

VN EDUCATION

THE RCVS VETERINARY NURSE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

JULY 2019

An excellent new course

*Pathway for Advanced
Veterinary Nurses*



In this issue: 175th anniversary for RCVS, VN shares mental health story, VN Day at the zoo, celebrating VN achievement, pre-registration exam dates, changes to CPD policy, VN Council changes, VN Futures update, next Vetnet meeting, summer events, meet the new team members

A big anniversary

College celebrates 175 years

Throughout 2019, we will be celebrating our 175th Anniversary with various initiatives that reflect our rich history, while still looking forward to the future of the veterinary professions. On 15 April 2019, the 175th anniversary of the first meeting of the RCVS Council was marked, the first to be held after the RCVS was brought into being by Royal Charter on 8 March 1844.

The RCVS was born from frustration with the quality of veterinary education being delivered at the time, and an identified need from qualified vets for reform of the system. A father and son team of veterinary surgeons from Staffordshire, Thomas Mayer and Thomas Walton Mayer, wrote a petition addressed to the Governors of the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) about the state of veterinary education, which was then distributed to other veterinary professionals to sign. Over 250 veterinary surgeons sent back letters agreeing for their signatures to be added to this petition, which initiated the campaign for a Royal Charter to create the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

RCVS CEO, Lizzie Lockett says, "We are proud that, 175 years later, we are still fulfilling these original Charter functions, and considerably more besides. Take, for example, our Mind Matters and Leadership

Initiatives, which may not have been envisaged at the time but ensure we continue to be relevant, and support a modern, forward-thinking profession."

This year, to commemorate this significant anniversary, we will be undertaking three key initiatives:

- to digitise and show-case the original petition letters from practitioners;
- to publish an interactive digital timeline of key events for the veterinary professions over the past 175 years; and,
- to start a longitudinal research project which will select a cohort of UK veterinary students to follow over the next 25 years, to better understand initial hopes and aspirations and their subsequent career choices and paths.

More information on the 175th Anniversary can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/how-we-work/royal-charter-and-legislation/175-year-anniversary. The digitised petition letters and the interactive timeline of the veterinary professions are being produced with help from our charity partner, RCVS Knowledge, which runs and maintains the College's historical archive.



Coming forward to reduce stigma

VN shares mental health story

In May, to observe both Veterinary Nursing Awareness Month and Mental Health Awareness Week, our Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) and the Doctors' Support Network (DSN) published the first blog by a veterinary nurse as part of the joint mental health anti-stigma campaign, '&me'.

'&me' encourages people within healthcare professions to come forward with their personal mental health stories, to demonstrate that mental health issues do not preclude people from achieving leading roles in healthcare.

In this new blog post, senior veterinary nurse Meg Conroy shared her personal experience with mental illness and how she has managed it whilst progressing her career in the nursing profession.

"In January 2018 I was promoted to Head Nurse for the hub of practices and had volunteered for British Small Animal Veterinary Association Southern region and Congress committee. I felt on top of the world. I was

married in July 2018, the best day of my life. But then suddenly, my black dog was upon me. Everything from the last eighteen months crashed down on me like a tsunami. Everything I had pushed to the back of my mind came flooding back. This is when I truly started to change how I viewed my mental health," says Meg.

"Before it was a dark, damning secret that I was ashamed of. Now I had supportive colleagues who genuinely just wanted me to get better. After five weeks off work, medication and starting counselling, I was ready to give work another go.

"We talk often about what our mental health takes away from us, but what has my mental health given me? It's given me a greater understanding and empathy towards others. My mental health is a part of me, but it does not define me. Certainly not as a nurse."

Meg's full blog can be read at: www.vetmindmatters.org/me-meghan-conroy/

Advancing the profession

VN Council approves new courses



At its May meeting, Veterinary Nurses Council gave final approval to two new advanced veterinary nursing qualifications to allow members of the profession at all stages of their career to develop their professional skills and knowledge in designated areas of practice.

The proposals for a new post-registration qualification framework for the profession grew out of a key recommendation of the *VN Futures Report and Action Plan*, published in 2016, which said that the joint RCVS and British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) project should 'canvas opinion on the scope, level and delivery of post-qualification awards for veterinary nurses'.

The proposals were consulted on last summer, with the large number of responses received feeding into further revisions that were approved by the VN Education Committee in April.

VN Council approval was the final stage of the process and there are now two courses – a Level 6 Graduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing and a Level 7 Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing.

The qualifications differ from the previous Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing in that they are smaller, more focused (being 60 credits rather than 120 credits) and are specific to the veterinary nurse's subject of choice, which makes it more manageable to fit around both professional and private life.

Commenting on the decision, VN Council Chair Racheal Marshall, said: "This is a fantastic development for veterinary nursing in terms of professional development and showcasing the full range of skills and experience that we possess.

"The course criteria that we have approved have already received a great deal of interest from both Further and Higher Education providers. We hope to work constructively with them on developing their courses to ensure that they meet the standards we have set out and that they are maintained over time.

"By allowing greater focus on particular designated areas of practice, I think these courses will really open up some significant opportunities for VNs, who can choose to go down a designated path, whether that is in, for example, anaesthesia, emergency & critical care, pharmacology or even non-clinical routes such as education and teaching, research skills and leadership.

"This is a great step forward for the profession and we look forward to working to develop the first Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing courses."

The courses have already received interest from Harper Adams University in Shropshire which is looking at advanced veterinary nursing courses in anaesthesia, surgical, oncology and analgesia & pain management.

VN Council member Susan Howarth, who is also Veterinary Nursing Programme Manager at Harper Adams, said: "We are delighted to be working with the new RCVS post-registration framework to develop a new suite of courses designed for RVNs from any academic background. It is hoped the smaller, more focused subject areas will attract more nurses to take up the challenge of developing their academic and professional skills that will benefit them, their patients and their practice.

"After many years of running the DipAVN we know students appreciate the flexible, blended learning provision we offered, so we will be offering these new courses in the same format. We hope to have an intake of students in September, subject to gaining RCVS accreditation."

For more details

The full framework for the new qualifications – including the candidate enrolment process, candidate requirements, assessment methods, guidance on curricula and the accreditation and reaccreditation standards – can be found at: www.rcvs.org.uk/who-we-are/vn-council/vn-council-meetings/8-may-2019/

Any veterinary nurses or Higher/ Further Education institutions who are interested in the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing should contact our VN Department on vetnursing@rcvs.org.uk or 020 7202 0788.

A do at the zoo

First VN Day of 2019

In May, we hosted our first Veterinary Nurses Day of 2019, welcoming over 220 newly-qualified veterinary nurses onto the Register, as well as celebrating the achievements of RVNs achieving a Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing and recognising long-serving members of the profession.

During the course of the event, attendees were invited to receive their scrolls and celebrate their accomplishments with their friends and family.

“Members of our Communications Team also attended the day to film a promotional video, which included interviews with the newly-registered members.”

The ceremony was held in the Prince Albert Suite at ZSL London Zoo and the nurses, along with their guests, were also invited to spend part of the day enjoying the grounds of the zoo. The ceremony was presided over by our President, Amanda Boag, who presented each veterinary nurse with their scroll, and

the Chair of the Veterinary Nurses Council, Rachael Marshall, who led the newly-registered nurses through their Professional Declarations.

One particularly special element of the day was the recognition of Surrey-based veterinary nurse Sandra Robson for her long service, with a veterinary nursing career spanning over 40 years.

Sandra, who now works part-time at Brelades Vets in Dorking, began her training in 1968 and qualified as a Registered Animal Nursing Auxiliary (or RANA) in August 1970. She has worked as a head nurse and practice manager at equine and small animal practices and has also been keen to pass on her experience to her peers, being active in teaching and training many student veterinary nurses over the years.

Members of our Communications Team also attended the day to film a promotional video, which included interviews with the newly-registered members. This video will be available to watch on the website shortly.

The next VN ceremony will be held in October this year. All veterinary nurses who are eligible to attend the event are contacted in advance to arrange their tickets, and all newly-qualified veterinary nurses are encouraged to attend and celebrate their achievements.



Cream of the crop

Celebrating VN achievement

At this year's Royal College Day, two veterinary nurses will be in receipt of RCVS Awards & Honours in recognition of their contribution to the veterinary professions and animal health and welfare.

The recipient of the Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award – the highest honour bestowed by the RCVS on veterinary nurses taking a leadership role in the profession – is Jane Devaney.

Jane is the head technical nurse at the Philip Leverhulme Equine Hospital at the University of Liverpool and has led the now six-strong nursing team for over 15 years.

Her nominator was Dr Ebony Escalona MRCVS, a former student of Jane's. She said: "This woman has been a constant in an ever-changing veterinary landscape from assisting pioneering medics and surgeons Professors Derek Knottenbelt and Barrie Edwards to supporting student learning experiences of thousands of veterinary professionals, including my own.

"She is an incredibly humble lady who shies from the limelight but I think Jane's years of service deserves more than the thank you I can give alone."

Louise Northway REVN is also one of two recipients of this year's Inspiration Awards, alongside vet and world-class athlete Laura Muir.

Louise is often better known as an advocate for the profession on social media as 'Lou the Vet Nurse'. She is also Clinical Nurse Lead at Wendover Heights Veterinary Centre in Buckinghamshire where, according to colleagues, she leads by example and tirelessly encourages the general practice team to strive for greater things and provide the best clinical care to patients.

Her nominator, Lisa Jane Bonnett, Clinical Director at Wendover Heights, said: "Louise is an exemplary representative of her profession, constantly championing the valued skills of vet nurses and their contribution to the veterinary community via her social media platform 'Lou the Vet Nurse' and more recently, her role on BVNA Council. By her own admission, Louise eats, sleeps and breathes veterinary nursing."

The recipients of Awards & Honours are invited to attend this year's Royal College Day – our Annual General Meeting and awards ceremony – which takes place at the Royal Institute of British Architects on Friday 12 July 2019.



London calling

UK hosts next FVE GA

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) will be jointly hosting the next Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) General Assembly at Church House in Westminster.

Although the formal agenda has not yet been set, it is likely to include reports from FVE's various divisions, discussions of pan-European issues such as medicines, animal welfare and disease control as well as discussions about regulatory matters such as significant updates to individual nations' codes of conducts and other issues that cut across the European veterinary sphere.

In addition to the main General Assembly there will also be a drinks reception at the House of Lords hosted by RCVS past-President Professor the Lord Trees.

Pre-registration exams

Dates for overseas qualified VNs

Throughout the rest of the year we will be holding pre-registration examinations for candidates who have completed an overseas qualification in veterinary nursing that has not received full approval by the RCVS. **These exams must be undertaken and passed before any of these candidates can join the Register of Veterinary Nurses.**

The dates and locations for the exams and exam registration sessions for the rest of this year are as follows:

- 27 July – Hartpury University & College, Gloucestershire (exam)
- 8 August – RCVS, London (registration)
- 12 September – RCVS (registration)
- 7 October – RCVS (registration)
- 16 November - Hartpury University & College (exam)
- 4 December – RCVS (registration)

Any candidates for the examinations with further queries should contact Michad Wildman, VN Pre-registration Assessment Officer, on m.wildman@rcvs.org.uk

Rolling out the changes

College announces shifts in CPD policy

Over the course of the next few years we will be rolling out a new 'outcomes-based' model of continuing professional development (CPD), following a successful piloting process.

The shift towards a more outcomes-based approach has been in discussion for a number of years, alongside an increasing awareness across many professions that CPD records solely based on 'inputs' do not necessarily equate to helpful learning or improvement of professional practice. Instead, research has shown that CPD activities focused on 'outcomes' encourages active reflection as well as contemplation on how learning will be applied, and practice will be improved. This then has a positive impact on professionalism and patient health outcomes.

“RCVS Council agreed further wide-reaching changes to the College’s policies on continuing professional development.”

At its June meeting RCVS Council agreed further 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.

This includes changes to the CPD requirement, now set at 35 hours per calendar year for veterinary surgeons and 15 hours 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.

There will also now be the option of downloading compliance certificates for those who are compliant in completing their CPD, as well as the introduction of an administration fee (which is currently yet-to-be determined). This fee 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 for their CPD records.

We will also be changing the words of the *Codes of Professional Conduct* to include the fact that CPD should be 'regular' and 'relevant', and there will be a continuation of our CPD Referral Group, which meets to consider further steps for failure of CPD compliance.

From 2022 will also be making a new CPD platform (currently in development) mandatory for both vets and VNs for recording their learning and development.

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 us confidentially at any time to discuss their difficulties on cpd@rcvs.org.uk.

VNs of the future

Team attend student-focused festival

This July, we are heading to the Royal Veterinary College’s Camden Campus for SVN Fest. This two-day event, held on Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 July, features keynote speakers including RCVS Inspiration Award winner Louise Northway (better known as ‘Lou the Vet Nurse’) and VN Council Vice-Chair Matthew Rendle, as well as exhibitions and workshops.

The event will host lectures on various topics, including anaesthesia, nutrition, wildlife, stress management and bereavement. Sunday will see

an interactive workshop being held and delegates will be provided with lunch, goody bags and t-shirts.

This event is run by student veterinary nurses, for student veterinary nurses, and is the very first congress of its kind having been set up by some final year SVNs at the RVC with the aim of providing attendees with the opportunity to learn from their nursing heroes and mingle with other SVNs from across the country.

Standard tickets cost £115.00 and attending may count towards CPD. For tickets, visit the SVN Fest website: <https://svnfest.weebly.com>

VN Council changes

New Council member from July

VN Council will be welcoming a new member, as well as re-electing its current Vice-Chair, at this year's Royal College Day, which takes place on 12 July at the Royal Institute of British Architects.



Liz Cox

Jane Davidson

No VN Council election took place this year as only two candidates – Liz Cox and Jane Davidson – had put themselves forward for the two available places, and so were elected for their three-year terms by default. Liz has been a member of VN Council since

2011 and served as its Chair from 2015 to 2018 when she was heavily involved in the launch of the VN Futures project. Latterly she has served as Vice-Chair of VN Council as well as being an appointed veterinary nurse member of RCVS Council.

Jane Davison is a new member of VN Council and is well-known amongst the profession as a prolific tweeter about all things #planetrvn from her **@JaneRVN** Twitter handle, as well as being a regular contributor for *VN Times* and an educator.

You can find out more about your new VN Council members – including their election manifestos – by visiting www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/blog/meet-your-new-vn-council-members/

At Royal College Day, Matthew Rendle will also be re-elected as VN Council Vice-Chair. Matthew has been an elected member of VN Council since 2016 and has been a member of the profession since 1989. His career has focused on zoological, wildlife and exotic animal nursing and he says that he has nursed everything from 'ants to elephants' and most things in-between.

CPD audit underway

VNs asked to share records

We are currently undertaking our annual audit of veterinary nurses' compliance with continuing professional development (CPD), with requests sent out to members of the profession in June.

Under the *Code of Professional Conduct*, all veterinary nurses are expected to maintain and develop the knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence.

This year, 1,130 registered veterinary nurses have been asked to share their CPD records for 2016 to 2018, to demonstrate that they have complied with our CPD requirements. Some 773 of the nurses contacted were from a random sample, 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 nor responded to requests for three or more years. In the 2018 VN CPD Audit, 28% of respondents were found to be non-compliant and, particularly concerning to members of 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 our Professional Conduct Department for further investigation.

Career progression, leadership and creating a sustainable workforce

An update on the VN Futures project

In the past year the VN Futures project, a joint initiative between the RCVS and the British Veterinary Nursing Association to help the profession prepare for its future challenges and make the most of its opportunities, has been given a significant boost by two key developments. The first is the formation of a VN Futures Board and the second is the appointment of a VN Futures Project Manager.

VN Futures Board formation

The VN Futures Board was formed in May 2018 as a steering group for the project to provide direction and strategy to the various working groups as well as supporting the project's ongoing work in meeting the *Vet Futures Report and Action Plan*.

The Board currently comprises four members – Racheal Marshall, Chair of the Board and the RCVS VN Council; Wendy Nevins, BVNA President; Jo Hinde, BVNA Junior Vice-President; and Liz Cox, Vice-Chair of VN Council. The Board is supported by an executive group comprising: Julie Dugmore, RCVS Director of Veterinary Nursing; Jill Macdonald, VN Futures Project Manager; and Robin Millar, BVNA Strategic Director.

It holds regular face-to-face meetings, most recently on 19 June 2019 where it met to discuss, among other things, a communication strategy for the project and a decision-making framework for group members. Racheal Marshall was also appointed as the new Chair of the Board at the June meeting.

From left to right: Wendy Nevins, Jo Hinde, Liz Cox and Racheal Marshall.

New project manager



Earlier this year the RCVS and BVNA appointed Jill Macdonald as part-time VN Futures Project Manager to take on much of the day-to-day running of the project including coordinating, guiding and supporting the work of the various working groups, promoting the work of VN Futures and encouraging engagement between the project and the profession.

Jill is known to many in the profession as a member of the editorial board of the *Veterinary Nursing Journal*, to which she also regularly contributes. If you are interested in finding out more about VN Futures or actively contributing to the project you can contact Jill on jill@vnfutures.org.uk or 07867 301 723.

Career case studies

As the VN Futures project recognised, the veterinary nursing profession has many special qualities and opportunities unique to its role and can lead nurses in a variety of directions, from all the different aspects of animal healthcare and welfare, to management, academia, conservation consultancy or even working overseas.

One of the ambitions being looked at by the VN Futures Workforce Working Group was to showcase the diverse career paths available to veterinary nurses particularly aimed at those just entering the profession or thinking about how to take their career to the next level. To facilitate this we have collated a selection of case studies on the



VN Futures website, featuring veterinary nurses in a wide variety of differing roles including an oncology VN, a VN working in the Armed Forces and a clinical services manager.

Though every nurse's career path will be unique, we hope that, by reading these case studies, they will find ideas and inspiration.

All the case studies can be viewed here:

www.vetfutures.org.uk/vnfutures/vn-career-case-studies

If you would like to submit a case study about your career then please contact Jill Macdonald for more information.

Career Progression Working Group

The activities of this Group are all about promoting 'the value of the veterinary nurse' and nurturing the next generation of veterinary nurse leaders. Over the coming months, amongst other things, the group is aiming to focus on how to help nurses lead fulfilling roles by encouraging practices to fully utilise the skills, experience and knowledge of their nurses. This will include engaging with practices to consider itemising the veterinary nurse's time and skills when charging clients and to encourage and support development review of veterinary nurses in practice.

“The Group is looking at how it might work with STEM Learning to create a pilot project which will provide training and resources.”

At a recent meeting of the Working Group, the production of a series of webinars was discussed as a way of reaching a larger audience to talk to the profession about career advancement and progression. As well as webinars, the Group also considered arranging talks and discussions around the subject at BVNA Congress this autumn and BSAVA Congress in spring 2020.

The Group also discussed the RCVS Leadership Initiative's massive open online course (or MOOC) which is available for free via online elearning platform FutureLearn and which has been co-produced with the NHS Leadership Academy. The course aims to instil everyday leadership skills into members of the professions at all stages of their career. This course has proven incredibly popular and the Group was pleased to note that uptake of the course amongst veterinary nurses was high and that feedback was positive.

Workforce Working Group

The demand for veterinary nurses is ever-increasing and the Workforce Working Group, in recognising this

need, discussed how outreach amongst school-age children could be used to get them to consider a career in veterinary nursing. The Group is looking at how it might work with STEM Learning to create a pilot project which will provide training and resources for veterinary nursing careers ambassadors.

The Group is also looking at producing a children's book which will further educate youngsters on what veterinary nurses do in order to inspire the next generation of veterinary nurses.

A further strand of the Group's work aims to provide advice to student veterinary nurses through talks and workshops about career progression and diversity at colleges and universities. We are always looking for volunteers so if you have knowledge on different career pathways in nursing and a desire to talk to and inspire others – please get in touch!

One Health Working Group

This Group is working on highlighting the concepts of One Health to the VN profession and encouraging nurses to take a more proactive role in working with other healthcare professions to share knowledge and best practice.

The key part of this Group's work is carrying out research around the 'district veterinary nursing' role, which would entail carrying out more community-based veterinary nursing work. Not only would this be interesting from a One Health aspect – as district veterinary nurses can learn from and share knowledge with their community nursing colleagues in human healthcare – but also provide further nursing care options for nurses working in practice, and maximise their potential in promoting human and animal health and welfare.

Training Practices Working Group

While the number of Training Practices (TPs) across the UK has been steadily increasing, there are still some areas less well catered for than others, so we are always looking to demonstrate the rewards and benefits of TP status to practices. We are currently looking at developing some 'TP case studies', so if you would like to share your and your practice's experience of Training Practice status, please get in touch.



New kids on the Baltic

RCVS attends ENQA as new member

In April this year, Julie Dugmore, RCVS Director of Veterinary Nursing and Linda Prescott-Clemons, RCVS Director of Education, attended the General Assembly of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), which was held in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

ENQA promotes European co-operation in the field of quality assurance in higher education and disseminates information and expertise among its members and stakeholders in order to develop and share good practice and to foster quality assurance on a pan-European basis. Last year the RCVS successfully applied for recognition by ENQA in respect of our accreditation processes for veterinary and veterinary nursing education and so we were invited to attend the event as a new member.

“The aim of the initiative is to strengthen strategic partnerships across universities, with a view to having 20 “European Universities” by 2024.”

Delegates attended a range of workshops and presentations including the *European Universities Initiative* by Vanessa Debais-Snainton, Head of Higher Education for the European Commission, and the *Landscape of Higher Education 2020 and beyond* by Bert van der Zwaar from the Netherland's University of Utrecht.

The European Universities Initiative was described as a flagship project of the European Economic Area, which encompasses not only higher education, but also vocational and school education and also includes states from outside the EEA. The aim of the initiative is to strengthen strategic partnerships across universities, with a view to having 20 “European Universities” by 2024, to bring European educators together and increase competitiveness across the board.

Bert van der Zwaar discussed the need for universities to think differently and adapt, as a result of three main issues: first, the large-scale changes in society; second, the disruptive nature of technological change; and third, the new societal role for the university. The General Assembly was a chance for representatives from the College, as a new member of ENQA, to introduce themselves and contribute to the review of ENQA policies and procedures.

What is Vetnnet doing in Bruges

European network meeting



The Veterinary European Transnational Network for Nursing Education and Training (Vetnnet) will be holding its next conference in Belgium this autumn.

The meeting will take place between Wednesday 18 and Friday 20 September at the Novotel in Bruges and is hosted by the city's University of Applied Sciences. Vetnnet is a European Network for anyone involved in veterinary nurse education and brings together colleges, veterinary accreditation bodies, and veterinary and veterinary nursing associations, including the RCVS.

“Vetnnet is a European Network for anyone involved in veterinary nurse education.”

This year's conference has a focus on sharing ideas on how best to teach clinical skills as well as how veterinary nursing education providers and accrediting bodies can best learn from each other. As part of this Victoria Hedges, RCVS Examinations Manager, will be giving a talk on the Pan-European Practical Assessment System (or PEPAS) and examiner training.

Furthermore, Julie Dugmore, RCVS Director of Veterinary Nursing, and Jill Macdonald, VN Futures Project Co-ordinator, will also be delivering a session outlining the current state and focus of the VN Futures project (see page 8) and how a European VN Futures project might be developed and promoted.

For more information and to register for a place please visit the Vetnnet website www.vetnnet.com/conference

Professional outreach

Catching-up at congresses

Over the course of the year so far the RCVS Veterinary Nursing Department has been busy attending various professional events and congresses to talk to both vets and vet nurses about issues relating to the profession, including VN Futures and Schedule 3.

At BSAVA Congress in April a whole stream was dedicated to discussing the VN Futures project and related issues such as VN wellbeing, the VN role in the Practice Standards Scheme, the art of delegation under Schedule 3 and the development of an Advanced Practitioner status for veterinary nurses.

Our VN Futures Project Coordinator Jill Macdonald has written a very helpful summary blog about the event on the RCVS website: www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/features/scoping-the-future-for-veterinary-nursing

In March, members of the RCVS team also gave three separate talks at the College of Animal Welfare's (CAW) Clinical Coach Congress which took place at the East of England Area and Events Centre in Peterborough. The first presentation was by VN Council member Kathy Kissick who gave a talk about how clinical coaches can encourage their students not only to achieve their qualification, but also develop professionally. The second talk was from Julie Dugmore and Jill Macdonald and was an update on VN Futures. The third was from RCVS CEO Lizzie Lockett in her capacity as Director of the Mind Matters Initiative with an overview of the project and its aims.

Finally, in May, Jill Macdonald also attended the CAW's Head Nurse Congress to talk about all things VN Futures to senior members of the veterinary nursing profession.

Dog days of summer

Talking all things veterinary

This year, team members from the College are out and about at various public-facing events across the country to talk about the role of the RCVS in safeguarding animal health and welfare, including the Practice Standards Scheme and our regulation of education and professional conduct as well as giving out our ever-popular careers advice for budding VNs.

From 20 to 23 June we attended the Royal Highland Show near Edinburgh where we spoke to members of the public as well as various representatives from stakeholder groups. Our second major event is Countryfile Live North at the stunning grounds of Castle Howard in North Yorkshire from 15 to 18 August.

“These events provide us with the chance to engage with the public directly and answer any queries or concerns that vets or veterinary nurses may have.”

Ian Holloway, RCVS Director of Communications, said: “These events provide us with the chance to engage with the public directly and answer any queries or concerns that vets or veterinary nurses may have. They are also great fun as we transform our



stands into an interactive veterinary practice setting, with plenty of photo opportunities to share.

“We also have lots of vet and VN career-related activities and information for children of all ages, including the chance to dress up as a veterinary professional and try their hand at some small animal surgery or farm animal practice.

“Furthermore, we also have lots of information for all animal owners about our Practice Standards Scheme and RCVS-accredited practices, the importance of registering pets with a veterinary practice, and our new practice/client relationship poster.”

Meet the new team members

Denise Chambers



What is your role in the Veterinary Nursing Department and what does it entail?

I am the Quality Assurance Officer and I will be checking that awarding organisations and their associated colleges and centres are delivering veterinary nurse training that meets

RCVS Day One Skills and accreditation standards, focusing mainly on further education.

What is your professional background and how does it relate to your role?

I started working as a veterinary nurse 20 years ago and after 10 years in practice I went into the education sector as I found that I really enjoyed being an assessor and helping to train student nurses. I am very interested in making sure nurses are trained appropriately and get the best quality education from the college they choose to train at.

What is your interest in animal health and welfare?

Education, education, education! I think the majority of people want to do the best for their pets, but they need that patient, knowledgeable veterinary nurse in practice to help them understand how to achieve it.

What is the main thing you have learnt from working as a veterinary nurse?

Buy an expensive pen and then you will always remember to get it back from whoever pinched it when you finish your shift.

Shirley Gibbins



What is your role in the Veterinary Nursing Department and what does it entail?

I am the Veterinary Nursing Qualifications Manager, responsible for auditing the VN Degree programmes in the UK and ensuring they meet the RCVS

standards so students are eligible to enter the Register upon graduation.

What is your professional background and how does it relate to your role?

I am a Registered Veterinary Nurse, having worked in both referral and general practices. I left practice to move into the education side of the industry and worked for The College of Animal Welfare as an Internal Quality Assurer then Lead Internal Quality Assurer. My RVN status means that I have a good understanding of the qualification process as well awareness of what practices want and need in their qualified nurses.

What is your interest in animal health and welfare?

Always ensuring that patient health and welfare comes first – it is good to see how much more aware practices are of how stressful the veterinary environment can be and there is so much being done to try and reduce this. This is now coming through at the grass roots level from day one of a veterinary nurses' training, so health and welfare is always at the forefront of our minds when nursing patients.

What is the main thing you have learnt from working as a veterinary nurse?

Change is necessary! There have been many changes to standard operating procedures and protocols over recent years, and I think the profession in general is more embracing of evidence-based nursing and understanding why we follow the procedure we do. But also with an awareness that can, and should, change as further research and investigation are completed.

Who does what in the VN Department

Julie Dugmore: *Director of Veterinary Nursing*

Annette Amato: *Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing, Secretary to VN Council*

Denise Chambers: *Quality Assurance Officer*

Shirley Gibbins: *Qualifications Manager*

Victoria Hedges: *Examinations Manager*

Jill Macdonald: *VN Project Coordinator*

Reanne McDonald: *Education Officer – VN Enrolments*

Sian Tanner: *Veterinary Nursing Education Officer*

Michad Wildman: *VN Pre-registration Assessment Officer*

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