

RCVS news

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*Text-only version of
RCVS News email*

RCVS Day: New RCVS President stresses importance of role models to inspire young vets and improve diversity

During his inaugural speech as RCVS President for 2019-20, Dr Niall Connell quoted US children's rights activist Marian Wright Edelman on the importance of role models for diversity saying, "It's hard to be what you can't see."

Niall was invested as RCVS President at this year's Royal College Day – the College's Annual General Meeting and Awards Ceremony – which took place at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) on Friday 12 July. He succeeds Amanda Boag who has now become Senior Vice-President of the RCVS.

A graduate of Glasgow Vet School in 1982, Niall has been an elected member of Council since 2013 and had a career in small animal practice including managing the PDSA Petaid Hospital in East Glasgow for 15 years. In 2003, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and, in 2009, took ill-health retirement. As well as being a member of RCVS Council, since his retirement he also works as a Clinical & Professional Skills Instructor at Glasgow Vet School.

During his speech Niall mentioned his own role model – Alf Wight (better known as James Herriot), who, like him, came from a working-class background in Glasgow.

"He grew up in North Glasgow and his dad was a plater in a Glasgow shipyard. I was born in the East End of Glasgow and my grandfather and great-uncle were platers at John Brown's on the Clyde.

"We can all benefit from having role models throughout our lives, but children in particular need them most. We should be encouraging diverse role models into schools, to improve awareness of our professions and help inspire youngsters from all backgrounds.

"We also need to improve, support, and protect diversity in the workplace and not be afraid to call out things that are not right or safe for any individual," he said.

Niall said that, as President, he would continue to Chair the new RCVS Diversity & Inclusion Group in order to try and break down barriers in regards to selection, recruitment and retention to encourage more ethnic and socio-economic background diversity within the veterinary professions.

Niall also outlined his other priorities during his presidential year. These include: continuing the work of the Graduate Outcomes project to better understand how young vets can be supported in the early part of their career; continuing to work with BVA and Defra on Brexit preparations; continuing to look at the role of RVNs and other paraprofessionals; and carrying out the College's pending review on 'under care' and 24/7 cover.

AGM and changes to RCVS and VN Councils

Royal College Day 2019 started with the 176th Annual General Meeting of the membership of the College, in which new appointed and elected members of RCVS and VN Councils were welcomed and retiring members were thanked. At the beginning of the AGM Amanda Boag highlighted that it was a special year for the RCVS as it marked 175 years since the first Royal Charter was granted and the College came into existence.

The RCVS Annual Report and Statement of Accounts were also presented for discussion and adoption, and questions on its content invited. At this point, it was reported that the College had, on the previous day, received a number of queries by email from those who had concerns about telemedicine and related issues, as well as the upcoming RCVS review of the concept of 'under care' and provision of 24/7 emergency cover. Summaries of the questions submitted by 5pm that day were read out, along with short responses to them. The full questions and detailed answers will be included in the AGM minutes and published online in due course.

Some questions were also asked from the floor, some of which related to telemedicine and the review which were similar to the email questions, and another which involved private matters.

The AGM was followed by a short meeting of RCVS Council in which the new Officer Team for 2019-20 was confirmed, comprising Dr Niall Connell as President, Amanda Boag as Senior Vice-President, Dr Mandisa Greene as Junior Vice-President and Dr Christopher (Kit) Sturgess as Treasurer.

RCVS Council also accepted a petition from Dr Shams Mir and Dr Suzanna Hudson-Cooke of the British Veterinary Union titled 'We urge the RCVS not to authorise prescription of POM-V remotely without physical examination of the patient / herd', which, at that time, had been signed by 1,219 individuals.

Awards and honours

Following the AGM was the awards ceremony, which, in addition to the College's usual suite of awards, saw the bestowal of a number of RCVS Knowledge awards and the inaugural Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grant, which was presented to a team from Scotland's Rural College.

The awards bestowed were as follows:

- RCVS Queen's Medal: Professor the Lord Trees
- RCVS Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award: Jane Devaney
- RCVS International Award: Dr Abdul-Jalil Mohammadzai and Dr Sam Thevasagayam
- RCVS Impact Award: Professor Sarah Freeman and Professor Paul McGreevy
- RCVS Inspiration Award: Dr Laura Muir and Louise Northway

Chief Executive's Address

The key theme of the address from RCVS CEO Lizzie Lockett was that the College was always striving to improve and, through its portfolio of projects and initiatives, working to make things better for the professions.

"We are not perfect. But we are always striving to be better. And, meanwhile, I would rather not wait until we are perfect before we start reaching out to try to improve things for the professions. Things like mental health and wellbeing, everyday leadership skills, and the ability to deal with innovation, change and uncertainty.

"And just as we are aiming to help turn a blame culture into a learning culture, by encouraging self-reflection and discussion around mistakes, it's important to reflect on our own areas for improvement," she said.

Lizzie then highlighted some of the College's key achievements during Amanda's presidential year including: the RCVS gaining accreditation from the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education; the launch of the Diversity & Inclusion Working Group; the launch of the Graduate Outcomes consultation; and, the RCVS and British Veterinary Association successfully lobbying the Migration Advisory Committee to recommend veterinary surgeons be added to the Shortage Occupation List, among other successes.

She added: "Finally, we are celebrating our 175th anniversary. That's over 175 years since a group of veterinary surgeons petitioned the Royal Veterinary College because they felt that its training was not fit for purpose. It is perhaps fitting, though, that 175 years later, the RVC is celebrating being independently ranked the top vet school in the world and, whilst our own founding fathers would no doubt heartily approve, I am not sure we can entirely claim that as an RCVS success."

Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council Chair address

The address from Veterinary Nurses Council Chair Racheal Marshall gave an overview of some of the achievements of VN Council and the VN Futures initiative over the last year – including the approval of two new qualifications in advanced veterinary nursing, that in the future could pave the way to a formal Advanced Veterinary Nurse status.

Racheal also praised the growing confidence of the veterinary nursing profession and the way it had been taking ownership of certain aspects of practice such as the Practice Standards Scheme, quality improvement and workplace mental health and wellbeing.

However, she also relayed the fact that it was clear, from her discussions with both veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons, that there was a desire to bolster the role of the veterinary nurse.

"Work is currently underway to shape proposals for future legislative reform, part of which involves looking at how the role of the Registered Veterinary Nurse can be expanded. I would urge everyone within the professions to support expansion of the VN role and ensure we have regulation fit for the future.

"We are all part of the vet-led team and are working for the same goal to ensure the health and welfare of our patients. It is time for change, as a profession we are ready, and we now ask for your support," she said.

President's address

In her last speaking engagement as RCVS President, Amanda Boag said that meeting so many vets and vet nurses

across the country had been the highlight of her presidential year and had led her to appreciate the leadership qualities of those in the veterinary professions. With this, Amanda officially launched the Inspiring Veterinary Leaders campaign and accompanying video, which showcased the leadership skills of 12 veterinary professionals all at different stages of their careers. These leadership stories are available to watch and read on the dedicated Inspiring Veterinary Leaders webpage.

Amanda also outlined how she was glad that the need to improve diversity in the veterinary profession, a key theme of her presidential year, was now being discussed more openly, as were both overt and structural discrimination (issues also highlighted in recent reports by the BVA).

Other issues Amanda highlighted in her speech included the fact that the College would continue to argue that a 'no deal' Brexit would have significant implications for animal welfare and public health; taking the lead in the regulation of the wider vet led team and the importance of delegating, trusting and empowering those within it; and, the challenges posed by new technologies and how best to regulate these for the benefit of society and animal welfare.

She said: "There is still much to learn and do to ensure we are providing the best care for animals in our complex, global, 21st century environment. As my presidency comes to an end I am excited about the impact we can all have by embracing this."

Before handing over the reins to Niall Connell, Amanda thanked the outgoing Senior Vice-President Professor Stephen May for his contributions to the RCVS and praised him for his immense intellect, his passion for veterinary regulation and education, and his 'legendary' ability to argue logically.

She also praised Niall as someone who had taken the challenges of his life and turned them into "positivity, meaningful action and a desire to see things change and make things better for his peers."

She added: "Niall, you are an inspiration to us all and I am very happy to be passing on this amazing role to you."

Following Niall's investiture as RCVS President, he thanked Amanda for an "excellent tour of duty" and for steering the College through a challenging year with "wisdom, passion and clear vision."

Niall then welcomed Mandisa Greene as Junior Vice-President of the RCVS saying: "As Mandisa is the first person from a minority ethnic background to be elected to Council and now to the Officer Team in our 175-year existence, this is an historic day. I know Mandisa wants to use her new role to encourage discussion about diversity and inspire people from BAME backgrounds to consider veterinary surgery as a profession. She is certainly a wonderful role model for everyone."

Guest speaker

Following Niall's presidential address, Amanda returned to the stage to welcome her guest speaker – Dr Patricia Mundy MRCVS, an ophthalmologist at the Matthew J Ryan Veterinary Hospital at the University of Pennsylvania, the lead veterinary ophthalmologist for the New York Police Department and a former colleague of Amanda's.

During Dr Mundy's talk 'Navigating Diversity and Inclusion in the Veterinary Profession', she detailed her journey from a North London council estate to studying veterinary medicine at the University of Cambridge and then completing a Fellowship in Comparative Ophthalmic Pathology at the University of Wisconsin Veterinary School, followed by a residency at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. She also spoke about her experiences as a black veterinary surgeon in a profession that is – both in the UK and the US – overwhelmingly white.

She talked about how, during the first 10 years of her career, including her time at vet school, she did not meet any other vets who looked like her and said that there is a strong case for increasing ethnic minority participation in veterinary medicine based on the fact that society is becoming more diverse and that the profession, therefore, needs to reflect society better.

In terms of tackling lack of diversity, she said that a key first step was to admit that there was a problem, and praised the College's and Amanda's recognition of this. She then identified a number of other barriers to joining the veterinary profession that could disproportionately affect those from BAME backgrounds, including a lack of role models, lack of knowledge about the cultural significance of animals, the role of class and socio-economic background and educational disadvantages.

In conclusion, she said: "As a global society, we have evolved to reach a consensus that now is the time for working to achieve inclusive environments across all professions. The path to professional inclusiveness and competence is clear; a systematic approach to achieving meaningful diversity and inclusion in the veterinary profession is essential. Our

profession, like all others, requires diverse practitioners so as to reflect our nation's population and the world we serve.”

A fuller report of the day as well as the full speeches from Amanda Boag, Niall Connell, Racheal Marshall and Lizzie Lockett will be made available on the Features section in due course.

RCVS showcases 12 inspiring veterinary leaders at Royal College Day

At Royal College Day 2019 – our Annual General Meeting and Awards Ceremony – a showcase of 12 inspiring veterinary leaders from a variety of backgrounds, roles, disciplines, and career stages was launched.

A video featuring interviews with the 12 veterinary leaders was unveiled by Amanda Boag in her final speech as RCVS President, reflecting the strong emphasis that she has put on the need for all members of the veterinary team to develop everyday leadership skills, as part of the RCVS Leadership initiative, during her presidential year.

The Leadership initiative itself was formally launched in April 2018 which was followed by the creation of a popular online leadership course, developed in conjunction with FutureLearn and the NHS Leadership Academy.

Speaking of the latest development in the Leadership initiative, Amanda said: “Vet professionals are almost invariably all leaders, but we are not always good at recognising and promoting this. The RCVS wants to celebrate leaders from across the vet and vet nursing professions, including both those leading every day in their workplaces, as well as those in traditional leadership roles. We want to highlight our qualities as both people and professionals, and emphasise the need to recognise these qualities and, through that, give us all the confidence to take up leadership roles.

“A few years ago, the RCVS began work with the British Veterinary Association on the Vet Futures project to identify where we are now, and where we want to be in 2030. Leadership development was identified as an area that we have not necessarily been brilliant at as a profession. More worryingly, there was evidence that some vets, particularly younger ones, do not see themselves as leaders, or feel comfortable with that term.

“In our selection of these 12 veterinary leaders we have shown that leadership is not something that belongs only to those who are senior, or those who wear a fancy chain of office around their neck. We believe leadership is something that is ongoing, and something that can be demonstrated at any stage of a career.

“We want young vets to know what good leadership looks like, and have the confidence to call things out when they are not right. Vets and vet nurses care a great deal about what they do, and this is the time for us to stand up, value ourselves, and tell ourselves and others that we can all lead in important ways.

“I am very proud that one of my last acts as President is to launch this showcase and I hope that other members of the profession find the diverse stories and experiences contained therein as exciting as I do.”

The 12 people who have been showcased as part of the initiative are:

- Sarah Colegrave, a clinical director of a small animal practice in King's Lynn who uses leadership to develop her team's talents;
- Professor Liz Mossop, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Student Development and Engagement at the University of Lincoln who talks about the importance of mentoring;
- RCVS President Niall Connell, who talks about how a life-changing illness has lead him towards leadership roles;
- Gemma Irwin-Porter, who leads a team of tutors providing pastoral care for student veterinary nurses at the University of Bristol;
- Hatti Smart, a student veterinary surgeon who is playing a leadership role in the veterinary LGBT+ community;
- VN Council member Matthew Rendle, who talks about the importance of everyday kindness in leading others;
- Sam Joseph from StreetVet, who talks about how the plight of the homeless and their animals led to the foundation of the life-changing programme;
- University of Nottingham PhD student Bobby Hyde who talks about the importance of good communication, even when it comes to complex topics;
- Richard Artingstall, clinical director at a Gloucestershire referral centre, who talks about the links between leading a practice, and hands-on clinical work;
- Victoria Fyfe, a veterinary nurse based near Durham who leads and inspires her practice team to engage with the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme;
- Professor Joanna Price, Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Agricultural University talks about the importance of vision and strategy in leadership; and,
- Ross Allan, a partner at a Glasgow-based veterinary hospital focuses on how vets can take the lead in controlling their own destinies.
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The full video for the showcase and a digital copy of the booklet featuring 12 in-depth interviews with the inspiring veterinary leaders can be found on the campaign's dedicated webpage.

Mental health research grant recipient announced

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Mind Matters Initiative is pleased to announce that Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) is the successful recipient of the inaugural Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grant.

The Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grant was named for an elected RCVS Council member who tragically passed away in 2017. It provides £20,000 worth of funding for research focused on mental health and wellbeing within the veterinary professions, including areas such as prevention, diagnosis, intervention and treatment.

Professor Stuart Reid, Chair of the Mind Matters Initiative, said: "While nothing can replace Sarah, I am glad that, with the blessing of her family, we have been able to launch these grants and, indeed, find a worthy recipient.

"We were very impressed with SRUC's proposal because it focused on farm animal veterinary sector, an area of practice that can be harder to address when it comes to mental health support, but which has significant challenges that research has demonstrated can put strains on the mental health and wellbeing of veterinary surgeons. For example, some farm vets have cited isolation, the challenging nature of some aspects of the job and the great responsibility it carries for the livelihood of farmers and rural communities as being particularly stressful.

"The SRUC research has the very laudable aim of identifying how to better promote job satisfaction and to break the cycle of negative thoughts and poor mental wellbeing identified amongst farm vets, and so we are very glad to have made this award to the team. It's only by improving the veterinary mental health evidence base that we will be able to hone the interventions and support that is available to members of the veterinary team."

SRUC was awarded the grant at RCVS Day on Friday 12 July. Dr Kate Stephen, a Behavioural Scientist at SRUC's Epidemiology Research Unit, will lead the project and undertake the majority of qualitative data collection and analysis.

Kate Stephen said: "It is an honour to be awarded this grant. We hope our project will make a positive contribution towards understanding and improving the mental health and wellbeing of individuals in the veterinary profession."

Based on the output of the research, which will comprise qualitative data gathering and workshops, at least one tool will be selected for development as a web application, which will be made available for testing in the final phase of the project.

The team at SRUC has been invited to present its research findings at the biennial Mind Matters Initiative Research Symposium in 2021.

Pioneering vet and researcher to speak at Fellowship Day

Fellowship Day 2019 takes place at The Royal Institution on Friday 20 September when the RCVS will be welcoming its fourth cohort of 29 new Fellows who are joining the learned society under the initiative's three new routes to entry.

All Fellows of the RCVS have been invited to attend the occasion, which will showcase some of the best of veterinary science and endeavour, and have been encouraged to bring along a colleague or peer who might be interested in joining the Fellowship in the future.

This year's keynote speaker is Dr John (Iain) Glen MRCVS (pictured above) who will be delivering a presentation titled 'Try, try and try again: some personal reflections on the development of the anaesthetic propofol' about his ground-breaking work at the AstraZeneca anaesthetics research team in which he discovered and developed propofol. Listed by the World Health Organisation as an 'essential medicine', propofol is one of the most common anaesthetic drugs in use today.

For this work Dr Glen was awarded the Lasker-DeBaakey Medical Research Award in 2018 which is given to medical researchers who make contributions to the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure or prevention of disease.

The event will also see the return of the 'Fellows of the Future' competition, which debuted last year, in which undergraduate and postgraduate veterinary students are invited to present a current or recent research project to Fellows in attendance. Each presentation will be judged by a panel and a prize will be awarded to the best presentation.

We are also inviting all RCVS Fellows to participate in 'Fellows in Focus' – an insight into the breadth and depth of knowledge and expertise within the Fellowship – in which they will have the opportunity to deliver a 10-minute talk on a topic of their choosing. Fellows can submit their proposed presentation topic using our dedicated webform as well as browse talks from previous years.

Anthony Roberts, our Director of Leadership and Innovation, said: "This is our fourth Fellowship Day and it is starting to become a major event in the veterinary calendar at which we celebrate the new cohort of Fellows, showcase the amazing and impactful work of the wider Fellowship and inspire the next generation of veterinary surgeons.

"We are delighted to welcome Dr Glen as our keynote speaker. He is a wonderful example of how veterinary knowledge, expertise and skill can not only benefit animals, but also have a wider application as well, in his case discovering a drug that has been used as an anaesthetic by millions worldwide.

"We also look forward once again to a range of interesting and eye-opening presentations from veterinary surgeons both established and new."

The full agenda for the day, which will be hosted by current Chair of the Fellowship Board Professor Nick Bacon, is available to view at our dedicated Fellowship Day webpage where there are also details on how to register and book tickets for the event.

College heads north for Countryfile Live 2019

We are delighted to be exhibiting at BBC Countryfile Live 2019 for the fourth consecutive year and for the first time that it is being held in North Yorkshire.

The College is exhibiting at the second of this year's Countryfile Live events, which will be held from Thursday 15 to Sunday 18 August at Castle Howard, near York. Having exhibited at Countryfile Live at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire for the last three years, the new location will enable the College to extend its public outreach activities in a different part of the UK.

Our staff will be on hand at stand I011, near the Dog Arena, to answer any queries about the veterinary professions and to share information on the College's role within the professions. RCVS Officers Racheal Marshall (Chair of Veterinary Nurses Council), Melissa Donald (RCVS Council Member) and Matthew Rendle (Vice Chair of VN Council Member), along with VN students from Askham Bryan College, will also be at the stand over the weekend to chat to animal owners and budding future vets and vet nurses.

Once again, the College's stand will feature its popular interactive veterinary practice setting, with information and literature about the College and the wider veterinary professions that show-goers will be able to take away with them.

"We recognise that school pupils start thinking about career options from an early age, which is why we'll have a range of vet and vet nurse career-related activities and information on our stand where children of all ages can learn about what's involved in working in the veterinary professions. This will include the chance to dress up as a veterinary professional and practise some veterinary procedures on our farm and companion animal models," says Ian Holloway, our Director of Communications.

"We'll also have lots of information for animal owners about RCVS-accredited practices and our Practice Standards Scheme, which aims to promote and maintain the highest standards of veterinary care. For peace of mind, owners can look for the RCVS accredited practice logo, which indicates that the practice has passed an independent assessment – something that can be particularly reassuring during the holiday season when people might be travelling with their pets and away from their usual practice."

We will post photos of our activities at the show on social media and afterwards on our Flickr page.

Statement from RCVS President on the Home Office accepting the Migration Advisory Committee's recommendations

RCVS statement: President Niall Connell on the Home Office confirming it has accepted the Migration Advisory Committee's proposals

"We are delighted to see that, in a written statement by the then Home Secretary Sajid Javid to the House of Commons dated 23 July, the Home Office has accepted all of the recommendations made by its Migration Advisory Committee in its review of the Shortage Occupation List, including that veterinary surgeons be added to the List.

"Both the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) worked together to ensure this outcome, which will see a lowering of the immigration barriers, for example, in terms of visa requirements, for overseas veterinary surgeons who wish to live and work in the UK.

"We also considered this a vital piece of preparation for the UK leaving the EU, as around half of those registering as veterinary surgeons with the RCVS in a given year are non-UK EU nationals and we would not want to see this vital supply of veterinary talent immediately dry up should 'freedom of movement' end when the UK leaves the EU.

"We thank Mr Javid for accepting the Committee's proposals and congratulate his successor Priti Patel on her appointment and look forward to the decision being implemented. The new Prime Minister pledged on the steps of Downing Street to do more to promote the welfare of animals, and having veterinary surgeons on the Shortage Occupation List will help in our mission to uphold animal health and welfare and ensure that vital veterinary work can continue to get done, whatever happens with the relationship between the UK and the EU."

VN Futures project attends inaugural SVN Fest

The work and aims of the VN Futures project were highlighted last weekend as part of the inaugural Student Veterinary Nurse (SVN) Fest which took place at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) in Camden.

Jill Macdonald, Project Manager for the joint RCVS and British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) initiative, and Julie Dugmore, our Director of Veterinary Nursing, attended the event on Saturday 20 July 2019.

The aim was to help nurses who are entering the profession learn more about the project and how they could get involved. Jill also spoke to those attending about the three key areas of focus for the project over the next few months, these being: maximizing the role and value of VNs in practice; educating the next generation on the possibilities of a career in veterinary nursing including promotion of diversity; and researching and developing the district or community nursing role.

Jill Macdonald commented: "We were delighted to have the opportunity to attend the first SVN Fest and talk to the next generation of our profession about why it is so important they take an interest in and contribute to their future via the project.

"We were pleased to see that many of the students were aware of the VN Futures project thanks to its well-known supporters such as Louise Northway, who spoke about the project during her keynote speech.

"We also took along a game which tested the delegates' knowledge of Schedule 3 and delegation, which led to many interesting conversations around how delegation happens in practice and what sort of tasks veterinary nurses can undertake.

"Furthermore, we are currently looking for student veterinary nurses to join VN Future's 'Creating a Sustainable Workforce' Working Group for their vital input in developing veterinary nursing career materials, running a schools' ambassadors pilot and encouraging increased diversity in the profession. It was fantastic how much interest there was in getting involved and we will now be following up to increase student veterinary nurse participation in this area."

The VN Futures project is aiming to attend similar events over the coming two years to engage the profession, increase awareness of the project's work and to improve understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the profession.

If you are interested in getting involved in VN Futures, or if you wish to invite someone to visit your practice or event to talk about the project, you can contact Jill Macdonald on jill@vnfutures.org

ViVet launches new innovation events

Registration is now open for the inaugural RCVS ViVet Innovation Evening, an evening of discussion about the latest technological and innovation trends in the veterinary sphere, and networking in Edinburgh.

The veterinary meet up is being held on Tuesday 6 August 2019 from 19.00-21.00 at The University of Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) Vet School and is the first in a series of UK-wide ViVet Innovation Evenings.

The evening is for veterinary professionals who want to grow their knowledge, network and innovation skill set through learning from and connecting with peers in the local area. It aims to provide attendees with a chance to fast-track both their own personal career growth and their practices' transformative journey as innovation and new technology start to change how veterinary services are being delivered in the UK.

Anthony Roberts, our Director of Leadership and Innovation, will start by speaking about how rapidly developing technology is transforming the veterinary profession and our role in driving innovation.

Following this, Professor David Argyle, Dean of Veterinary Medicine and Head of School, and Professor Richard Mellanby, Head of Companion Animal Sciences, will provide an overview of the technologies and innovation being developed at the Easter Bush Campus.

"We are delighted to be launching these evenings which will support the wider aims of ViVet, to continue to accelerate innovation in the veterinary professions and sector. To put veterinary professionals at the centre of innovation in the animal health sector, it is important to bring people together to share ideas and grow our collective knowledge," says Anthony.

The event is free and participants can register on Eventbrite. Refreshments and finger food will be available from 19.00 as part of the event.

Space is limited and we recommend booking in advance to secure a place.

Over the remainder of the year, more ViVet Innovation Evenings will take place across the UK. Details on these will be shared on the ViVet website and Eventbrite page.

Royal College Day 2019 speeches: RCVS CEO Lizzie Lockett

Nothing makes you feel quite so unworthy as coming to the lectern after such a succession of amazing award winners. I am so delighted that the new range of awards we launched in 2018 now allows us to celebrate such breadth and depth of achievement, with vets and nurses accomplishing wonders at all stages in their careers – bravo to you all!

It's particularly important to celebrate such achievements because, as a regulator, our correspondence bag – or, rather, messenger inbox, these days – is often full of people describing situations that haven't gone quite so well. It's important to remind our team at Belgravia House, and the world at large, of the huge contribution that the veterinary team makes to animal health and welfare, public health and wider society, each and every day.

It is to nurture and support such success that we launched programmes like Mind Matters, for mental health, and our leadership and innovation initiatives – to give vets and vet nurses the skills and support they need to be the best that they can be, rather than simply to reassure the public that we have a robust complaints process, in case anything goes wrong (we do, but that's not the point).

Yet when I stand on stages at conferences and talk about these things there is always one person in the audience who says 'but surely you are being hypocritical, the RCVS is a source of stress, you don't always handle things well...how can you be talking about supporting the profession?'

To which I always reply yes, I agree. We are not perfect. But we are always striving to be better. And, meanwhile, I would rather not wait until we are perfect before we start reaching out to try to improve things for the professions. Things like mental health and wellbeing, everyday leadership skills, and the ability to deal with innovation, change and uncertainty.

And just as we are aiming to help turn a blame culture into a learning culture, by encouraging self-reflection and discussion around mistakes, it's important to reflect on our own areas for improvement.

I think for sure there are times this year when we could have handled things differently, made quicker – or slower – decisions, brought the professions with us more, explained ourselves better. We will get plenty of things right, but we will fail – and I guess, for the benefit of those evidence-based scientists in the room, sometimes we will need to fail again, just to make sure it's statistically significant! – but we are learning all of the time. And listening. And adapting what we do.

So, what have we been doing?

We have spent a good deal of this year updating our governance structures to reflect last year's legislative reform order – including working out a succession plan for our Operational Board, and putting in place our new Advancement of the Professions Committee, which shines a light on our 'Royal College' activities – many thanks to Professor Gary England for being its founding chair.

Now that the bulk of our governance changes are in place, I am delighted that we can focus much more on making decisions on policy, guidance and standards. Not that this is always straightforward. I have a coaster on my desk – given to me by one of our lovely Council members – thank you Chris Tufnell. It features a group of people sitting round a board table, and one of them is saying 'Here's an idea, why don't we just do stuff that's going to be really massively successful?'

It would be nice. But, as a regulator, we often have to make difficult decisions, tackle issues that have no clear right or wrong answer, and work our way through potential minefields, all with the aim of safeguarding animal health and welfare. Our ongoing discussions on telemedicine and 'under care' are an example of this, but it's an area that we cannot afford to ignore.

So, as we start to develop our new strategic plan for the next few years, it's timely to reflect on what we have achieved this year:

- We gained our accreditation from ENQA, a pan-European association that accredits organisations which themselves quality assure higher education institutions and degrees. It did us good to be on the receiving end of such a process for a change – perhaps knowing how that feels will encourage us on our journey to be a more compassionate regulator!
- We launched our Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, including representatives from across the professions. Niall

will touch on this later, but it's worth highlighting that we included some questions around diversity in our Survey of the Professions this year and had some vets refuse to complete them, calling us all manner of names in the vein of political correctness...which goes to show the necessity of addressing the issues.

- We launched a major consultation around the future of undergraduate veterinary education – Graduate Outcomes – under the chairmanship of Professor Stephen May, and were delighted to receive nearly two thousand full responses and around four thousand partial responses from vets, nurses, organisations and members of the public. Key themes are now being worked on to help us meet our aim of developing veterinary surgeons well able to meet the challenges of tomorrow.
- Closer to home, we were ranked 28th medium-sized Best Place to Work in the UK by Great Place to Work, and given a Laureate Award for being within the top 50 for five years on the trot. During the last 12 months we also signed the mental health Time to Change Pledge, were awarded 'Excellence in Wellbeing' status and ranked within the top ten for the second year as a 'Great Place to Work for Women in the UK'. They must have seen the shoe cabinet in my office...
- It was also a great achievement to be a finalist in the prestigious European Foundation for Management Development Excellence in Practice Awards, for our leadership MOOC with the NHS and FutureLearn. You will hear more on this from Amanda shortly.
- We have seen our Mind Matters Initiative grow in strength and impact this year, with the launch of a series of Well-being Roadshows, jointly with the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons and the Veterinary Management Group; a series of pilot resilience training days with the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, and, as you have just heard, the launch of our inaugural Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grant. And thank you so much to Sarah's mother, Fiona, and sister, Sophie, for being with us today.
- We secured, with the British Veterinary Association, a recommendation from the Migration Advisory Committee that the veterinary profession rejoins the Shortage Occupation List – and have continued to devote a lot of resources to Brexit preparedness. I won't dwell on that here – it's a day for celebration! – but I can't help thinking that our preparation may seem a mere apprenticeship compared with the challenges that might follow.
- And to end this list on a positive note, I'm delighted that VN Council has recently agreed a new post-registration qualification framework for veterinary nurses – a proposal that grew out of the VN Futures project, which we'll hear more about from Racheal shortly.
- Finally, as I hope you have noticed from your programme, we are celebrating our 175th anniversary. That's over 175 years since a group of veterinary surgeons petitioned the Royal Veterinary College because they felt that its training was not fit for purpose. Do please take some time over lunch to have a look at the display of some of these letters – the sentiments they express might still sound a little familiar.

It is perhaps fitting, though, that 175 years later, the RVC is celebrating being independently ranked the top vet school in the world and, whilst our own founding fathers would no doubt heartily approve, I am not sure we can entirely claim that as an RCVS success. As we have just seen, the RVC's Principal, Professor Stuart Reid, is leaving Council today on this high note. I guess this is the veterinary political equivalent of a mic drop...

Our staff haven't been here for 175 years – although some of them have been with us for a very long time. But whether they are into their fourth decade with us, or, have only joined us this week, I am very lucky with the team we have built at Belgravia House.

I would like to thank them all very much for their amazing work, and also thank our hardworking and committed members of Council - especially all those who are stepping down today, after dedicating so many combined years of expertise, experience and wise counsel to us all.

And of course, a huge thank you to our Operational Board and our President, Amanda Boag, for all their help this year. And in particular for the support of Council in helping to look after our staff team at Belgravia House and understanding how important they are to the success of their – your – College.

And in that same spirit of collaboration and support, as we look to build our new strategy for the next few years, I look forward to working with all of you to help ensure our veterinary professionals can work to the very best of their abilities to achieve the highest standards of health and welfare for the animals committed to their care.

Thank you.

July 2019

Royal College Day 2019 speeches: VN Council Chair Racheal Marshall

I am very honoured to have the opportunity to speak to you today to give a brief overview of the work of the Veterinary Nurses Council.

My first year in the chair has been a fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable experience, although challenging when dealing with controversial topics from time to time.

As all of you here today will know, the Veterinary Nursing profession has come a very long way in a relatively short time, but I appreciate it sometimes feels like things move very slowly.

With this in mind, it is important to reflect on what we have achieved and appreciate just how much progress we have made since the Registered Animal Nursing Auxiliaries, or RANAs scheme started back in 1961, a law change in the 80's which allowed the use of the title Veterinary nurse, the introduction of the VN Register in 2007, and becoming a profession in our own right in 2015.

The change in the profession since I started in 2000 has been amazing with more and more practices recognising the value of Registered Veterinary Nurses, allowing them to use all their skills as a valued part of the Vet-Led team and promoting the VN role to client.

Across the whole veterinary profession, nurses are now seen at all levels in leadership roles and actively contributing to discussions that shape the future of the veterinary professions.

Nurses have also been forging their own way by taking ownership and leading their practices in areas such as the Practice Standards Scheme, quality improvement and mental health awareness to name but a few.

It is fantastic to see nurses here today being recognised by their colleagues and peers, and receiving awards for their work and outstanding careers. In the future I am sure we will see many more nurses coming up onto this stage.

I want to take this opportunity to encourage more nurses to take control of their own careers and find areas where they can take the lead, whether this be within their areas of practice or by contributing to the wider profession.

Sticking your head above the parapet can be scary and often daunting, however, the satisfaction of challenging yourself and achieving things outside of your comfort zone is all the more rewarding.

I would ask you to encourage your nursing colleagues to step forward, too. We need to galvanize the next generation of Veterinary Nursing leaders, to inspire future veterinary nurses and keep the whole profession moving ever forwards, like we have been doing since 1961.

Speaking to the other members of VN Council, we all had a supportive colleague who encouraged us to get involved, by pointing out areas which would be of interest to us, giving us a gentle tap on the shoulder saying "You would be good at that," or just being direct and telling us to stop moaning and get involved if you want things to change.

In some cases, a somewhat firmer shove was needed.

I know I certainly would not be standing here today had it not been for so many of my colleagues both past and present who inspired me to get involved, employers who not only allowed, but actively encouraged, me to contribute to the wider profession, and family and friends who have supported me in everything I have done.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, the Veterinary Nurses Council has certainly been busy.

We have continued to work with the BVNA on the VN Futures project to promote and ensure a vibrant, rewarding and sustainable profession both now and in the years ahead.

The working groups do an amazing job. They continue to work hard on the key ambitions from the 2016 report which identified our preferred direction as a profession, and have already completed several of the actions which are needed to help us on that journey.

In May, as Lizzie mentioned, we approved two new advanced veterinary nursing qualifications: a graduate certificate in advanced veterinary nursing and a postgraduate certificate in advanced veterinary nursing, which resulted from a VN Futures action.

These qualifications will allow veterinary nurses at all stages of their careers, and through all routes of qualification to develop their professional skills and knowledge in designated areas of practice and, in time, hopefully pave the way to a formal Advanced Veterinary Nurse status.

It has been great to be part of the VN Futures Board, witnessing the passion, enthusiasm and dedication of its members, seeing the amount they have achieved so far and their plans for the future. I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who has contributed – your hard work is really appreciated, and we could not do it without you.

In the last ten years, the number of veterinary nurses has more than doubled, with over 17,500 now on the register. I would like to think that the work we have been doing to raise awareness of Veterinary Nursing as a career, and promoting the role and value of veterinary nurses within the profession and to the public, has contributed to more nurses joining and, crucially, staying in the profession.

Our ongoing work to improve understanding of delegation under Schedule 3 can only lead to more and more nurses working to their full potential within the current legislation, and many nurses have achieved, or are currently undertaking, further qualifications to expand their skills and knowledge.

However, whilst all of these achievements are fantastic, there is still a way to go.

During my time on VN Council I have had the pleasure to meet a large number of veterinary nurses, and the message that continues to come across loud and clear is that they want the VN role bolstering, with many vets and employers echoing this sentiment.

Work is currently underway to shape proposals for future legislative reform, part of which involves looking at how the role of the Registered Veterinary Nurse can be expanded.

I would urge everyone within the professions to support expansion of the VN role and ensure we have regulation fit for the future.

We are all part of the Vet-led team and are working for the same goal to ensure the health and welfare of our patients.

It is time for change, as a profession we are ready, and we now ask for your support.

Thank you

July 2019

Royal College Day 2019 speeches: New President Niall Connell

My Lord, ladies and gentlemen. I am incredibly proud to be standing here today.

Some years ago, when I suddenly couldn't walk and I was getting lumbar punctures and an MRI, I thought my future looked bleak. I never dreamed that the highlight of my career was yet to come. Yet here I am, the 148th president of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

I pinch myself that I'm still part of this wonderful world of dedicated professionals. I'm so grateful for the support and hard work of my fellow council members and brilliant staff at the RCVS. I owe everything to my parents who sadly are not with us; my wife Colette, and my children, Andrew, Natalie and James.

I'm the 8th Glasgow graduate since 1844 to be president. I came into this profession having been inspired by another Glasgow graduate, a certain Alf Wight, perhaps better known as James Herriot.

And I continue to be inspired every day by the veterinary surgeons and the RVNs who I meet and work with. They are Jedi Knights who conduct themselves with impeccably high standards, with integrity and with the highest regard for animal welfare.

They are there for our animals 24/7. They work in a myriad of different roles. They always go the extra mile. They deserve the trust placed in them by the public.

I'm impressed by our undergraduates too. I'm privileged to have assessed the portfolios of vet students for the last five years and I get to see right into their souls. That is also an inspiring experience. I've attended vet and RVN graduations and I'm always amazed by the energy, commitment and abilities of our young people. We need to nurture them, support them and help them to enjoy long fulfilling careers. This is especially important for those early years until they find their feet – a key focus of our ongoing Graduate Outcomes review.

As we've heard, one of Amanda's key themes for her year was diversity, and I'm passionate about this too. I will continue to Chair the College's new Diversity and Inclusion Group and we will dig into the issues that require looking at. We will work with other groups to do what we can to identify and break down the barriers to building a more diverse profession with regards to selection, recruitment and retention.

One way to break down such barriers is through role models.

I mentioned Alf Wight, who was a role model to me. He grew up in North Glasgow and his dad was a plater in a Glasgow shipyard. I was born in the East end of Glasgow and my grandfather and great Uncle were platers at John Brown's on the Clyde.

We can all benefit from having role models throughout our lives, but children in particular need them the most. We should be encouraging diverse role models into schools, to improve awareness of our professions and help inspire youngsters from all backgrounds to join our professions. As the American activist for children's rights, Marian Wright Edelman, said "It's hard to be what you can't see."

We also need to improve, support and protect diversity in the workplace and not be afraid to call out if things are not right or safe for any individual.

There are so many other things on the shopping list too.

When Chris Tufnell became president in 2016, he mentioned Brexit in his opening remarks. We are still here, determined to make sure vital veterinary work continues to get done and looking after our non-UK colleagues who are an immense part of that.

We will be looking at the role of our RVNs and paraprofessionals, reviewing 'under care' and 24/7 cover, and many other issues besides. As ever, there will be opportunities for everyone, including students, to take part and contribute their views.

And, of course, a new home for RCVS is waiting for us out there somewhere, although whether this turns out to be Grand Designs, Escape to the Country or DIY SOS remains to be seen.

It's certainly going to be a busy year.

As our professions face these big challenges ahead, it's vital for us to collaborate. I'm convinced we are entering into a very good time indeed. Thanks to communication, social media and the like, we are closer together than ever before and can listen, talk to and support each other. This is a call for us all to work together in the present and grab the future with both hands, seeking the best outcomes for us all and for our animals - as caring, team-working professionals.

Last year, when Amanda introduced me, she referred to my musical tastes. Led Zeppelin was mentioned. I'd like to use a phrase today, if I may, from a Led Zeppelin song called "Thank You".

I would like to say this, for the welfare of our animals, for our wellbeing and for long happy productive careers for everyone. From the College, I say to you, Veterinary Surgeons, to you Registered Veterinary Nurses and to you, the public we serve. "Your hand in mine, we walk the miles."

Thank you.

July 2019

Royal College Day 2019 speeches: Outgoing President Amanda Boag

Well, what a year this has been.

In many ways, it doesn't seem five minutes since I stood here last year, although in others it feels the number of things that have happened must have taken place over a decade.

In recent weeks I have been asked by a few people what my highlight has been and I've found it very difficult to put my finger on.

Certainly, being involved with the graduation and registration ceremonies of both vets and nurses is a real privilege but I think more than anything else, the highlight has been meeting so many people and being constantly reminded about the extraordinary breadth of our professions.

Not only have I heard the words Dictyocaulus and Ostertagia for the first time in 20 years, I have also been fortunate enough to chat to people from across the whole professional landscape.

When I think of all of those conversations, I would be lying if I said there haven't been differences of opinion on some issues, but the one common theme is just how much every single professional I have spoken to this year (and it's quite a lot) cares deeply about our professions and the animals under our care.

So what have been the key topics of conversation?

One of the key themes for my year was the importance of everyday leadership skills, ensuring that all vets and vet nurses recognise that, pretty much regardless of our role, we are all called upon to be everyday leaders at times. At this event last year, Stephen May spoke very eloquently about the principles underlying professionalism and there is much overlap with leadership skills.

The launch of the Edward Jenner online leadership MOOC has been a big success with nearly 7,000 participants from 130 countries. Feedback has been excellent and with its novel approach to education, the programme has recently been shortlisted for the European Foundation for Management Development Excellence in Practice Awards– thank you to Anthony, Oliver, Greer and our NHS partners for all their work on this project.

This is, however, just one strand of our leadership programme and today we are delighted to share with you our first group of leadership role models – individuals from a wide variety of roles across our profession who all display leadership of different sorts.

You'll have seen their portraits on your way into the auditorium this morning, and will hopefully take their stories home with you in this lovely booklet and help us to share them online, but let's now hear just a little more from these inspiring veterinary leaders themselves.

At this point

July 2019

Blog

An update on the RCVS Legislation Working Party

Stephen May - RCVS Council member and Chair of the Legislation Working Party

The current Legislation Working Party (LWP) was established in early 2017 to review the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966 and related legislation, which legally underpins the work of the College. In doing this it picked up on the outstanding issues recognised by its predecessors, including the LWP responsible for the introduction of the new Charter in 2015. Here Professor Stephen May writes about some of Working Party's key work streams, and some of its discussions and decisions thus far.

The RCVS's responsibilities include maintaining the registers of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses eligible to practise in the UK; setting standards for veterinary and veterinary nursing education; and regulating the professional conduct of individual veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses. In doing this we continue to enhance society through improved animal health and welfare.

It is now more than half a century since the VSA achieved Royal Assent, and the veterinary landscape looks very different today from when the Act was first passed. Some of the constraints of the current legislation make it difficult for vets and VNs to thrive in the profession – including by limiting the ability of vets to delegate routine tasks to paraprofessionals within the vet-led team while also presenting a challenge for the RCVS to be a modern and forward thinking regulator and to advance standards of animal health and welfare. While we have managed to stretch the bounds of our regulatory scope within the framework of the VSA through amendments, additional schedules to the Act and changes to our Royal Charter, it is clear that this piecemeal approach is reaching its limits, and a long overdue overhaul is required.

In order to tackle this complex and sizeable piece of work, the LWP is conducting a thorough and wide-ranging review of the VSA, taking a coherent and comprehensive approach which will result in a set of robust recommendations. Underpinning this process are the themes which have emerged from the Vet and VN Futures projects, including issues around retention, recruitment of veterinary professionals and enabling vets and VNs to build sustainable and fulfilling careers in veterinary medicine.

Additionally, the UK's upcoming exit from the EU presents challenges and opportunities for the profession, including a risk of exacerbating the existing shortage of vets and blocking up the parliamentary timetable. However, the current lack of parliamentary time available to pursue reform gives us space to conduct a thorough review and consider the future of veterinary legislation in the round.

To that end, some of the major themes which we are considering include:

- Building on the recommendations of the Veterinary Nurse Schedule 3 Working Party;
- Continuing to pursue the statutory regulation of VNs, including protection of title so that only those who are appropriately educated and regulated can call themselves a veterinary nurse;
- Considering proposals to introduce a new role for VNs, allowing those with extensive and structured further training to be able to undertake additional tasks;
- Building on recent recommendations to bring some paraprofessional groups under the umbrella of the RCVS and ensure that they are properly regulated;
- Considering the possibility of regulation at a practice level, rather than only regulating individual veterinary professionals;
- Reviewing the complex issues around the registration of veterinary professionals which are hampered by the current 1966 Act; and
- Reviewing our disciplinary process to ensure it aligns with other healthcare regulators and modern regulatory practice.

We aim to ensure that our vision for the future of veterinary legislation is given proper consideration, and to propose a list of principles that should underpin any new legislation. To ensure that we get our recommendations for this legislation right, we are taking an evidence-based approach, collaborating with stakeholders across the profession, and working with the Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) to make the most of this opportunity.

The importance of this work to support the future of the veterinary profession cannot be overstated, as we must meet the needs of both veterinary professionals and the general public with regards to animal health and welfare.

Two years on, we have made some headway in determining how we would like to shape the future of veterinary regulation

and the veterinary team.

Regulating paraprofessionals

Back in January 2019, RCVS Council took the historic decision to recommend that some paraprofessional groups be brought under the RCVS' regulatory umbrella. In approving the way forward for two models of regulation, paraprofessionals can become either associates of, or accredited by the College, depending on the nature of their work and the legal status which would be needed to underpin this. While some groups would require new legislation to be brought under our wing, others such as the meat inspectors and animal behaviourists are doing work which do not constitute acts of veterinary surgery.

We are delighted that several paraprofessional groups have expressed interest in this decision, and we are working on developing detailed criteria for these two models, so that we can start to take applications soon. As part of this review we were advised that, where a paraprofession was considered to be undertaking work which would require underpinning by Schedule 3 of the Act, they would need to become associates of the College. By contrast, where groups were found to be doing minor procedures such as may be suitable for an Exemption Order to the VSA, or not undertaking acts of veterinary surgery at all, accreditation could also be a suitable route. We are currently recruiting for an additional member of staff in order to drive this project forward.

Schedule 3 reform and veterinary nursing

The LWP is developing Schedule 3 reform recommendations that seek to bolster the veterinary nurse role. At this stage, the Working Party is focusing on the specific tasks for delegation to veterinary nurses, and is also considering the possibility of decoupling the right of a VN to undertake Schedule 3 work from the need to be employed by a veterinary practice. In this way it is possible that VNs may be able to undertake more independent work in the future, whilst still being under the direction of a veterinary surgeon.

The LWP is also in the early stages of exploring the possibility of a veterinary nurse prescriber role, which could allow the prescription of a limited number of medications by VNs, putting it on a par with the current situation in human healthcare where appropriately qualified and registered non-medics can prescribe. It is crucial to note that, as with human healthcare, this role would be associated with extensive and structured further education and training, and would therefore not be a day one skill for nurses.

It is hoped that, if introduced, this could go some way towards addressing retention issues for both vets and VNs, by providing VNs with a more rewarding career path associated with additional tasks and by giving vets the opportunity to devote time to work that needs to be reserved for them due to its complexity or risk to animal health and welfare. Any recommendations that may arise from this will need to be supported by robust evidence and research, and so the LWP is currently working closely with our colleagues in human healthcare regulation as well as veterinary organisations to gather the evidence needed to analyse the feasibility of these proposals, in addition to the risks and benefits to animal welfare.

Reforming the disciplinary process

Finally, the LWP has begun looking at potential reforms to the RCVS disciplinary process to see how it can be brought in line with modern regulatory practice. We have been exploring the primary purpose of regulation (ie to protect animals and the public, to uphold professional standards and to maintain confidence in the veterinary professions) and have outlined a number of areas for discussion as regards the current disciplinary framework.

The review has noted that most other healthcare regulators have a 'forward looking' approach to their disciplinary processes, in that the key question is whether a professional's fitness to practise is currently impaired (known as the 'fitness to practise' model). The LWP intends to meet with colleagues from healthcare regulators to better understand their experience of using the fitness to practise model, with a view to determining whether it is suitable to the veterinary professions and, if it is, how it might be adapted for them accordingly.

Looking ahead to the future

The LWP has a large remit and significant progress has already been made, but there is a lot of work still to do. Over the next few months the LWP hopes to look at outstanding issues with the VSA concerning registration and education, after which time we hope to be able to begin to finalise our recommendations. It is an exciting time for the College and one which we hope will have a positive impact on the professions in years to come.

If you are interesting in finding out more about the LWP's work, then please make sure to read our series of summaries of all the meetings which it has held so far. These provide further detail on what has been discussed and decided at each meeting.

Published on 30 July 2019

Blog

Gudrun Ravetz - Head Veterinary Officer Simplyhealth Professionals, Past President of the British Veterinary Association

Having dropped a grade in my Maths A Level I nearly didn't get into Vet School but, thanks to the University of Liverpool, I graduated in 2002. An inability to say no and always looking for new things has meant I have had a portfolio career, spending most of my time in various types of small animal clinical work, as well as management and consultancy. I completed a Graduate Diploma in Law in 2009/10 and was President of the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons in 2012.

In 2015 I had the privilege of joining the British Veterinary Association (BVA) Officer Team and was President in 2016/17. The BVA work has been the highlight of my working career. It was humbling, motivating, and exciting to represent the veterinary profession and work with an amazing team at such an important time for the profession.

Ultimately though, I am happiest running the fells, biking the lanes and swimming in the lakes of Cumbria.

What are you most proud of, and why?

There are lots of things that I am proud of and most of these have been a collective effort. This includes the amazing work of the BVA team and Officers that I was involved in when I was there, particularly around the EU exit and collaborative research with the University of Exeter looking at workforce retention and recruitment, with a particular focus on gender discrimination.

With regards to a personal achievement that I am proud of – in the summer of 2014 I swam the length of all the lakes in Cumbria, including the 18 kilometres of Windermere. While I could not have done it without the support of others, this was a feat of sheer determination and commitment. Absolutely no technology was involved. It was just me, some friends and a lake for many hours of training in a stunning environment. I felt a real sense of 'put your mind to it, focus, and you will achieve.'

What is the biggest change you have seen during your career?

The biggest change has been around the types and styles of ownership of veterinary businesses – particularly the growth of large multisite veterinary businesses, with many not being owned or run by vets. The speed of this change has been fascinating to watch. Having worked for Banfield in 2004, I saw a different way of doing things early on with many impressive things happening and with the veterinary team at the centre of them. However, in one sense, although the ownership style and money flow has radically altered, the way of doing business has not. There has not been a significant shift in how practices are run, how veterinary team employees work, and, while new services may be offered to clients, the manner in which they are offered has not changed. I am waiting for there to be positive innovation and disruption in how we offer our services and how our veterinary team work. I believe this can be a real, progressive and positive change for the profession and the animals and clients we serve.

What innovation has the greatest opportunity to change the health and welfare of animals?

One of the biggest ways we can improve animal health and welfare is through evidence based on sound scientific principles. Positive health and welfare outcomes must be evidence-based to have a meaningful, credible and long-lasting impact on animal health and welfare. While there are great initiatives taking data from practices to give us meaningful evidence, the majority of data points, particularly from practices, are not captured in a consistent and uniform manner. Adoption of innovation that allows for a sharing of common and consistent data that the profession could collectively own for the good of animal health and welfare (not financial benefit), along with the people power and funding to turn this into open-access evidence, could have a huge effect on providing more positive health and welfare outcomes for animals. Once this has happened, innovation, and the adoption of it, would allow for instant and easy remote access to this information and could have a really positive effect on animals' health and welfare.

How could vets better meet the needs of today's clients and patients?

I think we need to facilitate putting clients more in control of how they can engage with the veterinary profession and their animals' treatment. We need to adopt innovation that makes things easy for clients – remote booking of appointments, access to their animals' medical records, easy access points to communicate with the veterinary team, and easy access to evidence-based information tailored to meet the needs of their animals. Instead of being concerned about the rise of access to information, we need to embrace a clients' interest in their animals and be there to help them navigate good information from bad. We need to be the hub of evidence that enhances the vet-client relationship. While the face-to-face vet-client relationship is invaluable, we also need to engage with ways of making sure we can continue that relationship remotely.

Are you a technophile or a technophobe?

I think I am a technophile in that I use and enjoy technology that enhances my everyday personal and work life. For me, the key point is that it has to positively enhance my life. Working this bit out is the tricky part – hours reading mindless stuff on social media is not an life-enhancement, but gaining immediate access to new evidence-based reports via social media is. As a profession, whilst we must engage with innovation and technology, we also need to look at outcomes and make sure these are evidence-based and positive.

Innovation and technology has led to amazing and positive advances, but we need to be constantly questioning. Our skills as scientists must always be questioning the evidence and the outcomes, and our unique skills in animal health and welfare must always be questioning the benefit for the animal especially from the animals' point of view. While health benefits are absolutely important, around innovation, we must keep our focus on welfare. We must ask ourselves – Is this in the best interests of the animals' welfare, even if it improves health? It strays into the “because we can, should we” argument and, while we improve our knowledge and adoption of technology, this needs to be coupled with ongoing education and discussion about the welfare and ethics of it.

Events

Countryfile Live 2019

Thursday 15 to Sunday 18 August, Castle Howard, York YO60 7DA

RCVS Council September 2019

Thursday 5th September 2019, RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2AF

WellVet Weekend

Friday 6 – Sunday 8 September 2019, Girton College, University of Cambridge, Huntingdon Rd, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0JG

Mind Matters Mental Health Awareness Training – Belfast

Tuesday 10 September 2019, Hilton Belfast, Lanyon Place, BT1 3LP

VN Council – September 2019

Wednesday 11 September 2019, RCVS, Belgravia House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2AF

Fellowship Day 2019

Friday 20 September 2019, The Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, London W1S 4BS

Mind Matters Initiative Research Symposium

Tuesday 24 September 2019, Deans Yard, Westminster, London SW1P 3NZ

DC reprimands Lincolnshire vet for poor aftercare

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has issued a reprimand to a Lincolnshire-based veterinary surgeon while finding no misconduct against another in a hearing relating to allowing a dog to remain at practice overnight without adequate monitoring and/or post-operative aftercare.

The hearing for the two respondents – Ms Julia Louise Creese MRCVS and Ms Elizabeth Sing May Law MRCVS – took place between Tuesday 18 June and Wednesday 26 June 2019.

There were three charges against Ms Creese, all pertaining to the period between 1 July 2016 and 8 November 2017. The first charge was that Ms Creese failed to ensure that there were adequate systems and processes in place for out of hours' care for in-patients.

The second charge against Ms Creese was that she publicised that the practice had "24 hour care provided by our vets at our practice" and/or "Care 24/7 for your pets" on its website, which suggested that staff were present at the practice 24 hours a day when they were not and as such publicity was dishonest and/or misleading.

The third charge against Ms Creese was that she failed to ensure that the owners of Kiwi, a German Shepherd/Wolf-hound-cross dog, were informed about arrangements at the practice for out of hours' care for in-patients.

There was one charge against Ms Law which stated that, having performed surgery to Kiwi on 7 November 2017 to address gastric dilation volvulus (GDV), she failed to obtain informed consent to the entirety of the surgical process and management, to include post-operative aftercare.

The charge also states that she failed to provide adequate analgesia to Kiwi before, during or after the surgery; failed to provide appropriate and adequate fluid therapy to Kiwi; failed to offer an appropriate and adequate post-operative care plan and/or post-operative transfer for Kiwi to another practice; and failed to inform the owners that there would be nobody present at the practice to provide post-operative monitoring and aftercare for Kiwi for approximately seven hours during the night of 7 to 8 November 2017.

Finally the charge states that Ms Law allowed Kiwi to remain at the practice overnight from 12:30am to 07:45am on 8 November 2017 without adequate monitoring or post-operative aftercare.

At the outset of the hearing, Ms Creese denied all the charges against her. Ms Law admitted some of the charges against her, including that she had failed to obtain informed consent; failed to offer an appropriate and/or adequate post-operative care plan; failed to inform the owners that there would be nobody present at the practice; and allowing Kiwi to remain at the practice overnight without adequate monitoring and/or post-operative aftercare. However, she denied that she failed to provide adequate analgesia to Kiwi and that she failed to provide appropriate and/or adequate fluid therapy to Kiwi.

With regards to the charges against Ms Creese, the Committee, after hearing evidence from relevant witnesses, considered that the practice did have in place systems and processes for out-of-hours care for in-patients and that there was no evidence of repeated or ignored failures of these systems and processes. The Committee therefore found the charges against Ms Creese not proved and all three were dismissed.

The Committee separately considered the charge denied by Ms Law and found all of the charges proved, with the exception of failing to provide adequate analgesia during the perioperative period.

Having considered the facts, the Committee then moved on to consider whether the admitted and proven charges against Ms Law amounted to serious professional misconduct, taking into account any aggravating and mitigating factors. The aggravating features were that, as a result of Ms Law's failures in relation to analgesia and fluid therapy, there was either actual injury to Kiwi, or a risk of such injury.

In mitigation, the Committee considered that she promptly and accurately diagnosed GDV, and proceeded to perform the necessary emergency surgery. The Committee considered that the charges related to a single isolated incident and that Ms Law has had an unblemished career to date. They also noted that Ms Law had made open and frank admissions as to the majority of the charges.

The Committee found that the conduct of Ms Law set out in the majority of the charges did not amount to serious profes-

sional misconduct. However, in the judgement of the Committee, Ms Law's conduct in allowing Kiwi to remain at the practice overnight without adequate monitoring or post-operative aftercare did amount to serious professional misconduct.

In deciding the question of sanction Jane Downes, who chaired the Committee and spoke on its behalf, said: "The Committee considers that the respondent (Ms Law) has insight into the serious mistake that she made in failing to ensure that Kiwi was checked or monitored overnight. The Committee has found that this was a single isolated incident, which involved a serious lapse of clinical judgement, which will probably stay in the mind of the Respondent for the rest of her career.

"The respondent has been in practice for some nine years now, and apart from this incident, there is no suggestion that the respondent has fallen short of the standards expected of her on any other occasion. The Committee does not consider that there is a risk that the respondent is likely to leave an animal overnight after major surgery again, without ensuring that it is checked during that time, and, as such, the Committee considers that there is no future risk to the welfare of animals so far as the respondent is concerned."

The Committee considered that the finding of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect in this case is too serious for no further action to be taken, having regard to the need to maintain public confidence in the profession and declare and uphold proper standards of conduct.

The Committee concluded that the appropriate sanction in this case was to issue a reprimand to Ms Law, in relation to the finding of serious professional misconduct.

"The Committee considers that this sanction, coupled with the findings of fact and disgraceful conduct made against the respondent, is sufficient to maintain public confidence in the profession and uphold proper standards of conduct. The Committee does not consider it necessary to issue a warning to the respondent about her future conduct, on the basis that the Committee has concluded that there is no risk of repetition," added Jane Downes.

DC takes no further action against London-based vet

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Disciplinary Committee has decided to take no further action against a London-based veterinary surgeon who was brought in front of the Committee for charges regarding the care of a pregnant Chihuahua named Kika.

The hearing for Eleonora Corsi took place from Monday 3 June to Tuesday 11 June (excluding 6 June) and with an extra day on Wednesday 19 June, in relation to five charges against her. The first charge was that, on 14 December 2017, having previously consulted on 30 November 2017 with Kika's owners in relation to the management of her pregnancy, and having on that occasion taken a radiograph of Kika which indicated the presence of at least four puppies, Dr Corsi failed to advise her owners that Kika required an immediate veterinary examination in circumstances where she was informed by the owner over the telephone that Kika had produced two live puppies and one dead puppy during the previous night.

The second charge was that, having been telephoned for a second time by the owner, she still failed to advise the owners that Kika required an immediate veterinary examination.

The third charge was that, following an examination of Kika that afternoon, and having ascertained that Kika required a caesarean section to remove one undelivered puppy, Dr Corsi failed to perform the caesarean section that day and advised the owner that Kika could undergo the caesarean section (at the practice, performed by her) the next day (or words to the effect). The charge also states that she failed to advise the owner that Kika's health and welfare required the caesarean section to be performed that day; and that she failed to advise them that, if she or another veterinary surgeon at the practice could not perform the surgery that day, Kika needed to be referred to the out-of-hours clinic so that the caesarean section could take place on 14 December 2017.

The fourth charge was that Dr Corsi failed to recognise that Kika's health and welfare required a caesarean section to be performed on 14 December 2017.

The fifth charge was that, on 16 December 2017, having been telephoned by the owner at about 5pm and having been informed that Kika was weak and had not been eating post-operatively, Dr Corsi failed to advise the owner that Kika should be presented urgently for a veterinary examination.

The Disciplinary Committee considered the facts of the case and heard evidence from a number of witnesses including the owners of Kika and Dr Corsi, and from Mr Maltman MRCVS who was called as an expert witness on behalf of the College and Mr Chitty, who was called as an expert witness on behalf of Dr Corsi.

Having considered all of the evidence, the Committee found all aspects of the first and second charges proven in their entirety.

The Committee found the majority of the third charge not proved, with the exception of the fact that it found that Dr Corsi did advise the owner that she could undertake the Caesarean section on 15 December 2017.

In light of the Committee's findings in respect of the aspects of charge three that were not proved, charge four was also found not proved. Finally, the Committee considered that charge five was found not proved.

The Committee then went on to consider whether the charges that were found proven amounted to serious professional misconduct either individually and/or cumulatively.

"In light of the evidence of both parties' experts, the Committee was of the view that there was a risk of harm or injury resulting from Dr Corsi's failure - the Committee decided that this was an aggravating factor," said Committee Chair Cerys Jones.

"However, the Committee took into account that, at the time of both calls, Dr Corsi had a rationale for her decision, that she asked appropriate questions and received answers which led her to make what she considered to be a reasoned assessment. She had also made arrangements in both calls to be kept updated either at a pre-arranged time or sooner if Kika's condition changed. On this basis, the Committee was satisfied that, while this was an error of judgement, it did not fall so far short of what was expected as to amount to disgraceful conduct."

Therefore, the Committee decided that while Dr Corsi's conduct in Charges 1 and 2 demonstrated a departure from professional standards, the falling short was not so grave as to amount to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

Privy Council partially upholds appeal against decision to remove vet from the Register

The Privy Council has partially upheld and partially dismissed an appeal submitted to it by Dr Gerhard Schulze Allen against a decision by the RCVS Disciplinary Committee in January 2018 to direct that his name be removed from the Register.

The Disciplinary Committee had directed that Dr Schulze Allen's name be removed from the Register after finding him guilty of serious professional misconduct in respect of four charges against him. These related to his conviction for petty theft in California in the United States, and his subsequent dishonesty in not disclosing the conviction to the RCVS.

Following the Disciplinary Committee hearing, Dr Schulze Allen submitted an appeal to the Privy Council. The basis of his appeal revolved around whether, under Californian law, his conviction for petty theft was a conviction for a criminal offence, or whether it was a conviction for an infraction of petty theft, and whether an infraction under US law was a criminal offence.

The Privy Council considered the background to the case, noting that Dr Schulze Allen had been unclear in his position as regards the conviction during the course of his initial dealings with the RCVS, and had only produced evidence to the Disciplinary Committee after it had made its decision as to the facts. The Privy Council also had regard to a decision made by Judge Berg in the US Administrative Court in July 2018 who, when considering Dr Schulze Allen's appeal against the Veterinary Medical Board in California's refusal to grant him a veterinarian licence, decided that whether an infraction for petty theft was a criminal offence is "open to interpretation" under US law.

In relation to the College's first charge against him – namely, that Dr Schulze Allen was convicted of a criminal offence – the RCVS argued that, while the theft is not a criminal felony in California, under English law it would be considered so.

The Board of the Privy Council which heard the appeal – comprising Lords Wilson, Carnwath and Lloyd-Jones, found that, in relation to this charge, the RCVS had not proven beyond all reasonable doubt that Dr Schulze Allen was convicted of a criminal offence under Californian law. It therefore upheld Dr Schulze Allen's appeal against the Disciplinary Committee's finding that he had committed a criminal offence.

The Privy Council then considered Dr Schulze Allen's appeal against the third and fourth of the charges against him - that he was dishonest in his representations to the College that he did not have a 'criminal' conviction and did not have a 'criminal record'. The Privy Council found that, since the conviction for petty theft was an infraction, and was not a criminal offence and did not leave Dr Schulze Allen with a criminal record, then, strictly speaking, his representations to the RCVS were not false and so upheld his appeal against these two charges.

The Privy Council then considered Dr Schulze Allen's appeal against the College's second charge against him. This charge was that he had, in a written application for restoration to the Register, represented that he did not have any cautions, criminal convictions or adverse findings. The College argued that he still had a responsibility to make a full and frank disclosure about his infraction, even if it did not meet the threshold of 'criminal' under Californian law.

The Board of the Privy Council noted that it had, on Dr Schulze Allen's behalf, done its best to identify some argument that his conviction for an infraction, namely for petty theft, does not amount to an "adverse finding", but the Board concluded that, in that quest, it had failed. The Board finding that "the conviction obviously amounted to an adverse finding."

The Board agreed with the College's argument, saying that veterinary surgeons, upon renewing their registration, are expected to declare any 'convictions, cautions and/or adverse findings' and decided that Dr Schulze Allen should have declared the petty theft conviction on the basis that it should be considered an adverse finding. The Board concluded that "there is no material by reference to which the Board [of the Privy Council] can depart from the [Disciplinary] Committee's conclusion that, in answering "no" to that question, he knew that his answer was untrue. In other words, his denial was dishonest."

In its conclusion the Privy Council stated: "The Board therefore allows the appeal against the [Disciplinary] Committee's conclusion on the first, third and fourth charges. But it dismisses the appeal against its conclusion in relation to the second charge, namely that in that regard Dr Schulze Allen had been guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect."

In relation to the Disciplinary Committee's sanction requesting that Dr Schulze Allen be removed from the Register, the

Privy Council determined that it would set “aside the sanction which the Committee imposed on him and remits to them the task of identifying the appropriate sanction in relation to the second charge.”

As a result of the Privy Council’s decision, the Disciplinary Committee will be holding a further hearing in relation to Dr Schulze Allen to decide the sanction in relation to the second charge against him. The date of this hearing is yet to be determined. In the meantime Dr Schulze Allen remains on the Register of Veterinary Surgeons.