



**RCVS NEWS / APRIL 2019**

*Text-only version of  
RCVS News email*

# Record turnout for 2019 RCVS Council election

Just over one-quarter of veterinary surgeons eligible to vote did so in this year's election of three candidates to RCVS Council – a record in the recent history of College elections.

There were nine candidates standing in this year's election, which closed at 5pm on Friday 26 April, and the results, in order of number of votes, are:

Niall Connell – 3,766 votes (re-elected)  
Linda Belton – 3,581 votes (elected)  
Jo Dyer – 3,146 votes (re-elected)  
John Innes – 2,716 votes  
Kate Richards – 2,283 votes  
Tim Greet – 2,280 votes  
Peter Robinson – 1,791 votes  
John Davies – 507 votes  
Tom Lonsdale – 422 votes

A total of 8,234 votes were cast in this year's election (2,207 of which were by post and 6,027 of which were online) making for a record total turnout of 25.5%. The closest that College elections had come to this turnout in previous years was in 2017 when 22.8% (or 6,785) of those eligible to vote that year did so.

Eleanor Ferguson, RCVS Registrar and Returning Officer for the election, said: "Congratulations to Niall and Jo for being re-elected to Council and congratulations also to Linda who we look forward to welcoming to Council at this year's Royal College Day on Friday 12 July. I would also like to thank Kate, Tim and Peter for their contributions during their time on Council and give my commiserations to them and the other candidates who were unsuccessful this year.

"I was delighted to see that, this year, we had over a quarter of those eligible to vote doing so which means both a record number of votes and a record turnout – it seems this was assisted by our email reminders which, each time they were sent out, lead to a significant boost in uptake.

"However, we will not rest on our laurels and will continue to think about how we can further improve engagement in the election process and turnout for subsequent years."

The results of the election will be formally declared at this year's Royal College Day – our Annual General Meeting and awards ceremony – which takes place at the Royal Institute of British Architects on Friday 12 July 2019 where the successful candidates will also start their new four-year terms.

No election to Veterinary Nursing Council was held this year due to the fact that there were only two candidates – Liz Cox and Jane Davidson – standing for the two elected places. Both Liz and Jane will take up their three-year terms at Royal College Day.

# A Royal College Day focused on diversity and inclusion

We are inviting our Members and Associates to attend this year's Royal College Day, which will see the investiture of the new RCVS President and Officer Team, a number of awards being bestowed upon members of the professions and a keynote speech on diversity and inclusion.

This year's Royal College Day – the RCVS Annual General Meeting and Awards Ceremony – takes place at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) on Friday, 12 July and free tickets to the event are now available to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses via our [Eventbrite page](#).

The event starts with an Annual General Meeting during which the results of the RCVS Council election will be formally declared, new members welcomed to the Council and the College's annual report and accounts presented. Following this, a short Council meeting will see the formal election of the RCVS Officer team for 2019-20.

Dr Niall Connell was elected as Junior Vice-President for 2018-19 by his fellow Council members and is set to take over as RCVS President from Amanda Boag on Royal College Day, with Amanda moving to Senior Vice-President.

Mandisa Greene will be joining the Officer Team as the next Junior Vice-President, with Kit Sturgess standing for election as Treasurer once again. Following a formal election at Veterinary Nurses Council in May, Racheal Marshall will be looking to continue as the Chair for 2019-20.

Following the Council meeting will be the awards ceremony, where the following awards will be bestowed:

Queen's Medal – Professor the Lord Trees MRCVS

Golden Jubilee Award – Jane Devaney RVN

International Awards – Abdul-Jalil Mohammadzai and Dr Samuel Thevasagayam

Impact Awards – Professor Sarah Freeman FRCVS and Professor Paul McGreevy MRCVS

Inspiration Awards – Laura Muir MRCVS and Louise Northway REVN

More details about each of the award winners can be found on a previous news story about the award winners.

Also being presented on the day are two awards from our charity partner, RCVS Knowledge. This year's Knowledge Awards celebrate individuals and teams who have enhanced veterinary care by implementing quality improvement in practice. RCVS Knowledge will be announcing the winners, including the 'Champion Practice', in May during Veterinary Nursing Awareness Month.

The Veterinary Evidence Student Awards, new this year, highlight budding veterinary professionals who have produced outstanding research for publication in Knowledge's peer-reviewed journal.

You can find out more about both awards on the [RCVS Knowledge website](#).

After the awards ceremony will be a number of speeches including from Amanda Boag as the outgoing President, Lizzie Lockett as CEO and the day's guest speaker Dr Patricia Mundy MRCVS who will be delivering a talk entitled 'Navigating Diversity and Inclusion in the Veterinary Profession'. Dr Mundy (pictured right) is Clinical Instructor in Veterinary Ophthalmology at the University of Pennsylvania's Ryan Veterinary Hospital. She grew up in Zambia and was educated in the UK, receiving her degree in veterinary medicine from the University of Cambridge in 2005, following which she completed a small animal internship at the Royal Veterinary College before undertaking a Fellowship in Comparative Ophthalmic Pathology, Veterinary Pathology and Pathobiology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

After completing a Comparative Ophthalmology Residency at Cornell University she worked in private practice in New York City where she was the lead veterinary ophthalmologist for the New York Police Department. Dr Mundy joined the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine in September 2016.

Amanda Boag, RCVS President, invited Dr Mundy to speak and said: "I have known Tricia for nearly 15 years since we worked together at the RVC during her internship. It has been a pleasure to watch as she has subsequently forged a career in the US as a leading veterinary ophthalmologist and to reach her current position as an academic at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

“As a black female academic working in a profession that is, both in the US and the UK, overwhelmingly white, she will be a great and inspiring speaker on the importance of diversity and the unseen challenges that those from minority backgrounds can face.”

The full agenda for the day can be found at our dedicated Royal College Day webpage.

# The RCVS celebrates 175 years

Throughout 2019, we will be celebrating our 175th Anniversary with a number of initiatives that both reflect our rich history and look forward to the future of the veterinary profession.

Today, 15 April 2019, marks the 175th anniversary of the first meeting of the RCVS Council, which was held after the RCVS was brought into being with its Royal Charter on 8 March 1844.

The Charter was born from frustration with the quality of veterinary education delivered at the time and an identified need from qualified vets for reform. Two father and son veterinary surgeons from Staffordshire, Thomas Mayer and Thomas Walton Mayer, wrote a Petition addressed to the Governors of the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), which was then distributed to other veterinary professionals to sign.

Over 250 veterinary surgeons sent back letters agreeing for their signatures to be added to this petition, which initiated the campaign for a Charter to create the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

"This first Royal Charter recognised the 'veterinary art' as a profession, established RCVS Council with elected members, and gave the College power to administer examinations, which students of the then veterinary colleges in London and Edinburgh had to pass if they wished to be styled veterinary surgeons and have the privileges of members of a profession," says Lizzie Lockett, RCVS CEO.

"We are proud that, 175 years later, we are still fulfilling these original Charter functions, and considerably more besides. Take, for example, our Mind Matters and Leadership Initiatives, which may not have been envisaged at the time but ensure we continue to be relevant, and support a modern, forward-thinking profession."

"Meanwhile it's fitting that we are celebrating the 175th anniversary of when we were asked to address educational standards at the Royal Veterinary College in the year in which that establishment's veterinary degree course was ranked number one globally in the QS rankings."

This year, to commemorate this significant anniversary, we will be undertaking three key initiatives.

The first will be to digitise and show-case the original petition letters from practitioners that drove the Charter and writing to 175 practices in the same vicinities to seek their views on the future of the profession 175 years on. This feedback will then inform our upcoming strategic plan.

We will also be publishing an interactive digital timeline of key events for the veterinary profession over the past 175 years.

Finally, we plan to commence a longitudinal research project that selects a cohort of UK veterinary students to follow over the next 25 years to better understand initial hopes and aspirations and their subsequent career choices and paths.

More information on the 175th Anniversary can be found on our 175 page, which will be regularly updated as the projects develop. The digitised petition letters and the interactive timeline of the veterinary profession are being produced with help from our charity partner, RCVS Knowledge.

# Register now for Mind Matters Symposium

The RCVS' second Mind Matters Initiative Research Symposium, 'Understanding and supporting veterinary mental health', is now open for registrations.

The symposium, which will be held on Tuesday 24 September 2019, at Church House, London, will bring together researchers interested in all aspects of veterinary professionals' wellbeing and mental health.

The symposium will feature plenary speakers from mental health research, including:

Sustaining resilience at work – what does the evidence tell us works?: Professor Neil Greenberg, Professor of Defence Mental Health, Consultant Academic Psychiatrist at King's College London, Chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' (RCP) Special Interest Group in Occupational Psychiatry.

The impact of veterinarian suicide on colleagues: Dr Alexandra Pitman, Associate Professor in Psychiatry in the UCL Division of Psychiatry and an Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist at Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust.

The Mind Matters Initiative – what we've achieved so far: Professor Stuart Reid, Principal, Royal Veterinary College, Chair of the Mind Matters Initiative.

"It's really important that any mental health and wellbeing interventions are evidence based, so bringing together researchers in this area is vital to underpin the work that we and others carry out to better support veterinary professionals," says RCVS CEO, Lizzie Lockett.

"Our first Research Symposium, held in Edinburgh in 2017, had an amazing energy - there was curiosity to understand such a complex area, a real drive to provide evidence that can be translated into meaningful action and a strong sense of community. I hope that our second Symposium will build on this and make a really exciting contribution to the field."

Tickets for the symposium cost £45 and can be purchased on Eventbrite.

A small number of travel bursaries are available for students, people with lived experience of mental health problems, and people who are unwaged, who would not otherwise be able to attend. For further details, please contact Lisa Quigley, Mind Matters Initiative Manager, on [l.quigley@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:l.quigley@rcvs.org.uk).

## Call for submissions

The symposium is also currently open for applications for presentations on veterinary mental health and wellbeing research, with abstracts being accepted up until 23:59 (GMT) on Friday 19 April 2019.

Applicants should note that presentations should be in the format of a 15-minute oral presentation or an A1 poster.

Those wishing to apply should submit an abstract clearly marked 'poster' or 'oral presentation'. The title should be 15 words or fewer. The abstract should include author(s) first name(s), followed by surname(s), institution of affiliation and country. The body of the text should be no longer than 250 words and include: background; clear and explicit aims and objectives, hypotheses or research questions; methods; results; discussion; and conclusion.

All abstracts should be submitted as Word documents to Rosie Allister on [rosie.allister@gmail.com](mailto:rosie.allister@gmail.com).

Applicants will be notified if they have been successful within 14 days of this date. Speakers whose applications are successful will receive complimentary registration for the symposium, not including travel and accommodation costs.

# CPD for overseas veterinary professionals

Registrations are now open for our continuing professional development (CPD) course for overseas veterinary surgeons and nurses, covering an introduction to the UK veterinary professions.

The course, running on Tuesday 11 and Wednesday 12 June 2019, will be held at the RCVS offices, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London.

The course is aimed at overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons and nurses during their first two years of working in the UK, as well as those who are considering working here, and is an introduction to the UK veterinary professions.

Jointly organised with the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS), this 2-day course provides overseas graduates with the key information and skills needed to practice in the UK, as well as helping them understand their legal duties as veterinary professionals. There is no requirement for delegates to attend both days and, if they wish, they can attend either just the first or second day of the course.

Day one of the course is RCVS-facilitated and provides the ideal opportunity for those vets and vet nurses who are either contemplating working in the UK or who have recently started working here, to gain first-hand knowledge of the regulations that apply and the support that is available. This day is free to attend and tickets can be reserved on Eventbrite.

Day one presentations will cover a variety of subjects, including:

- What it means to be a veterinary professional in the UK
- Developing your skills and knowledge
- Further support available to you as a UK veterinary professional
- Securing your dream job in the UK
- RCVS Initiatives

Day two of the course is facilitated by the VDS and uses experienced facilitators and simulated clients (played by actors) to provide a unique and interactive learning experience for delegates. By recreating situations participants have found challenging, the facilitators will give attendees specific communication tools to deal with them effectively in the future. Day two costs £150.00 (not including VAT). Tickets for day two can be purchased directly with VDS Training at [info@vds-training.co.uk](mailto:info@vds-training.co.uk) or 01565 743862.

Both days will help you with:

- Confidence in communicating with clients not in your native tongue
- Understanding some of the specific cultural challenges you may face while working here
- Information regarding your obligations around Continuing Professional Development
- The legislation and regulations that apply when working in the UK

Programmes for the day will be finalised soon and posted on both the RCVS and VDS websites. Attendees can book in for either one of the days or for the entire two day course, booking in for each day through the provided channels.

# Enrolments open for online leadership course

We are pleased to announce that enrolments are now open for our Edward Jenner Veterinary Leadership Programme, with the second public cohort of learners scheduled to begin the first of three courses on 15th April 2019.

Piloted in the summer of 2018, as part of the RCVS Leadership Programme initiative, the Edward Jenner Veterinary Leadership Programme is a free-to-access Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, hosted on the FutureLearn digital education platform. Developed in partnership with the NHS Leadership Academy, we launched the programme to support our strategic ambition to “become a Royal College with leadership and innovation at its heart”.

“The programme encourages and supports the development of everyday leadership skills for all veterinary professionals, addressing the importance of leadership in the veterinary setting, along with the art of good leadership and decision-making”, says Anthony Roberts, RCVS Director of Leadership and Innovation (pictured on the right).

“Participants in the programme can expect to learn how to be a more confident and effective leader, in addition to how to develop an inclusive leadership culture in your workplace.”

The programme has already proved successful with well over 3,000 veterinary professionals, including Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Nurses, from across over 130 countries having already engaged with the course.

“The feedback we have received has shown us that this MOOC has a far-reaching application, and is both educational and enjoyable. Whether you are a vet, veterinary nurse, practice manager or student, this programme will be relevant and useful in your professional career”, adds Anthony.

Almost all learners would recommend the course to a colleague and around three-quarters of learners feel the course equipped them to be effective leaders. Following course completion, 93% of learners said the course met their expectations, 94% said they had gained new knowledge or skills and 75% reported that they have applied their learning in practice.

“This course gives a very good foundation in understanding and developing leadership qualities. It is engaging and stimulating. It helps you see that you don't have to be perfect to be a leader but that with some basic qualities and tools you can learn to lead in a more effective way. For me it has given me a framework which I believe I can build on in order to become a more effective leader to the benefit of those I lead and the organisation I work for”, says Rebecca Willby, Edward Jenner Veterinary Leadership Programme learner.

The programme, which runs for 14 weeks, comprises two free-to-access online courses with an optional paid final assessment and is supported by the innovative audio drama, ‘Glenvern’, which faithfully portrays the leadership challenges vets encounter in daily practice.

The first course, Your Leadership Self, introduces the concept of leadership, elaborating on why it matters and the types of issues faced by leaders, as well as exploring the leadership skills that those taking on the course already have. The main principle guiding this course is that all vet professionals are leaders.

The second course, Developing Leadership Foundations, helps learners develop the basics of leadership practice through understanding more about themselves and the impact they have on others.

After completing the two courses, participants are able to progress to the final assessment. Here learners create a portfolio consisting of four reflective blogs designed to demonstrate understanding of leadership through the impact it has on their veterinary practice.

All the learning materials are free-to-access, although there is a charge of £77 for those who undertake the final assessment. Sitting the final assessment rewards unlimited access to the course material as well as a professional credential.

To sign up for the programme beginning 15 April 2019, visit the FutureLearn Website to register.

“The Edward Jenner Leadership Programme has given me much more insight into different leadership techniques, a greater ability to reflect on leadership styles that I have encountered in the past and tools to improve my own skills going forward.” -Imogen Henderson Edward Jenner Veterinary Leadership Programme learner.



"This course has made me re-evaluate how I interact with staff currently and perhaps has altered the way I see my career progressing. I feel more capable of considering taking on more management responsibility than I did before this course. I have learnt a lot." - Molly Varga, Edward Jenner Veterinary Leadership Programme learner.

# RCVS returning to Vet Festival 2019

We are delighted to be returning to Vet Festival 2019 in June to answer queries and chat with budding or current members of the veterinary professions.

Vet Festival, a festival that focuses on 'veterinary education for tomorrow', will run from Friday 7 to Saturday 8 June 2018 at Loseley Park, Guildford, and RCVS staff will be on hand at stand ST726, to answer any queries and to share information on its key initiatives and programmes.

"We are excited to be attending Vet Festival again this year, after coming along for the first time in 2018. Profession-wide events such as this are invaluable opportunities for us to hear from veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, answer any questions and discuss our ongoing work," says Ian Holloway, RCVS Director of Communications.

"We are celebrating turning 175 this year and are keen to share the exciting commemorative initiatives we have planned over the next few months.

"We will also be promoting other key RCVS activities including our Leadership initiative and MOOC, our Mind Matters Initiative and associated Research Symposium in September, and the next ViVet Innovation Symposium this coming October."

Further details will be released nearer to the festival date with regards to what the RCVS has got planned for the event and their stand.

# Scoping the future for veterinary nursing

At this year's British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress in April the RCVS and the BVNA worked together to organise a stream of talks related to the VN Futures project. The overall aim was to give both vets and vet nurses a sense of the project's current priorities, how it is meeting the aims set out in the VN Futures Report and Action Plan, and upcoming work and events.

Here Jill Macdonald RVN (pictured, the RCVS VN Futures Project Manager who joined the College at the beginning of this year, gives an overview of the talks.

## Wellbeing

The VN Futures stream started with a presentation from Laura Black RVN entitled 'A VN's guide to wellbeing' during which she highlighted the processes and advantages of an 'open' workplace culture and the use of significant event audit.

Whilst maybe not immediately considered as having an impact on wellbeing; ensuring that significant events are dealt with using a 'no-blame culture' approach, considering what happened and improvements that can be made, and then ensuring this is communicated with staff; promotes openness about mistakes, and crucially, procedures and protocols could be put in place to minimise the risk of them happening again

Laura also looked at the relationship between good quality sleep and wellbeing and also asked the audience how many of them worked in practices where a clear wellbeing policy was in place. I observed that only around three people raised their hand so it struck me that this is an area of practice life that can be improved.

I know that the Mind Matters Initiative and the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons are doing excellent work in this area via the Wellbeing Awards and we will consider how we can help promote and add value to this from a veterinary nursing point of view.

## Practice Standards Scheme

Liz Cox, Senior Vice-Chair of VN Council and RCVS Council member, presented a 'VN's guide to the Practice Standards Scheme', acknowledging that veterinary nurses play a crucial role in administering and preparing for PSS accreditation and award visits.

Liz (pictured), who had previously served on the Practice Standards Group, had a fantastic idea that veterinary nurses should proactively 'take ownership' of a key aspect of the PSS and 'make it their own' – for example, whether that be client service, infection control or clinical governance.

As Liz pointed out, delegation of this very important work to veterinary nurses can have a positive impact on their feelings of autonomy, levels of responsibility and job satisfaction and encourage them to take their learning and development in different directions.

## Schedule 3

The next presentation was from my colleague Julie Dugmore RVN, the RCVS Director of Veterinary Nursing, who gave a presentation on Schedule 3 and delegation to a very busy room. On the plus side, this means that nurses want to understand more about Schedule 3 and how it works in practice, but may also demonstrate that there is still uncertainty regarding its application.

Julie went through some of the key concepts around delegation and the most important passages in Schedule 3, the Code of Professional Conduct and its supporting guidance. She also highlighted some of the procedures that can definitely be delegated to VNs under Schedule 3 (eg 2nd vaccinations, maintenance & monitoring of anaesthesia and blood sampling) and those which definitely cannot (eg castrations, spays and extracting teeth using instruments).

Towards the end of the session it was flagged up that we have developed a series of case studies to help both vets and VNs navigate Schedule 3 in practice and that more were in development – as well as a handy flowchart for both vets and VNs which, once published, will help them make decisions about what can and can't be delegated.

## Advanced Practitioner Status

The final presentation was from Susan Howarth RVN (pictured), VN Council member and Chair of the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee, who gave an update on the VN Futures project's work towards establishing an 'Advanced Veterinary Nurse Practitioner' status.

The first step towards creating this, as identified by the VN Futures project, has been to develop a new set of advanced qualifications and last year, the College consulted on a new Post-Registration Qualification Framework, with two new qualifications covering the further and higher education routes.

Susan outlined the key differences with the previous Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing – including the greater scope to develop qualifications within a designated area of interest, the fact it's a slightly less onerous academic qualification, and the fact the courses are Certificates rather than Diplomas.

Susan said that the intention was to launch the Certificates this year and that the Advanced Veterinary Nurse Practitioner status would be developed in conjunction with the development of the two courses.

### **Overall conclusions**

It was great to see so much engagement from veterinary nurses in areas such as Schedule 3 and Advanced Veterinary Nursing and, if there was one disappointing aspect, it was the fact that there were probably not enough vets in attendance.

Though the focus of the presentations was on the role of the veterinary nurse – the information given was very much relevant to vets as the people who manage and delegate to VNs and who also have a role in their training and development. We will have a think how, in future, we can better market these events to all of the practice team.

The very last thing to say is that – excitingly – we have both a dedicated VN Futures website and e-newsletter in development – so keep an eye out on this website for future announcements on the progress of these.

# Blog

## &me – Allisdhair McNaul

Allisdhair has been a vet for 34 years and suffered with depression and anxiety for over 20 years before he sought help. Getting help was the best thing he ever did, it has changed his life. He is sharing his story in the hope that it will help in removing the stigma of mental health issues and show that there is light at the end of a very dark tunnel.

&me aims to encourage senior people within the healthcare professions to come forward with their stories to show that we all have mental health, and that a mental health problem does not exclude people from achieving leading roles in healthcare. I have previously shared my story at the Wellvet Weekend and more recently at the BSAVA Congress as part of the Mind Matters stream and am now presenting here.

I qualified as a vet in 1985 and have spent my entire career in small animal practice in a variety of practices, including the charity sector, a two-vet practice, a large multi-branch practice and the corporate sector. I have held a number of positions, from assistant to clinical director, but throughout my career I have found the stresses of everyday practice difficult to deal with. I particularly found being on-call very difficult and had a constant feeling of not being good enough and that every other vet knew more than me and was more skilled at everything. However, I felt that it had been my choice to become a vet and that there was nothing else that I could do and just had “to get on with it”.

For me “getting on with it” meant accepting the stresses as normal and my coping strategy was to try to suppress emotions. I ignored the fact that I did not feel happy but took on more responsibility in my professional life thinking that was what I should do, but all it meant was that I experienced more difficult situations and more stress. I was also increasingly anxious and my mood was low, but it is only now that I recognise this. Even when I consulted with my GP and found myself crying during the consultation, not knowing why, I still did not recognise that I was depressed.

When you do not address stress, when you suppress emotions and when you do not recognise the warning signs your body is giving you, it is inevitable that something will give. For me it was finding myself shouting in a consultation, pent-up emotions and stress have a tendency to burst out in unexpected and inappropriate anger. It was at this time I realised that I needed help. It had only taken me 25 years to come to this realisation.

So, I went back to the GP who got me to fill in the questionnaire that is used to assess levels of depression. I scored well, but in this test the higher the score, the worse the result, so perhaps the first lesson in recognising perfectionism is not a good thing. I was prescribed medication, signed off work and was recommended to undertake talking therapies. Fortunately, I had health insurance and there was a Priory hospital close to home and I took the decision to get myself referred there.

After an initial assessment, my psychiatrist recommended three half-day sessions as an out-patient. I was asked how I felt about group therapy. I had no idea how I felt about group therapy but approached treatment with an open mind putting myself in the hands of the experts and seeing what happened. Group therapy was interesting, as I listened to other people's stories I thought “you thought that?”, “you do that?”, “that's not going to be helpful”. But as I reflected on what I was hearing, I realised that I did the same things and I was able to recognise problems in others but not in myself.

Talking therapies are surprisingly tiring, at the end of the sessions I was exhausted, but I stuck with it and did my homework which was lots of self-reflection and understanding my unhelpful behaviours, how thoughts affected emotions and, in turn, mental and physical health. Through the combined treatments of cognitive behavioural therapy and mindfulness, I learned how to monitor my thoughts and recognise they are just thoughts as well as how to recognise the voice of my inner critic who would constantly tell me that I was not good enough, that everyone else knew better than me and that my opinion was not worth a thing.

Over time I have learned to ignore my inner critic which has increased my confidence and self-esteem and opened a whole new world to me of new opportunities. I am getting more from my professional life, and genuinely feel that I am a better now than I ever have been. I also have allowed myself to explore other interests as well, particularly in producing fine art photography and poetry, and this creative outlet perfectly balances my work life.

I do not believe that I am cured of depression and anxiety, but with the toolkit mindfulness has given me I can ensure that I remain in remission and get more out of my life now than at any other stage. So if you are feeling low and cannot see how things can improve ask for help, it may be the best thing you ever do.

# Blog

## Rediscovering why I love being a VN through CPD

Recent news from the RCVS has showed an alarming level of veterinary nurses showing non-compliance with regards to required continual personal development (CPD) hours, with a large number (58%) giving no reason at all for non-compliance.

Mental health concerns are a big cause of time away from the profession at the moment and are a major focus of my groups within the community. Last year I took some time away from work due to my mental health having suffered for various reasons. My depression, stress and anxiety had begun to make me lose love for the profession I had worked so hard to get into and stay in.

While taking time away wasn't an easy decision I knew it was one I needed to do. After around a week of lying in bed not knowing what to do or thinking about the future, I saw a VN Times under the bed. I grab it and flicked through. While I cannot remember the article, I do remember the feeling it gave me. In this moment I remembered why I loved my job and why I wanted to keep going. I ended up reading the whole issue in one sitting.

There are so many ways of making up the needed 45 hours (15 per year) of CPD without having to spend any money, whether this is your own or practice funds. I will look into some of the ways I have done in the past.

We all have reasons that may hold us back from going on day courses and congresses. These situations can make the best of us anxious, so we can look for ways to increase our hours at home as best we can until we feel able to attend such events.

My journals are sent to my home address. While many of us will have them sent to work, I can imagine many end up in our post trays and often stay there. With busy work days and so many rushed lunches, do we get time to read them in work? I know I rarely do, so this is why I keep them at home.

During my time off work, I was glad I had done this as I had copies of multiple different journals including the VNJ and The Veterinary Nurse. On top of reading journals, I also looked to online sources of CPD to keep my interest up. If you look well enough, there will be online course and features for any interest or speciality you can desire.

All journals have online libraries (for example):

- Vet Times
- Veterinary Nursing Journal
- The Veterinary Nurse
- Companion Animal

In addition to this, most companies have online courses short or long.

With regards to what I did:

I checked out the Royal Canin e-Learning site for canine and feline nutrition and weight management.

Diabetes management CPD was accessible to me on registering online.

The Webinar Club from CPD solutions is also a great source of webinars for nurses at all levels from general practice to referrals.

Another great source for the vet nurse community can be found on social media. Groups on Facebook can be both a CPD resource and a way of keeping up to date on new techniques. Various groups are available, some just for nurses like Vet Nurse Chatter and VN Wishlist. Others include vets as well like Veterinary Voices and Vets: Stay, Go, Diversify.

This month off ended up renewing and turned out to be the best thing I could have done at this time in my life and career. I came back with a fresh intake of knowledge and was keen to get back to work.

My aim in this blog is to highlight that although completing CPD hours may seem like a chore, it really doesn't need to be. With a little searching, we can find CPD that is interesting and useful for us in practice. If you are struggling to get help with funds in practice, think about the benefits to the practice and present these to your managers.

# Events

## **Regional Question Time - Glasgow**

Thursday 2 May, Double Tree by Hilton Glasgow Westerwood Spa & Golf Resort, 1 St Andrews Drive, Glasgow G68 0EW

## **VN Day**

Tuesday 7 May, ZSL London Zoo, London NW1 4RY

## **VN Council**

8 May, RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

## **Partner Conference 2019**

Thursday 16 and Friday 17 May 2019, Celtic Manor Resort, Caerleon, Newport NP18 1HQ

## **Vet Festival 2019**

Friday 7 and Saturday 8 June 2019, Loseley Park, Guildford, Surrey GU3 1HS

## **CPD course for overseas vets and VNs**

Tuesday 11 and Wednesday 12 June 2019, RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

## **RCVS Council**

Thursday 13 June 2019, RCVS, Belgravia House, 62 – 64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF

## **The Royal Highland Show**

Thursday 20 June to Sunday 23 June 2019, Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Newbridge EH28 8NB

## **Royal College Day**

Friday 12 July 2019, Royal Institute of British Architects, 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD