

# RCVS news

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*Text-only version of  
RCVS News email*

# **#YourKindOfVets – campaign to promote RCVS-accredited practices**

Earlier this month we launched a story-led digital campaign, Veterinary care from your kind of vets, to raise awareness of the Practice Standards Scheme amongst animal owners – what it is and why they should care about it.

Now in its second week, we've been delighted that so many RCVS-accredited practices have got involved already (thank you!) by sharing the video stories, images and PSS explainers that we've posted across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, as well as on our campaign website: [www.rcvs.org.uk/yourkindofvets](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/yourkindofvets).

We'd love as many RCVS-accredited practice teams as possible to get involved in the campaign and have produced lots of resources to make this quick and easy to do (see campaign launch packs for full details).

If you work in an RCVS-accredited practice, do please share the videos and images on your own social media channels and websites using the hashtag #YourKindOfVets, and consider using the posters and videos in your waiting rooms to help promote your hard-won accredited status to your clients.

# Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

From 1 January 2020, the way in which we assess CPD compliance is changing. There is a requirement to move to annual CPD hourly targets of 35 hours a year for veterinary surgeons and 15 hours for veterinary nurses. The change supports the need for every vet and vet nurse to undertake regular and relevant CPD.

On 27 January 2020, we are introducing a new digital recording platform, 1CPD, for you to manage your CPD. This will replace the online Professional Development Record (PDR) from January 2020.

We are also introducing outcomes-focused CPD, including a 'reflect' element in the 'plan, do, record, reflect' cycle. Our new CPD model focuses on the quality, impact and relevance of your CPD. We would encourage you to begin reflective practice as soon as possible, as it will become compulsory from January 2022.

How do I plan my CPD?

What do I need to do?

How do I record my CPD?

How do I reflect?

Videos

What's the case for outcomes-focused CPD?

Professor Stephen May, former Chair of the RCVS CPD Policy Working Party, explains why the changes to CPD have been introduced.

Was the profession consulted about the changes to the CPD policy?

We consulted with the RCVS Education Committee and Council about the change to annual hourly targets. We ran a consultation with the profession about the move to outcomes-focused CPD starting in 2016, with a pilot programme running from March 2017 to October 2018.

If you would like further details about the pilot, please contact the Education team at the RCVS. We invited members of the profession to help us user-test 1CPD, the new CPD platform, during its development; their input and feedback was crucial in ensuring that the platform is helpful and intuitive.

What is CPD?

Continuing professional development, or CPD, is the process of continually maintaining, improving and broadening your skills and knowledge, as well as developing personal qualities, which help to ensure you remain professionally competent.

Progressing your professional learning in whichever way is most relevant to you, will help you to develop and improve the professional service you provide.

Who has to do it and why?

All practising veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses listed on the RCVS Register must complete the minimum CPD requirement, regardless of whether they are working full-time or part-time.

The RCVS Codes of Professional Conduct state that all vets and VNs are obliged to maintain and continue to develop their professional knowledge and skills. CPD is therefore mandatory for all vets and VNs and should be seen as the continuous progression of capability and competence.

Do I need to record my CPD?

Yes, you need to keep a record of your CPD and the easiest way to do that is to use the 1CPD app or website to record your CPD.

Until 2022 you can record your CPD in any format as long as it clearly shows what type of activities you have undertaken and how many hours of CPD you have done.

We would also recommend that you keep a learning journal to keep notes of your learning and your reflections. If you use 1CPD all your notes and reflections can be recorded within the system so you do not need to keep any other records.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# VN Council approves new qualification accreditation standards

At its Wednesday 13 November meeting, the RCVS Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council approved a new standards framework for veterinary nurse education that allows for greater flexibility and innovation in how courses are delivered and a greater focus on student empowerment.

The new standards framework sets out the professional values, knowledge, skills and behaviours that are required of awarding organisations and higher education (HE) institutions that provide the veterinary nursing curricula, the centres (for example, further education colleges and other training providers) that deliver the courses and their affiliated training practices as part of our accreditation and re-accreditation processes.

The new framework focuses on six key standards, which apply across the board to awarding organisations/ HE institutions, the centres and training practices. These standards are: learning culture; governance and quality; student empowerment; educators and assessors; curricula and assessment; and effective clinical learning.

Julie Dugmore, our Director of Veterinary Nursing, explains some of the key changes: "In our previous set of standards there were separate policies and documents for training practices, the centres and the awarding organisations/HE institutions. This now brings all those disparate policies into a unified whole.

"The new standards also place a greater focus on innovation and different types of learning. The previous standards very much assumed that the learning would be done on a face-to-face basis, but we know that, increasingly, student veterinary nurses may be getting the majority of the contact time with their educational institution online and that many institutions have brought in blended learning programmes. These standards recognise this fact and that there are many different ways to learn.

"A greater focus on the student experience is another thing that has really been bolstered in these new standards. For example, we would now be looking for evidence that educational institutions and training practices are providing the support needed for student veterinary nurses to look after their mental health and wellbeing, and that academic and pastoral support is provided to prepare them for independent, reflective practice.

"The new standard will be formally brought into force in January - although for those institutions and organisations that are currently going through the accreditation or re-accreditation process, they can opt to still be assessed via the previous set of standards."

The new standards were drawn-up by a working group comprising VN Council members Alison Carr, Andrea Jefferies and Kathy Kissick, as well as Julie Dugmore. Veterinary nursing educators were invited to a consultation day in July when they were introduced to the new standards, which were received positively, and invited to give feedback.

Commenting on the changes Kathy Kissick said: "As a former Head of Veterinary Nursing at Myerscough College, I am very glad that we have finally been able to realise and build in the importance of student empowerment into these standards – recognising that veterinary nursing education and training is not just something being done for our students, but something they have a voice and role in shaping.

"Allowing greater choice in the methods and means by which veterinary nursing education is delivered is also a passion of mine and, again, this is something these new standards fully recognise and allow for."

A handbook containing the new accreditation standards will be published on the RCVS website in due course. In the meantime, the documentation is available to download in the November 2019 VN Council papers.

[READ MORE NEWS](#)

# Veterinary surgeons urged to consider applying for Fellowship in 2020

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# RCVS and VCI sign historic mutual recognition agreement

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI), the UK and Ireland veterinary regulators, have agreed a historic mutual recognition agreement to facilitate the recognitions of each others' accredited veterinary degrees.

At its meeting on Thursday 3 October 2019 RCVS Council, the College's governing body, approved the mutual recognition agreement (MRA) which had previously been approved by the Council of the VCI at its meeting on 25 September 2019.

The MRA is the first agreement that has been signed on a bilateral basis between the UK and another country in the European Economic Area (EEA), meaning that, through opportunities for an expert reviewer from each party to sit on local accreditation panels and sharing of visitation outcomes, the veterinary degree from University College Dublin can be recognised by the RCVS and the current eight UK veterinary degrees (including the recently approved University of Surrey degree) can be recognised by the VCI.

Currently, EEA citizens who graduate from University College Dublin have an automatic right to work in the UK via the European Union's Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive. The MRA means that, whatever the outcome of the UK leaving the European Union, following successful accreditation visits University College Dublin graduates can join the Register of Veterinary Surgeons in the UK, and UK graduates can join the VCI's equivalent register.

Dr Niall Connell, RCVS President, said: "We are glad to be able to sign this agreement with the VCI which is a vital element of future-proofing to ensure that, whatever the future relationship with the EU, Dublin graduates are able to be recognised as holding a registerable qualification by us as the UK regulator.

"I hope, in particular, this provides some reassurance to the community in Northern Ireland as many of its veterinary surgeons are trained in Dublin and so it is vital to ensure that, whatever happens with the UK's exit from the EU, this will continue to be a viable source of veterinary talent for the region."

The President of the Veterinary Council of Ireland, Peadar Ó Scanaill (pictured right), said: "I am delighted to see the continued close alignment the Profession enjoys across both nations. This close alignment transcends any borders and many decades of mutual cooperation and recognition.

"The veterinary profession in Great Britain and throughout the island of Ireland has moved step-by-step and shoulder-to-shoulder in unison over the years and recent political events will not sever that important bond. Cooperation and mutual recognition are the key components of our future together."

The MRA also stipulates that, in order to maintain the agreement, the RCVS and VCI will have the opportunity to attend accreditation visitations to each other's veterinary schools in order to ensure that they are meeting their respective accreditation criteria for veterinary education. The current expectation is that these visitations will be carried out in conjunction with, or as part of, those of any international accreditation bodies, such as the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

It is expected that, later this month, the VCI President Peadar Ó Scanaill and CEO Niamh Muldoon will meet with RCVS President Niall Connell and RCVS Director of Education, Dr Linda Prescott-Clements, in London to sign the agreement.

The full text of the agreement is available to view in the papers for the October 2019 meeting of RCVS Council.



# Veterinary leaders commit to EBVM

In a first for the profession, 15 of the major UK member organisations, vet schools and policy-making bodies have today come together to affirm their commitment to veterinary medicine based on sound scientific principles, in a new landmark publication produced by RCVS Knowledge and the charity Sense about Science.

Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine Matters: Our Commitment to the Future represents the first time this broad and influential group have formally united in support of a single issue. This unprecedented collaboration is testament to the importance that veterinary organisations across the profession place on the use of evidence to enhance all types of veterinary medicine.

The publication serves to demonstrate the profound and wide-ranging impact that evidence can have – and has had – on animal health and welfare. It also provides a convincing rationale for all veterinary professionals to contribute to the evidence base and put evidence into practice, to the benefit of animals, owners and veterinary teams themselves.

The signatories to the commitment are:

Animal and Plant Health Agency  
British Cattle Veterinary Association  
British Equine Veterinary Association  
British Small Animal Veterinary Association  
British Veterinary Association  
British Veterinary Nursing Association  
RCVS Knowledge  
Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS)  
Royal Veterinary College  
University of Bristol  
University of Cambridge  
University of Liverpool  
University of Nottingham  
University of Surrey  
Veterinary Policy Research Foundation

The commitment is set in the context of 14 case studies that showcase the impact of standout veterinary research and evidence in the 20th and 21st centuries. Spanning small animal, farm, equine, nursing, animal welfare and agriculture, the case studies show that different types of evidence have been key to major steps forward in veterinary medicine.

Evidence has been at the heart of the eradication of the cattle disease rinderpest, successful strategies to prevent bird flu, and the rapid and accurate diagnosis of colic – one of the most common causes of death in horses. Evidence has also been core to the development of new techniques to treat Bulldogs with breathing problems, new methods to reduce seizures in dogs with epilepsy, and faster means of detecting antimicrobial resistance, among many other valuable advances.

In their commitment, the group state:

“When rigorous research underpins medical decisions, adverse events can be minimised and patient outcomes can be improved.

“We believe evidence-based veterinary medicine reinforces the sound scientific principles of the profession and strengthens the commitment to put animal health and welfare at the forefront of all we do.”

The charity RCVS Knowledge has been championing the use of evidence-based veterinary medicine (EBVM) for the past five years, and provides a variety of tools, resources and education to the professions. Jacqui Molyneux, Chair of the Board of Trustees, said:

“Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine Matters is a milestone publication for the professions, representing the first time the majority of the key institutions have aligned under the same EBVM banner.

“A celebration of decades of incredible discoveries, achievements and improvements in animal health, it also serves to remind us that even the earliest forms of veterinary medicine were underpinned by evidence.”

UK Chief Vet Christine Middlemiss said:

“What’s the evidence? An evidence-based approach is vital in all areas of our profession, whatever is keeping you awake at night. For me, it is the threat of African swine fever and avian flu. The evidence I rely on comes from our specialist surveillance monitoring and testing, veterinary epidemiologists and disease modellers. It enables me to make timely, proportionate risk-based decisions that stand up to scrutiny.

“If you are managing veterinary care in practice, the evidence you rely on to underpin your standards of clinical care comes from multiple sources too. Evidence-based veterinary medicine allows us to refine and tailor strategies to be effective and efficient, making full use of existing and new technologies.

“The profession has taken great strides towards embracing evidence-based veterinary medicine and building on this will strengthen the links between clinical decision-making, policy development and future research.”

Chris Gush, Executive Director of RCVS Knowledge, added:

“We are impressed by the contributions from our co-signatories, which clearly demonstrate the phenomenal impact on patient outcomes that conducting research and using evidence can have. We are also delighted that Sense about Science, a flagbearer for evidence, transparency and rational thinking, has joined with us to highlight the many benefits EBVM can bring.

“The publication also makes a strong case for much-needed funding for research to grow the evidence base, which would put powerful, robust data into the hands of veterinary professionals as they make critical decisions that can affect patient outcomes.

“It is our hope that the calibre, diversity and sheer number of the organisations putting their name to this commitment will galvanise all vets and their teams to expand their use of evidence in practice.”

Sense about Science is an independent charity that promotes understanding and use of scientific evidence. Rebecca Asher, Deputy Director, said:

“This is a showcase of game changers in veterinary care and we hope it will inspire and motivate everyone in the profession.

“We were delighted that RCVS Knowledge approached us to collaborate with them and other leading institutions in the veterinary research community to affirm their commitment to an evidence-based approach to veterinary medicine.

“Everyone expects treatment for humans to be underpinned by evidence. We now expect the same of the whole veterinary community when it comes to the treatment of animals.”

The full commitment and portfolio of case studies can be read in Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine Matters, available for free online: [bit.ly/EBVMMatters](http://bit.ly/EBVMMatters).

# VN Futures initiative launches School Ambassadors Pilot

VN Futures is launching a new School Ambassadors Pilot this November, to address the need for highlighting and supporting pathways into the veterinary nursing profession.

The pilot is the result of the VN Futures' Sustainable Workforce Working Group and is set to run for approximately 12 months with regular review points planned for every three months following an Ambassadors' Development Day on 18 November 2019.

"The aim of the pilot is for a group of enthusiastic VN ambassadors to inspire the next generation of potential veterinary nurses and deliver careers advice and information about veterinary nursing to primary school age children, in time for when they are starting to think about which career they may wish to pursue following secondary education," says VN Futures Project Manager Jill Macdonald.

"We know that we need more VNs in the profession and that early advice on a career in veterinary nursing may often be lacking. Therefore, this pilot aims to support the need for VNs and fill the gap in information provided regarding VN careers. I am excited about getting the pilot underway and learning from our ambassadors about what works well with regards to promoting veterinary nursing futures, which will then support future ambassadors wishing to carry out this role."

The pilot also aims to highlight and encourage diversity in the veterinary nursing profession, through use of diverse workforce imagery and promoting the message that veterinary nursing is for everyone.

There are currently eight VNs from across the profession, including experienced nurses through to those who have recently qualified as well as both small animal and equine nurses, set to take part in the pilot.

In addition to providing career advice, the ambassadors will work in partnership with the VN Futures project, and with the support and guidance of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) Learning to develop effective materials and resources for delivering career information to school-aged children. The aim is that learning from the pilot, and materials that are developed from this, will then become available to other VNs who are interested in becoming school ambassadors, so that they too can deliver information on VN careers and support pathways into veterinary nursing.

Racheal Marshall, Chair of VN Council and one of the Pilot's School Ambassadors says "I am looking forward to the pilot getting underway, both from a VN leadership perspective and as an Ambassador taking part in the programme.

"We know that very little career information about veterinary nursing is available at many schools and so it is vitally important to the veterinary nursing profession that we are well positioned to share information and advice on VN careers – so that we can support a future generation of VNs that is diverse and inclusive.

"I am also excited about the opportunity to be a VN School Ambassador myself, sharing my personal experiences about the profession that I am passionate about. I hope that I will be able to inspire the children I work with to consider veterinary nursing as an option for their futures."

Following the conclusion of the pilot there will then be a feedback meeting to discuss the findings and develop next steps for the school ambassadors' programme. More information will be released on the VN Futures website as the pilot progresses.

# AMR discussion opens new podcast series

RCVS Knowledge has launched a series of podcasts tackling the big issues facing veterinary medicine, starting with a roundtable chaired by the UK Chief Vet Christine Middlemiss on antimicrobial resistance, to coincide with World Antibiotic Awareness Week (18th-24th November).

'The Knowledge Sessions' bring together specialists from across the industry to examine the landscape, propose potential approaches to complex problems, and provide practical advice on a range of subjects.

The first discussion considers the challenges of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the possible strategies to overcome it. In particular, which measures are currently in place, and which are working? What can the UK learn from other countries currently leading the way in tackling AMR? And who is responsible for instigating widespread change?

Joining Professor Middlemiss to discuss these crucial questions are:

Ian Battersby – Head of Internal Medicine at Davies Veterinary Specialists and Chairman of the board of trustees at Mission Rabies

Steve Howard – Head of Clinical Services at PDSA

Kristen Reyher – Reader in Veterinary Epidemiology and Population Health, and leader of the AMR Force research group at the University of Bristol

David Singleton – epidemiologist specialising in antimicrobial resistance in companion animals and the surveillance of antibiotic prescribing, SAVSNET

You can listen to the conversation below or by searching for 'RCVS Knowledge Podcasts' on your favourite platform.

Subsequent episodes in the series will feature a breadth of high-profile experts sharing thoughts and experiences on topical subjects, including:

the benefits of corporatisation on clinical outcomes and quality ethics and animal welfare

the role of quality improvement in veterinary regulation

research as a practitioner: the benefits and how to get involved

the role and value of checklists in a clinical environment

what veterinary medicine can learn from human medicine.

The Knowledge Sessions add a new dimension to the charity's podcast offering, which to date has accumulated more than 25,000 downloads across clinical lectures, presentations and bite-sized audio summaries of evidence.

"We are delighted to have brought together such varied and informed voices from across the sector for what we believe are essential discussions around the critical challenges faced by a 21st century veterinary industry," said RCVS Knowledge's Executive Director, Chris Gush.

"It is our hope that veterinary professionals – current and upcoming – will find these podcasts invaluable, eye-opening and thoughtful."

Subscribe to RCVS Knowledge's podcasts channel to hear new episodes as they release, by searching for 'RCVS Knowledge Podcasts' on your favourite podcast platform, or by visiting <http://rcvsknowledge.podbean.com/>.

## We must review the meaning of 'under care'

This article was first published in the 16 November 2019 (Vol 185 No 19) edition of the Veterinary Record. We would like to thank the Veterinary Record for allowing us to reproduce the article on our website.

Everyone understands what 'under care' means, don't they? At least, everyone understands what it means to them. After all, weren't these words carved in tablets of stone in the Medicines Act 1968?

Except that 'under care' was not actually defined anywhere in the Act, or in the replacement Veterinary Medicines Regulations (2005), but has, over the years, been 'interpreted' by RCVS Council in the Code of Professional Conduct.

This, in essence, frames the fundamental challenge facing the College as it prepares to launch one of its most significant guidance reviews in many years. How should we continue to interpret 'under care' in a profession, and a society, that is largely unrecognisable to the one that first defined the term? How can we adapt this term to accommodate the different situations in which it is applied? Why do we want to review it at all?

I will return to the first two questions shortly, but to answer the third, we must revisit the joint RCVS/BVA Vet Futures initiative. One of its strategic ambitions was to review the regulatory issues relating to new veterinary technologies, with a view to establishing a framework to take account of future innovations.

The Vet Futures Report highlighted that there was 'no limit to the impact that technological advances may have on the veterinary profession', and noted that 'it has been recognised...for some time that innovations in delivering healthcare in the veterinary sector will require changes to the regulatory framework to ensure animal health and welfare remain front and centre.'

The College then incorporated this ambition into its strategic plan, and launched a consultation in 2017 to seek views from all veterinary stakeholders on the use of telemedicine – using IT to provide healthcare remotely – in veterinary clinical practice, with a particular emphasis on 'vet-to-client' telemedicine.

The results revealed strong and diverse views. Confusion as to the existing parameters around remote consultations was also apparent, but there was little evidence on what the impact might be of any change to the supporting guidance to the RCVS Code.

As a result, the College devised mechanisms to gather such evidence, including a time-limited telemedicine trial. However, following lengthy and robust debates at both RCVS Standards Committee and RCVS Council meetings, it became clear that telemedicine, and specifically remote prescribing from vet to client, could not be considered in isolation. What was really under the microscope was the meaning of 'under care', the associated rights and responsibilities, and how the principles applied in one veterinary sphere might, or might not, be applied in others. In addition, the College would need to be consistent in its approach to regulating all instances of under care, unless it could provide clear rationale for any difference.

RCVS guidance has certainly endeavoured to do this over the years, but inconsistencies and anomalies are apparent in the way 'under care' is being interpreted.

Therefore, it was decided that we needed a wide-ranging review, including a call for evidence. Which returns me to my first two questions. Indeed, we have recognised that this review will be so large and complex we need the support of an independent and specialist organisation to carry it out.

At the time of writing, we are waiting for full committee approval to proceed. The initial evidence-gathering stage will be the most complex, and will push back the proposed timeline for the review that we published earlier this autumn. Look out for more detail on this early in the new year, followed by updates on the analysis of the collated views, and then a consultation on a new draft of the guidance.

We will be seeking your views based not only on your own experience, but also on how this could apply across multiple sectors throughout the profession. We all have vested interests in this review. Only by receiving and reviewing as many different opinions as possible, will we know how best to apply the principle of 'under care' for the benefit of future generations of veterinary professionals and the animals for which they care.

November 2019

# Blog

## Why the Fellowship matters and why you should consider joining

Professor John Innes - Chair of the RCVS Fellowship Board

Like many people my career, and therefore my pathway to becoming a Fellow of the RCVS, has been one of chance events, accidents and stumbles. When I first became a vet, like many others, I intended to go into practice, but ended up going into academia with the intention of staying there for a few years. I was there for 22 years.

That career in academia ultimately sparked my interest in joining the Fellowship of the RCVS when it re-launched in 2016 with its three new routes to entry. Joining the Fellowship appealed to me because of my love of research and because I could see that, under the Chairmanship of my predecessor Nick Bacon, there was a new vibrancy to the scheme. This was demonstrated by not only an increasing number of people joining, but a broader range of the profession including more women, more people outside academia, and people of a slightly younger demographic. The Fellowship should be open to anyone who has made a difference in their branch of the profession.

As the new Chair of the Fellowship Board, which is responsible for setting the criteria and process for joining the Fellowship and meeting its strategic aims, I am in a fantastic position to build on Professor Bacon's excellent work and continue that process of transformation.

During my three-year tenure my ambition is to further the role of the Fellowship both within the profession and wider society. We need to be looking at some of the issues and debates floating around and seeing how the Fellowship, as a learned society with a pool of expertise and knowledge, can contribute from a scientific point of view. It is important that animal owners and wider society understands what we as veterinary scientists can bring to these debates and we need to constantly communicate the value of evidence-based science in public life.

The Fellowship, and individual Fellows, also have a role to play in reaching out to and mentoring our younger colleagues, particularly when we are aware that there is a retention issue and that some younger vets are feeling frustrated with the profession and maybe even considering leaving it. I still remember the people that gave up their time and provided advice for me when I was younger. This was incredibly valuable and features as some of the key moments in my career. If we can similarly inspire our younger colleagues then it is an endeavour that will reap many benefits.

All of this is very worthwhile – but it also depends on keeping that momentum and energy going within the Fellowship, to ensure we are getting new blood and new ideas. So why should you consider applying to become a Fellow? Well, being a vet can often be rewarding on a day-to-day basis, but when we're so busy dealing with the immediate problems in front of us, it can be more difficult to get that long-term sense of achievement. What you want to be able to do is look back over your career and say – I achieved something, I changed something and that I contributed in some way to the evolution of the profession and how we engage with the animal-owning public. I think that, with its new energy and its ambitious strategy, the Fellowship is the ideal place to gain that, particular, sense of satisfaction.

I am really keen for people to at least be thinking about becoming a Fellow – even if it's not something for now but in a few years' time – and what I would recommend is talking to someone in your peer group or your company or your university who has become a Fellow in the past few years. Ask them questions about the requirements, about the process, about the evidence you need and so on – we are very keen on mentoring prospective Fellows on how to apply. Over the next few months, I'm also keen to provide examples of Fellows who have come through more unusual or newer routes. We need more Fellows from primary care practice as well; there are many vets in primary care who have achieved a great deal – it is important to document these achievements to build a compelling case and I would encourage colleagues to consider this.

The Fellowship Team here at the RCVS is also a fantastic resource and will be able to put you in touch with other Fellows – myself included – to provide advice about joining the Fellowship.

Please consider joining us in helping to raise the profile of the profession and visit the College's dedicated Fellowship page where you can find out all about the application process. Also check out the Directory of Fellows where you can find out more about who is in the Fellowship, their areas of interest and expertise and become inspired by some of the great work they are doing.

Published on 29 November 2019

## Events

# Clinical governance in equine practice: practical examples of quality improvement

**Date:**

Thursday 5th December 2019

**Opening times:**

9.45am-3.45pm

**Venue:**

Ashbrook Equine Hospital, Middlewich Road, Allostock, Nr Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 9JQ

**Details**

This full-day event, hosted by RCVS Knowledge, will include real-life scenarios and case studies that will help you learn how to apply quality improvement (QI) methods and showcase the latest developments and free tools available to equine practices to make practical changes to improve outcomes for your patients.

# Disciplinary Committee reprimands vet for Romanian bribe conviction

The RCVS Disciplinary Committee has reprimanded a veterinary surgeon following a conviction for buying influence in Romania whilst studying veterinary medicine.

The hearing of the case against Andreea Maria Bacaintan took place on Thursday 21 November 2019 when the Disciplinary Committee, chaired by Ian Green, considered one charge against her. The charge was that on 5 October 2017, in the Bucharest Court of Law (Criminal Section I), Miss Bacaintan was convicted, following a guilty plea, of buying influence.

At the time of the offence, Miss Bacaintan was a student in her final (6th) year at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, Romania studying to qualify as a veterinary surgeon. The offence consisted of paying a bribe to a professor at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, in order to pass an examination.

She was fined and sentenced to a period of one year and four months' imprisonment, suspended for two years, with requirements for supervision and unpaid community service work, and the case against Miss Bacaintan was that this conviction renders her unfit to practise veterinary surgery.

At the outset of the hearing the respondent admitted the facts as contained in the charge and that her conviction rendered her unfit to practise veterinary surgery. However, notwithstanding Miss Bacaintan's acceptance that she was unfit, the issue of whether or not she was fit to practice remained one for the Committee's judgement.

With the charge admitted to, the Committee went on to consider whether or not Miss Bacaintan's conduct amounted to serious professional misconduct. In coming to its decision, the Committee took into account the submissions it had heard from Nicole Curtis, acting for the College, and from Miss Bacaintan, who represented herself.

Ms Curtis submitted that the nature and circumstances of the offence, which involved an element of dishonesty and which led to the conviction, were such as to render Miss Bacaintan unfit to practise as a veterinary surgeon in the UK. Miss Bacaintan's conduct was also liable to have a seriously detrimental effect on the reputation of the profession, as it undermined the examination system.

The Committee also considered the mitigating factors associated with the conviction, namely that this was a single, isolated incident; and that Miss Bacaintan was clearly the victim of a dishonest scheme perpetrated by members of staff at the University to extort money from students in order to allow them to pass this exam.

Considering both the aggravating and mitigating factors, the Committee was satisfied that Miss Bacaintan's conduct fell far below the standard expected of a Registered Veterinary Surgeon.

The Committee then considered what sanction to impose on Miss Bacaintan. In doing so it took into account some of the written testimonials submitted on behalf of Miss Bacaintan. The Committee was satisfied that Miss Bacaintan understood the magnitude of what she had done and was highly unlikely to repeat her dishonest behaviour.

Speaking on behalf of the Committee, Ian Green said: "This was a truly exceptional case where, whilst she had been dishonest, which the Committee in no way condoned, she had felt compelled to act in this way. The Committee was persuaded that Miss Bacaintan had herself been the victim of a corrupt system and had acted out of desperation in the final stages of her degree and with the genuine fear that if she did not "play the game" she would not graduate, thereby throwing away six years of hard work.

"It was notable that she did not succumb to the corrupt scheme until the third time of trying to pass this exam. It was clear from the evidence that she was not alone in paying up to try and pass this exam and that at least 30 and possibly many more students had done the same thing."

In such circumstances and with the significant mitigation, the Committee decided that the appropriate and proportionate sanction was to reprimand Miss Bacaintan and to warn her about her future conduct.

Please note: this news story has been published to assist in understanding the case and the Disciplinary Committee's decision but does not form part of the decision itself. The Committee's full facts and findings are the only authoritative documentation.