Inspiring future generations of VNs through the VN Futures School Ambassador Project

Racheal Marshall

One of the ambitions of the VN Futures project is creating a sustainable workforce. The veterinary nursing profession has many special qualities unique to its role, though not all of these are recognized by students or their parents when considering career options.

The demand for registered veterinary nurses continues to grow, and whilst the number of nurses joining the register every year is increasing, without students choosing veterinary nursing as a career and entering the profession, we cannot produce a sustainable workforce. Currently the career advice available within schools on veterinary nursing is very limited and that which is available tends to be outdated and does not contain relevant information.

To improve the recognition of veterinary nursing as a career option and ensure that up-to-date information is

available for schools, VN Futures are running a Schools Ambassadors pilot project. As part of the project a group of veterinary nurses have become STEM school ambassadors. STEM ambassadors work with schools and education organizations to encourage enthusiasm and understanding of science, technology, engineering and maths. By working with STEM, schools across the country will be able to access information on veterinary nursing and can be put in contact with veterinary nurse ambassadors to request careers talks and to attend careers events. The pilot group has also developed resources and an outline structure which can be used by anyone doing school visits.

If you are interested in becoming a veterinary nursing schools ambassador, or are already doing school visits and would like to share your experiences, please come along to this session where we will give an overview of the work of the pilot group and discuss how we can raise the profile of veterinary nursing as a career to students across the country.

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Gain awareness of the VN Futures Project work to promote veterinary nursing as career and improve sustainability in the profession
- Understand what the VN Futures School Ambassador Pilot involves
- Learn what we hope to gain from the VN Futures School Ambassador Pilot, and future plans for ambassadorial roles

Nursing in the community: the potential of the community nurse role in One Health

Rebecca Jones

There are many definitions of One Health, with the basic concept being that the health of people, animals and the environment are all intrinsically linked. By the unity of working together locally, nationally and globally, we can work towards optimal health for all.

The majority of veterinary nurses train because they want to make a difference to the welfare of animals. It quickly becomes apparent that their role is as much about supporting owners as it is about treating their pets. Long before the concept of 'One Health — One Welfare' became topical, veterinary nurses had already been establishing the human–animal bond.

As the concept of One Health continues to gather momentum, there is an increased recognition of the benefits of human-centred healthcare and veterinary professionals working together for the benefit of both human and animal patients. There are some great examples of work under this umbrella, with one such example being the establishment of the community veterinary nurse.

To understand the potential for community nursing, we need to be able to define it. Our human-centred nursing counterparts broadly define the term as 'any nursing care that is provided outside of the acute hospital environment' (The Queens Nursing Institute). This means that community nursing could take place just about anywhere else — within the home environment, within a school, out on the streets or within a village hall, for example. Therefore, the potential for this role is vast, ranging from home visits to support owners with their pet's end-of-life care, to community engagement and education, or a first aid course for the fire brigade.

During this session, VN Futures will share profiles of veterinary nurses performing such roles, which will demonstrate their diversity and value to the community. They will also provide an insight into the unique skill set required and the potential challenges that may be encountered. For example, there are clearly benefits with providing care within the home environment.

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However, there are also potential concerns around safeguarding, decision making and the emotional impact of dealing with a number of, sometimes unexpected, situations away from the direct support of the practice team.

Community veterinary nursing also opens up the potential for collaboration with other healthcare professionals — initiatives such as the PDSA/NHS collaboration to provide MOT health checks to both owners and their pets, and the training of veterinary nurses by 'Dementia Friends', to become Dementia Champions and understand how best to help those affected by dementia with caring for their pets. There are many other topics that could be further explored through the work and shared learning of community nurses — end-of-life care, obesity, antimicrobial resistance and welfare issues are just a few examples. Through this collaboration, we can achieve One Health — One Welfare.

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand what One Health is and its relevance to veterinary nurses
- Be able to define the term 'community nursing' is and understand the context in which it can be applied
- Be able to give examples of topics that fit under the umbrella of 'One Health — One Welfare'

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of these best defines the concept of One Health?
 - (A) The health of dogs, cats and rabbits are all intrinsically linked
 - (B) The health of people, animals and the environment are all intrinsically linked at local, national and global level
 - (C) The health of people, animals and the environment are all intrinsically linked
 - (D) Our own health should be our only concern — survival of the fittest!
2. How is 'community nursing' broadly defined?
 - (A) Nursing care is provided within the home environment
 - (B) Human-centred and veterinary nurses working together
 - (C) Any nursing care that is provided outside of the acute hospital environment
 - (D) Providing advice on healthcare to members of the community
3. Which of these are examples of topics under the umbrella of One Health — One Welfare?

(A) Obesity	(C) End-of-life care
(B) Welfare issues	(D) All of the above