



Suzanne Bedford

Suzanne is a third-year SVN studying the foundation degree at Sparsholt College, Hampshire. She joined the BVNA as a Student Council Member in 2016 and is passionate about encouraging student contribution to the development of the profession. Her main interests include anatomy and emergency and critical care.

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BAVNS – the student voice

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Abstract: The British Association of Veterinary Nursing Students (BAVNS) was developed to provide support to student veterinary nurses across the UK in all and any concerns during the course of their training. Promoting student contribution to the profession through VN Voice and article writing for the *Veterinary Nursing Journal*, BAVNS also hosts the Friday night social at BVNA Congress, helping to provide a strong network between the country's veterinary nursing students, where the unity of veterinary professionals is one of our underpinning goals.

Keywords: BAVNS; student; council

Founded in 2015 as the student subsection of the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) by Student Council Advisor Nimisha Patel, the British Association of Veterinary Nursing Students (BAVNS) aims to ensure that students' voices across Britain are better heard, allowing greater contribution to the development of the profession alongside a sense of belonging and boosted morale. With three student members on the council (**Figure 1**), issues or concerns directly impacting the student population may be raised and elevated through the council's connections and experience, ensuring that a solution is met. Our contribution to the VN Futures initiative aims to tackle issues such as course standardisation through creation of a VN Schools Council, the training practice to student ratio and enhancement of career guidance and subsequent progression. Additionally, members have access to VN Voice – a communication portal that provides the opportunity for you to express your views on a number of important topics surrounding the profession. As the future generation of nurses, your opinions are invaluable to the continued evolution of veterinary nursing, so please get in touch so that we can lobby for the issues that matter to you.

Regardless of qualification route, the road to becoming a qualified veterinary nurse can be challenging in almost all aspects. Be it emotionally, physically or financially, BAVNS are here to provide support and guidance throughout your student years. Our member's advisory helpline is available to give confidential, expert

advice that will help to provide you with all the information you need to tackle those tricky situations. Whether you are having troubles in practice or even with your course provider, please do not suffer in silence – pick up the phone! We hope to be your first port of call in this instance and no issue is too small; we're here to listen. Additionally, course fees and student debt can easily feel overwhelming, especially for those who are unable to obtain student finance and so must fund the course themselves. A range of members bursaries are available to help cover the costs of course and other educational fees, such as transport and accommodation, so that student veterinary nurses (SVNs) may reach their full potential without financial constraints.

Evidence-based nursing is a key aspect of the profession, and BAVNS are committed to aiding your studies through access to a number of educational sources. For instance, the peer-reviewed *Veterinary Nursing Journal* is not only a perfect revision tool but is useful for keeping up to date with the latest developments in the veterinary world, allowing you to keep your knowledge current. It is also the best route for getting your name "out there". Publishing your essays or research projects is a great way to share your findings with the broader community and really bolsters the role of the student veterinary nurse by contributing to the development of gold-standard practice. Conversely, if you just cannot bear to read another page of information during exam season, our free webinars are available around the clock on a wide range of handy topics

Nimisha Patel



My name is Nimisha Patel and I have been involved with the BVNA since I graduated from the University of Bristol in 2015. I had the inspiration for BAVNS while at university with my vet colleagues. I thought that SVNs needed a way to communicate with others, to be able to create that sense of community amongst the student population was my goal, and what an immense goal it is! It is coming along and I hope BAVNS will go from strength to strength in the years to come. I work in a large referral hospital in Bristol, where I live with my partner, Xander and 2 cats, Astra and Luna. I love to bake, watch films, and generally being a geek!

Jasmine Kilpatrick



Alongside my studying and working full time at my training practice, I enjoy spending time with my family, friends and pets. My Jack Russell Terrier, Poppy, is a joy to be around and such a memorable character. I also love exploring new places, horse riding and playing the drums which I have done for the last ten years.

Simon Johnson



I have two main passions in my life when I'm not in vet nurse mode. Firstly, I have my degree in photography, and although I wouldn't describe myself as an avid photographer anymore, I still enjoy going out on adventures and seeing what amazing photographs I come back with. I also enjoy writing, and whether this is for a journal article or my own book (which has been a work in progress for over 10 years!) it's so much fun to pick back up and create something that is yours.

Suzanne Bedford



Outside of veterinary nursing, I love to go for walks in the New Forest with my rescue pup Taro, who is a beautiful German Shepherd that is quite the handful! I have been horseriding since I was 9 years old and although my lifestyle is too hectic to have a horse of my own at the moment, I sponsor 4 horses from charities across the UK who I enjoy travelling to visit in my spare time. Lord of the Rings are my all-time favourite films, and I've spent the past 4 years trying to convince my partner, Michael, to watch them with me!

Figure 1. Get to know your student council members.

for an alternative revision approach. Furthermore, membership entitles you to discounted textbooks and continued professional development (CPD). This is the perfect deal for textbook hoarders, and although CPD is not strictly a requirement during your student years, the talks available help to build on lecture information, enabling you to demonstrate a broad and detailed knowledge when answering those all-important exam questions; plus, the events are a great opportunity to meet other veterinary professionals.

With long hours spent in practice, lectures and surrounded by textbooks, training can leave you feeling isolated from the rest of the world, which can take its toll on your emotional well-being. It is important not to lose touch with your friends during this time, but it may also be helpful to share your experiences with fellow SVNs who are all in the same boat. BAVNS

endeavours to provide the platform for this student support network, encouraging communication between individuals from across Britain so that no student feels alone. This is particularly important for those in single-student practices, as although your clinical coach is invaluable in providing help and guidance, sometimes you just need someone to compare notes with. BVNA's annual Congress is the perfect opportunity to spread your social wings, with veterinary nurses travelling from all points of the country to get involved. Alongside the fantastic talks and exhibition, this year BAVNS are inviting you to Hogwarts for our student social night on Friday 12th October! Get your wands and quills at the ready to sit your "Ordinary Wizarding Levels" with our magical quiz, have a bite to eat and a drink on us, and embrace your inner witch or wizard. With so many opportunities to meet other students, we can guarantee

that you will leave Congress with some new SVN friends.

Connecting the veterinary community is vital for the development of the profession, where collaboration and communication between veterinary nurses, both student and qualified, and all veterinary professionals will ensure that we take those important and necessary steps of change together. While BAVNS is still in its fledgling years, we are passionate and driven to achieve our goals, for instance creating international links to further expand the SVN network. The student contribution to practice is invaluable and as the next generation, your role is perhaps the most pivotal in future developments. To get involved, visit www.bvna.org.uk for full BAVNS membership details and let your voice be heard today.