and immigration issues (including prosecutions). She also has experience in assisting employers and employees during the conduct of internal investigations and discrimination and harassment complaints.

Patricia has an in-depth knowledge of the Labour Tribunal, having assisted parties involved in Labour Tribunal proceedings for several years. She has also represented both plaintiffs and defendants in both District and High Court actions involving substantial claims for unpaid bonuses, enforcement of restrictive covenants and claims for injunctive relief in Hong Kong, including applications for injunctive relief. She also advises clients on licencing issues and regulatory investigations involving the SFC and the HKMA.



Mr Michael Withington
Partner (Dispute Resolution and Insurance)
Howse Williams

Michael is experienced in a wide range of commercial litigation, including shareholder disputes involving both listed companies and high-profile private companies (many of which involve a cross-border element).

He has also acted in litigation involving financial services institutions (including mis-selling claims and negligence claims), claims involving directors, and disputes over asset acquisitions. He advises property managers and landlords in relation to enforcement of deeds of mutual covenant and tenancy disputes.

A large part of Michael's practice at Howse Williams involves contentious employment matters (acting for both employers and employees), including claims over termination and remuneration, enforcement of post-termination restrictions, discrimination claims and partnership disputes. He advises employers and statutory bodies on internal investigations and disciplinary proceedings, and has represented a number of individuals in SFC investigations. He also has significant experience in conducting and defending judicial review proceedings. Michael also has extensive insurance experience, particularly in relation to the defence of professional negligence claims and advising on coverage issues. He has been a panel solicitor for the Hong Kong Solicitors Professional Indemnity Scheme since 1998, and has represented both local and international law firms in connection with a broad range of claims.



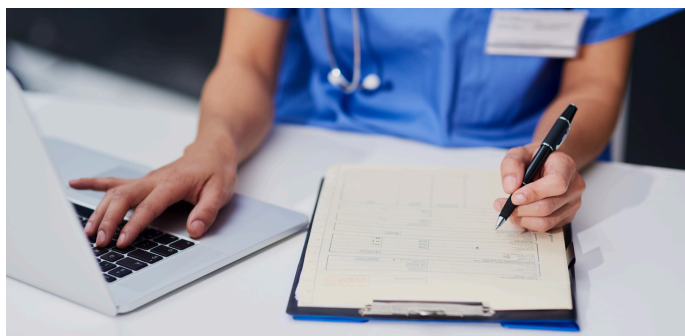
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TOPICS



6 November 2024

Topic ONE: Record Keeping

This webinar will address the importance of keeping proper medical records, how to keep proper medical records, the consequences of altering medical records and your legal responsibilities with regards to providing medical records to clients, other clinics and regulatory bodies.

It is of utmost importance in veterinary practice to ensure that all team members understand the importance of maintaining quality medical records.

The statement "if it is not in the record it did not happen" cannot be overstated. At best incomplete or inaccurate medical records can lead to confusion and wasted time.

At worst, it can lead to legal and professional consequences, potentially resulting in legal claims or disciplinary proceedings.

By Dr Bernard Murphy & Mr Chris Howse



4 December 2024

Topic TWO: Informed Consent

This talk will discuss the essential elements of informed consent, including whether the duty to obtain informed consent can be delegated to other colleagues/ staff.

When obtaining informed consent for a particular procedure or treatment, the risks, benefits and alternatives must be adequately

communicated to the client. During the seminar we will discuss the essential elements of informed consent and whether the duty to obtain informed consent can be delegated to other colleagues or other staff (such as veterinary assistants). We will also consider the potential legal and ethical consequences of failing to obtain valid informed consent. We will also discuss communicating prognosis and complications with the client.

By Dr Bernard Murphy & Mr Chris Howse



15 January 2025

Topic THREE: Dealing with complaints & De-escalating complaints and Irrational Clients

In addition to making complaints directly to the veterinary surgeon and/or the clinic, a dissatisfied client may refer their complaint to several other authorities, including the VSB, AFCD, Consumer Council and Privacy Commissioner. We will look at some common issues giving rise to complaints, how to reduce the risk of complaints materialising, and what to do (and what not to do!) upon discovering that a complaint has been made.

The majority of complaints in veterinary practice arise not because of suboptimal clinical care, but because of communication difficulties between the veterinary surgeon and client.

By Dr Bernard Murphy & Mr Chris Howse

During this seminar we will look at some of the common issues which can result in communication problems and explore measures veterinary surgeons should take to reduce these risks. We will look at the role played by the veterinary assistant in the chain of communication between the veterinary surgeon and client. We will also consider strategies for de-escalating complaints as soon as they arise. The seminar will also cover how you may conduct a conversation after the client starts behaving irrationally; subsequent issues with insurance claims; what to say and what to avoid during discussions to avoid implicating yourself.



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12 February 2025

Topic FOUR: Dealing with VSB disciplinary issues

The Veterinary Surgeons Board (VSB) is authorised under the Veterinary Surgeons Ordinance to regulate the profession in Hong Kong.

An important function of the VSB is to deal with complaints against veterinary surgeons through the VSB's statutory disciplinary process.

During this seminar we will review the key aspects of the VSB disciplinary process from the initial Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC) stage, through to the disciplinary inquiry. This will include looking at how to prepare a written response at PIC stage, whether you need to instruct an expert, and how to prepare for a disciplinary inquiry (including preparation for mitigation).

By Dr Bernard Murphy & Mr Chris Howse



12 March 2025

Topic FIVE: Employment issues for veterinary surgeons

Employment issues for veterinary surgeons: Veterinary surgeons in private practice are usually employed under an employment contract, or engaged as service providers under a service contract. Often these contracts will contain clauses against non-competition and non-solicitation. A common concern for veterinary surgeons moving practices is to what extent are these clauses enforceable. During this seminar we will look at restrictive contract terms and the enforceability of non-competition and no-solicitation clauses. We will also consider issues such as sick leave, work related injury compensation, termination processes and handling complaints from labour tribunals.

By Ms Patricia Yeung & Dr Bernard Murphy



9 April 2025

Topic SIX: Defamation and social media

We will look at the law of defamation with particular emphasis on the challenges faced by veterinary surgeons in monitoring and responding to defamatory comments posted on social media. We will consider when and how to respond to such comments and steps you and your practice can take to reduce the risk of clients using social media to post potentially defamatory comments.

By Mr Michael Withington & Dr Bernard Murphy



14 May 2025 21 May 2025

Topic SEVEN: Special Circumstances

During this seminar we will take a look at issues relating to endangered species; smuggled animals; reportable diseases; and abused animals.

Endangered species - what to do if you encounter them in the clinic.

Smuggled animals - what are your legal responsibilities if the client informs you that the animal was smuggled across the border? Reportable diseases - what are your legal obligations in reporting notifiable Diseases?

Abused animals - what are your ethical, moral and legal responsibilities.

By Dr Bernard Murphy