Working together as SVNs

Katie Mee

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Katie is currently in the final year of her Veterinary Nursing and Bioveterinary Science degree at University of Bristol. Katie enjoys the mix of learning from lectures at university and practically through her placements. She is interested in all aspects of nursing but is particularly interested in anaesthesia, especially the more complex cases. Katie is planning on working in a referral hospital in the future, where she can focus on learning more about anaesthesia for a range of species.
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Starting a new placement is exciting and inspiring, you finally get to put into practice what you have learned in your classes. More importantly you work alongside other veterinary professionals, all of which have the mutual goal of improving animal's lives. However, placement for many student veterinary nurses (SVN) can be a daunting prospect. For me, going into the third year of my degree was somewhat terrifying. I had the opportunity to be an SVN in a referral hospital, seeing some incredibly exciting cases. This was an amazing experience, but it was challenging work, which sometimes left me feeling overwhelmed and out of my depth.

I was able to combat these negative emotions by taking part in a group activity called "The Huddle." This was set up by a clinical demonstrator from my nursing programme who was also a qualified RVN. For one hour each week, my fellow SVNs and our clinical demonstrator gathered to discuss the cases that we had seen within the referral hospital that week. Our discussions focused on; what we thought had went well, what we had achieved and where there may be potential for improvement. This group discussion was an open, non-judgmental space for all of us to express how we felt we were progressing, and it allowed us to compare our approaches to situations with each other and with a qualified RVN. In addition to this, we were also able to practice our skills for the OSCEs together and discuss some aspects of our NPL, which was very useful.

These sessions highlighted that I was not alone and many other SVNs also felt like they were struggling at times. However, these huddles allowed us to support one another, aiding us to overcome any issues as a team. These meetings have been especially helpful during the recent event of Lockdown. Our "Huddles" have been moved to video calls and have allowed us to connect even though we are miles apart. The Huddle has been an incredibly positive part of my training and I would recommend the idea to any other SVNs and course leaders. These sessions have vastly improved my confidence and helped me to form great friendships with other SVNs.

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