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Veterinarian takes the lead at international society



It wasn't too long ago that it was common for people to live with damaged cartilage. Left unattended, though, compromised cartilage often develops into devastating arthritis, confining people – and animals – to sedentary lives. Since 1997, the International Cartilage Repair Society has aimed to change this, and for the next 18 months, the global association will be led by Dr. Lisa A. Fortier, associate professor of large animal surgery at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University.

Dr. Fortier assumed the presidency in May 2009 and is the first veterinarian to lead the group of surgeons, sports medicine clinical physicians, veterinarians, and scientists whose focus is cartilage repair. Most recently, she was a member of the executive board and served as the treasurer of the organization. Dr. Fortier hopes to help secure the financial base of the society during her tenure as president and to continue global expansion of the professional society. Founded in Switzerland, the organization has approximately 1,200 members from 70 countries who are dedicated to advancing cartilage repair through facilitating communications amongst all interested parties and sharing knowledge at international meetings, through journal articles, and online discussion forums. In addition, the society financially supports surgical and basic science training programs and awards scholarships.

"Cartilage research and repair will progress at a much faster pace if clinicians and scientists collaborate and share information," said Dr. Fortier, who is one of only a few veterinarians in the society. "When we work in isolation, we tend to reinvent the wheel. There is a lot of commonality between the types of cartilage injuries and the long-term goals for our human and animal patients. Recognizing and capitalizing on this will bring us closer to our shared goals of functional cartilage repair and prevention of arthritis."

A board-certified veterinary surgeon, Dr. Fortier earned her veterinary degree at Colorado State University and her PhD at Cornell University. She has been a member of Cornell's faculty since 2000. She has a joint appointment as an orthopedic surgeon in the Large Animal Hospital and directs a research group as a member of the Department of Clinical Sciences. Her laboratory investigates the underlying cellular and molecular mechanisms involved in the development of arthritis and investigates the use of biologics such as stem cells and platelet rich plasma for cartilage and tendon regeneration.