Looking back: Stepping forward!

Celebrating 50 years of veterinary nursing

Liz Branscombe
Chairman, VN Council

What do we hope to achieve today?

- Celebration
- Reflection
- What have we achieved?
- Looking forward…
We’ve come a long way

A bit of history…

• 1961 – RCVS approved first ANA training scheme (later RANA)

• 1962 – first Registered Animal Nursing Assistant qualified

• 1965 – BVNA inaugurated

• 1984 – Title “Veterinary Nurse” first used

• 1991 – VSA 1966 amended and role of nurse formally recognised in law (Schedule 3)
  – RCVS established the List

• 1992 – First cohort qualify with DipAVN(Surgical)
More history…

• 1997 – College accredited as an awarding body
• 1998 – College starts to offer NVQs
• 2000 – First nurses to be listed by virtue of NVQ
  – First equine veterinary nurses qualified
• 2002 – VN Council held its first meeting
  – First cohort completed BSc Hons in veterinary nursing
  – Schedule 3 further amended increasing scope of role

More history…

• 2007 – Non-statutory Register opened
• 2010 – Transition from NVQ to Level 3 Diploma
  – First VN on RCVS Council
• 2011 – Introduction of disciplinary system for RVNs
  (first complaint is under consideration)
  – New draft Code of Professional Conduct for VNs
Profile of today’s profession

- 8,346 registered veterinary nurses
- 1,542 listed veterinary nurses
- Average age = 31 (45 for vets)
- 98% women (= 50:50 for vets)
- 99% ethnically white (similar for vets)
- Just under 10% now enter training with a degree
- Average year of qualification = 2003
- Almost all qualified in the UK
- Average basic working week (full-time) = 39 hours
- Average overtime per month (full-time) = 22 hours
- Quarter planning to leave clinical practice within next five years for reasons other than retirement (mainly pay)

Source for all but register/list = RCVS Survey of Veterinary and Veterinary Nursing Professions, 2010

Best things about being a VN

- Working with animals
  - “Being able to treat and help animals”
- Variety
  - “The variety of the work load throughout the day”
- Job satisfaction
  - “Job satisfaction when there is a good outcome to cases”
- Building client relationships
  - “Building professional relationships with clients”
- Making a difference
  - “Making a positive difference to the lives of animals in my care”

Source RCVS Survey of Veterinary and Veterinary Nursing Professions, 2010
What would make it a better profession?

- Pay fees/remuneration
  - “Better pay. Making salaries more public”
- Greater respect/appreciation in general
  - “If it was regarded as a ‘real’ profession and treated like human nursing, for example”
- Greater respect from employers/vets
  - “If some vet surgeons were taught to value their nurses more, rather than as glorified cleaners”
- Greater responsibility
  - “Strong responsibility and involvement in individual cases”
- Better opportunities for career progression
  - “Most post-registration qualifications and better career prospects”

Source: RCVS Survey of Veterinary and Veterinary Nursing Professions, 2010

VN ‘profession’: are we there yet?

- Features of a profession
  - Assured standards of training & qualification (✓)
  - Code of professional conduct (✓)
  - Commitment to maintain competence (✓)
  - Sanctions for those who transgress (✓)
  - Practitioners held in high public regard (?)
How can we improve public profile?

• Clarity of role?
• Ensure only those qualified use the title?
• Better definition within the practice team?
• Greater contact with clients?
• More ambassadors within the profession?
• ??

Issues under consideration by VN Council

• Draft Code of Professional Conduct
• Post-qualification awards structure
• Developing proposals for statutory regulation
  – Protection of the title/area of work
  – Raising public awareness of the role of nurses
  – Ensuring nurses used properly within the team
  – Ensuring title ‘veterinary nurse’ only used appropriately
  – Likely to set up a Working Party, although no concrete promises from Defra
Looking back:
Stepping forward!

Any questions?