

vet Times

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VNs NOT USED TO FULL POTENTIAL, REVEALS SURVEY

MORE than half of VNs feel they are not used to their full potential, a survey has revealed.

The survey, identifying what VNs do in practice and what they want from their careers, was originally carried out by VNs working for Independent Vetcare (IVC), but was later expanded across the country. It was conducted by VN Jane Lewis, from Manor Veterinary Clinic in Kent.

In total, 454 people took part – more than half (55.9 per cent) were VNs and 25.8 per cent were students. The majority worked in private practice. Results showed more than three-quarters of respondents did not hold any post-graduate qualifications, while 43.3 per cent said they would like to complete an advanced diploma.

More than 90 per cent of respondents said clipping and scrubbing patients for operations, taking x-rays and blood sampling were among the most common jobs they were asked to carry out.

Tasks they were asked to do least frequently included digit amputations, lump removals and stitch-ups, despite the fact more than 50 per cent of respondents said they wanted more of that kind of work.

Respondents felt vets did not refer enough for nurse consultations and more Schedule 3 training would be beneficial. Understaffing was also cited as a major issue, while others said practices should consider employing kennel assistants and cleaners to free up nurse time.

IVC bought Manor Veterinary Clinic in March 2001, when Mrs Lewis joined the company's nurse committee, which looks at how to improve the lives of its nurses.

"We received a huge response. It shows just how much nurses want their voices to be heard," she

exclusive report by

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explained in an exclusive interview with *Veterinary Times*.

"As part of the committee, we created a list of what nurses at different levels can do because we felt, a lot of the time, perhaps vets weren't always aware of what nurses were allowed to do."

Important research

Mrs Lewis said it was important to share the results, not only with VNs, but with vets and others in the industry. She believes it is the first time such research has been undertaken.

"The thing that surprised me the most was there were so many VNs saying they felt underused... felt [their practice] was understaffed and... didn't have the respect of the vets," added Mrs Lewis.

"For me, to [have] so many people feel they are not being used to their full potential and... perhaps they are not getting the respect they deserve is a worrying feature."

Some respondents to the survey said they felt patronised and underused, with one stating: "There are more reasons to leave the profession than to stay; with money, recognition, hours and expectations being the main reasons I left clinical and considered leaving my VN career completely."

Commenting on the survey's findings, BVNA president Sam Morgan urged practice owners to provide clearer career paths for their nursing teams.

She said: "Unfortunately, it does not come as a surprise to see these results; however, we need to move forward in

a positive manner. Nurses should be encouraged to review their practice and see where they can fill any skills gaps.

"Personal development should be planned and then appropriate CPD and/or further qualifications found to further a VN's knowledge.

"The BVNA would like to encourage practice owners to have clear progression paths for their VNs, combining responsibility and skill development. This, ideally, would be presented with a clear and increasing salary package to remunerate them according to experience and level of knowledge."

And she added: "Good communication between vets and VNs can help a mutual understanding of each other's skills and knowledge."

Mrs Lewis said the research would be used by the nursing committee at IVC to improve the lives of VNs, as well as attract and retain nurses. By sharing the information, Mrs Lewis hopes to raise awareness of the issues facing VNs and improve their careers.

She said: "It is [about] raising awareness of how people are feeling, and encouraging nurses to feel they are valued and something is being done. With the fight going on with the VN title, it is a really important time for progress in veterinary nursing and I think this [survey] goes hand in hand with that."

The BVA said it was clear about the importance of the entire team and valued the contributions VNs made.

BVA junior vice-president Gudrun Ravetz said: "We need more messaging, like the RCVS-led VN title campaign, to champion the training, skills and work that goes into qualifying and continuing to work as a VN."

She said the BVA would continue to work with the BVNA to support VNs.

For full results of the survey, visit <http://independentvetcare.co.uk>

Centre builds cat-only ward

WORK has begun to install a £100,000 feline ward at the north-east's largest veterinary business and is expected to be completed by April.

The new facilities at Westway Veterinary Centre, West Road, Newcastle, which include an operating theatre and prep room, will enable the practice to keep cats separate from dogs while undergoing treatment and handle an increase in patient numbers as the group continues to grow. The cat-only wing of the hospital is being built five months after the opening of a feline waiting room, set away from dogs.

Westway director Nick Myerscough said: "We want to provide a better environment for cats and keep them away from barking dogs to minimise the stress of being in a vet practice.

"We try to ensure all animals brought here are treated with care, compassion and understanding, and we are committed to constantly improving facilities and treatment of pets. We will be the only practice in Newcastle with a separate cat ward and facilities to this standard."

VN Amy Wilkinson said: "We already have a cat-only waiting room and this facility will ensure cats brought to the hospital will be happier and less stressed."

Westway, which also owns Easyvets and Value Vets, has 23 surgeries and employs 37 vets across the north-east.



Left: builder Andy Duncan, architect David Kershaw, Westway director Nick Myerscough and VN Amy Wilkinson.



An award for veterinary practices

Friday 18th March 2016

The Veterinary Marketing Association Advertising Awards are the most prestigious in our business, and are attended by the industry's leading lights. We are delighted to announce our Practice Marketing Award, sponsored by Merial Animal Health. It is open to companion and farm animal practices which can demonstrate effective marketing to their end customers. If your practice has instigated some striking communications between January 1 and December 31 2015, log onto www.vma.org.uk/awards or email secretary@vma.org.uk for entry details.

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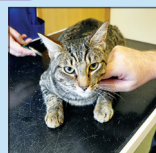
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