



**RCVS NEWS /**  
**JULY-AUGUST 2018**

*Text-only version of  
RCVS News email*

# Still time to have your say on the future of VN qualifications

There is just under a week to go for you to have your say on the future of veterinary nursing qualifications and careers by responding to our consultation on reforming the post-registration qualification framework for veterinary nurses.

Our proposed new qualifications are a Graduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing and a Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing which would replace the current Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing. These aim to provide accessible, flexible and professionally relevant post-registration awards for veterinary nurses in order to bring an enhanced level of veterinary nursing practice.

The consultation itself grew out of the VN Futures research project in which one of the key priorities identified was the development of a structured and rewarding career path for veterinary nurses.

To participate in the consultation, we are asking veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons to first download and read the 'Draft RCVS post-registration framework for veterinary nursing', before answering a series of questions as set out in our online questionnaire. Please do let us know what you think by 5pm on Monday 27 August.

# Chief vet and renowned physicist speaking at Fellowship Day 2018

We will be holding our third annual Fellowship Day in October this year to celebrate a new cohort joining the Fellowship and the achievements of RCVS Fellows, as well as hearing from inspiring guest speakers.

At this year's event, which takes place at the Royal Institution on Friday 5 October, the keynote speakers are Jim Al-Khalili, author, broadcaster and Professor of Physics and Professor of Public Engagement in Science at the University of Surrey and the UK's recently appointed Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss.

Jim Al-Khalili will be talking about public engagement in science, including its importance, how it has evolved over time and its potential pitfalls, while Christine Middlemiss will be talking about the challenges facing the veterinary profession over the next 10 years.

The event will also see 33 veterinary surgeons being officially welcomed as Fellows of the RCVS of whom 17 are being recognised for meritorious contributions to clinical practice, eight for meritorious contributions to knowledge and eight for meritorious contributions to the profession. A full list of those joining the Fellowship in October is available to download.

During the event there will be the opportunity for current Fellows to give a 10 minute presentation on an enlightening and interesting topic of their choice in the world-famous Faraday Lecture Theatre (home of the famous Christmas lectures). The College has written to all Fellows to ask them for their presentation ideas. Any Fellows who wish submit an idea for a presentation can fill in our dedicated online form.

Professor Nick Bacon (pictured right), Chair of the Fellowship Board which is responsible for considering applications to the Fellowship and running the initiative, said: "We are delighted that such an eminent scientist and public figure as Jim Al-Khalili as well as the Chief Veterinary Officer have agreed to speak at this year's Fellowship and we also look forward to a variety of interesting talks from Fellows about their areas of interest and research.

"However, while the Fellowship is about celebrating and recognising the achievement of established members of the profession, it is also concerned with encouraging and nurturing scientific endeavour at all career stages. This is why we have written to each of the vet schools asking them to suggest both undergraduate and postgraduate students who are conducting interesting and original research so we can help give a platform to the next generation of veterinary surgeons."

Students who are interested in submitting a presentation idea can do using our dedicated online form. Presentations should be no longer than five minutes and will be given feedback by a judging panel comprising our President Amanda Boag, Nick Bacon and Jim Al-Khalili. The best presenter will also win a prize.

As well as inviting all RCVS Fellows we are also encouraging any Members of the RCVS who are interested in potentially applying for the Fellowship to attend the event as guests of RCVS Fellows. Those who wish to attend the event can order their free tickets on our Eventbrite page where they can also find the provisional programme and further information about the day.

Those with any questions about attending the event should contact our Senior Events Officer Emma Lockley on [e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:e.lockley@rcvs.org.uk)

# College talks to hundreds at public events

We attended three major public shows over the summer, talking to members of the public about veterinary careers, the Find a Vet search tool, the Practice Standards Scheme (PSS), and our joint campaign with the British Veterinary Association (BVA) to highlight the benefits of registering pets with veterinary practices, #petsneedvets.

This was the third year that we attended BBC Countryfile Live, held in the grounds of Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire from 2 to 5 August, but the first year for two major events: Devon County Show, held near Exeter from 17 to 19 May, and the Royal Welsh Show, held near Builth Wells from 23 to 26 July.

At each event our stand was transformed into a make-believe veterinary practice with lots of activities for both children and adults, including a number of surgical models for budding 'veterinary surgeons' to 'operate' on and a model dog and rabbit on which future veterinary nurses could practise their bandaging skills.

The stands were attended by our staff, PSS Assessors, and RCVS and VN Council members including RCVS Council Vice-President Niall Connell and VN Council Vice-Chair Matt Rendle.

Altogether, they handed out about 2,000 canvas bags as well as 1,000 logo bugs to kids, all themed around the joint #petsneedvets campaign. All of the canvas bags contained information about the Find a Vet search tool and Practice Standards Scheme bookmarks.

Over the course of the Royal Welsh Show and BBC Countryfile Live they talked to 350 people, about 200 of whom were asking about veterinary careers, as well as greeting Welsh CVO Christianne Glossop (pictured top) and canine fundraisers for Eden Animal Rescue Max and Paddy (pictured right).

Ian Holloway, our Director of Communications, said: "These kind of public-facing events are wonderful opportunities to meet members of the animal-owning public, with the Royal Welsh Show affording us a whole new avenue to talk to large-animal owners.

"Over the course of these multi-day events we chatted to hundreds of people about our role and the services we provide, and explained more about the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions.

"Promoting the Practice Standards Scheme and Find a Vet helps people to make informed decisions about their choice of veterinary practice, so we would urge practices to ensure their details are up to date online."

To use the Find a Vet search tool please visit our website. You can also find further information about veterinary careers and the Practice Standards Scheme, and all tweets from the #petsneedvets campaign can be found on Twitter. Please use the same hashtag and link to [www.rcvs.org.uk/petsneedvets](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/petsneedvets) to support the campaign!

Pictures of the events are available on our Flickr site.

# RCVS publishes report of 2017's achievements

We have published our Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2017, itemising our major achievements over the course of the year as well as the allocation of funds.

Some of the work highlighted includes Brexit-related research and lobbying, the launch of a new innovation hub, Vivet, two new RCVS awards (Impact and Inspiration), a Schedule 3 consultation, updates to the Practice Standards Scheme, the pilot of a new reflective approach to continuing professional development (CPD), changes to the Veterinary Nurses Council, and refreshing the College website. It also covers many of the College's ongoing projects, including Vet and VN Futures progress and the growth of the Mind Matters Initiative for mental health.

In addition, the Report gives an overview of the College's independently-audited finances with details of income and expenditure. These have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice – a framework for charity accounting and reporting.

The Report will be presented for adoption by members of the College at this year's RCVS Day – the College's Annual General Meeting and Awards Ceremony – on Friday 13 July at the Royal Institute of British Architects.

To view the Report please visit our [publications page](#), or contact [publications@rcvs.org.uk](mailto:publications@rcvs.org.uk) to request a hard copy.

# RCVS: a top workplace for women

We have been recognised as one of the best workplaces for women by the Great Place to Work Institute.

We have been ranked the 7th in the medium-sized company or organisation category (50 to 449 employees) of the Best Workplaces for Women initiative.

This year is the first that the Great Place to Work Institute has run this initiative and, in making its rankings, it looked at a number of factors including the number and proportion of women in leadership positions, pay parity between men and women, workplace policies and how they support female employees, as well as training and development and mentoring.

Commenting on the results Amanda Boag, RCVS President, said: "I am delighted that the RCVS has been recognised for being an excellent and supportive place for women to work and pleased that the hard work of the team at Belgravia House in this area has been publicly rewarded in this way.

"One of the key themes of my Presidential year is diversity and I think it is very important that, as a regulator, we reflect the veterinary profession (which is currently 63% female for veterinary surgeons and 98% female for veterinary nurses) as far as possible. With two-thirds of the staff at the RCVS being women it demonstrates that the College is largely reflective of the profession it serves.

"However, it's not just about the numbers and with 60% of the Senior Team at the RCVS being women, including the CEO and Registrar, it demonstrates that the College has developed a culture in which women can shatter the glass ceiling and pursue leadership roles.

"Also, with policies such as flexible working hours, encouragement of home working, shared parental leave and enhanced maternity and paternity pay, the College goes the extra mile to support working parents."

Further information about the criteria for the Great Place to Work Institute's Best Workplaces for Women Initiative, as well as the 2018 rankings, can be found on their website.

# Charity launches annual survey on its services

Welcome to the RCVS Knowledge annual survey for 2018.

If you completed last year's survey, you will be familiar with the format. For those of you who haven't filled one of these in before, the next five to ten minutes will gauge how much you know about the support we offer to veterinary professionals, while allowing us to learn how helpful our services and resources are to you.

Your responses go a long way to directing our aims and vision as the charity partner of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and our underlying mission to advance the quality of veterinary care for the benefit of animals, the public, and society.

Data from this survey will be kept anonymous, and the resulting report will be shared with the veterinary community in order to help us learn from each other.

To be in with a chance of winning an iPad, simply opt-in to the prize draw at the end of the survey.

# Vet Futures competition: what's inspired you?

To mark two years since the launch of the Vet Futures Action Plan, the RCVS and BVA are launching a competition to find the best project or initiative that has been inspired by Vet Futures.

The prize for the best entry includes a platform to showcase the idea during BVA Congress at the London Vet Show (LVS) in November, as well as two tickets to LVS (including accommodation and travel) and support from BVA and RCVS to promote the project to the wider profession.

The Vet Futures Project Board wants to hear from individuals or organisations who are taking forward initiatives that will help to meet one or more of the six Vet Futures ambitions to enable the profession to take charge of its own future. They are:

- A leading force for animal health and welfare
- Valued for our wider roles in society
- Confident, resilient, healthy and well-supported
- A broad range of diverse and rewarding career paths
- Thriving, innovative, user-focused businesses
- Exceptional leadership

Entrants must set out their project in 500 words or fewer explaining which of the Vet Futures ambitions it aims to meet, how the idea will be or has been implemented, and how success is being, or has been, measured.

The Vet Futures Action Plan, launched at the Vet Futures Summit in July 2016, set out 24 specific actions to help meet the ambitions. The actions are being taken forward by RCVS and BVA, with Vet Schools Council and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA), and great progress is being made, for example:

- Publishing the Animal Welfare Strategy, which won a World Veterinary Association award in 2017
- Setting up the Veterinary Animal Welfare Coalition to communicate to the general public about the five welfare needs
- Establishing up the UK One Health Coordination Group with medical and environmental professionals to share best practice
- Launching RCVS Leadership and piloting the Edward Jenner Veterinary Leadership Programme for vets and VNs
- Launching ViVet, the veterinary innovation hub, and hosting the first veterinary innovation symposium in September 2017
- Engaging the profession globally with the Vet Futures Europe project and inspiring individual countries to run their own Vet Futures projects
- Launching the VN Futures report and action plan

Stephen May, RCVS President, said:

"Vet Futures has reminded us that to fully serve Society the profession must be in control of its own future, and we are delighted that so many are already taking up that challenge. We want to celebrate their contributions and look forward to receiving the entries to our competition."

Commenting, BVA President John Fishwick added:

"A lot has already been achieved against the Vet Futures actions, with more in the pipeline, but we are keen to hear from others who have been inspired to set up their own projects, whether big or small."

The closing date for entries is midnight on Sunday 23 September 2018. Entries will be judged by members of the Vet Futures Project Board, which includes representatives from BVA, RCVS and Vet Schools Council. The winner will be announced ahead of the Vet Futures session at BVA Congress at the London Vet Show on Thursday 15 November.

For more information about the competition visit <https://www.vetfutures.org.uk/competition>



# New President redoubles commitment to diversity in the professions and embracing change

Looking at diversity in all its aspects and harnessing the positive potential of change were two of the key changes made by Amanda Boag in her inaugural speech as the new President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons for 2018-19.

Amanda was invested as President at Royal College Day – our Annual General Meeting and Awards Ceremony – at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) on Friday 13 July 2018, taking the reins from Professor Stephen May, who became Senior Vice-President.

In her opening speech she said: “Along with specific projects, I wanted to highlight a couple of themes which will be prominent in the coming and future years.

“Firstly, the importance of diversity.... Diversity takes many forms and we must not lose sight of these. This includes ensuring our professions reflect the society we serve and are seen as a great and realistic opportunity for people from all backgrounds and, once in the professions, making sure we have an open and supportive environment where everyone is given the chance and the support to succeed.

“Secondly is the inevitability of change and the importance of harnessing it positively for our professions, but more importantly for the public and the animals we care for. This year will of course see the enormous change of Brexit and collaborating with the British Veterinary Association (BVA) and others and we will continue to speak forcefully about the importance of our professions and animal welfare.

“There are also a number of ongoing discussions focused more specifically in our industry on issues such as evolution of the veterinary nursing profession, how accountability will work in the vet-led team and the changes that telemedicine is already bringing.”

Amanda has been an elected member of RCVS Council since 2012 and in 2016 was re-elected to serve another four-year term. Since being elected she has served as RCVS Treasurer (2014-17) and on the Education Committee, PIC/DC Liaison Committee and the Operational Board. She has also played a critical role in the development of the recently launched RCVS Leadership Initiative.

Amanda graduated from Cambridge in 1998 and, after undertaking two internships, became a Lecturer in Emergency and Critical Care at the Royal Veterinary College from 2003 to 2008, where she was involved in running the referral and first-opinion emergency service. In 2008 she took up the post of Clinical Director at Vets Now, where she has a wide ranging role overseeing clinical and professional standards across the business. Amanda was Founding President of the European College of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care (ECVECC) from 2014-2018 and served as President of the European Society of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care (EVECCS) from 2011-2014.

## **AGM and changes to RCVS and VN Councils**

Royal College Day 2018 started with the Annual General Meeting of the membership of the College in which new members of RCVS and VN Councils were welcomed, retiring members were thanked and appointments to the Officer team confirmed.

After an introduction to the proceedings by then President Stephen May, members approved the minutes of last year's AGM and the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for 2017.

RCVS Registrar Eleanor Ferguson then updated those in attendance regarding the impact of the recent Legislative Reform Order (LRO) on the College's governance (which was passed by Parliament in May) and on RCVS Council, including a reduction in elected and university-appointed members, the ending of appointments by Privy Council and formal lay and veterinary nursing representation on Council.

Regarding the RCVS Council elections, Eleanor Ferguson said that the impact of the LRO meant that only the three candidates with the most votes (rather than the top six as previously) would take up their posts on Council. She then welcomed Susan Paterson, Mandisa Greene and Neil Smith, all of whom were re-elected, back on to Council for four-year terms.

The Registrar then welcomed the new lay members to RCVS Council, all of whom were appointed following an extensive

independent recruitment process. These are: Dr Derek Bray, Mark Castle, Linda Ford, Claire McLaughlan, Tim Walker and Judy Worthington. Also welcomed were two veterinary nursing members appointed from the Veterinary Nurses Council, namely Racheal Marshall and Liz Cox, the new Chair and immediate past Chair of VN Council respectively.

The President (Stephen May) then thanked retiring Council members Douglas Hutchison, Dr Kieron Salmon, Dr David Bartram, Elaine Acaster, David Catlow, Rachel Jennings, Dr Jacqui Molyneux (pictured) and Professor Mike Herrtage, as well as Professor Richard Hammond, Tim King and Karen Braithwaite, who were unable to attend. Stephen gave particular thanks to Jacqui Molyneux and Mike Herrtage, who had served on Council for 12 years and 21 years respectively.

Dr Molyneux was President of the College in 2012-13 and was a particular champion of the Practice Standards Scheme, serving as Chair of its coordinating body, the Practice Standards Group, for five years.

Professor Herrtage was a member of RCVS Council appointed by the University of Cambridge and brought his expertise in education and research to bear as a member of the Education Committee, amongst many other committee roles.

For VN Council there were similar changes to its governance, including a reduction in elected members (which meant there was no election this year) and new appointed lay and veterinary nurse members. First, the Registrar welcomed the new appointees, who were once again brought on board following an extensive recruitment process, these being: Belinda Andrews-Jones, Wendy Drinkwater and Katherine (Kathy) Kissick. VN Council also said thank you and farewell to the following VN Council members: Amber Richards, Dr Niall Connell, Vicky Aspinall and Hilary Orpet.

For the Officer Team, Amanda Boag was confirmed as President for 2018-19, Dr Niall Connell as Junior Vice-President, Professor Stephen May as Senior Vice-President and Christopher (Kit) Sturgess as Treasurer.

### **Awards and honours**

Following the AGM was the awards ceremony, which, in addition to established awards such as the Queen's Medal and International Award, saw the introduction of the inaugural Impact and Inspiration Awards.

The occasion began with the presentation of two bequests made to the College – the first was the presentation of the scroll and parchment of Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior, a former President of the RCVS and the first veterinary surgeon to be elevated to a Peerage, who sadly died in May 2017. These items were presented by Judy MacArthur-Clark (pictured), a former RCVS President who is now Chair of the Trustees of the Soulsby Foundation, a charity set up in his name to promote the concept of One Health.

The second bequest was the prize awarded to veterinary surgeon Mary-Elizabeth Raw when she won the 1989 series of Mastermind. The bowl was presented by her cousin Sir Robert Nelson who praised Mary-Elizabeth's courage and tenacity as a veterinary surgeon with multiple sclerosis who also devoted her time to helping others with disabilities.

This year the Queen's Medal – the highest honour the College can bestow upon a veterinary surgeon in recognition of a distinguished career – was presented to Professor Peter Clegg MRCVS, Professor of Musculoskeletal Biology and Head of Research at the Institute of Ageing and Chronic Disease, in recognition of his research in the veterinary, medical and biomedical worlds and his dedication to mentoring and nurturing the careers of his students.

Reading the citation for Professor Clegg, Stephen said: "Though Peter's academic achievements are truly remarkable, they are heightened by his ability to nurture the careers of those around him to contribute to both the human and the veterinary medical world."

Next Stephen presented two RCVS International Awards, which this year were bestowed upon Dr Alemayehu Hailemariam and Rachel Wright. Dr Hailemariam is a veterinarian who leads the Brooke equine charity's animal health programme in Ethiopia.

Reading his citation Stephen said: "Dr Hailemariam... has helped an estimated 600,000 animals across Ethiopia. This is one of the world's largest populations of working equids, belonging to some of the world's poorest communities, who often rely upon their animals for their livelihoods. Dr Hailemariam's work is therefore one of the finest examples of how a vet can service their whole community."

Rachel Wright qualified as a veterinary nurse in the UK and went on to found the Tree of Life for Animals (TOLFA) hospital in Rajasthan, India, in 2005.

Stephen said: "At the outset, there were only four staff, and no electricity or running water, but Rachel was determined

to provide veterinary care for those stray animals that had nowhere else to go. Fast-forward 13 years and there is now a hospital facility covering two acres with 50 staff, capable of treating between 300 and 400 animals on any one day."

The next presentation was for the inaugural RCVS Impact Award, intended for veterinary surgeons or veterinary nurses who have made a considerable impact on the profession, animal health and welfare and/or public health in any field of veterinary endeavour, for example, clinical practice, research or education. The recipient of the inaugural Impact Award was Jade Statt (pictured), who co-founded the Street Vet charity in 2016, an organisation that provides free veterinary care to the animals of the homeless community in many UK cities.

Commenting on her award, Stephen said: "Jade has had an immeasurable impact on homeless communities across England. From her first solo missions across London with a backpack full of veterinary medicine supplies, Jade and her co-founder Sam Joseph have grown a community of veterinary volunteers that operates across London, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Cheltenham and Plymouth, providing reliable, continual veterinary care to over 315 street dogs and cats."

The next presentation was for the new RCVS Inspiration Award, for which there were two recipients this year. The first was Dr Ebony Escalona (pictured) for her work with the Brooke equine charity and for founding the Vets: Stay, Go or Diversify Facebook group.

"Ebony is a true inspiration... not only because of her academic achievements, but also because of how she applies them. Her own diverse application of veterinary skills led her to create a new Facebook group.... This group, now with nearly 10,000 members, encourages veterinary professionals to seek true career fulfilment and expand the definition of 'veterinary career' beyond the traditional," Stephen said.

The second recipient of the Inspiration Award was Professor Derek Knottenbelt, also this year's guest speaker, who recently retired from his Emeritus Professorship at the University of Liverpool, where he influenced generations of students.

Stephen May said: "Derek is now a visiting Professor at the University of Glasgow's Veterinary School in the Weipers Equine Centre. His interpretation of 'retired' is somewhat strange, however, for as well as being a visiting Professor, he also runs Equine Medical Solutions, lectures throughout the world as Chair of the British Horse Society, and is now planning his eighth tour as a founding member of the charity Vets with Horsepower."

An RCVS Fellowship by Thesis was also presented to Dr Neil Hudson, while Dr Judy MacArthur-Clark received her Fellowship by meritorious contributions to the profession. Furthermore, diplomas in small animal surgery (orthopaedics), veterinary cardiology and zoological medicine were also presented.

### **Chief Executive's address**

Next on the agenda was the inaugural address of RCVS Chief Executive Officer Lizzie Lockett who was appointed to the role in November 2017.

Lizzie (pictured) gave an overview of what the College has been doing and how it has been fulfilling the ambitions of the Strategic Plan since her appointment, citing projects such as the RCVS Leadership Initiative, the Graduate Outcomes project and the College's ongoing work with the BVA and Government on Brexit.

She also said increasing efforts are being made to make the College more proactive in its approach to regulation, rather than reacting to events as they happen.

"Although we work hard through our concerns process to ensure individual veterinary surgeons and nurses are fit to practise, and we do this on behalf of the public, waiting until something goes wrong usually means someone – and some animal – has been adversely affected in the process.

"We are therefore putting huge energies into more proactive support of the professions, to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are populated by vets and nurses who are happy and confident, and have the right skills and knowledge to thrive, and can work in environments where learning from mistakes is encouraged," Lizzie said.

## **VN Council Chair's address**

The next address was from Liz Cox (pictured on the right with new VN Chair Racheal Marshall), who had held the post of Chair of VN Council for the past three years, during which she had fronted a campaign to protect the veterinary nursing title, helped lead the VN Futures project and been involved in the crucial work around reviewing Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

In her speech Liz spoke about her 'love affair' with veterinary nursing, how she had been inspired to become a VN by witnessing what they do first-hand at the age of 13 during the treatment of her family dog. However, a few years after qualifying as a veterinary nurse, she had become disillusioned with a lack of career progression and left the profession, only to return some years later because she missed the impact that veterinary nurses can have on clients and their pets and the satisfaction that brings.

Speaking of her years as VN Chair she said: "One of the areas I am proudest about in my time with the RCVS has been the VN Futures project. I was certain that we needed to speak to nurses in person, to travel, to engage them, to listen and understand. We have numerous working parties that, importantly, are populated with nurses that wanted to be involved, that had that passion. One day, I hope that one of those nurses or others we have met will be standing where I am now.

"We developed six ambitions to achieve by 2020, all with 3 Rs in mind: recruitment, retention and returners. Above all, we need to ensure we have a workforce that is able to support a growing veterinary world in all of its areas, and we need to offer a career that is sustainable, well supported, rewarding, and has a structure. If we have leavers, it's because they choose to, not because they have to."

She added that she looked forward to an expanded veterinary nursing role, with greater scope for career progression and expanded responsibilities so that veterinary nursing can fulfil its potential as a career for life.

Following Liz's address Racheal Marshall was invested as the new Chair of VN Council with Liz becoming a Vice-Chair alongside VN Council member Matthew Rendle.

## **President's address**

The event then moved on to Stephen May's final address as RCVS President (pictured), in which he spoke about the RCVS being the archetypal "complete professional regulator" that protects the public and their animals through setting standards for entry to the profession, and empowering members of the veterinary professions through codes of conduct aimed at supporting professional capability and wellbeing.

In particular, he emphasised what emerged as one of the main themes of the day, the need to nurture the new generation of vets and nurses, and move away from a blame culture to one where professionals were more willing to admit, and learn from, their mistakes.

He said: "It is important, with most of our veterinary surgeons and nurses going into primary care, that we recognise the complexity of these roles and the importance of developing professionals to become expert generalists so that they do not just survive but thrive in that sector as well as all the others.

"The Graduate Outcomes proposals that will be ready for consultation later this year, and the new reflective approach to continuing professional development, are both components of the College's ambition to move us as a profession from what is often a blame, to a learning culture embraced by all.

"Of course, we are all subject to the law of the land if any of our activities fall foul of that law. However, as the Registrar and I have been keen to point out to veterinary students all around the country this year, it is important that society and all members of the profession recognise the clear distinction between misconduct and cases with disappointing outcomes where at worst professional judgement may have been clouded by conflicting demands and needs."

In reviewing his year as President, Stephen also spoke about the ongoing discussions around the veterinary workforce, which may be affected by the UK leaving the EU, the review into the legislative framework for the veterinary professions and some of the debates and controversies around the College's position on homeopathy and complementary and alternative medicines in general.

Both of these have been challenges, but at the same time they have provided opportunities to emphasise the importance of the profession to Society and explain what the profession stands for.

He added: "As my year draws to a close, I am confident that I am handing on to Amanda a College that is more confident in itself and its role, and better able to face the challenges of the future, as we restructure our governance and

committees, and Lizzie looks strategically at extra staff appointments related to the growth of the profession and all the College's business."

Stephen then thanked fellow members of Council, the Operational Board, and RCVS staff, his colleagues at the Royal Veterinary College and the professions as a whole, as well as his family who had supported him through his busy year.

Following his address, Stephen handed over the chain of office and President's gown for Amanda to be invested as RCVS President, with Dr Niall Connell being invested as Junior Vice-President. He also said farewell to Chris Tufnell as he ended his year as RCVS Senior Vice-President praising him as a brilliant and insightful colleague who always had the progression of the professions as his ultimate goal.

### **Guest speaker**

This year's guest speaker was the aforementioned Derek Knottenbelt (pictured), who gave a talk entitled 'Empowering our successors' about how established members of the profession can help young veterinary graduates develop into well-rounded, capable and resilient veterinary surgeons and nurses.

Among the subjects covered in the talk was the importance of failure as a character and competence building exercise for professionals and not always something deserving of censure or blame.

He said: "Certain types of error are deserving of censure, such as recklessness and choosing to work when one is not fit. However, other failures can be seen as praiseworthy, particularly where individuals have good reasons for working (slightly) beyond their normal area of practice, and appropriately intervening where a prognosis is otherwise poor.

"All of us will have been mentored by individuals who have influenced our own professional course, and will be eternally grateful to them. It was often in the context of our failures that their encouragement and praise, in focusing us on the opportunities for learning, proved to be amazing tools for bringing success.

"The new graduates of today are quite simply the best possible young people to secure our future. The profession will have a lot to answer for if we cannot embrace them within a professional 'learning culture' and give them a life of fulfilment and happiness."

Pictures of Royal College Day will be available to download from our Flickr page in due course.

# #AndMe: The importance of early intervention in mental health

## Senior First Opinion Vet, Rutland House Veterinary Hospital

I qualified as a veterinary surgeon in 2004, and spent three and a half years in mixed practice before moving to small animal practice. I am now senior vet at a busy, multisite first opinion practice, involved in the British Veterinary Association as regional representative for the North West, and co-chair a veterinary wellbeing group.

Compared to many of the experiences shared through the &me campaign, mine may seem quite minor, but if I hadn't been in the lucky position to have amazing and supportive colleagues and friends and family around me then maybe things would have been different.

I initially visited my GP because I thought I had a chest infection as I was struggling to breathe. The GP asked me if I was sure it wasn't anxiety, but I was adamant it must be something physical. I thought anxiety was a weakness, something that effected other people.

Several weeks later, as I slid down the wall in my consult room to sit on the floor crying, unable to do anything, it became apparent it was not a chest infection. I was lucky as I only needed a short period of time away from work, and talking therapy worked well for me.

There is increasing evidence that early intervention for mental ill-health can reduce the need for time away from work, reduce the risk of relapse and lead to improved recovery.

Hopefully by sharing my story, we can work to reduce the stigma, and open early channels of communication to help look after the mental health of ourselves and others.

# epiCam V: Bringing Human Ophthalmic Imaging to Animals... and Back Again

Animal and human healthcare medicine are closely linked, in this blog we hear how the researchers at Epipole have learnt first-hand how overcoming technical challenges to re-purpose their specialised equipment for veterinary medicine, has led to improving their technology for Human medicine ... so with each contributing to the other, where else can we adapt to improve both animal and human healthcare?

At Epipole we began our medical device journey back in 2011 with the aim of helping clinicians around the world to find blinding pathologies and thus to save sight. Save sight in humans, that is.

Working in this area over those years, we came to recognise that animals were quite poorly served in this respect. Their eyes were in the care of a small number of highly qualified and dedicated referral vets whose expertise was immense and whose equipment was highly specialised. What we needed to do was build a device that could be used by all vets in practice and thus widen the diagnostic use of ophthalmology.

Having already built and proven the efficacy of two hand-held, low-cost, fundus cameras for human eyes we decided that we would take up the challenge of building a device for animals and see where that led us. Although epiCam M and epiCam C were designed to image the human eye at very high resolution – they can resolve detail as small as 10 microns – we knew that they were also “general purpose” enough that their core imaging technology could be re-purposed for veterinary applications.

The major challenge was that whilst humans have a fairly predictable physiology, the label “animal” applies to a massively varied population. Firstly, the simple geometry of the orbit of various eyes can vary in size by centimetres, from the guinea pig to the giraffe. And then there is the variation not only in pupil size but shape, from the bizarre multi-stage penguin pupil to the massive horse pupil – real levels of complexity. Moving on to the retina itself, there we also find an enormous range of shapes, sizes, structures, textures and what I can only describe as odd bits. Some bits are missing, in different places or at locations that seem to defy explanation. All of this has to be imaged and the device still has to turn out diagnostic levels of quality.

However, we always knew that we would end up with a much more complex device for animals than for humans. At its heart, a fundus camera is a microscope with on-axis illumination and a sensor in the place of the human eye. Much of our microscopy imaging technology was already complete and well tested, there was just the vexed question of illumination delivery and image formation to sort out.

As part of this, rather inconveniently, some animals have a tapetum lucidum that will massively over-expose a sensor even under low illumination. This, and the other issues, has meant that we had to give the device several more controls than we would need for humans – digital illumination control being just one of them.

Ironically, some of the technical challenges we had to overcome have meant that improvements and features have made their way back into the human imaging devices and for that we are immensely grateful. Neonate humans and small dogs turn out to be not that dissimilar after all.

Where next for digital veterinary ophthalmology? We are working hard to bring it to a wider audience, make it part of standard veterinary practice and provide an enhanced insight into pet health.

**Dr Craig Robertson is the founder of Epipole Ltd., an award-winning medical device company developing high quality, inexpensive video fundus cameras. Craig's early background was as a researcher in mathematics and AI and since that he has spent more than 15 years in medical device engineering. He is the named inventor on many patents in retinal imaging and machine vision and has presented at over 50 conferences as well as being an invited speaker at TEDx Glasgow.**



# EVENTS LISTINGS

## **WellVet Weekend**

24 - 26 August - Girton College, Cambridge

## **RCVS Fellowship Day**

5 October - The Royal Institution, London

## **BVNA Congress**

12 - 14 October - Telford International Centre, Shropshire



# Disciplinary Committee extends adjournment for Dyfed-based veterinary surgeon

The Disciplinary Committee of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) has decided at a hearing held on Monday 30 July to further postpone its sanction decision for a Dyfed-based veterinary surgeon for twelve months.

Lynn Jo Ann Davies MRCVS first appeared before the Committee on Monday 22 and Tuesday 23 January 2018 in respect of a number of separate charges related to two drink driving offences, breaching the terms of her Undertakings to the College as part of its Health Protocol, and being under the influence of alcohol on three occasions while she was on duty as a veterinary surgeon in December 2016.

Dr Davies admitted all five charges against her and admitted that this meant she was unfit to practise veterinary surgery and that she was guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. The Committee accepted her admissions and found, with the exception of one allegation, that her conduct was disgraceful in a professional respect.

At its first hearing the Committee having considered both aggravating and mitigating circumstances decided to postpone the hearing for six months on the basis of Dr Davies' entering into a new set of Undertakings, including one not to practise veterinary surgery and to remain abstinent from alcohol during the period of postponement.

On Monday 30 July 2018 the Disciplinary Committee resumed its sanction inquiry decision. Dr Davies' Counsel submitted on her behalf that Dr Davies wished to return to practise and the Committee reviewed her witness statements, documentary proof and medical records that she provided to demonstrate she had complied with the her Undertakings given at the last hearing.

"All members of the Committee considered that the account she gave of herself in the witness box was confident and they were reassured by her evidence as to how she now sets about managing her levels of stress and how she reacted to stressful incidents," Stuart Drummond

Stuart Drummond, Chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "Having had the opportunity to see and hear from the respondent when she gave evidence and when she answered the questions put to her, the view formed of her current state of health was favourable. All members of the Committee considered that the account she gave of herself in the witness box was confident and they were reassured by her evidence as to how she now sets about managing her levels of stress and how she reacted to stressful incidents.

"Such concerns as the Committee had about her return to practice concerned her ability to receive support from a third party who would act as a mentor...the Committee therefore requires the Respondent to identify, within a period of one month of today's date, a veterinary surgeon who would agree to act as her mentor. That mentor would have to be a veterinary surgeon acceptable to the College as someone suitable to act in that capacity and that mentor would have to be approved before the Respondent could resume practice.

"A further requirement of the Committee would be that the Respondent should make a disclosure to any new employer of the fact of her appearances before this Committee in January 2018 and in July 2018 and of the decisions of the Committee in relation to both such Hearings. The final requirement of the Committee in this respect is that the respondent should not accept a 'sole charge position' at any time during her employment during this next period of postponement of sanction."

The Committee directed that the hearing be postponed for a further 12 months.

Please note: this news story is to assist with understanding the circumstances of the case and the Committee's decision, it does not form part of the findings or decision. The Committee's full findings and decision is the only authoritative document.

# DC strikes off vet who illegally imported puppies

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has directed the Registrar to remove a Greater Manchester-based veterinary surgeon from the Register after he pleaded guilty to illegally importing puppies to the UK.

The Disciplinary Committee hearing for Viktor Molnar took place on Thursday 2 August 2018 in regards to his conviction at Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court in March 2018 of five counts of importing puppies to the UK in contravention of the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and other Mammals) Order 1974.

At that court hearing he also pleaded guilty to one count of keeping premises as a pet shop without the authority of a licence granted by a local authority. As a result of his conviction Mr Molnar was sentenced to 270 hours of unpaid supervised work and was ordered to pay compensation of £2,683.93 and costs of £250.

"The Committee accepts the College's submission that the fact that they [the puppies] were imported contrary to the law of the UK, because they were underage and had not been properly vaccinated, undermines the integrity of a system which is designed to ensure that effective vaccination and precautions against disease take place in every case," Ian Green, Disciplinary Committee chair

The Committee, which proceeded with the hearing in Mr Molnar's absence, found that the RCVS charges against Mr Molnar were proven and went on to consider whether, individually and cumulatively, they resulted in Mr Molnar being unfit to practice being a veterinary surgeon.

Ian Green, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The Committee accepts the College's submission that the fact that they [the puppies] were imported contrary to the law of the UK, because they were underage and had not been properly vaccinated, undermines the integrity of a system which is designed to ensure that effective vaccination and precautions against disease take place in every case.

"The Committee also notes that the convictions in this case were directly linked to the respondent's veterinary practice, as they related to animals sold from his veterinary practice address. By operating an unlicensed pet shop, and by doing so through an email address that referred to his occupation as a veterinary surgeon, the respondent was abusing his position as a veterinary surgeon, and acting in a way that was liable to undermine the reputation of the profession."

The Committee therefore found that, because Mr Molnar's conviction was directly linked to his veterinary practice and posed a substantial risk to animal welfare and public health, his conviction meant his conduct fell far short of what was expected of a professional.

"The Committee considered that the respondent, as a veterinary surgeon, must have known the serious implications and consequences of what he was doing by importing these puppies unlawfully. The public should expect to be able to trust a veterinary surgeon to ensure that his conduct does not put at risk the health of both animals and humans," Ian Green. In considering the sanction for Mr Molnar the Committee considered that, while he had no previous convictions or adverse professional findings against him, the case against him was very serious "because of the risk of serious harm both to animals and the public, as well as being for financial gain."

Ian Green said: "The Committee considered that the respondent, as a veterinary surgeon, must have known the serious implications and consequences of what he was doing by importing these puppies unlawfully. The public should expect to be able to trust a veterinary surgeon to ensure that his conduct does not put at risk the health of both animals and humans."

Mr Green added that the Committee felt that the only appropriate sanction was to direct the Registrar to remove Mr Molnar's name from the Register.

Mr Molnar can lodge an appeal with the Privy Council within 28 days of being notified of the Disciplinary Committee's decision.

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In view of the sanctions already imposed by the court in Ireland, and his suspension by the VCI, the Disciplinary Committee decided that a period of two years' suspension from the UK Register of Veterinary Surgeons was the

appropriate sanction.

Professor Barr said: "Whilst Mr Adams would be able to practise in the Republic of Ireland before he was able to practise in the United Kingdom again, the Committee considered that the conditions attached to his supervision in Ireland meant that he would be subject to close supervision before he was allowed to practise again in the United Kingdom and that only a longer period of suspension would allow this to happen.

"The Committee therefore decided that only a suspension of two years would maintain public confidence in the profession and declare and uphold proper standards of conduct for the serious nature of these charges."

Mr Adams has 28 days from being informed about the Disciplinary Committee's decision to make an appeal to the Privy Council.

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# VNDC strikes off West Midlands veterinary nurse for misleading charity

The RCVS Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee has directed the Registrar to remove a West Midlands-based veterinary nurse from the Register after it found that she had misled and been dishonest with a charity.

The hearing for Laura Jane Garfield took place between Tuesday 24 and Friday 27 July 2018 and related to the allegations that, on 12 March 2017, when meeting with a representative of the Retired Greyhound Trust (RGT) she had told them that she had possession of Lola, a greyhound; that she proposed keeping Lola living with her as an adoptee; and that she would not part with possession of Lola except to the RGT.

This was despite the fact that, at the time of signing the adoption agreement, she had already given Lola to another charity named Greyhound Gap and that, as a result, her conduct was misleading and dishonest.

In considering the facts of the case, the Committee found the charges and all constituent parts proven and went on to consider whether this amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

"The gravamen [seriousness] of the respondent's dishonest conduct was that she set one dog rescue charity against another, caused them to spend publicly raised funds on a legal dispute about who should be allowed to retain Lola when those precious funds ought, instead, to have been spent on their charitable objectives,"

Judith Way, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The end result of the respondent's decisions and conduct meant that RGT was persuaded to pass lawful possession and ownership of the dog Lola to the respondent when it would not have agreed to do so had it been told the truth by her.... In truth, the respondent was not going to adopt and re-home Lola herself. Instead the respondent's plan and intention was that Lola should be passed on to a third party who had been recommended by a rival dog rescue charity for rehome and adoption."

She added: "The consequence was that a social media dispute broke out when the rival dog charity decided to attempt to take advantage of the erroneous belief of the respondent that a decision had been taken by RGT to put Lola to sleep. The publicity generated by the respondent's erroneous belief... was obviously adverse.... The gravamen [seriousness] of the respondent's dishonest conduct was that she set one dog rescue charity against another, caused them to spend publicly raised funds on a legal dispute about who should be allowed to retain Lola when those precious funds ought, instead, to have been spent on their charitable objectives."

The Committee judged that the charge and its parts constituted serious professional misconduct and went on to consider the sanction against Mrs Garfield.

In considering the proportionate sanction the Committee took into account both mitigating and aggravating factors. In terms of aggravating factors the Committee considered that the dishonesty was pre-meditated, that she accused members of a rescue charity of lying and demonstrated no or only minimal insight into her wrongdoing.

"All of these consequences, actual and potential, stem from the respondent's premeditated act of dishonesty in relation to which the Committee considers she showed very limited insight prior to this disciplinary hearing, as she did during the course of this hearing.... In the result, it is the conclusion and decision of this Committee that the only proper sanction that can be imposed in this case is that the respondent's name should be removed from the Register," Judith Way.

In mitigation the Committee considered that Mrs Garfield had cooperated with the College in its investigations, that she had acted in the genuine belief that she was acting in the best interests of Lola and that her conduct did not put Lola at risk or cause her to suffer any adverse consequences as a result. The Committee also accepted the testimonials and positive evidence from colleagues.

However, the Committee decided that removal from the Register would be the only appropriate sanction. Summing up Judith Way said: "The reputational consequences for RGT were potentially significant bearing in mind that it is a rescue organisation with some 57 or so branches across the country.

"All of these consequences, actual and potential, stem from the respondent's premeditated act of dishonesty in relation to which the Committee considers she showed very limited insight prior to this disciplinary hearing, as she did during the course of this hearing.... In the result, it is the conclusion and decision of this Committee that the only proper sanction that can be imposed in this case is that the respondent's name should be removed from the Register."

Mrs Garfield has 28 days from being informed of the Committee's decision to appeal.

Please note: this news story is to assist with understanding the circumstances of the case and the Committee's decision, it does not form part of the findings or decision. The Committee's full findings and decision is the only authoritative document.

# No finding of disgraceful conduct for London-based vet

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has found a London-based veterinary surgeon not guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

The Disciplinary Committee hearing for Sarah Lee Dantas-Holmes MRCVS took place from Monday 16 July to Thursday 19 July and concerned the death of a cat, Hope.

On 19 April 2017 Hope was due to undergo an operation under general anaesthetic to explore a growth inside her mouth, and the charges related to Hope's unexpected death and Dr Dantas-Holmes' subsequent communication with Hope's owners.

Dr Dantas-Holmes accepted that Hope's death was, most likely due to her failing to flush fluid through the giving set attached to an intravenous drip, leaving air in the tubing causing some air to enter Hope's bloodstream when the cannula was placed and the giving set's control opened.

The first set of charges relate to Dr Dantas-Holmes' initial phone call to Hope's owners ten minutes after Hope's death, in which she told one of the owners that Hope had died because of a reaction to anaesthetic drugs; Dr Dantas-Holmes failed to mention that the cause of death was still to be determined; and failed to mention that a likely cause was in fact an air embolism and/or a complication relating to the intravenous drip.

Following her initial phone call to the Owners Dr Dantas-Holmes viewed CCTV of her actions after which the owners came into the practice later in the day, and the communications during that time constitute the second set of charges: that, during this meeting, Dr Dantas-Holmes didn't correct her earlier statements about the cause of Hope's death, and that she didn't mention that there was an ongoing investigation or that a likely cause of death was an air embolism and/or complication.

The third set of charges related to Dr Dantas-Holmes' subsequent clinical records, in which it was alleged that Dr Dantas-Holmes failed to include references to the findings on review of the CCTV footage of Hope's death, and the possibility of an air embolism and/or complication relating to the intravenous drip. The fourth and final set of charges were that her conduct was misleading, and/or dishonest.

"The particular circumstances of this case demonstrate how important it is to communicate effectively and the need for the veterinary surgeon to ensure that their clinical records for which they are wholly responsible, are complete. The Committee concluded that its findings demonstrated a departure from professional standards but that the falling short was not so grave as to amount to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect," Stuart Drummond, Disciplinary Committee chair

The Committee found, relating to the first set of charges, that Dr Dantas-Holmes did tell the owners that Hope died because of a reaction to the drugs, but that given the short nature of the phone call to the owners and the distressing circumstances there was no duty to discuss the investigation, or to mention the likely cause being an air embolism.

Relating to the second set of charges, namely the communications with the owners when they came to the practice, the Committee found that Dr Dantas-Holmes did fail to mention that anaesthetic drugs might not have been the cause, and that she also failed to mention the investigation. Dr Dantas-Holmes had agreed with the Practice Manager, however, that she would not discuss the possibility of an air embolism or complication, and so that charge was not found proved.

On consideration of whether Dr Dantas-Holmes had failed to include relevant findings in the clinical reports, the Committee found both charges proved, and, in relation to the final set of charges, the Committee found that while Dr Dantas-Holmes had misled Hope's owners, it was unintentional, and she had not been dishonest.

Ultimately, the Committee found Dr Dantas Holmes not guilty of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

Stuart Drummond, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: 'The findings of this Committee demonstrate that there were errors and omissions in communications with the owners. When communicating with a client it is the professional's responsibility to ensure that the client has heard and understood what has been said. The importance of good and effective communication is particularly important when an unforeseen and shocking event occurs such as it did

in this case.

"The particular circumstances of this case demonstrate how important it is to communicate effectively and the need for the veterinary surgeon to ensure that their clinical records for which they are wholly responsible, are complete.

"The Committee concluded that its findings demonstrated a departure from professional standards but that the falling short was not so grave as to amount to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect."

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# Disciplinary Committee strikes off vet convicted of animal welfare offences

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has directed the Registrar to remove a Leeds-based veterinary surgeon from the Register following his conviction for animal welfare offences in 2016.

The Disciplinary Committee hearing for Gary James Cassius Samuel MRCVS took place on Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 July in respect of the fact that he was convicted, on 21 January 2016, at Leeds Magistrate Court of five offences contrary to the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The charges related to causing unnecessary suffering to a number of animals including twelve dogs and four cats and failing to take steps to ensure that the needs of the animals for which he was responsible were met. These animals were kept at the Armley Veterinary Practice, for which Dr Samuel was, at the time, practice principal.

In relation to these convictions on 7 March 2016 he was sentenced to 12 weeks' imprisonment suspended for 12 months on the condition he completed 150 hours' unpaid work and paid a fine of £100; was ordered to pay costs of £500 and a victim surcharge of £80; and made subject to a disqualification order for three years.

Dr Samuel appealed against his conviction with the appeal being heard in April 2018 – Dr Samuel's appeal was dismissed in respect of five of the charges but was upheld in respect of one charge, which, as a result, did not form part of the College's case.

Dr Samuel declined to attend the hearing in person and was not represented before the Disciplinary Committee. In considering the facts of the charges against Dr Samuel the Committee found them proven.

The Committee then went on to consider whether the proven charges, both individually and cumulatively, rendered Dr Samuel unfit to practise as a veterinary surgeon. The College's case was that the convictions concerned animal welfare and therefore went to the heart of his practice as a vet, that Dr Samuel behaved in a manner incompatible with being a veterinary surgeon, that he failed in his core responsibility as a veterinary surgeon to protect and act in the best interests of animal welfare, and that he maintained he had no responsibility for the animals on his practice premises – an assertion referred to as 'an extraordinary position for a veterinary surgeon to take'.

Ian Green, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "Just as the judgment of the Crown Court and the Magistrates Court had found, the Committee also found that Dr Samuel must have known that the animals were in distress and were in a neglected state. The Committee was sure that Dr Samuel must have been aware of the animals notwithstanding his continued denial. The Committee concluded that Dr Samuel was unfit to practise because of the facts underlying the convictions. Dr Samuel had an overriding duty of care for the animals and to take action in relation to their health and welfare because they were living under the roof of his veterinary practice."

"The Committee decided that the behaviour found proved was fundamentally incompatible with being a veterinary surgeon because in this case there had been a serious departure from standards as set out in the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons," said Ian Green.

In considering its sanction against Dr Samuel, the Committee concluded that removal from the Register was the most appropriate option. It took into account the fact that the animals were found starving in a cellar without water, that Dr Samuel had not demonstrated insight into the serious nature of his offences, that he continued to deny responsibility and, furthermore, found no evidence that he no longer posed a risk to animals in the future.

Ian Green added: "The Committee decided that the behaviour found proved was fundamentally incompatible with being a veterinary surgeon because in this case there had been a serious departure from standards as set out in the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons. ... Furthermore, there had been serious harm caused to a number of animals and a risk of harm to a number of other animals."

Dr Samuel has 28 days from being informed of the Disciplinary Committee's decision in which to make an appeal to the Privy Council.

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