

## Professional Wellness for Veterinarians

Nienke Endenburg<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Division Human-Animal Relations, Department of Animals in Science and Society, and Animal Behaviour Clinic, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands; Yalelaan 2, 3584 CM Utrecht, The Netherlands

\*Corresponding author's email: n.endenburg@uu.nl

**Keywords:** mental health, professional wellness.

### INTRODUCTION

Personal and professional wellness of veterinarians and veterinary staff are receiving increased attention in veterinary publications and conferences, social media and the non-veterinary press. Recent suicides of high-profile, socially-harassed or victimized veterinarians have caused consternation within the profession. There is an increased recognition that stress and compassion fatigue coupled with a demanding workplace environment are adversely affecting the mental well-being and physical health of veterinarians.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A literature study has been performed with search engines like Scopus, PubMed and Google Scholar. Keywords were professional wellness, mental health, compassion fatigue.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Several studies have estimated that the incidence of suicide in the veterinary profession in countries such as USA, UK, Australia & Norway to be double of the other health care professionals, and four times that of the general population <sup>1,2</sup>. A number of influencing factors may be postulated as contributing to this increased risk: personality factors, undergraduate training, professional isolation, work-related stressors, attitudes to death and euthanasia, access and technical knowledge, psychiatric conditions, stigma around mental illness, and suicide contagion<sup>2</sup>.

Also a heavy workload, insufficient rest and prolonged, intense contact with animals and their owners can result in occupational stresses and burnout. Veterinarians who neglect their physical, emotional and psychological needs can find themselves suffering from "compassion fatigue", and it has been estimated that between 15-67% of veterinarians are at high risk of burnout<sup>3</sup>.

However, the research done comes mainly for the developed world. And even there scientific evidence on topics like for instance compassion fatigue, is lacking. Furthermore it seems that this professional wellness issues are not seen in for instance Asia. The question is whether or not this is

true, and if so why?

### CONCLUSION

More studies regarding professional wellness are conducted the last decade. The results indicate that veterinarians have a greater risk for mental health problems than other professions. However most of the studies done come from the Western world. Other research has to be done to find out if mental health problems are limited to the developed world.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The PWG of WSAVA gave input to this study.

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