

Giving a voice to Vectar

Welcome to the first issue of *Vectar Voice*, the new Vectar project newsletter.

Vectar stands for the Veterinary European Clinical Training and Assessment Record, and aims to support and enhance clinic-based learning for veterinary nursing students across Europe.

Practical skills training is the cornerstone of primary veterinary nurse training and the project aims to develop an effective way for students and their clinical coaches to benchmark and measure clinical experience.

The project started in 2011, and is led by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), the regulatory body for veterinary nurses in the UK.

We are supported by the Leonardo da Vinci lifelong learning programme (www.leonardo.org.uk).

In this first edition of *Vectar Voice*, we'll introduce you to our project partners and the progress we are making. We are keen for others to join us on this exciting project – please get in touch if you would like to contribute.



Libby Earle
Vectar Project Leader

Tradition makes way to tech: what is Vectar?

Everyone involved in veterinary nurse (or technician) education knows that clinical work experience is an essential part of the programme. Placement time is a precious commodity and it's important that the best possible learning experience is gained from it. But clinical placements are often in clinics that may be many miles from the supervising college. The clinics themselves are focused on the business of providing veterinary services (rather than teaching students) and the staff may not be experienced trainers.

This is where Vectar comes in. We are developing an electronic experience log to record essential skills, experience and competence, and to guide both students and the qualified veterinarians and nurses who supervise them. It is known as the Clinical Training and Assessment Record, or CTAR.

The system is based on a detailed list of practical skills to be learned, and practised, during the placement. Students and their supervisors log progress, using a five-stage process (see figure 1). As the whole process is online, college tutors are able to interact with the process, and to monitor

progress. This helps everyone (student, supervising veterinary practice and college) to get the best out of valuable placements, and to detect any problems that arise at a much earlier stage than is possible with a paper-based reporting system.

Alongside the CTAR log, we are developing a training package for clinical supervisors, to help them have confidence when guiding students and evaluating their learning and competence. This is being designed for both face-to-face and online delivery to make it as accessible as possible for busy clinic staff.

Figure 1: The Vectar five-stage skills learning process



Where are we going, and how far have

During the first year of the project, our partner schools piloted an online experience log developed by the RCVS in 2010 to improve the work-based learning process for veterinary nursing students.

We piloted the UK electronic student clinical progress log with the Vectar partners in 2012, leading to some amendments to the underpinning skills list and improvements to the logging system itself.

All of the partner schools are currently conducting a field trial of the adapted CTAR, and are receiving very positive feedback from students – and from their host clinics.

Here are some of their views.

Logging on in Oslo: a report from Norges Veterinærhøgskole (NVH)

Clinical staff and students in Oslo haven't been used to the level of interaction and recording the CTAR entails. They thought the pilot skills list was great, but had lots of ideas for streamlining the recording process, making this much easier and quicker to use alongside busy clinic work. The adapted log we now have for the field trial is a significant improvement.

Our second-year students have done a lot already. This enables them and their coaches to get started with it quickly. There are a lot of students in the field trial who did not use the CTAR in the pilot. The clinical coaches who have used it during the pilot, and again now, are definitely more happy with it.

We are piloting now with all the practices within visiting range of NVH, and we are coaching and teaching the coaches the system in situ, so to speak. We are then following up to see that they use it properly.

The CTAR in Portugal: a report from Instituto Polytechnico de Viseu (IPV)

The CTAR has been experimentally tested for the past months in Portugal in a variety of veterinary clinics and hospitals from across the country. The feedback that we are getting from our clinical coaches and students is very positive, this tool is helping everyone involved in training and assessing students to monitor their progress closely, and in real time, whilst they are in the practical work environment. Additionally, clinical coaches are encouraged to review the ways in which they support students, which is helping them to develop better strategies and a more consistent approach to teaching.



we got?

Field trials in Finland: report from Amiedu, Helsinki

We in Amiedu are very excited to participate in the Vectar project. It is mainly our apprenticeship students and their clinical coaches that have participated in the testing and evaluating of the CTAR.

Two-thirds of them come from distances of between 200 and 600km from our school in Helsinki. There has not been a problem training the students to use the CTAR while they visit the school regularly, but there have been some difficulties with the clinical coaches because of the distances and high travelling costs.

One thing this trial has shown us is that we need a really good 'distance-learning' package for those coaches who cannot participate in the training day at the school. Amiedu also had a good opportunity to improve awareness of the CTAR amongst veterinary nurses when we made a presentation about the Vectar project at the annual veterinary nurse meeting in November 2012.



Your help and interest?

You've heard the views of those involved – would you like to take part?

Throughout the project we are encouraging much wider veterinary, veterinary nursing and educational interest in Vectar, which we feel has the potential for application and use within the veterinary professions, all of which rely heavily on acquiring essential skills through work-based learning. We are therefore keen to establish communication networks and encourage all veterinary and nursing organisations to engage with us and follow our progress.

The Vectar project is overseen by the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA), which means that European veterinary employers have a direct link to the project throughout.



The project presents... Vectar project conference date

In August, the Vectar project team will be holding a final one-day open conference in Finland to launch the new web-based veterinary nurse student experience log and a training package for clinical mentors.

Although the system has been developed to support VN programmes, it is very flexible and would work well with any education programme that involves gaining vital skills in a work environment. So, if you offer either veterinary or veterinary nursing education programmes, this conference could be of interest.

There will be plenty of opportunity to explore the many issues surrounding clinic-based placements, ensuring that vet and VN students get the best out of this very valuable experience.

We'll be explaining our development process and the benefits the pilot experience log has already brought to the project schools. And there will be opportunity to try out the system and consider how it may benefit your college or university.

The conference is free to attend, and will be held in Helsinki on Friday 30 August (not Thursday 29 August as previously advertised). If you are interested, please contact the project team on the details below.

The Vectar partner organisations

The project is co-ordinated by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (UK).

Our partners are:

Abivet (Italy)

Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nurse Education (ACOVENE)

Ameidu (Finland)

Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA)

Groenhorst College (Netherlands)

Institutio Polytechnico de Viseu (Portugal)

Katholieke Hogeschool Kempen (Belgium)

Norwegian School of Veterinary Science (Norway)

Skillwise Ltd (UK)

Questions?

If you would like to find out more about the Vectar project, we would love to hear from you.

Contact us on:

info@vectar.org

T + 44 (0)20 7202 0788

F + 44 (0)20 7222 2004

W www.vectar.org

Vectar

C/o Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Veterinary Nursing Department
Belgravia House
62-64 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 2AF
UK

