

RCVS news

RCVS NEWS / DECEMBER 2019

*Text-only version of
RCVS News email*

RCVS publishes new resources for the profession on CPD policy changes

Ahead of our new policies on continuing professional development (CPD) coming into force at the beginning of 2020, we have developed a range of new resources to support the profession in understanding and adapting to the changes.

From January 2020 we are changing the way in which we assess CPD compliance – moving to a simpler and easier-to-understand annual CPD requirement of 35 hours a year for veterinary surgeons and 15 hours a year for veterinary nurses (rather than the previous rolling average over three years). The changes will also enable the College to measure CPD compliance and address any non-compliance in a more meaningful way.

Allied to these changes, on 27 January 2020, we will also be introducing 1CPD, its new digital CPD recording platform, which will replace the current Professional Development Record (PDR) for both vets and vet nurses. The 1CPD platform supports the 'plan, do, record, reflect' cycle of CPD, with a particular emphasis on aiding and enhancing the reflection element of the cycle, and will also be available in app format for iOS and Android.

Reflection is a key element of the new outcomes-based CPD model, which will be introduced by the RCVS from January 2020 and become mandatory from 2022 to encourage veterinary professionals to reflect on the quality, relevance and impact of the CPD they undertake.

To help the profession prepare for all these changes we have updated our 'CPD 2020' webpage with new resources, including:

Short video interviews with key policy makers at the RCVS answering some of the key questions about the changes and their implications;

Case studies of vets and vet nurses who took part in the recent pilot of an outcomes-based CPD model;

Blogs from veterinary professionals covering topics such as how best to integrate learning into everyday practice and doing CPD on a budget;

Scenarios covering some of the key questions and issues arising from the policy changes; and

Frequently asked questions about the changes.

Dr Linda Prescott-Clements, our Director of Education (pictured right), said: "We hope these resources will help members understand some of the fundamental and practical issues around the changes and the impact they will have, as well as covering some of the big questions such as what counts as CPD, how to engage in meaningful reflection and how to balance CPD with personal and professional responsibilities.

"As well as the main CPD 2020 webpage we have also developed four off-shoot pages which look in more detail at the 'plan, do, record, reflect' model of CPD and provide further advice and guidance about each stage.

"We hope that the profession will find these resources useful and we will continue to update these pages with blogs, case studies, videos and other resources as the policy changes bed in."

All of the CPD resources can be accessed on the dedicated webpage.

Any members of the profession who have queries about the policy changes and their implications can also contact our Education Department on cpd@rcvs.org.uk

Vets amongst the most trusted professionals, according to survey

A survey commissioned by the RCVS and conducted amongst 2,000 members of the public has found that veterinary surgeons are amongst the most trusted of UK professionals.

The survey was conducted with a nationally-representative sample of 2,000 UK adults who were asked questions about satisfaction with the service they and their animals received from veterinary surgeons, levels of trust in the profession, and whether the service provided by vets represents value for money.

In terms of trust, the survey found that a very high proportion of the public (94%) either completely trusted or generally trusted (34% and 60% respectively) veterinary surgeons. This put veterinary surgeons at number three in the league table of most trusted professions – below opticians and pharmacists, but above general practitioners and dentists. The ranking is the same as was found in a 2015 survey carried out as part of the joint RCVS and British Veterinary Association Vet Futures project.

Regarding satisfaction levels, the picture was similarly positive, with an overall satisfaction rate of 80% (39% very satisfied and 41% satisfied), which meant that veterinary surgeons were the fourth highest profession in terms of satisfaction rates – below opticians, pharmacists and dentists, but above general practitioners and accountants. This represented a slight improvement on the 2015 survey, where the overall satisfaction rate was 78%.

In terms of value for money, 32% of the respondents felt that veterinary surgeons represented excellent (8%) or good (24%) value for money, with 38% thinking that veterinary fees were fair. Some 29% of respondents thought that veterinary surgeons and their services provided poor (21%) or very poor (8%) value for money. These findings were similar to that of the 2015 survey.

Commenting on the results, our President Dr Niall Connell said: “These results clearly demonstrate that there is a great deal of good will towards the veterinary profession and the work they do in treating the nation’s animals and serving their communities. The basis of all good relationships is trust, and it is fantastic to see that our clients continue overwhelmingly to trust our knowledge and expertise and remain very happy with the service we provide them.

“The picture on value for money is clearly a bit more mixed, although clearly 70% of the respondents recognise that we at least charge fair fees in terms of our time and expertise. There is, of course, always more work that we can do in order to help the public understand veterinary costs and fees and promote the value of veterinary care, as demonstrated by last year’s joint Pets Need Vets social media campaign with BVA, in which we highlighted the benefits to pet owners of being registered with a vet.”

The survey was carried out on behalf of the RCVS by Mo Gannon & Associates Ltd via the Walnut Omnibus survey.

[READ MORE NEWS](#)

Videos from the day – Mind Matters Initiative Research Symposium 2019

Videos from the day – Mind Matters Initiative Research Symposium 2019

On 24 September 2019 the second veterinary mental health research symposium was held at Church House (London), entitled 'Veterinary mental health: the evidence base'. You can watch the plenary sessions and talks from streams A and B via the links on this page.

<https://www.vetmindmatters.org/resources/videos-from-the-day-mind-matters-initiative-research-symposium-2019/>

Last call to submit RCVS Awards nominations

There is just under a month to go until the end of the nomination period for the 2020 RCVS Awards & Honours, recognising veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and lay people working to improve animal health and welfare within or alongside the veterinary professions.

There are six awards for which nominations can be made which cover veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and lay people working in both the UK and abroad, at all stages of their career and across a wide range of veterinary work.

Niall Connell, RCVS President, commented: "Since I joined RCVS Council in 2013 one of the most humbling highlights of the calendar is seeing the various RCVS Honours and Awards being bestowed upon some of the most amazing, dedicated, passionate and impactful people both within and outside the UK veterinary professions.

"What our awards are looking for are those who are enhancing animal health and welfare and public health in the UK and abroad, who are inspiring and mentoring their colleagues, who are advocating for the professions and our issues on a public platform.

"I am really looking forward to hearing their stories and presenting their awards as the last official duty as my presidential year –so I would implore my colleagues to take the next few weeks to think about who they most admire in the profession and nominate them.

"To get some inspiration please visit our Awards & Honours webpage where you can find out more about each of the awards and find examples and case studies of previous award winners, as well as watch a number of videos featuring interviews with previous award winners."

The College is seeking nominations for all six of its awards, which will be presented to the successful nominees by Dr Niall Connell at Royal College Day 2020, which will take place at 1 Great George Street on 10 July 2020. The awards for nominations are:

The Queen's Medal: the highest honour that can be bestowed upon a veterinary surgeon for a highly distinguished career with sustained and outstanding achievements throughout.

The Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award: this award is for a veterinary nurse who has had a sustained and distinguished career, who can demonstrate a leadership role within the profession and who can act as an ambassador for the value of veterinary nurses and their work.

RCVS International Award: this award is for vets, vet nurses or lay people who work internationally, from either within or outside the UK, in making an outstanding contribution to, for example, raising veterinary standards, veterinary education and improving animal health and welfare.

RCVS Impact Award: this award is for vets or vet nurses who have recently, or are currently, undertaking a project, initiative or similar that has a significant impact on the profession at large, animal health or welfare, or public health. Such impact could have been made through any field of veterinary endeavour, including clinical practice, research, education or veterinary politics.

RCVS Inspiration Award: this award is for vets or vet nurses at any stage of their career who have demonstrated the ability to inspire and enthuse others consistently throughout. It is open to those who have inspired and motivated individuals anywhere within the profession and recognises those who have gone 'above and beyond' what may normally be expected from a professional colleague.

Honorary Associateship: this honour may be conferred on a small number of lay people each year, in recognition of their special contribution to the veterinary sphere. It recognises the full range of individuals who contribute to the veterinary and animal health sector including scientists, lecturers, journalists, charity-workers, farriers, farmers and those involved in the commercial field.

Nominations can be made either through completing an online application form or by downloading a PDF application form that can then be either emailed or posted to the RCVS. The full nomination criteria for each of the awards, as well as further guidance notes, can be found on the RCVS Honours & Awards webpage.

The deadline for nominations is Friday 10 January 2020. All awards will be conferred at Royal College Day 2020.

For an informal talk about the awards and how to make a nomination, please contact Susie Tomlin, Executive Secretary, on s.tomlin@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0761.

RCVS President donates money to help vulnerable animals

The RCVS President Niall Connell has chosen two charities that help to treat some of the most vulnerable animals for the College's annual Christmas donation.

The recipients of the £3,000 donation are StreetVet and The American Fondouk – each will receive £1,500 – which were both chosen by Dr Niall Connell. StreetVet, which became a registered charity earlier this year, provides free veterinary care to the animal companions of the homeless community in cities in England, Scotland and Wales, with hundreds of veterinary and veterinary nurse volunteers helping with tasks such as vaccination, microchipping and administering pain relief as well as antibiotics to control infection.

Niall Connell (pictured) commented: "Since it started in 2016 I have been a great admirer of the work that StreetVet has been carrying out amongst some of the most vulnerable people and animals in the UK. It's a sad fact that homelessness levels have increased in recent years and we also know that many in the homeless community have dogs, which often act as a vital source of companionship, love and stability in their lives.

"So to see these vets recognising a problem and finding a way to help those who are struggling is utterly inspiring, and I was very happy for the RCVS to make a donation to their cause on behalf of the profession."

In response to the donation Sam Joseph MRCVS and Jade Statt MRCVS, the co-founders of the charity, said: "On behalf of everyone at StreetVet we would like to say a huge thank you to the RCVS President for selecting us as one of their chosen charities this Christmas.

"The RCVS and the veterinary profession as a whole continue to support us at every step allowing StreetVet teams across the country to continue providing essential care to pets belonging to those most in need. This fantastic donation will be used to pay for set-up costs that allow StreetVet teams to do their valuable work in two new locations this year."

The American Fondouk is a charity that provides free veterinary care for working donkeys, horses and mules in the Moroccan city of Fez, recognising that many of the city's poorest people are reliant on these animals for transportation and labour. The charity also provides education to the population on care and nutrition for working equids.

Niall added: "Many veterinary students at the University of Glasgow volunteer with The American Fondouk and, as one of the undergraduate assessors at the University, I have noticed how much the students have valued their time volunteering there and the difference they felt they were making to the lives of both the animals and the people who depend on their hard work.

"This view was cemented by a presentation from the charity's Director, Dr Gigi Kay, at the RCVS Fellowship Day in 2018, where she described the very hard lives led by working equids in the developing world as well as how she was helping to train up local veterinary talent."

In response to the donation Dr Kay FRCVS said: "The American Fondouk is honoured and delighted to have been chosen as the recipient of a Christmas donation from the RCVS.

"Our mission in Morocco is to help the poorest sectors of the community through the provision of free veterinary care to their working horses, mules and donkeys. In Morocco in common with many other developing world countries, the rural and the peri-urban economies literally ride on the backs of the working equid.

"The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, for example, has estimated that up to 75% of traction energy in Africa is supplied by working animals, and when one realises the economic importance of these animals to their owners, it is easy to understand that the provision of high-quality veterinary care is in many instances a lifeline.

"The American Fondouk runs a full service equine hospital in Fez, with 40 stables and 10 veterinarians, to provide just that. We know that the well-being of a working mule is intimately linked with the well-being of an owner and his entire family.

"Sometimes though, despite the best efforts of the Fondouk veterinary team, a mule or donkey loses its battle for life. In these instances the owner can be left destitute. As a result of the generous donation from the RCVS, the Fondouk will be able to buy eight replacement mules for farmers whose mules have died. This is a Christmas gift that will feed eight fami-

lies for many years to come. Really a gift that carries on giving.”

The charity donation is made by the RCVS to a charity (or charities) chosen by the President every Christmas in lieu of posting cards. Previous recipients in recent years have included the Links Group, The Horse Trust, Medical Detection Dogs, Worldwide Veterinary Service, Mind, Riding for the Disabled Association, Canine Partners, Hounds for Heroes, and Vetlife.

Broadcaster to host Mind Matters event stream at SPVS-VMG Congress

The broadcaster, commentator and author Clare Balding OBE will be chairing a series of Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) talks about diversity and inclusion, at next year's Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) and Veterinary Management Group (VMG) Congress.

The event takes place at the Celtic Manor Resort near Newport in South Wales on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 January 2020 with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Mind Matters Initiative's Wellbeing in Practice stream taking place throughout the Friday.

Clare, who will also be delivering the keynote address for the Congress, will be chairing the two morning sessions, which look at the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in the veterinary workplace, and wider inclusion and equality issues respectively.

The first talk, entitled LGBT+ in Practice, will be delivered by Dr Dan Makin, President of the British Veterinary LGBT+ Group, at 10.40am. In this, he will share stories of discrimination against LGBT+ people in the veterinary professions that have led to poor mental health, as well as positive stories around those practices which get it right. He will make the business, recruitment and legal case for introducing policies for practice teams, to help educate, inform, and instil a sense of belonging and will describe what those might look like.

The second MMI session, at 11.40am, is a panel discussion titled Inclusion and Equality in the Workplace, which will look at the importance of a diverse team in terms of overall wellbeing and performance and how feelings of exclusion, and otherness can lead to poor mental health and wellbeing. The panel will discuss how good policies around equality and inclusion, can reap the benefits of a happy, healthy and diverse team. The panel will include Dan Makin, Partheeban Navaratnam, co-founder of the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society, Ebony Escalona, founder of Vets: Stay, Go, Diversify and Penny Barker, from the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS).

For the two afternoon MMI sessions, chairing duties will be taken on by SPVS Board Member Liz Barton who will look at how effective leadership and a positive working environment benefits wellbeing.

The first of the afternoon talks, starting at 1.30pm, is titled 'Being the leader you and your team need' and will be delivered by Caroline Pearson from Progressive Vet Consulting, along with some of the winners of the joint SPVS and Mind Matters Initiative's Veterinary Wellbeing Award who are being announced at the opening ceremony of the SPVS-VMG Congress. They will discuss current leadership thinking and challenge delegates to ask questions about the type of leader they think they are, how upbringing and past experience may have influenced this, and how to become the leader a team needs.

The final talk of the Mind Matters stream is titled 'Civility in Practice' and will be delivered by Dan Tipney from training consultancy VetLed, in which he will talk about challenging people who display problematic behaviours in the workplace. He will share evidence from within the NHS and campaigns such as 'Civility Saves Lives' and consider how best to apply this learning to the veterinary profession. He will make a strong case for linking wellbeing with both animal safety and quality improvement.

The full programme for the Congress, including the Mind Matters stream, can be found on the SPVS-VMG 2020 Congress website.

As well as the MMI stream, we will also have a stand at the Congress, where we will be promoting our latest and upcoming projects and initiatives including CPD policy changes, the Practice Standards Scheme and the RCVS Leadership initiative.

Furthermore, on the afternoon of Friday 24 January, the College will be holding a series of free 30-minute Practice Standards Scheme surgeries with PSS Lead Assessor Pam Mosedale. The surgeries give the opportunity for those within the Scheme, or who are thinking of joining, to ask questions about the assessment and awards application process, among other things. Sessions are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis and can be booked via a dedicated webpage.

Broadcaster to host Mind Matters event stream at SPVS-VMG Congress

The broadcaster, commentator and author Clare Balding OBE will be chairing a series of Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) talks about diversity and inclusion, at next year's Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) and Veterinary Management Group (VMG) Congress.

The event takes place at the Celtic Manor Resort near Newport in South Wales on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 January 2020 with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Mind Matters Initiative's Wellbeing in Practice stream taking place throughout the Friday.

Clare, who will also be delivering the keynote address for the Congress, will be chairing the two morning sessions, which look at the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in the veterinary workplace, and wider inclusion and equality issues respectively.

The first talk, entitled LGBT+ in Practice, will be delivered by Dr Dan Makin, President of the British Veterinary LGBT+ Group, at 10.40am. In this, he will share stories of discrimination against LGBT+ people in the veterinary professions that have led to poor mental health, as well as positive stories around those practices which get it right. He will make the business, recruitment and legal case for introducing policies for practice teams, to help educate, inform, and instil a sense of belonging and will describe what those might look like.

The second MMI session, at 11.40am, is a panel discussion titled Inclusion and Equality in the Workplace, which will look at the importance of a diverse team in terms of overall wellbeing and performance and how feelings of exclusion, and otherness can lead to poor mental health and wellbeing. The panel will discuss how good policies around equality and inclusion, can reap the benefits of a happy, healthy and diverse team. The panel will include Dan Makin, Partheeban Navaratnam, co-founder of the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society, Ebony Escalona, founder of Vets: Stay, Go, Diversify and Penny Barker, from the Veterinary Defence Society (VDS).

For the two afternoon MMI sessions, chairing duties will be taken on by SPVS Board Member Liz Barton who will look at how effective leadership and a positive working environment benefits wellbeing.

The first of the afternoon talks, starting at 1.30pm, is titled 'Being the leader you and your team need' and will be delivered by Caroline Pearson from Progressive Vet Consulting, along with some of the winners of the joint SPVS and Mind Matters Initiative's Veterinary Wellbeing Award who are being announced at the opening ceremony of the SPVS-VMG Congress. They will discuss current leadership thinking and challenge delegates to ask questions about the type of leader they think they are, how upbringing and past experience may have influenced this, and how to become the leader a team needs.

The final talk of the Mind Matters stream is titled 'Civility in Practice' and will be delivered by Dan Tipney from training consultancy VetLed, in which he will talk about challenging people who display problematic behaviours in the workplace. He will share evidence from within the NHS and campaigns such as 'Civility Saves Lives' and consider how best to apply this learning to the veterinary profession. He will make a strong case for linking wellbeing with both animal safety and quality improvement.

The full programme for the Congress, including the Mind Matters stream, can be found on the SPVS-VMG 2020 Congress website.

As well as the MMI stream, we will also have a stand at the Congress, where we will be promoting our latest and upcoming projects and initiatives including CPD policy changes, the Practice Standards Scheme and the RCVS Leadership initiative.

Furthermore, on the afternoon of Friday 24 January, the College will be holding a series of free 30-minute Practice Standards Scheme surgeries with PSS Lead Assessor Pam Mosedale. The surgeries give the opportunity for those within the Scheme, or who are thinking of joining, to ask questions about the assessment and awards application process, among other things. Sessions are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis and can be booked via a dedicated webpage.

Shape the future of the professions as an RCVS or VN Councils candidate

Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses are being encouraged to help shape the future of their professions by standing as candidates for the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Council and Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council, respectively, in their 2020 elections.

In next year's RCVS Council election there are three elected veterinary surgeon member places available with successful candidates serving four-year terms. In the VN Council election there are two elected veterinary nurse member places available with successful candidates serving three-year terms.

The nomination period for both RCVS and VN Councils runs until 5pm on Friday 31 January 2020. In order to stand, candidates for either Council will need to complete a nomination form, submit a short biography and personal statement and supply a high resolution digital photo.

Each candidate will also need to have two nominators. For RCVS Council candidates, these should be veterinary surgeons who are on the RCVS Register but are not current RCVS Council members; for VN Council candidates, the nominators must be Registered Veterinary Nurses who are not currently on VN Council.

Nominations will be particularly welcome for VN Council as, due to governance changes, no election took place in 2018 and there was also no election in 2019, due to only two candidates standing for the two available places.

Racheal Marshall, Chair of VN Council, commented: "Although we are delighted with the two VN Council members who came on board this year, I think all would agree that it was a shame that there was no opportunity for the profession to exercise their democratic right and cast a vote for their preferred candidates.

"Being a member of VN Council and, latterly, its Chair has been a professional highlight for me – I have helped shape recommendations for how we can take the profession forward through the VN Futures project, have played a part in developing the postgraduate Certificates in Advanced Veterinary Nursing and have welcomed many new veterinary nurses to the Register by taking them through their professional declarations.

"We know that veterinary nurses sometimes feel that they struggle to be seen and heard – being a member of VN Council who can shape policy on education and professional conduct and attend events as an ambassador for the profession all helps give veterinary nursing the voice it deserves. So please consider standing for VN Council and I am very happy to talk to people about what it involves and how to fit it around your work and life."

Veterinary nurses who wish to find out more about becoming a candidate for VN Council can arrange an informal conversation with Racheal by contacting Annette Amato, VN Council Secretary, on a.amato@rcvs.org.uk

Eleanor Ferguson, our Registrar and Returning Officer for both the elections, added: "As always, we would encourage those who are interested in having their say in some of the key debates in the regulatory sphere, such as our under care review, our policies around the impact of Brexit and our vision for new veterinary legislation, to become a candidate.

"RCVS Council is at its best when it encompasses a broad range of perspectives, experiences and knowledge, and so we encourage people from all areas of veterinary life and all levels of experience to put themselves forward and share their expertise and insight."

The election period will start around mid-March and run until 5pm on Friday 24 April 2020. Ballot papers and emails with a secure link to a unique voting website will be sent to all registered veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who are eligible to vote.

Furthermore, prior to the launch of the election period, we will be sourcing questions from members of the professions to put to the candidates, who will be asked to produce a video giving their responses to two questions of their choice. These videos will be published at the start of the election.

Nomination forms, guidance notes and frequently asked questions for prospective RCVS Council candidates can be found at the dedicated 2020 RCVS Council election webpage. The equivalent documents for VN Council candidates are available on the dedicated 2020 VN Council election website.

Prospective candidates for RCVS Council are welcome to contact our Registrar, Eleanor Ferguson (e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk) and the RCVS CEO, Lizzie Lockett (l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk) for more information about the role of the College and/or RCVS Council and VN Council members.

RCVS Council will also be holding its next public meeting on Thursday 23 January 2020, prior to the closure date for Council candidate nominations. Prospective candidates are welcome to attend the Council meeting as an observer. Please contact Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, on d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk if you wish to attend.

RCVS Knowledge communications survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/JL2L2C2>

Reminder for all VNs to complete their annual renewal

We are reminding all veterinary nurses that they must complete their annual renewal, including paying their annual renewal fee, by Tuesday 31 December 2019 at the latest.

The renewal period has opened now, via the 'My Account' area of our website, with the official renewal date being Friday 1 November 2019. As the renewal year runs from November 2019 to November 2020, all veterinary nurses must complete the renewal process, including new nurses who may have first registered less than 12 months ago.

The annual renewal fee for veterinary nurses is set at £69 for this year, and payments can be made by debit or credit card via the 'My Account' area of our website, or by cheque, bank draft or bank transfer. Unfortunately, payments cannot be taken over the telephone.

All veterinary nurses also need to confirm their Register address and contact details, confirm their compliance with the current continuing professional development requirement of 45 hours over a three year period, and declare any convictions, cautions and/or adverse findings. These steps still need to be completed even if the veterinary nurse's employer is paying the renewal fee.

Veterinary nurses who fail to complete their annual renewal on or before Tuesday 31 December 2019 will be removed from the Register.

Veterinary nurses with any queries about annual renewal should contact the RCVS registration team via registration@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0707.

Blog

Our 2017-19 Strategic Plan in review

Challenging, stretching, ambitious – these were some of the words used to describe our 2017-19 Strategic Plan when it was first published and, as we reach the end of 2019 and, indeed, the decade, they hold as true now as they did then.

The Plan built upon the foundations laid by the 2014-16 Plan (which was about making sure we were getting the basics right) and added challenges and objectives that pushed us to expand upon our core remit while, at the same time, examining and tackling some of the tricky and persistent issues that face both the veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse professions.

Of course, we have also had a very challenging external environment to tackle as well, not least around the future relationship between the UK and the EU. This Plan was forged in the months immediately after the EU Referendum and, like almost everyone else, we couldn't have predicted how the process of leaving the EU would proceed or, indeed, foreseen all the various points of impact that decision would have on the veterinary professions.

Meeting the goals hasn't always been easy and, as with any plan when it bumps up against reality, there have been plenty of learning points along the way. But I am immensely proud of what the College, its staff, its Council members and the professions at large have achieved in meeting the ambitions.

While I don't want to make this a 'listicle' I do want to go through the five main ambitions of the plan and pull-out some key highlights from each.

Developing a learning culture

One of our key achievements under this ambition has been the transition to an outcomes-based model for continuing professional development (CPD), which encourages the use of reflection to make learning and development more relevant and impactful. Thanks to the hard work of our Education Team, Education Committee and the Working Groups looking at this policy this is now very close to bearing fruit with our 1CPD platform and app launching early next year and a transition to a more reflective model of assessing CPD. It has taken some time to carry the professions with us regarding the benefits of reflection but, thanks to pilot projects, academic research papers, and buy-in of the concept from many employers and CPD providers, the benefits of reflective CPD are now well on their way to being accepted.

Another major area of cultural shift that this ambition looked at was the transition from a blame culture, where mistakes lead to blame and even cover-up, to a learning culture in which the veterinary team can have frank and honest conversations about what went wrong and how improvements can be made, with a focus on Quality Improvement. Again, thanks to work by our Mind Matters Initiative and partner organisations, including RCVS Knowledge, these concepts are starting to become embedded in the profession and we are currently piloting Schwartz Rounds, a model of reflective practice that encourages non-judgemental discussions of cases that can contribute to a learning culture.

Furthermore, we also saw the formal establishment of the Veterinary Client Mediation Service, a service funded by the College that uses mediation in order to resolve complaints that do not meet our threshold of serious professional misconduct. This has significantly freed up time for our case managers and case examiners and means that they can concentrate their efforts on investigating the most serious and relevant cases.

Leadership and innovation

In terms of our leadership work, we have launched some fantastic initiatives in this period, not least our immensely popular online leadership course, jointly developed with the NHS Leadership Academy and which has over 7,000 enrolments to date, and an 'Inspiring Veterinary Leaders' campaign showcasing the range and diversity of leadership and leadership roles in the professions. Our work to transition the Fellowship into a learned society and source of mentorship and leadership for the profession has also continued apace, with over 150 new Fellows being welcomed since its 2016 re-launch and increased engagement with veterinary students and veterinary surgeons at all stages of their careers.

On the innovation front, this period saw the launch, in 2017, of our ViVet innovation programme which, over the last two years, has looked at the impact of innovation on the veterinary professions and how the profession can seize the opportunities offered by innovation to transform how it works and widen access to veterinary services. This has been cemented by a number of presentations at various congresses and events, Innovation Workshops and, this year, the second of our biennial Innovation Symposiums, which focused on the concept of precision veterinary medicine.

Both us and the wider profession have also been talking a lot more about diversity and inclusion and the need for the veterinary professions to better reflect the make-up of modern Britain, whether that's in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic background or other factors. Through the launch of our Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Working Group we are getting involved in this space and look to do some key work in this area in the coming years.

Continuing to be a First Rate Regulator

There has been some thought-provoking behind-the-scenes work going on via our Legislation Working Party, which has been taking an holistic approach in developing a series of recommendations for legislative reform that will tie-up various anomalies, as well as improving and underpinning the statutory basis for many of our activities and future-proofing our regime. One of the key areas that has been looked at is delegation to veterinary nurses under Schedule 3, with a 2017 survey finding that there was a continuing lack of clarity and confidence about how Schedule 3 operates in practice. In response to this, we have published Schedule 3 case studies and, towards the end of this year, a poster checklist to help both vets and vet nurses navigate how Schedule 3 works in practice.

On the regulatory front we also met the action to develop a framework by which allied professions could be brought into the regulatory remit of the RCVS should they want to do so. This pathway was opened with a decision by Council at its January 2019 meeting to use powers under our Royal Charter to allow paraprofessionals to become associates of or accredited by the College and both the Association of Meat Inspectors and the Animal Behaviour and Training Council have expressed interest in this.

In 2018, to great fanfare, we also launched our Graduate Outcomes Project and consultation, an ambitious piece of work looking at the future of veterinary education and how the profession (and the College) can better help and support veterinary graduates through the transition into life in practice. The consultation was launched in recognition of the fact that there is often a mismatch between expectations of life in practice and the reality, leading to problems with mental health and wellbeing and also recruitment and retention. Nearly 2,000 people responded to the rather lengthy consultation (one of the highest responses we've had for a formal consultation) and so it demonstrates the levels of interest in this issue and we hope to publish the conclusions of the consultation – and the various Working Groups and Parties set up in its wake – early next year.

In the Strategic Plan we also said we would review the regulatory framework around new technologies in order to get the balance right between encouraging innovation, while still maintaining high standards of animal health and welfare. This has been a much debated and discussed issue and, while this review may not have panned out as originally envisaged, in 2020 we will be undertaking our wide-ranging review of the core principles behind the term 'under care' which will underpin any future discussions around how and where veterinary surgeons work.

Finally, these years saw the culmination of our discussions around improving the governance structures of the College, with a Legislative Reform Order being approved by Parliament in May 2018. This Order reduced the size of Council (a process that is still ongoing), has led to formal inclusion of lay and veterinary nurse members for the first time, and also introduced a code of conduct for Council members. The reduction in size of Council means that we can now have more frequent meetings, leading to a more agile, flexible and rapid decision-making process.

Global reach

The aforementioned external environment and the uncertainty that has surrounded the UK's exit from the EU has meant that much of our energy and capacity during this period has had to go into looking at how we maximise the opportunities and minimise the risks of Brexit, rather than some of our more wide-ranging global ambitions.

Regarding Brexit, throughout the period we have been working with the Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and the British Veterinary Association to look at how we can ensure that, whatever Brexit scenario becomes reality, workforce needs can continue to be met and that vital veterinary work still gets done. In partnership with the BVA we also successfully lobbied the Migration Advisory Committee to recommend that veterinary surgeons be added to the Shortage Occupation List, thus streamlining the process for overseas veterinary surgeons to gain UK work visas. This recommendation has now been accepted by the Home Office.

As a final note, we also signed an historic mutual recognition agreement with the Veterinary Council of Ireland, our equivalent in the Republic of Ireland, meaning that, whatever happens with Brexit, graduates from University College Dublin will be recognised here and UK vet school graduates will be recognised in Ireland.

Over the past three years we have also made it clear that Brexit doesn't change the close working relationship that we have with our colleagues and partners in the rest of the European Union and the continent as a whole. So, next summer, we are very glad that the RCVS and BVA will be jointly hosting the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) General

Assembly in London, welcoming colleagues from over 40 European countries.

Our service agenda

While our other ambitions might be more headline-grabbing, in many ways this ambition is the most important of them all, because it is all about incremental and small-scale improvements to how the RCVS operates and the service that we offer the professions and the public – from IT to human resources to our service standards.

Some key internal improvements to highlight from the last three years would be changes to how we accept payments from the profession, including Direct Debit management; a wide-ranging project to improve our internal IT infrastructure including our professional conduct management system; and our ongoing efforts to relocate the College to more appropriate premises.

In terms of external-facing projects, the past three years has seen an increase in the number of public events we have been attending (such as the Royal Highland, Royal Welsh and Devon County Shows) where we have had the opportunity to talk to hundreds of members of the public about the profession and how we regulate it (the fact that kids can perform operations on stuffed animals at our stands has certainly helped with engagement!). This year we have also launched our public-facing digital storytelling campaign #YourKindOfVets to drive public engagement with the Practice Standards Scheme and RCVS-accredited practices.

Thanks to a suggestion by one of our practising members, we also produced and mailed to all practices a poster designed to help clients better understand what they can expect from their veterinary team and, similarly, what is expected of them as animal owners. This idea was well received on both sides as a simple and easy-to-understand way of explaining their duties, obligations and expectations.

It is fair to say that I could go on and that there are many things I have had to leave out or skim over (a full account of how we have met the ambitions of our Strategic Plan can be found in my November update to Council). However, I would reiterate how immensely proud I am of all the work that has been done by the team here and thank the professions and the public for their continuing engagement, feedback and support for what we are trying to achieve.

I hope that 2020 will be a fruitful year for everyone and look forward to updating you all soon on our exciting new Strategic Plan which is due for publication in the early part of next year. I wish everyone a Happy New Year!

Blog

Celebrating 100 years of female vets

Thinking about all of my brilliant colleagues and peers in the veterinary profession – women and men of all ages, at different stages of their careers, working together to treat our country's animals, enhance animal health and welfare and public health - I find it hard to believe that it was just 100 years ago that women were able to join the profession.

Today (23rd December 2019) is a day for celebration. It marks the centenary of Royal Assent being given to the "Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919" that opened up the veterinary profession, as well as several others including law and accountancy, to women like me. Putting to one side, for a moment, the uncomfortable reality that we had to wait for men to "allow" us to join the profession, this decision was the catalyst for remarkable change. The Act enabled Aileen Cust, an extraordinary lady who had completed her veterinary degree in 1897 but had not been legally allowed to practise, to become the first woman on the RCVS register in 1922 and countless others have followed.

Leaping forward to the present day, the prominence and status of women in the veterinary profession gives cause for even greater celebration. The profession is now majority (over 60%) female, as it has been since the late 2000's, and the vast majority of vet students are women. Women are increasingly represented in all areas of our profession, including in leadership roles. Last year, I was the eighth female President of the Royal College, and next year the ninth female President will also be the first person of colour to hold the position. Women also hold leadership roles in our representative organisations, including the BVA, and in senior government, private and third sector roles. It is a privilege to know, and work alongside, these women.

The grass is not, however, uniformly green – any woman in a leadership role will have been faced with questions about the negative impact of "feminisation" – I think it is unlikely many men faced questions about the problems with "masculinisation" in the last century! An increased number of women in the workforce across all professions is a reality; and whilst this represents change, when approached with a non-judgemental frame of mind, the extra skills, experience and perspectives now open to our profession can only be a good thing.

Despite the great strides of the last 100 years, the challenging and uncomfortable fact remains that progression within the profession is not a level playing field, however hard we might wish it so and however hard each of us as individuals feels we treat each other equally. Whilst there are still clearly occasional examples of overt discrimination and these could and should be confronted, more insidiously, joint research conducted by the British Veterinary Association and the University of Exeter last year found that systematic discrimination within the profession is still a problem.

The research involved surveying UK-based employers, partners and managers and found that there was evidence of bias and discrimination when it came to employers' recommendations on pay, competence and career advice. Ironically, those who were most likely to discriminate were also the most likely to believe that discrimination against women in the veterinary professions wasn't a problem. Perhaps unsurprisingly this is further reflected in the fact that there is a gender pay divide between men and women at all comparable career stages. We are a scientific profession and for anyone whose instinct is to say "well that can't be true", I urge you to put your feelings to one side and engage with the evidence.

So how can we tackle the issues we face, acknowledge the fact that the profession is majority female and make sure that all of us are able to fulfil our potential within the professions? Here the answers are less clear and, at the current time, less well evidenced. Equally as a female leader, these are realities I personally grapple with day in and day out - and the two areas I would like to highlight are the challenges of working schedules and confidence.

Clinical work is, of course, demanding and unpredictable with clinical cover required throughout both normal working and unsociable hours. Twentieth century rota patterns do not meet the needs of those with caring responsibilities.....it's not so long since veterinary contracts required you to have a "wife" who could take the calls. Development of creative flexible working patterns so that a balance can be struck between family, professional and personal life are possible and should be explored by all employers. And, of course, there should never be the assumption that – when it comes to caring responsibilities and especially children – women should be the sole or even primary carer. Whilst more generous paternal and shared parental leave would of course support this, we all have a part to play. Whether as a partner, as an employer or as a friend, honest conversations with men with young families must be encouraged so that the share of caring is as works best collectively for family units rather than following an assumed pattern.

In terms of confidence, there is ample evidence from the broader community that suggests that often men will apply for

jobs they don't think they are quite qualified for, while women won't apply for jobs unless they are absolutely sure they are qualified. Clearly these are generalisations and don't hold true in all circumstances, but women do seem more likely to suffer from 'impostor syndrome', in which we doubt our achievements and fear our perceived inadequacies being exposed. There is no simple and easy cure for this experience. For both women and men, recognition that the phenomena exists, and is real, is the first step. Whether as an individual reflecting on our own next steps or as a mentor supporting colleagues in their career, recognising where we fit on the scale, and that others are not the same, will help us all achieve what we are capable of.

I look forward to the future - a future where all veterinary surgeons and nurses are given opportunities to fulfil their aspirations - meaning we will be seeing more female Fellows, Specialists, Advanced Practitioners and leaders across the spectrum of veterinary life. The last few years has seen a focus on diversity and inclusivity from both the RCVS and others. I hope that whereas the last 100 years has seen it become possible and "normal" for veterinary professionals to be women, the next 100 years will see us all work in environments where we are supported fully in reaching our potential regardless of gender.

There is a great deal to celebrate and much to be done – here's to another 100 years and beyond of women in the profession!

Events

PSS Surgeries – Newport (SPVS-VMG Congress)

Friday 24 January 2020, Celtic Manor Resort, Caerleon, Newport NP18 1HQ

SPVS-VMG Congress 2020

Friday 24 January 2020, Celtic Manor Resort, Caerleon, Newport NP18 1HQ

CAMPAIGN

Veterinary surgeons urged to consider applying for Fellowship in 2020

The application process for joining the RCVS Fellowship in 2020 has been launched, with vets of all backgrounds being urged to consider applying.

The Fellowship is the learned society of the RCVS aimed at veterinary surgeons whose activities demonstrate excellence in veterinary endeavour and who have distinguished themselves on account of their ongoing commitment to using their experience and knowledge to enhance the profession further.

The Fellowship, which was founded in 1877, underwent a transformation in 2016 when it was opened up to more of the profession with three new routes to entry recognising meritorious contributions to: veterinary knowledge; clinical practice; and the profession. Since 2016 over 150 veterinary surgeons have been welcomed to the Fellowship under the new routes.

In 2018 the Fellowship was given additional impetus with the development of a three-pronged strategy to help it reach its aim of becoming a learned society. The three key aims were: promoting scientific excellence; harnessing the expertise of Fellows to further professional skills and practice and to invigorate a curiosity for innovation; and undertaking activities that enrich public discourse about the impact of veterinary science to everyone.

Now Professor John Innes, who this year was elected as Chair of the Fellowship Board which runs the initiative, is calling on more veterinary surgeons to help the Fellowship meet its strategic aims by applying for FRCVS status. He said: "When I applied to join the new Fellowship back in 2016 it really appealed to me because of my love of research gained from my academic career and because I could see that, under the Chairmanship of my predecessor Nick Bacon, there was a new vibrancy to the scheme.

"This has been demonstrated by not only an increasing number of people joining the Fellowship, but a broader range of the profession including more women, more people outside academia and people of a slightly younger demographic. I would also encourage primary care vets who have made substantive contributions to also consider applying.

"As a whole I believe the Fellowship, as a learned society with a pool of knowledge and expertise, can play a distinct role in helping animal owners and wider society understand some of the scientific issues and debates of the day. Individually, Fellows can also provide guidance and mentoring to some of our younger peers, including veterinary students, and encourage them to think about joining the Fellowship at a later date.

"If this appeals to you I would strongly encourage you to, at the very least, consider applying to become a Fellow and find out about the requirements, the process and about the evidence you need to supply and talk to any peers and colleagues already in the Fellowship for help."

The deadline for applying to join the 2020 tranche of the Fellowship is Monday 3 February 2020. All the details on how to apply – including the overall criteria, specific requirements for each route and the application forms – can be found on our Fellowship webpage. Those seeking more bespoke advice and mentoring on their application can email fellowship@rcvs.org.uk.

The RCVS also has a Fellowship Directory featuring profiles of many of the veterinary surgeons who have recently become Fellows with information about their areas of special interest and areas in which they can provide further support as well as biographical details. The Directory also allows you to request contact with individual Fellows.

Disciplinary Committee reprimands one vet and suspends another for clinical failings

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has reprimanded one veterinary surgeon and suspended another for four months, following a joint hearing regarding their professional conduct while they were in practice in Slough, Berkshire in August 2016.

The hearing for Javier Salas Navarro MRCVS and Roman Kristin concluded on Wednesday 11 December having initially commenced on 7 January 2019 with hearings taking place in January, March, September, November and December covering 35 days.

The charges against Dr Navarro concerned his treatment of a kitten named Marnie. The charges (which can be found in full in the Committee's decision) include:

On 5 August 2016 failing to read the anaesthesia consent form in relation to a surgical spay he performed;
On 9 August 2016, when Marnie was readmitted for surgery, failing to read the anaesthesia consent form, failing to undertake adequate assessment of Marnie's condition; performing surgery without adequately considering her condition; subjecting Marnie to anaesthesia without recognising the seriousness of her illness; failing to obtain informed consent from the owners; administering medication which was contra-indicated; and failure to make an adequate record of his involvement in Marnie's care.

The charges against Dr Kristin (which can also be found in full in the Committee's decision) also related to his treatment of Marnie. These include:

his failure on 8 August 2016 to undertake an adequate assessment of her condition; failure to recognise and record the fact that Marnie could not pass urine; failure to refer or offer her for specialist treatment; and failure to ensure Marnie received care and treatment overnight;

on 9 August 2016, when admitting Marnie for surgery, he made a number of clinical mistakes including failure to gain informed consent; and failure to recognise the seriousness of her illness;

that overnight from 9 to 10 August there were a number of failings in relation to Marnie's care, including failure to arrange adequate overnight care, failure to monitor and record her condition, and failure to gain informed consent for the overnight care;

that on 10 August 2016 he failed to advise Marnie's owners that he suspected her uterers had been ligated during the spay, failed to advise Marnie's owners that she required specialist veterinary treatment; and advised that Marnie undergo further surgery at the practice in spite of this meaning her having to undergo further anaesthesia in a week and with poor chances of survival;

that the above conduct was misleading and dishonest.

The Disciplinary Committee found a number of the facts in the charges against both Dr Navarro and Dr Kristin proven (the full details can be found in the Committee's decision documentation).

In summary, the Committee found that Dr Navarro breached a number of aspects of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons including: making animal health and welfare the first consideration when attending to animals; the provision of appropriate and adequate veterinary care; responsible prescription, supply and administration of medicines; communication with professional colleagues to ensure the health and welfare of the animal; being open and honest with clients and respecting their needs and requirements; effective communication with clients; keeping clear and accurate clinical records; and working with the veterinary team to coordinate the care of animals.

Of the proven charges, the Committee found that his initial failure to read Marnie's anaesthesia consent form on 5 August did not amount to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect, but that the repetition of this failure on 9 August did amount to disgraceful conduct. It also found that Dr Navarro's failure to undertake adequate assessment and perform surgery without this assessment amounted to serious professional misconduct. Furthermore, the Committee found that subjecting Marnie to anaesthesia in spite of her being unwell, failure to obtain informed consent and failure to keep adequate records also amounted to serious professional misconduct.

For Dr Kristin, in summary, the Committee found not proven the allegation that he had failed to respond on 5 August 2016 to concerns from Marnie's owners about her condition while she was recovering from a surgical spay and also all the allegations relating to Dr Kristin's admission of Marnie to the practice on 9 August on the basis that it was not satisfied so as to be sure that Dr Kristin had been the veterinary surgeon who admitted Marnie on that day.

The Committee found proven the remaining charges and found he breached the following parts of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons: making animal health and welfare the first consideration when attending to animals; keeping within area of competence and referring responsibly; providing appropriate and adequate veterinary care; responsible prescribing, supply and administration of medicines; communication with colleagues to ensure the health and welfare of the animal; being open and honest with clients and respecting their needs and requirements; communicating effectively with clients and obtaining informed consent; keeping clear and accurate clinical records; and working with the veterinary team to coordinate the care of animals.

Of the proven charges, the Committee determined that his failure to adequately assess Marnie's health, to obtain a clinical history, to undertake blood tests and recognise that she was seriously ill, amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect and led to "Marnie's underlying condition going undetected and undoubtedly contributed to her eventual death two days later".

The Committee also found that Dr Kristin's decision to hospitalise Marnie without adequate overnight care, place her on IV fluids without monitoring the treatment or her condition, and failure to obtain adequate informed consent – among other things – amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

Stuart Drummond, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, commented: "As a direct result of Dr Kristin's acts and omissions, Marnie was left alone overnight on fluids when those fluids had nowhere to go. Had he done his job properly he would have known that and Marnie could have avoided the prolonged suffering caused by the chosen course of treatment that did not address the underlying condition. Every element of Dr Kristin's behaviour was catastrophic for Marnie, and yet he took no personal responsibility for her welfare and just went home."

Following its findings on disgraceful conduct in a professional respect, the Committee then went on to consider its sanction for both Dr Navarro and Dr Kristin.

In respect of Dr Navarro, the Committee considered the mitigating factors including previous good character, admissions to some of the facts of the case from the outset; genuine insight and remorse into the seriousness of the actions; his youth and inexperience; and relevant and good-quality testimonials from colleagues. The Committee noted that the testimonials were universally positive and demonstrated that Dr Navarro had reflected on his conduct, had become more mature and confident in his practice and made efforts to rectify the areas in which he had fallen below standards.

Stuart Drummond said: "Although the consequences for Marnie and her owners were clearly devastating, the Committee considered that Dr Navarro's part in her demise has to be seen in the context of all the evidence. In light of the extensive mitigation, including significant evidence of insight and remediation, the Committee was able to conclude that Dr Navarro did not represent a future risk to animals or the public. In such circumstances, the Committee considered that it was not necessary to restrict Dr Navarro's registration and that a reprimand was the appropriate and proportionate sanction in his case."

In relation to Dr Kristin, the Committee took into account positive character evidence from Mr Karel Daniel, a semi-retired veterinary surgeon and Vice-President of the Czech Republic Veterinary Chamber, a similar body to the RCVS in that country, as well as other testimonials on his behalf. In mitigation, the Committee considered Dr Kristin's previously unblemished career, the fact that it was a single case involving a single animal; some development of insight into his conduct; no evidence of repetition; expressions of remorse; the impact of a family bereavement during the course of proceedings; and his financial position.

However, the Committee also took into account aggravating factors including a lack of candour from Dr Kristin when he was giving evidence, demonstrated by a tendency to blame others rather than take responsibility, as well as his recklessness in suggesting a third operation on Marnie that was not in her interests, rather than referring her into specialist care.

The final decision of the Committee on the sanction for Dr Kristin was that, given the seriousness of the misconduct, it was satisfied that this warranted a six-month suspension period. However, given the mitigating factors, the Committee decided that four months was appropriate and proportionate.

Commenting on the sanction Stuart Drummond said: "The Committee determined that it was important a clear message be sent that this sort of behaviour is wholly inappropriate and not to be tolerated. It brings discredit upon the respondent and discredit upon the profession and, most importantly, caused harm to Marnie and great distress to her owners.

"The Committee did consider whether to remove Dr Kristin from the Register. However, in light of the mitigation in this case, the fact that this was a single case in an otherwise unblemished career, together with the unlikelihood he would repeat his disgraceful conduct, the Committee decided that, in all the circumstances, to remove him from the Register

would be disproportionate.

“The Committee therefore decided to order that the Registrar suspend Dr Kristin’s registration.... The Committee was satisfied that a period of four months was appropriate and proportionate in all the circumstances.”

The full facts and findings from the case can be found at on the RCVS Disciplinary Committee hearings webpage.