

VN Well-being Survey Report



Introduction and background

The stresses suffered by veterinary surgeons and the alarmingly high suicide rate have been an issue that sadly, as a profession, we are familiar with. The British Veterinary Nursing Association felt it vital to explore the factors which cause nurses and other staff in the practice problems and try to ensure that they know where to go for help should they need it; and have been working alongside Vetlife in order to achieve this.

Vetlife, which is funded by the Veterinary Benevolent Fund, is an invaluable service which offers support to the veterinary profession and advice on well-being. This service is available to all practice staff who are in need of assistance, or need advice on how to help others. (www.vetlife.org.uk)

Our first task for this project was to perform a 'VN well-being survey'. The aim of the survey was to gain valuable information on the issues that veterinary nursing staff face on a daily basis and covered several 'areas' including personal pressures, as well as work-based and clinical stressors.

Method

Survey content was sourced from David Bartram, who has undertaken a lot of work in this area, similar questions having been used for a survey to vets in 2009 for his RCVS Fellowship thesis. (Bartram, DJ, 2009)

The survey was circulated by means of an online questionnaire, was launched at BVNA congress, and aired using social media and external publications within the industry.

27 questions were included which were broken down into three main sections; personal, general work-related and clinical work-related issues. It also included a very important concluding question which asked respondents what gave them the most pleasure from their work.

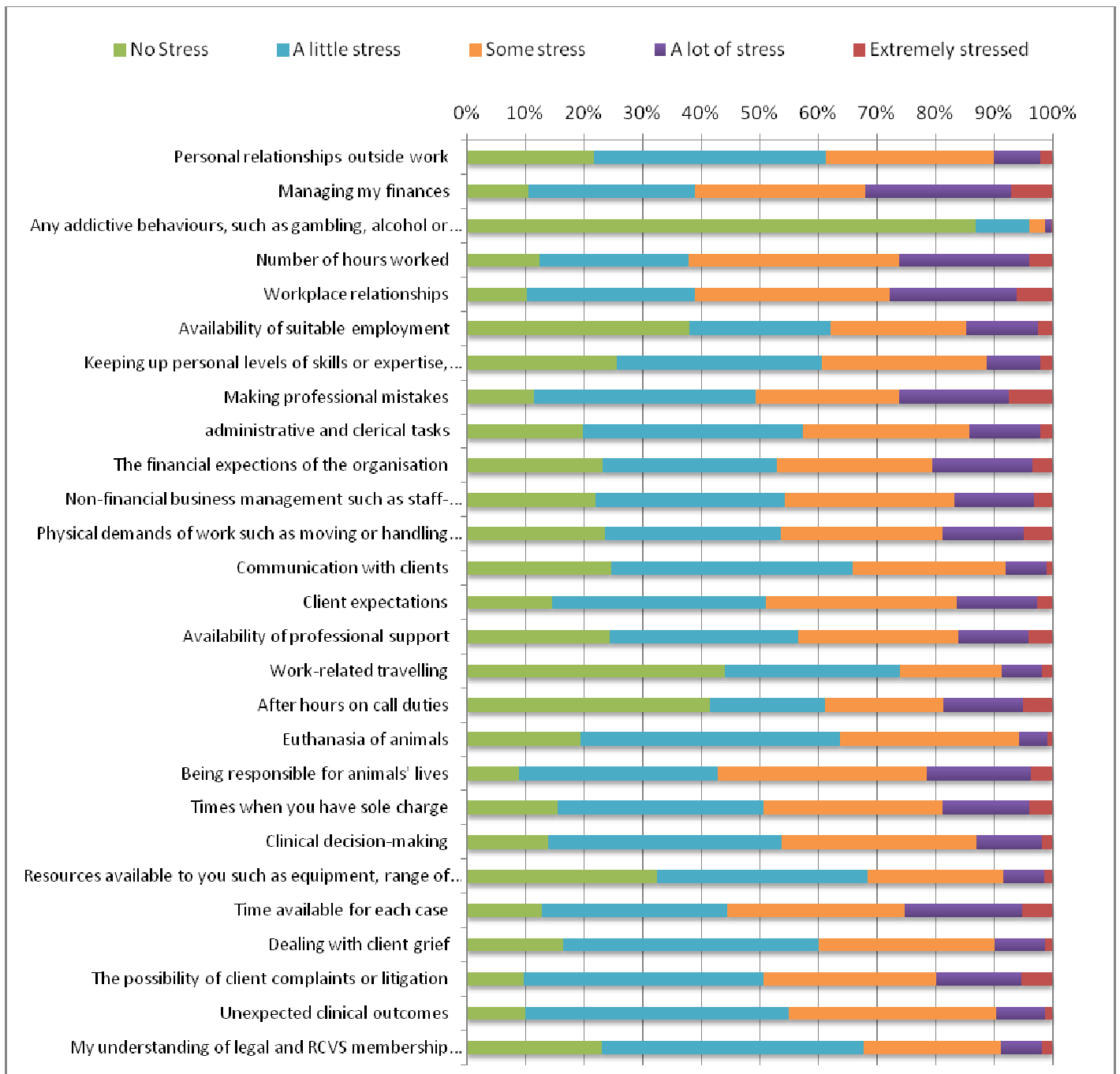
Candidates were asked to answer each question using a rating scale of:

- No stress
- A little stress
- Some stress
- A lot of stress
- Extremely stressed

Responses

The survey received 1258 responses, an approximate response rate of 27% when based on BVNA membership numbers. This provides invaluable information on levels of stress within the industry and also which areas offer the most job satisfaction. Information on awareness of Vetlife services were also very useful as it enables us to look at how we highlight to the profession the support services that are available.

Managing finances and making professional mistakes were the main reported contributors to stress. Good clinical outcomes and working with animals were the greatest sources of satisfaction. Number of hours worked and work place relationships were associated with less favourable working conditions.



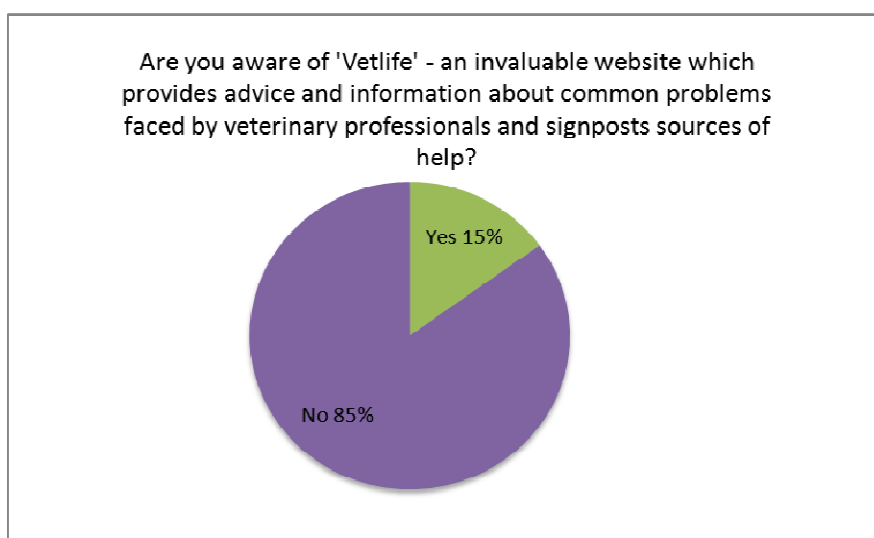
The below table provides a more detailed breakdown of the percentage results:

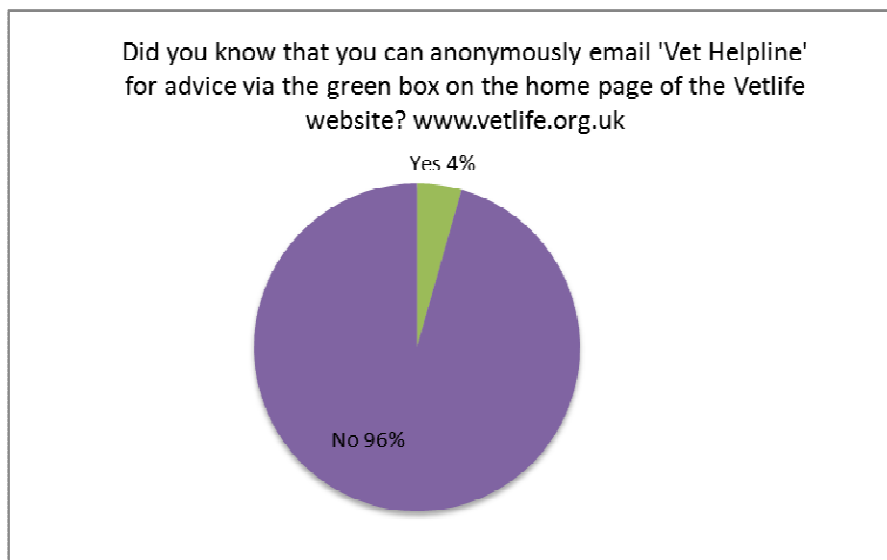
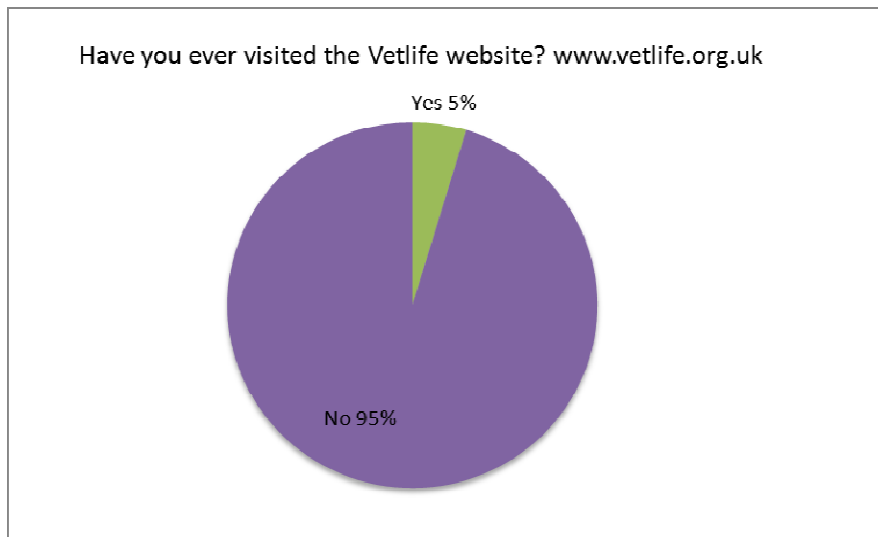
	No Stress	A little stress	Some stress	A lot of stress	Extremely stressed
Personal relationships outside work	22%	40%	29%	8%	2%
Managing my finances	11%	28%	29%	25%	7%
Any addictive behaviours, such as gambling, alcohol or drugs	87%	9%	3%	1%	0%
Number of hours worked	13%	25%	36%	22%	4%
Workplace relationships	10%	29%	33%	22%	6%
Availability of suitable employment	38%	24%	23%	12%	3%
Keeping up personal levels of skills or expertise, including CPD	26%	35%	28%	9%	2%
Making professional mistakes	12%	38%	25%	19%	7%

administrative and clerical tasks	20%	38%	28%	12%	2%
The financial expectations of the organisation	23%	30%	27%	17%	4%
Non-financial business management such as staff-related matters, H&S, practice accreditation	22%	32%	29%	14%	3%
Physical demands of work such as moving or handling animals or equipment, etc.	24%	30%	28%	14%	5%
Communication with clients	25%	41%	26%	7%	1%
Client expectations	15%	36%	33%	14%	3%
Availability of professional support	24%	32%	28%	12%	4%
Work-related travelling	44%	30%	18%	7%	2%
After hours on call duties	42%	20%	20%	14%	5%
Euthanasia of animals	19%	44%	31%	5%	1%
Being responsible for animals' lives	9%	34%	36%	18%	4%
Times when you have sole charge	15%	35%	31%	15%	4%
Clinical decision-making	14%	40%	33%	11%	2%
Resources available to you such as equipment, range of medicines and diagnostic tests	33%	36%	23%	7%	1%
Time available for each case	13%	32%	30%	20%	5%
Dealing with client grief	17%	44%	30%	9%	1%
The possibility of client complaints or litigation	10%	41%	30%	15%	5%
Unexpected clinical outcomes	10%	45%	35%	8%	1%
My understanding of legal & RCVS membership responsibilities such as dispensing, certification, etc.	23%	45%	24%	7%	2%

Vetlife Support

Within the survey respondents were also asked about their awareness of the support services provided by Vetlife which showed that work is needed to highlight this invaluable service:





What next?

The findings from this report are crucial in aiding BVNA to highlight the services and support available to those experiencing stress.

Articles on the highlighted problem areas will be published in the forthcoming issues of VNJ and a dedicated page on the BVNA website is currently being constructed to provide nurses with more information on support and services available to them.

BVNA will continue to work in ensuring the veterinary nursing profession are aware of the support services available to them and that anyone experiencing issues feel supported and able to seek help.

Reference: BARTRAM, D.J. (2009) A cross-sectional study of mental health and well-being and their associations in the UK veterinary profession. Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, Diploma of Fellowship Thesis, pp 1-269

Related links

www.bvna.org.uk / then go to 'Helplines & Support'

www.vetlife.org.uk

Vet Helpline, providing 24/7 support 07659 811118 or by Anonymous email from the green box on the Vetlife website

The Veterinary Surgeons Health Support Programme
VSHSP@vetlife.org.uk