- (C) Problems with eating
(D) Unwanted intrusive thoughts about a situation at work
2. What is compassion fatigue?
- (A) Not enough empathy
(B) Not enough exposure to difficult cases
(C) Never preventable
(D) Contributed to by secondary traumatic stress

3. Which of the following statements is UNTRUE?
- (A) Workplace support systems can reduce the risk of compassion fatigue
(B) Compassion fatigue is a sign of an excessively sensitive personality
(C) Distress at animal suffering is common among veterinary professionals
(D) Suppression of emotional responses does not prevent compassion fatigue

Building and supporting compassionate teams: what helps?

Rosie Allister

Veterinary professionals work hard to care for others, and that care needs to extend to ourselves and our colleagues. Over recent years, awareness of poor wellbeing, stress at work, burnout and other challenges facing veterinary mental health have increased. It is important that we match that increased awareness with evidence-based steps to improve and maintain mental health and wellbeing. There are things, at both organizational and individual level, that can help.

The session reviews what both workplaces and individuals can do if they identify concerns. It also looks at stress among veterinary professionals and things employers and individuals can do to help, with a particular focus on prevention rather than a reactive response.

We look at five take-away tips to maintain wellbeing, and at five essential employer and organizational actions to support staff and help to keep them safe.

For employers we look at:

- Valuing wellbeing and developing authentic plans to support it
- Compassionate line management and how positive supportive relationships help
- Effective teams and communication — how they can help prevent burnout
- Working conditions and what is important for mental health
- Understanding and preventing (rather than just reacting to) stress.

For individuals we look at:

- Taking control — understanding what you can and cannot control in workplace wellbeing
- Prioritizing wellbeing — the evidence base for what helps the most
- Connection and relationships in maintaining mental health
- Sleep and how to get it when working out-of-hours
- Challenging superhero culture.

Finally the session reviews the work of Vetlife in supporting the veterinary community. Vetlife receives around ten contacts a day from veterinary professionals needing support. Vetlife has three services:

- Vetlife Helpline, which offers confidential, non-judgmental emotional support to everyone in the UK veterinary community 24 hours a day by phone or email
- Vetlife Health Support, professional mental health support for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses referred through the Helpline
- Vetlife Financial Support, financial help for veterinary surgeons and their dependents impacted by health conditions or bereavement.

Vetlife can be contacted 24 hours a day on 0303 040 2551 or email via www.vetlife.org.uk.

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Review the evidence around veterinary teams and mental health and wellbeing, particularly burnout
- Understand the concept of compassionate line management for wellbeing
- Explore techniques for early identification and prevention of veterinary mental health issues, and how supportive and compassionate line management can help

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following would be likely to help most in response to burnout?
- (A) Performance management
(B) Sending the individual staff member on a course about stress
(C) Review of systems and structural factors causing chronic stress for all staff in the workplace
(D) Disciplinary process
2. Who is susceptible to burnout in a veterinary team?
- (A) Veterinary surgeons
(B) Veterinary nurses
(C) Customer care staff
(D) All staff can be affected

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Guest (guest)

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3. What is compassion?

- (A) Understanding what another person might be thinking
- (B) The sensation of feeling another person's or animal's feelings

- (C) The desire to help other people or animals, induced by understanding their perspective and feelings
- (D) Sacrificing one's own needs to help other people or animals

What to do when you don't know what to do: case studies for dealing with difficult situations

Katie Moore

Research indicates that veterinary professionals are at greater risk of suffering from mental ill-health compared to the general population. Depression, adjustment disorders and anxiety account for the greatest proportion of problems seen by clinicians at Vetlife Health Support. There is an association between work-related stress and mental ill-health.

Strong bonds between colleagues can help them respond to challenging events. Creating safe working environments, where colleagues feel supported and able to speak without fear, is beneficial to their wellbeing, as well as productivity.

In this interactive session we will explore a number of challenging practice-based scenarios, focusing on mental health. Often there is no obvious right or wrong way of dealing with a particular situation, and we will discuss different approaches and key concepts.

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand how social interactions at work impact upon mental health

- Consider different approaches to difficult work-based situations relating to mental health
- Understand the importance of supportive relationships and how they can help colleagues respond to challenging events

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Research suggests that people are LEAST likely in the first instance to seek support from which of the following?
 - (A) Spouse or partner
 - (B) A colleague
 - (C) Another family member
 - (D) Their general practitioner (GP)
2. Which of the following describes a psychologically safe workplace?
 - (A) Where everyone agrees with each other
 - (B) Where people can speak without fear of humiliation or punishment
 - (C) Where extroverts thrive
 - (D) Where standards are lowered to meet deadlines
3. Which of the following is an appropriate response to a colleague confiding that they think they might have an alcohol problem?
 - (A) Disclosing the information to the boss
 - (B) Signposting them to their GP or Vetlife
 - (C) Reporting them to the RCVS
 - (D) Offering to go to the pub with them