

RCVS news

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*Text-only version of
RCVS News email*

RCVS Council agrees wide-ranging review of guidance on 'under care' and 24/7 cover

Please note: we published a response to concerns arising from this Council decision on 19 June 2019.

The Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) yesterday gave the go-ahead for a wide-ranging review of a number of key provisions of the supporting guidance to the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct, following ongoing discussions around trialling the development of telemedicine services, including remote prescribing, in UK veterinary practice.

The review was recommended to RCVS Council by its Standards Committee following its lengthy and detailed exploration of the implications of new technologies for both animal health and welfare and veterinary regulation – a key strategic objective for the RCVS, first identified as part of the Vet Futures initiative in 2015.

The main areas under consideration include the provision of 24-hour emergency cover and the interpretation and application of an animal being under the care of a veterinary surgeon.

During the course of its discussions, which included numerous meetings and reports, a public consultation and examination of external legal advice, the Committee identified a number of anomalies in the College's existing guidance that could affect how the Code's provisions were applied across a range of different scenarios.

Chair of the Standards Committee, Dr Kate Richards [pictured], said: "It became clear to us that we could not consider telemedicine and remote prescribing in isolation and that it raised broader questions around the appropriateness of, and justification for, certain elements of existing RCVS guidance.

"I'm therefore pleased that RCVS Council has decided that the right and responsible approach is first to conduct a full review of these provisions."

It is anticipated that the review will require wide engagement from all relevant sectors, potentially including a Select Committee-style hearing in certain areas. This would help to ensure any decision to treat different groups differently, in relation to 'under care' and 'out-of-hours', is both reasoned and justified.

In the meantime, as this review will take some time to complete, the College should like to make clear that the current provisions of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct and its supporting guidance remain in full effect.

Further information about the review will be made available in due course.

RCVS Council agrees changes to CPD policy

At RCVS Council's June meeting, members agreed wide-reaching changes to the College's policies on continuing professional development (CPD), including the hourly requirement and the processes for recording learning and development.

The paper had been brought forward by the RCVS Education Committee, and was previously approved by the RCVS Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council at its May meeting, with six key recommendations for changes to CPD policy:

To change the CPD requirement – as stated in the Codes of Professional Conduct – to 35 hours per calendar year for veterinary surgeons and 15 hours in the same period for veterinary nurses, from the start of 2020. This replaces the previous requirement of 105 hours and 45 hours of CPD over a rolling three-year period for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses respectively.

Making the use of the new CPD platform (currently in development) for recording learning and development mandatory from 2022.

Giving veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who, upon renewing their registration, have confirmed their compliance with the requirement, the opportunity to download a certificate demonstrating this.

The introduction of an administration fee (which is currently yet to be determined) that will be charged to any veterinary surgeons or veterinary nurses who continually (defined as two or more years in a row) fail to confirm their compliance with the requirement and/or fail to respond to requests from the College for their CPD records.

Changing the words of the Codes of Professional Conduct to include the fact that CPD should be 'regular' and 'relevant'. The continuation of the CPD Referral Group, which meets to consider what further steps should be taken in cases of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses who continually fail to comply with CPD requirements and/or respond to requests.

RCVS Council agreed, by a majority vote, to approve the above recommendations.

RCVS Council member Dr Sue Paterson, who introduced the paper and is the incoming Chair of the Education Committee, said: "While the majority of both veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses do recognise the importance of continuous learning and development for their professional practice, their clients and, ultimately, animal health and welfare, it's clear that there has been a cohort of people in both professions who take a more lax view of undertaking CPD.

"The changes to our CPD policy are intended to tighten up our processes and are targeted at those who, when challenged about why they have not undertaken sufficient CPD, say that they will meet the requirement one or two years down the line as part of the rolling three-year system. The administration fee also recognises the amount of time and effort spent by staff in the College in contacting and chasing up those people who aren't compliant.

"However, we also recognise the fact that some members of the profession may have personal circumstances that means they are unable to meet their CPD requirement in a given year – whether that's because of parental leave or other caring responsibilities, or long-term sick leave. So we will be retaining flexibility within the system and will be considerate and compassionate when taking into account individual circumstances when considering non-compliance.

"Furthermore, in light of the fact that the majority of vets and vet nurses do meet the requirement but also often go above-and-beyond it, we also thought it would be a good idea to introduce a downloadable compliance certificate in recognition of their achievement. This could be displayed, for example, in the practice and would be particularly useful for Practice Standard Scheme assessments.

"Over the coming months we will be fine-tuning the details of these policies and will be making further decisions about how they will work in practice in due course."

Vets and nurses who feel they will struggle to complete their CPD requirement within a 12-month period due to personal circumstances can contact RCVS confidentially at any time to discuss their difficulties on cpd@rcvs.org.uk

For full details about the decision, please download the RCVS Council paper.

Landmark 2019 Surveys of the Professions launched

This week we will be launching our landmark Surveys of the Professions 2019 sent to every member of the RCVS and registered veterinary nurse to help get a current snapshot of the professions.

The Surveys are conducted every four to five years and ask vets and vet nurses respectively to answer questions on a wide variety of subjects. This includes demographic data (for example, socio-economic background, educational attainment, race/ethnicity, disability), work-related data (for example, employment status, location of workplace, type of workplace, hours of work, position in practice) and information about professional achievement (for example, hours of continuing professional development (CPD) undertaken and extra qualifications earned).

Furthermore, the Surveys, which are conducted on the College's behalf by the Institute for Employment Studies, also ask respondents about their views on different aspects of their profession, including career plans, challenges facing the profession, and wellbeing.

Additional questions for this year's Surveys include those around the professions' views of the RCVS, including its values, how it should communicate, and what it should prioritise in future years.

Lizzie Lockett, RCVS CEO (pictured right), said: "The results of the Surveys form a very important 'snapshot' of the profession at a given point in time, but they also prove useful for years to come in terms of how the College develops its regulatory and educational policy, the areas it chooses to focus on and the issues it chooses to tackle.

"The ensuing reports are also used by a myriad of other individuals, such as those in academia, government and representative bodies, as well as journalists. It's therefore really important that we have as accurate a picture as possible. So although completing the Surveys is entirely voluntary, we strongly encourage members of the professions to take the time to complete them. It will, ultimately, help the development of appropriate and supportive policies for your profession."

In addition to the two main surveys, aimed at vets and vet nurses respectively, there will be an additional survey for MsRCVS who practise overseas. This survey aims to better understand why they continue to retain their MRCVS status, what this status means in the countries in which they work, global attitudes towards the RCVS and how the College could improve its communication with them.

RCVS Fellowship changes governance structure

The RCVS Fellowship scheme, which was relaunched with new routes to entry in 2016, is making significant changes to its governance structure, including the composition of the Fellowship Board and a new process for electing certain Board members.

The decision to create an expanded Fellowship Board was taken last year and approved this April at the new Advancement of the Professions Committee, in order to allow the Fellowship's governance structure to better meet the initiative's ambitious three-year plan.

The three-year plan, which was announced at last year's Fellowship Day, includes the following objectives:

- Promoting scientific excellence: the Fellowship will support opportunities to advance veterinary standards by working collaboratively to examine the current knowledge base, identifying knowledge gaps, and supporting the translation of knowledge and research into veterinary practice.
- Furthering professional skills and practice and invigorating creativity: this includes committing the Fellowship to help enhance the professional skills and practice of all veterinarians, wherever they are on their career path, by sharing best practice. Under this path the Fellowship will also act as a spur for creative thinking and innovation to address the challenges faced by the profession.
- Promoting public awareness of veterinary science: under this ambition the Fellowship will aim to be one of the trusted and authoritative voices within the veterinary profession that is able to engage with the general public to raise awareness and understanding of veterinary science.
- To meet these plans, the Board will be expanded from seven members to a 10-strong team with new positions, including the immediate past-Chair of the Fellowship Board and two members responsible for delivering specific projects and engaging with the wider Fellowship.

As well as additional members, it was also decided that some key positions on the Board should be filled by election from within the Fellowship – these being: the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Fellowship Board and the two new Fellow members responsible for delivering projects and engagement.

This year elections will be held for the Chairmanship and the two projects and engagement Board members. An election for the Vice-Chair position will be held in 2020.

The nomination period for Fellows of the RCVS to put themselves forward for the 2019 positions is due to open next week, with the election period due to start towards the end of July. All Fellows will be eligible to put themselves forward as a candidate and vote in these elections – including Honorary Fellows and the 2019 cohort of Fellows who have recently had their entry to the Fellowship confirmed by letter.

Anthony Roberts, our Director of Leadership and Innovation, said: "This is an excellent opportunity for Fellows to help lead the Fellowship towards its ambition to become a learned society and a source of informed, evidence-based opinion on a variety of veterinary matters.

"We encourage Fellows to put themselves forward for these exciting and influential positions".

Fellows will be emailed next week with more details on the election process and to how to apply to stand for election.

Once the candidates have been confirmed an email with a link to an online voting platform will be sent to all those eligible to vote next month.

Ethics Review Panel made permanent fixture by RCVS Council

The RCVS Ethics Review Panel has been made a permanent service provided by the College after RCVS Council members unanimously voted for it to become a permanent group reporting to the Standards Committee.

The Panel was started on a trial basis in July 2016, with the aim of providing a route for ethics review for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses conducting practice-based research who might not otherwise have access to an ethics review system in academia and industry.

Although the trial was only originally concerned with research projects related to small animals, over its course it was expanded to include equine and farm animal-based research as well, with members of the Panel representing a wide range of subject areas as well as veterinary nurse and lay representation.

Since July 2016, the Panel has received some 71 applications from practice-based researchers for ethics review, of which 23 have now been granted full approval from the members. Of the 71 applications received so far, 41 concerned research about dogs, seven about cats, four about farm animals, two about equids, five about other species, two related to social studies, three concerned both cats and dogs, and seven were unclassified.

Professor David Morton CBE, a veterinary ethicist, chairs the Panel and said: "We are delighted that the members of RCVS Council saw fit to establish the Ethics Review Panel on a permanent basis. Ethics should be a key consideration in any research project involving animals to ensure that the health and welfare of those involved in any study are a primary concern and that questions of 'ought we do this' are considered alongside 'can we do this'.

"As a veterinarian and ethicist it has been very gratifying for me that the Ethics Review Panel has been there to help guide researchers and help safeguard both animal health and welfare. It is also of benefit to the researchers as many veterinary journals now ask for evidence of ethics review and approval as a precondition of publishing papers."

Over the course of the two years since the pilot was launched, there has been a steady increase in the number of applications received by the Panel. The remaining applications that have not received full approval are currently under review to give the researchers guidance on how they can make their research more scientifically and ethically sound in the expectation that, with some amendments, it will be approved.

Dr Kate Richards, Chair of our Standards Committee, added: "The feedback received about the Panel suggests that it was an invaluable resource for practice-based vets and vet nurses who may not have access to the same resources as their colleagues working in the universities or for commercial companies. Comments from participants have also mentioned how vital this service was, and they were impressed that it was free as well.

"One thing we will be doing over the coming months is recruiting more panel members and also working to ensure that applications are acknowledged and processed in a more timely manner, as this is one area in which some of the feedback was quite critical. Not only will the Panel provide access to practice-based researchers but will ensure that their work will be eligible for publication and, often at the same time, adding to the evidence base for veterinary medicine."

Further details about the Ethics Review Panel, how to make an application and the process by which it makes determinations on applications can be found on the Panel's dedicated website.

Anyone who is potentially interested in becoming a Panel member is encouraged to contact our Advice and Standards Team for an initial discussion of the role on ethics@rcvs.org.uk

346 vets removed from the Register for non-payment of fees

The RCVS has removed 346 veterinary surgeons from the Register for non-payment of their annual renewal fee.

The final deadline for paying the fee was 31 May 2019, with the 346 who did not pay being removed on 1 June 2019, compared to 308 last year. Those who have been removed from the Register but have subsequently paid to be restored are not named on the list.

The RCVS sent reminders to members of the profession, including emails, text messages, and letters, reminding them that the fee was due. Additional letters were sent to those for whom we do not hold an email address or mobile telephone number.

A list of those who have not paid their fee has now been published and can be found on the RCVS website. Practices are encouraged to check the list to ensure that no employees are named.

Anyone removed from the Register can no longer call themselves a veterinary surgeon, use the postnominals MRCVS or carry out acts of veterinary surgery – to do so would be in breach of the Veterinary Surgeons Act and therefore illegal.

We would also like to remind veterinary surgeons that, although paying the fee is required to remain on the Register, to complete their registration in full they need to confirm they are compliant with the continuing professional development (CPD) requirement and complete the criminal disclosures form. Both of these are required by the Code of Professional Conduct and can be completed on the 'My Account' area.

Anyone with queries about completing the registration process should contact our Registration Department on 020 7202 0707 or registration@rcvs.org.uk.

900 vets are yet to complete their annual renewal declarations

Over 900 vets have yet to complete their annual renewal declarations and are therefore not compliant with the Code of Professional Conduct, despite having renewed their registration by paying their annual fees. The annual declaration of CPD compliance and of any criminal convictions, cautions or adverse findings, is an important part of the annual renewal process and has been a Code requirement for a number of years now.

The deadline for completing the declarations was 1 June 2019, and we are urging all vets who have not yet completed this part of the process to do so as soon as possible so that they can become compliant with the Code. The Registration Department, in collaboration with the Professional Conduct Department, will be contacting all of these vets to inform them of the situation. In the meantime, vets can still complete their declarations online in the RCVS My Account area or by contacting the Registration Department on 020 7202 0707.

The above section regarding annual renewal declarations was added to this news story 28 June 2019.

'Precision veterinary medicine' the theme for second ViVet Innovation Symposium

The RCVS landmark innovation initiative ViVet will focus on how rapidly developing technology and data-driven practice will transform the veterinary professions and the care they provide for its second-ever Innovation Symposium this autumn.

The ViVet Innovation Symposium takes place on 1 October at The Lowry Theatre in Salford, Greater Manchester, and will see a number of guest speakers explore, with delegates, how artificial intelligence (AI), big data and genomics are and will be changing the profession by putting more information in the hands of the veterinary practitioner than ever before.

The ViVet programme grew out of the joint RCVS and British Veterinary Association (BVA) Vet Futures project which had, as one of its core aims, the establishment of a project to help encourage veterinary innovation and entrepreneurship and, through case studies and thought leadership, help the profession understand and thrive in the changing environment.

To this end, this year's keynote speaker will be Nancy Rademaker, an IT professional with first-hand experiences straight from the places where technology is shaping our future. She will cover the impact of digitization on customer behavior and how that affects the way organisations should interact with customers while giving insights into how the veterinary professions can prepare for and thrive in the future.

Nancy has over 20 years of experience in how technology is transforming society, working for different IT companies, amongst which five years for Microsoft in the Netherlands and Europe. She loves to share her passion for technology and combines that valuable inside information with her experience in training and education.

Other speakers confirmed for the day include:

- Kathy Turner, Corporate Vice President and General Manager for IDEXX Laboratories' Europe, Middle East and Africa Companion Animal Commercial Operations who will be speaking about changing customer attitudes and preventative veterinary medicine.
- Matthew Smith, Director of Business Development at Microsoft, who will be speaking about AI and agriculture.
- Iain Maclaren, Senior Market Development Manager in Agrigenomics, Food and Consumer Genomics at Oxford Nanopore Technologies Ltd who will be speaking about low-cost and accessible genomic sequencing.
- During the course of the event we will also be hosting the ViVet Student Veterinary Innovation Competition final, which sees three finalist teams going head to head presenting in front of a panel of industry professionals including BVA President Simon Doherty.

Anthony Roberts, RCVS Director of Leadership and Innovation, said: "Since our inaugural innovation symposium in 2017, innovation and technology adoption in the wider animal health and welfare sector has accelerated. In the longer term it is clear that technology will fundamentally change the role of the vet and how veterinary services are delivered.

"It is ViVet's role to ensure veterinary professionals can navigate this transition and remain at the centre of animal health and welfare. It does this by providing insights as to what the future could look like, and supporting veterinary professionals to develop the skills they need to take charge of and to shape that future, by leading innovation.

"This event provides an extraordinary opportunity for any vet or veterinary nurse who wants to understand how to adapt and use these new developments, learn about precision veterinary medicine, what it means for the future of veterinary care, and learn about new roles for vets being produced by these changes."

Tickets for the event can be secured through the Innovation Symposium's dedicated Eventbrite page with discounted tickets available for veterinary students and veterinary nurses.

More information about the ViVet project, as well as videos and reports from the 2017 Innovation Symposium at which the project was launched, can be found on the project's dedicated website.

Veterinary schools seeking input from graduate employers

Following the Veterinary Schools Council's inaugural survey of veterinary employers in 2017, the veterinary schools have now joined forces with the RCVS to launch a new survey for employers of recent graduates.

This joint survey will continue to give employers a means of providing their insights on recent graduates from veterinary schools of the UK and Ireland, while reducing the number of survey requests that employers receive from individual veterinary schools.

The survey results will also provide valuable information about Graduate Outcomes such as preparedness for practice, and experience of the Professional Development Phase, against which any future changes in policy can be evaluated.

In the 2017 survey, employers commended the communications skills and empathy of graduates while rating them lower on financial and business management. The new survey will enable veterinary schools to see any shifts since that time, while previous feedback on the survey's format has been incorporated to make it simpler and clearer for employers.

In addition to the employer survey, the Veterinary Schools Council is launching a parallel survey for graduates, providing further insights into how veterinary education can respond to the needs of the workplace. This too will support future educational development work carried out by the RCVS.

Professor Ewan Cameron, Chair of the Veterinary Schools Council and RCVS Council member, said:

"Two years ago we made a commitment to an improved and ongoing conversation with the employers of our graduates. Since conducting that first survey we've met with employers' groups to discuss the findings, the veterinary curriculum and the complexities around areas such as emotional resilience.

"Vet schools and employers working together is part of optimising the transition for new vets into the workplace. Another key voice is that of the recent graduates themselves, which is why we are introducing a new national survey for three-to-five-year graduated vets as well.

"This desire to listen and adapt is how our vet schools became ranked among the very best in the world. We look forward to continuing the dialogue and helping to create the profession of tomorrow."

Professor Susan Rhind, Chair of the VSC Education Committee, said:

"As educators we want our decisions to be evidence-based, so this survey will be invaluable to informing our work in readiness for practice. Over time we are hoping to build a full picture that reveals trends. This will provide a strong basis for the allocation of resources to certain areas, as well as direction for conversations with employers.

"As the workplace evolves so too must veterinary education. We're very pleased to make the voice of employers a part of this process. The more people who respond to the survey, the more meaningful the insights will be."

Professor Susan Dawson (pictured), Chair of RCVS Education Committee, added:

"A key component of the Graduate Outcomes project has been that the RCVS as regulator should work very closely with the vet schools so that they are working towards the common goal of making sure that veterinary graduates are the right fit for the profession and the improvement of that transitional stage. We are very glad to be working with the VSC on this survey, to ensure that we have relevant information against which the impact of future educational interventions can be measured. The honest and frank feedback of employers and graduates on how veterinary education is working – and where it is not – is vital for our aims."

Employers can click [here](#) to access the new survey.

Note: this is for employers who have employed someone who graduated in the last two years from a veterinary school in the UK or Ireland.

Recent graduates can click [here](#) for their survey

Note: this is for vets who graduated between 2014 and 2016 from a veterinary school in the UK or Ireland.

RCVS conducting annual VN CPD audit

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) is currently undertaking its annual audit of veterinary nurses' compliance with continuing professional development (CPD), with requests sent out last week.

Under the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct, all veterinary nurses are expected to maintain and develop the knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence, demonstrating this by carrying out at least 45 hours of CPD over a rolling three-year period.

This year, 1130 registered veterinary nurses have been asked to share their CPD records for 2016 to 2018 with the RCVS to demonstrate that they have complied with the CPD requirements. Some 773 of the nurses contacted were from a random sample across all UK postcodes, 180 were nurses who were found to be non-compliant during the 2018 audit, 58 nurses did not respond to the 2018 audit and 119 nurses declared they were non-compliant during the annual renewal for nurses at the end of last year.

This year's audit comes on the back of a decision by VN Council in February 2019 to expedite the referral process for veterinary nurses who have continuously not complied with their CPD requirement for three or more years nor responded to requests to share their records.

In the 2018 VN CPD Audit, 28% of respondents were found to be non-compliant and, particularly concerning to members of the VN Council, was the fact that eight members of the profession had been included in a total of seven of the previous annual CPD audits and, each time, were found to be non-compliant.

As a result, VN Council decided that any veterinary nurse who was audited and found to be non-compliant in three consecutive years should have their records sent to the CPD Referral Group, a subcommittee comprising members of RCVS and VN Council who review cases of CPD non-compliance for both vets and VNs.

The CPD Referral Group makes decisions on how to follow-up these cases including, in the most serious instances, referring individuals on to the College's Professional Conduct Department for further investigation.

"The main thing with CPD is that it is relevant to your role and supports you to provide the best care to your patients. It can involve easily accessible options such as webinars, lectures, reading relevant clinical papers or reflecting on your development. It's really important for us to get this point across – CPD is incredibly important for a flourishing profession but it doesn't need to be expensive, stressful or demanding" says RCVS Director of Veterinary Nursing Julie Dugmore.

"Whilst we recognise that the majority of veterinary nurses understand the importance of CPD to their development and comply with the requirement, a substantial proportion of the profession has remained consistently non-compliant in previous years. We are hoping to see these numbers improve, with increased CPD compliance in this year's audit."

The deadline for nurses sending through their records is Friday 28 June 2019. Nurses can either share their PDR with RCVS Senior Education Officer Jenny Soreskog-Turp at j.soreskog-turp@rcvs.org.uk, email their records to vnpr@rcvs.org.uk or send by post to the RCVS offices at 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF.

For more information about the CPD requirement for both vets and vet nurses, what activities might count as CPD, how to record your CPD and a series of frequently asked questions about CPD please visit our dedicated page: www.rcvs.org.uk/cpd.

RCVS reports on 2018's achievements

The RCVS has published its Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2018, highlighting major achievements from over the course of the year as well as the spending, the allocation of funds and other financial matters.

Some of the work highlighted includes the launch of the Graduate Outcomes consultation, and the Edward Jenner Leadership Programme (a massive open online course) as well as the successful continuation of the Mind Matters Initiative, and the social media campaign run jointly with BVA on the advantages to the public of having their animal registered with a vet.

It also covers exploring an outcomes-based continuing professional development (CPD) approach, undertaking a review of Schedule 3 and the Veterinary Surgeons Act, and planning for the UK's exit from the European Union, mitigating the potential risks in areas such as the veterinary workforce by conducting a survey of non-UK EU vets working in the UK.

In addition, the Report includes the College's independently-audited finances with details of income and expenditure. Whilst the College is not a charity, the accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice – a framework for charity accounting and reporting, which allows easier comparison with the finances of similar bodies.

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 12 July 2019 at the Royal Institute of British Architects.

To view the Report please visit our Publications section, or contact publications@rcvs.org.uk to request a hard copy.

Standards & advice update: changes to equine ID guidance

At its April 2019 meeting, our Standards Committee approved changes to the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct regarding compulsory equine microchipping in England. The 2017 Innovation Symposium at which the project was launched, can be found on the project's dedicated website.

The changes were prompted by new legislation, namely the Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018. The major resulting changes and what they mean for you are set out below.

What are the changes?

The following has been added to Chapter 29 – Microchips, microchipping and animals without microchips:

Compulsory microchipping - equines
England

29.7 Under the Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018, from 1 October 2018, the microchipping of equines became compulsory in England for:

- a) Equines whose previous microchip ceases to function, or
- b) Equines arriving in England having been subject to an alternative method of identity verification.

29.8 From 1 October 2020, in England the microchipping of all equines will become compulsory. This includes those equines born before 30 June 2009, which had previously been excluded from mandatory microchipping in the Horse Passport Regulations 2009.

29.9 Excluded from the compulsory microchipping regulations are equines which are deemed to be wild or semi-wild, that is, unless a wild or semi-wild equine is treated with a veterinary medicinal product. In this case it would require a microchip to be implanted and a passport to be issued within 30 days of treatment.

29.10 Owners or keepers of equines have a legal obligation to have their equine microchipped and registered with the Central Equine Database (www.equineregister.co.uk), if they have not done so already. The owner or keeper is responsible for keeping these details up to date and, whenever there is a change of keeper, the new keeper must ensure their details are recorded with the database within 30 days of the transfer. If a client refuses to microchip their equine, the veterinary surgeon should do the following:

- a. Inform the client of their legal obligation to microchip the equine; and/or
- b. Consider reporting the client's non-compliance to the Local Authority. If done so without client consent this will be considered as a breach of client confidentiality, however, this breach will be justifiable under public interest grounds. (See chapter 14 – Client Confidentiality)

29.11 A veterinary surgeon who implants a microchip into an equine must ensure that the microchip number is unique. Failing to do so is a criminal offence. A veterinary surgeon can fulfil this obligation by ensuring the following:

- That the microchip is obtained from a reputable source.
- That the microchip is ISO 11784/5 compliant.
- That the microchip number is not already registered to another equine on the UK's Central Equine Database. Currently, the quickest way is to use the National Equine Chip Checker hosted at www.equineregister.co.uk. If the microchip number is already registered, this chip should not be inserted, instead the veterinary surgeon should report the fact of a duplicate equine microchip to their local Trading Standards office.

29.12 A veterinary surgeon must declare on the equine's passport, prior to treatment, whether the medication to be administered would establish the equine's status as not intended, or intended, for human consumption. Failing to do so is a criminal offence, unless the owner or keeper has failed to produce the equine's passport or smart card when requested. If the passport or smart card is not produced, it is permissible for a veterinary surgeon to provide the client with a form identifying the equine, stating the medication administered, and advising the client that they need to contact the passport issuing office for a new passport. An example of such a form can be found in the 'Related Documents' box.

29.13 In England, there is no longer a legal obligation for a veterinary surgeon to check whether an equine has a pre-existing microchip. However, veterinary surgeons should still undertake a clinical examination (i.e. scan for a microchip, or check for scars which could be caused by removal of a microchip) in order to avoid multiple microchips being implanted, and to avoid mistakes being made in relation to the equine's food chain status.

Scanning for microchips – equines England

29.33 A veterinary surgeon should scan an equine for a microchip and ensure that the microchip number can be reconciled with an equine's passport or smart card. If there is no microchip, a veterinary surgeon should check identifying markings on the equine and match these to the description of the equine from the passport.

29.34 Exceptions to the routine scanning of equines may apply when there may not be medication being administered during an equine appointment; or when the equine may have been examined by the veterinary surgeon many times before and the food chain status is already determined.

The following has been amended in Chapter 29:

New guidance is in bold text and removed guidance is struck out.

Horses

29.15 The RCVS considers the microchipping of horses within the nuchal ligament to be an act of veterinary surgery. The Equine Identifications (England) Regulations 2018 specifically require that a microchip may only be implanted in an equine by a veterinary surgeon.

Explainer

Here are some of the key points in a nutshell:

- The microchipping of equids is compulsory in England for equids whose previous microchip ceases to function or for equids arriving in England having been subject to an alternative method of identity verification.
- From October 2020, in England, the microchipping of all equids will become compulsory.
- Excluded from the compulsory microchipping regulations are equids which are deemed to be wild or semi-wild.
- Microchips may only be implanted in an equid by a veterinary surgeon.
- A veterinary surgeon who implants a microchip into an equid must ensure that the microchip number is unique, before it is inserted. See paragraph 29.11 of the supporting guidance to see how this requirement can be met.
- In England, there is no longer a legal obligation for a veterinary surgeon to check whether an equid has a pre-existing microchip. However, veterinary surgeons should still undertake a clinical examination in order to avoid multiple microchips being implanted.

Further updates and information

Scottish legislation has now been enacted in relation to equid identification, following the lead of the Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018. As a result, the Standards Committee will be discussing further required changes to the supporting guidance at their September meeting. Watch this space!

Gaining insights on animal owner complaints

The RCVS-funded Veterinary Client Mediation Service was set up last year following a one-year trial and is an alternative dispute resolution provider that seeks to resolve complaints made by animal owners about individual veterinary practitioners or veterinary practices that do not meet our threshold for serious professional misconduct.

The free, voluntary service is run by Nockolds Solicitors aims to resolve disputes through mediation which includes talking to and negotiating with both parties to find an optimal outcome that all can accept.

With the publication of the Veterinary Client Mediation Service's annual report this month, Jennie Jones (pictured below right), a partner at Nockolds who runs the service on behalf of the RCVS, shares some of the key insights into veterinary complaints and how to resolve them that the service has gained over the past 12 months.

This year the VCMS has been busier than ever - we put this down to more owners and practices increasingly knowing about what we do and how mediation can help when a complaint can't be resolved within the practice and doesn't meet the RCVS complaint threshold. The fact that we are dealing with an increasing amount of cases gives us an excellent opportunity to identify some of the key trends in this area and so complement the existing RCVS learning and advice to the profession on how they might avoid complaints and how to resolve them when they do arise.

What type of complaints are referred to the VCMS?

Just as you would expect, in the majority of cases the owner is unhappy with the care and service provided. The VCMS analyses the nature of complaints, for example, we determine if the owner complaining about the veterinary care provided, the service received or what they were charged for the service. Deeper analysis shows that almost all complaints refer to a problem with communication in one form or another. Mediation discussions often reveal the difference between what has been said, and what has been understood.

The VCMS has a framework which we follow to ensure complaint mediations progress as swiftly and effectively as possible. Here is an overview of what the VCMS does at each stage, and the questions we will explore with owners and practices:

What happens during the mediation process?

Mediation is about having a conversation. The mediator will not judge or take sides. They will explore the complaint with each party in turn. They may ask some challenging questions to help each party to understand why the complaint is continuing and the barriers that may have prevented a resolution before. We do not impose a resolution on either parties and we do not make any judgements or findings.

The mediator may pose some questions to help both parties reflect on the potential escalation if the complaint does not conclude in mediation, but the decision on whether to make or accept any proposal rests with the owner and practice involved.

We may bring an independent perspective, an independent ear, and listen for the clues in how to unlock the complaint and find a resolution.

How do practices feel after the mediation?

We ask for feedback after every mediation as it is important that the service is trusted and maintains impartiality. Feedback during 2018 was very encouraging!

On average 92% of respondees would use the VCMS again and would recommend to others

94% were satisfied with the process of the mediation

98% found the VCMS Team helpful & efficient

88% found the mediation productive

94% felt the VCMS understood their concerns

84% were satisfied with the outcome

81% felt the process was fair

Common questions and comments that the VCMS receives from practices when we first contact them about the fact a complaint has been submitted for mediation include:

We have already responded to the complaint so what more can mediation achieve?

The situation is difficult and our practice team are worried about discussing the complaint with them

We have already spent so much time trying to resolve this complaint!

We don't feel like we have done anything wrong clinically, so why should we mediate?

This is all about fee avoidance, so should we delay debt recovery with mediation?

However, by the end of the mediation process, we generally find that, as outlined previously, most practices were happy they engaged with the process and with the outcomes.

What can mediation achieve?

Finally, what kind of resolutions are achieved? We work to resolve each individual issue in a unique and fair manner, recognising that there is no 'one size fits all' solution to complaints. The most common sorts of resolutions that we achieve are:

Refund of fees or waiving of fees on a goodwill basis - on average these are £230, although the most common range is between £75 and £100, with a few higher value/equine related complaints accounting for the high average;

Getting the practice to acknowledge an owner's complaint, the impact of events and, if appropriate, an apology;

Clarity in communication to resolve any misunderstanding;

Charity donation;

Average refund of waiver;

Further explanations;

Protocol reviews;

Further training for the practice team;

In resolving the owner's complaint, the VCMS will also explore the issue of any outstanding fees to ensure that all issues between the owner and practice are resolved, avoiding future or ongoing conflict - so far in 2019, £22,000 in outstanding fees have been included as part of the mediated resolution;

Reassurance and helping owners' accept and come to terms with what has happened.

For more information on the VCMS and our mediation services, contact our teams via 0345 040 5834 or enquiries@vet-mediation.co.uk or fill out our online complaint form.

Blog

Wrapping up our Strategic Plan and looking forward to the next six months

Six months into 2019 – the third and, indeed, last year of our current Strategic Plan - and it has already been a busy year, with many exciting initiatives outlined in the Plan being completed or getting underway and many more on the horizon as we start to look ahead to the next plan.

In spite of the ever-present uncertainty of Brexit, our team, located just a short walk from the parliamentary chaos of Westminster, has worked tirelessly on our preparations, policies and procedures to mitigate any effects Brexit might have on the veterinary professions.

Most recently the College, working with the British Veterinary Association (BVA), secured a recommendation from the Migration Advisory Committee that the veterinary profession re-join the Shortage Occupation List. We welcomed this recommendation with our submission focusing on the need for the UK immigration system to recognise that the veterinary workforce is already under capacity and that this problem is likely to be exacerbated after Brexit.

As we gear up for a productive second half of the year, now is a good time to reflect on some of the achievements the RCVS has made and the steps we are taking as we wrap up the 2017-19 Strategic Plan.

Here are just a handful of the initiatives that have contributed towards the delivery of our Strategic Plan over the last six months:

In March, Council supported the recommendations of the Education Committee to implement an outcomes-based approach to CPD, supporting our aim to be an organisation that encourages lifelong learning and development amongst the profession.

In March, our Council member who leads on Global strategy, Dr Chris Tufnell, and Policy Manager Ben Myring attended the 7th Pan Commonwealth Veterinary Conference (CVC) of the Commonwealth Veterinary Association in Bangalore, to investigate global interest in RCVS qualifications, the Practice Standards Scheme and Advanced Practitioner and Specialist statuses. This trip has clarified next steps in our ambition to improve animal health and welfare on an international basis by helping to raise veterinary standards overseas.

The first meeting of the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group was held in April, including representatives from the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society, British Veterinary LGBT+, the British Veterinary Association, the Major Employers Group, the Association of Veterinary Students and the Society for Practising Veterinary Surgeons – the British Veterinary Nursing Association and the Veterinary Schools Council are also represented on the Group. This is an important step in working towards our aim of being an organisation that encourages and supports diversity in the professions, our Council, our staff and other groups allied to us.

To improve our communication with veterinary and veterinary nursing students, we have welcomed students to our flagship events. We also now have two veterinary student representatives on each of the Education Committee and the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC), who attended their first meetings in spring and provided valuable contributions across a wide range of issues. Also, in March, to ensure RCVS staff have a better understanding of student life, Bristol veterinary school kindly hosted a group of team members for a visit.

We closed our Graduate Outcomes survey in January and received 1,963 full responses and 3,825 partial responses from veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and members of the public, in addition to numerous organisational responses. 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.

At the risk of writing a novel-length update, I would also like to share just a few of my personal picks for other achievements we have celebrated this year so far – demonstrating the range of our activity:

The College is celebrating its 175th Anniversary this year and, 175 years after the RCVS was brought into being with its Royal Charter, we are proud to continue to support veterinary surgeons – and now veterinary nurses – to meet the high

standards expected of them by the public and their own professions.

This year we were ranked 28th Best Place to Work in the UK (medium-sized) by Great Place to Work, and given a Laureate Award for being within the top 50 for five continuous years – a testament to our HR department and all of our wonderful RCVS staff.

We were also made a finalist in the prestigious European Foundation for Management Development Excellence in Practice Awards, for our joint leadership Massive Open Online Course, run jointly with the NHS and FutureLearn. We have seen our Mind Matters Initiative grow in strength and impact this year, with the launch of a series of Wellbeing Roadshows, run jointly with the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons and the Veterinary Management Group; a series of pilot resilience training days run jointly with the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, and the launch of our inaugural Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grant, to fund research that focuses on mental health and wellbeing within the veterinary professions. I am delighted that the first award, of £20,000, will be made at RCVS Day on 12 July. We have also signed the Time to Change Pledge, to signal our commitment to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our team.

We have published the results of our second survey amongst non-UK EU graduates, in light of the UK's decision to leave the EU, and recently launched our 2019 Surveys of the Veterinary Professions.

Given the uncertainty around Brexit, it's more important than ever that we maintain links with our European colleagues, and we have been represented at the ENQA forum in Tallinn, the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education Conference in Zagreb, and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe General Assembly in Bratislava.

Finally, we welcomed 220 new veterinary nurses to the profession at our VN Day at London Zoo.

Looking forward to wrapping up our 2017-19 Strategic Plan

2019 is the last year of our current Strategic Plan and so we have been busy looking at how to deliver on its remaining actions.

One of our priorities is continuing to meet our ambition of being a First Rate Regulator, with much of this work, including reviewing Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act with an aim of bolstering the role of VNs, developing a strategy for the regulation of allied professionals, and exploring the ability of the College to engage in compulsory practice inspections, being tackled by the RCVS Legislation Working Party.

We are also looking at our global reach in terms of how we can share our regulatory best practice internationally as well as the potential international appeal of some of our standards and qualifications, not forgetting to ensure that we continue to learn from regulators around the globe.

A final area of priority is putting systems in place to support the roll-out of our outcomes-based approach to continuing professional development (CPD), which reflects our commitment to creating and sustaining a learning culture.

What next?

One of our key activities in the last half of 2019 will be developing our next Strategic Plan – putting on to paper our vision for the RCVS going into the 2020s.

This year we will be consulting with veterinary and public stakeholders, RCVS and VN Councils and our committees in preparation for the new strategy. RCVS staff will also be contributing to the development of the strategy at the RCVS away day later on in the year.

We also have an exciting line-up of events planned for the remainder of the year, with RCVS Day (12 July), our 2nd Mind Matters Mental Health Research Symposium (24 September) and our 2nd ViVet Innovation Symposium (1 October) open for ticket applications. Check out our events page for more information on these.

Before I sign off, I want to thank all of the RCVS staff for their huge contribution so far this year. I also want to stress that we recognise and appreciate the hard work of veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in safeguarding animal health and welfare, and public health, in the UK and beyond – we just set out the professional framework, you do the hard work.

Blog

The value of veterinary nurses to practice – changing the mind-set

Stephanie-Writer Davies is a veterinary surgeon and a member of the VN Futures Career Progression Working Group.

Stephanie has always been very supportive of the veterinary nursing profession, recognising the value of veterinary nurses to practice and being keen to see them performing broader and more challenging roles and improve their status and job satisfaction. She is a previous SPVS President, and is currently the SPVS VN Liaison.

The Career Progression Group is working towards several ambitions which form part of the VN Futures Report and Action Plan; including maximising the value of veterinary nurses in practice, and encouraging charging correctly for nurses' skills and time. Stephanie discusses some of these issues in this short blog – to which we welcome input and comments from our readers.

There has been some debate in recent months over the value of veterinary nurses to practices, and the 'cost' to veterinary businesses of their veterinary nursing staff.

So, how should practice owners think about their nursing teams in terms of cost vs value? Are they an 'overhead' that has to be factored into the business' 'Profit and Loss' (P&L), one which provides useful support for patients and clients, but which doesn't contribute to the financial health of the practice?

I make this somewhat controversial comment to stimulate debate because I hope that everyone who knows me (or knows of me) is aware that this is in direct contradiction to what I actually believe! Veterinary nurses are never, to my mind, a net cost to practices, but to accept this I think we have to look at things in a different way.

Veterinary practices contain a team of staff members with different roles, all of which contribute to the practice income. No single group can manage without the help and support of the others, and that should be acknowledged. In relation to veterinary nurses in particular, it's important to recognise that veterinary surgeons cannot work effectively without nursing support – and that's not just in relation to the 'stuff out the back'; veterinary nurses play a big role in the consulting room, not only as 'assistants' for the vets, but also as consulting professionals in their own right. Both these aspects of the role of veterinary nurses include income generation but the difficulty is that practices often don't show how veterinary nurses generate income in a transparent way.

I believe we should change our mindsets about this and recognise the financial contribution that veterinary nurses make to practices as well as their clinical contribution – and in doing so we must change the way we talk about veterinary nurses. Veterinary nurses are not just 'the staff out the back' whose time is given away for 'free' in nurse clinics; they are expertly trained professionals who provide a necessary and valuable service for animals and their owners and their time is therefore worthy of a professional fee! We should show the nursing charges on our bills for surgical, diagnostic and in-patient care – after all many practices itemise things such as surgical kits so why not anaesthetic monitoring by the RVN, for example? We charge hospitalisation fees but why do we not list nursing care as part of this cost? And what about the admission and discharge appointments that are often done by veterinary nurses – why do we not show the costs of those amongst the surgical or other charges? If we don't, then we should!

There is a view that Nurse Clinics don't generate income but, in my opinion, this is flawed. Many of the consultations that nurses do are 'pre-charged' by the veterinary surgeons (eg 2nd vaccinations, post-op checks, repeat medications etc) so the charge for the nurse's time gets 'lost' in the initial veterinary surgeon fees. Additionally, of course, if these appointments weren't carried out by the veterinary nurses they would have to be done by the vets, so these clinics free up the vets' time to be used for consultations on new cases or additional surgical procedures, for example, which generate new income. In effect, this vet-led income generation is facilitated by the veterinary nurses taking on the nurse clinics. Then there's the thorny issue of how to charge for tasks such as emptying anal glands or clipping nails... is it cheaper if a veterinary nurse does it? Absolutely not! 'Task-led' procedures of this type should be charged at a set fee – after all a nail clip is the same whoever does it – and they should be done by veterinary nurses to free up veterinary surgeons' time. If clients insist on seeing a vet for something of this nature, then they should be charged a consultation fee. And no more 'free' nurse clinics please! They can perhaps be complementary for patients on health plans but otherwise nurse consultations should be charged appropriately!

I don't want you to think that I consider veterinary nurses as 'mini' or 'frustrated' vets because I don't. To me, they are skilled co-professionals important for veterinary businesses and patient welfare and they should be proud of the role they play and the financial value they bring. However, this should be acknowledged and promoted by the other members of staff within the practice so that clients see the veterinary nursing profession in a new light. With enhanced public respect and an acceptance of their value should come the potential for enhanced roles in practices for veterinary nurses which should also result in improved salaries!

Events

Royal College Day

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

Mind Matters Mental Health Awareness Training – Aberdeen

Monday 22 July 2019 - 9:30, Palm Court Hotel, Aberdeen, AB15 7YX

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

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

DC refuses to restore former vet to the Register

The Disciplinary Committee of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) has dismissed an application to be restored to the Register of Veterinary Surgeons from a former Kent-based veterinary surgeon.

Warwick Seymour-Hamilton was originally removed from the Register in June 1994 for failing to maintain his practice's equipment and facilities in working order, for example, there being a total disregard of basic hygiene and care for animals, thereby bringing the profession into disrepute.

The restoration hearing took place on Thursday 20 May 2019 and was Mr Seymour-Hamilton's seventh application for restoration, with previous applications being heard but refused in July 1995, June 2010, February 2015, March 2016, May 2017 and April 2018. However, as the Committee makes its decision on the merits of the case before it, those previous applications were not considered as relevant to its current decision.

The Committee heard oral evidence from Mr Seymour-Hamilton and were shown clear bottles with liquid, a container with tablets and petri dishes with grown cultures as detailed documentary evidence. In respect of any concerns regarding keeping his veterinary practice up-to-date, Mr Seymour-Hamilton said that "you never lose that skill" and explained that he kept up-to-date through extensive reading and conversations with veterinary surgeons in Europe.

However, the Committee had significant concerns as to his fitness to practise safely as a veterinary surgeon for a number of reasons, including that nearly 25 years had passed since he was last in practice and that there was little, if any, evidence of him keeping up-to-date with the knowledge and skills required to practise as a veterinary surgeon.

Ian Green, chairing the Committee and speaking on its behalf, said: "The applicant worryingly did not accept that he was in any way deskilled by the passage of time. The evidence that the applicant has provided showed limited interaction with other veterinary surgeons and there is no documented evidence of the discussions or structure of the meetings he had with veterinary surgeons in Europe.

"There is no evidence of a prolonged and intense period of re-training by way of relevant study to demonstrate that a sufficient level of competence to return to practise has been achieved. In the absence of such evidence the Committee was of the view that there would be a serious risk to the welfare of animals if the applicant was restored to the Register.

"Further, it was a grave concern to this Committee that the applicant demonstrated worrying attitudinal issues towards individuals of a different religion and his attitude to employing a minor when he knew it to be against the law. Such attitudes are incompatible with professional standards the public would expect of a veterinary surgeon."

Finally, with no evidence of public support for the applicant, the Committee concluded that the application for restoration should be refused.

DC finds conviction does not render vet unfit to practise

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Disciplinary Committee has found a Lancashire-based veterinary surgeon not unfit to practise following his conviction for careless driving causing death.

The hearing of the case against Colm Doherty took place on Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 May 2019 when the Disciplinary Committee, chaired by Mr Ian Green, considered one charge against him. The charge was that, whilst being registered on the RCVS Register of Veterinary Surgeons, on 13 November 2018 Dr Doherty was convicted following a guilty plea of careless driving causing death and that the conviction rendered him unfit to practise veterinary surgery.

Whilst driving, Dr Doherty had lost control of his vehicle returning from a veterinary conference and his vehicle went across the centre of the road into the path of a car driven by Mrs Mary Long, who died at the scene from her injuries. Dr Doherty was convicted at the Kilkenny Circuit Criminal Court in the Republic of Ireland on 13 November 2018 and on 23 November sentenced to 18 months imprisonment, suspended in its entirety for 2 years on condition that he enter a bond of 500 Euros to keep the peace and be of good behaviour for 2 years, and was disqualified from driving for five years and fined 5000 Euros.

At the outset of the hearing the respondent admitted the charge but did not admit that his conviction rendered him unfit to practise veterinary surgery and it was then the task of the Committee to consider whether the conviction rendered him unfit to practise.

In coming to its decision, the Committee took into account the evidence it had heard from Ms Nicole Curtis for the College and from Mr Glasson QC for Dr Doherty.

Ms Curtis submitted that the conviction was serious as Dr Doherty had received a suspended custodial sentence. She submitted that the public interest would require a finding that the conviction rendered the Respondent unfit to practise. Ms Curtis also referred the Committee to the general regulatory law principle, that a professional who has been convicted of a serious criminal offence should not be allowed to practise until such time as the satisfactory completion of their sentence which in Dr Doherty's case would be in November 2020.

The Committee also considered the mitigating factors included in the Judge's sentencing remarks regarding Dr Doherty, including that he had accepted responsibility for the accident from the outset and pleaded guilty at the earliest opportunity, and that, furthermore, Dr Doherty had suffered deep remorse over the accident.

The Committee took into account the public interest and concluded that the public, in full knowledge of the exceptional circumstances of this case, would not expect a finding that the conviction rendered Dr Doherty unfit to practise.

The Committee also took into account that the conviction related to an accident that occurred whilst Dr Doherty was a veterinary student in 2016 rather than a qualified veterinary surgeon.

Therefore, having taken into account all of the evidence and given due consideration to all factors, the Committee concluded that the conviction did not render Dr Doherty unfit to practise veterinary surgery.

"The respondent has always accepted the seriousness of the offence for which he was convicted. There was the tragic loss of life of another road user who was a mother, wife and grandmother and a highly regarded member of the Community," said Mr Green.

"The respondent prior to the accident was driving properly, not too fast and his car was road worthy and within two to eight seconds the offence altered the course of his life, and tragically that of Mrs Long, forever. The Committee hopes one day in the future the Respondent can forgive himself for the tragic loss of life."

In coming to a conclusion on this matter, the Committee recognised that this was a serious offence involving the death of Mrs Long and where Dr Doherty had received a suspended custodial sentence and therefore it was right and proper that this case should have been referred to the Disciplinary Committee for a public hearing.