



Claire Roberts DipAVN(Surg) VNCert ECC RVN

Claire qualified as a VN in 2000 and has worked in first opinion, charity and referral practices. She gained the Diploma in Advanced Surgical Nursing in 2006 and has a keen interest in surgical nursing and anaesthesia. She strongly believes in veterinary nursing as a profession and has worked as a lecturer, and an assessor, as well as an internal verifier and assistant examiner for the RCVS. Claire currently works at a specialist practice in Chester, whilst running her own CPD company, SynergyCPD (www.synergycpd.com), which specialises in bespoke, on-site CPD for veterinary nurses.

The benefits of in-house training

Claire Roberts DipAVN(Surg) VNCert ECC RVN
 Chestergates Referral Hospital, Units E and F, Telford Court, Chestergates Road, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 6LT, UK

ABSTRACT: We should all be aware of the importance of keeping up our theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This article aims to highlight the benefits that can be gained by both practice and staff by organising in-house continuing professional development sessions (CPD) for the whole team.

What is continuing professional development (CPD)?

CPD is an essential activity for those individuals who wish to, or are required to, maintain their knowledge and skills in relation to their profession.

CPD obligations are common to most professions, and veterinary nursing is no exception. As veterinary nurses we are required as outlined by *The RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses* to maintain and continue to develop our professional knowledge and skills.

Is continuing professional development (CPD) mandatory for all registered veterinary nurses?

As a registered veterinary nurse you are required to accrue a minimum of 45 hours of CPD in any three-year period. Due to the numerous ways in which CPD can be undertaken, most nurses will do considerably more than this, but, if you are struggling to achieve a minimum of 15 hours/year, you would benefit from putting together a development plan with defined learning objectives to make sure that you meet your personal goals and the RCVS's requirements.

What counts as CPD?

'Tell me, I'll forget. Show me, I may remember. But involve me, and I'll understand'

–Chinese Proverb

Any activity that results in you furthering your professional competence will count towards your CPD requirements. This may include a variety of methods, such as scheduled courses, e-learning, critical reading, secondments to other practices and in-house training.

The scope, variety and availability of CPD in various formats should enable you to learn at your own pace and use learning styles that enhance your retention of new knowledge and skills. Some people may learn better through visual media whilst others respond more readily to audio-style learning. In my opinion, due to the practical nature of the veterinary nurse's role, veterinary nurses often learn well through visual and practical learning combined.

All CPD should be documented correctly and further information on how to do this can be found on the RCVS website. <http://www.rcvs.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-nurses/>

The benefits of CPD

CPD is a fundamental part of personal development and progression, as it helps to build confidence and, hopefully, increases job satisfaction. It also provides a way to highlight achievements and work towards goals. Change becomes natural as you update your skill set, which will ultimately result in your being more efficient, and more confident and will give you the knowledge and skills to provide better patient care.

The remainder of this article we will focus on the advantages of in-house CPD.

DOI: 10.1080/17415349.2015.1009724

The advantages of in-house training

In-house training normally involves bringing in a trainer to a location of choice, ideally this will be the veterinary practice, in order to deliver a customised training programme to the whole team. It is increasing in popularity and, in the veterinary practice setting, has some very strong advantages over other training options (Figure 1). One of the most obvious benefits of in-house training

to an employer is that they can control when the training takes place, scheduling it so that it minimises the impact on the practice. In-house training provides benefits for employees too; being able to refresh the skills used on a day-to-day basis gives them more confidence at work. When a practice has a number of employees who need to learn new skills, or needs to standardise protocols or implement change, in-house training is often the most economical solution. Other training options can be generic and

therefore will contain elements that are not relevant to a person's specific role or work setting. When in-house training is formulated correctly through consultation with the practice it enables confidence to be gained in the areas of weakness.

There are several ways for practices to set up an in-house training programme, and its format will depend on the sorts of skills being taught. Sessions can be divided into theory and practical elements, where the staff can use equipment that is available to them on a daily basis or be introduced to new equipment in which the practice has invested. (Figure 2).

It is not unusual during an in-house session to find out that members of the team perform the same task very differently. This creates the perfect opportunity to standardise and build new protocols as a whole team. For example:

- Do all nurses surgically prepare a patient in the same way? Does everyone know the correct dilutions for surgical prep' solutions?
- Is every member of the clinical team up-to-date on the new RECOVER CPR guidelines? Do you all perform CPR the same way?
- Does everyone know how to use the capnograph? Are you and your veterinary surgeons confident in troubleshooting the capnograph waveforms?
- Do you have a standard protocol for perioperative patient temperature control?

These are just a few examples, but the list is extensive and when scheduling in-house training, you should consider carefully what you as a team are hoping to achieve.

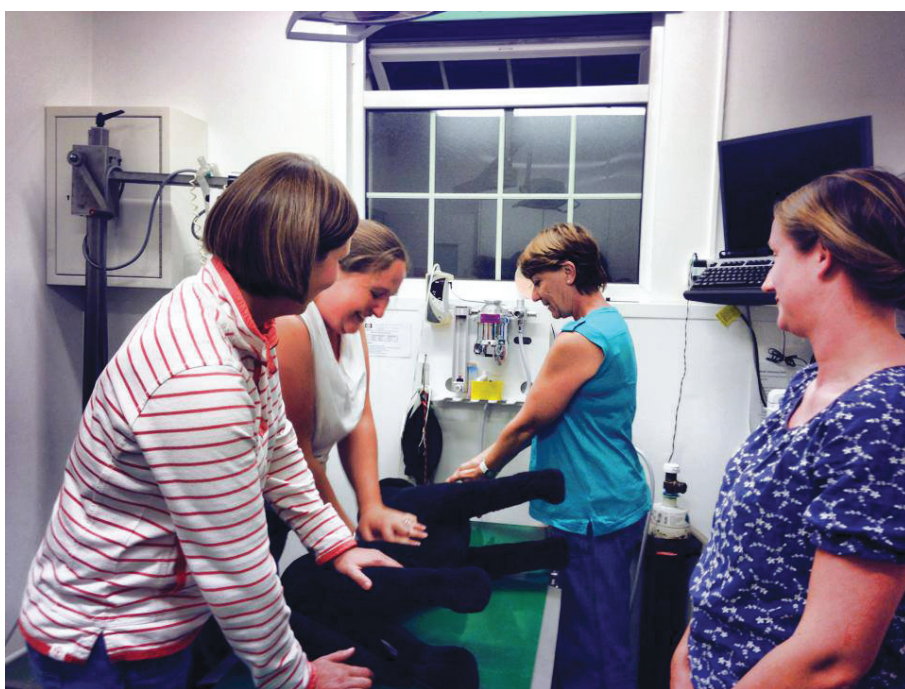
There are numerous advantages of in-house training:

- Training cost savings – In-house training costs per delegate are typically lower than external courses, due to the fact the training company only has to send a trainer to you rather than set up a training venue themselves.
- Travel cost savings – Your employer doesn't have to pay for the travel and possible accommodation costs to get staff to a training centre.



▣ Figure 1. In-house training can be relaxed and fun and a great way to get everyone together. It can be an unthreatening way of helping ease staff back into practice after a period of absence due to, for example, sickness or maternity leave.

© Ashworth Veterinary Group 2015. All Rights Reserved



▣ Figure 2. A practical training session, involving both vets and nurses, can ensure that the whole practice standardises during one session and allows opportunity to discuss opinions of best practice.

© Heath Veterinary Clinic 2015. All Rights Reserved



Figure 3. Combining staff from different levels can encourage teamwork and will also lead to increased awareness and understanding of each other's roles. It opens up the opportunity to standardise and build new protocols as a whole team.

© New Priory Veterinary Group 2015. All Rights Reserved

With fuel prices so high and training centres often being in large cities where accommodation is at its most costly, this could save a significant amount.

- More focused training – Running in-house training courses can allow the training to be a lot more focused on the specific disciplines and skills that are relevant to the individual practice. External CPD courses and e-learning will often be generic and may not fulfil the specific learning gap in your practice.
- Current work examples can be used – Training in-house means the courses can be prepared to address individual issues using real life examples, and therefore have the greatest impact.
- Convenience and flexibility – In-house training courses in the practice enable sessions to be scheduled around a time when it is convenient for both employees and the practice. Training may consist of a single session or multiple sessions delivered over the course of several months to a year, and could be held during a working lunch, after hours or even over weekends.
- Team building – The inclusion of staff from different levels can encourage teamwork. This can have fantastic results as it is often in this setting, when ideas are being bounced off each other, that the most learning takes place. This approach will also facilitate greater awareness and understanding of each other's roles as well as increased staff morale (**Figure 3**).
- A platform for change – External CPD can sometimes be frustrating for veterinary nurses, as they come back to practice, full of enthusiasm and ideas for change, only to meet resistance from their colleagues. By including the whole team, in-house CPD is the perfect platform to initiate change, discuss options and concerns and formulate an action plan. A well-run session should encourage team building and a better understanding of each another.

Investing in staff development can boost an organisation's efficiency, employee motivation and engagement, and result in better patient care and customer satisfaction.

Considerations

Before scheduling an in-house CPD session there are a few areas that should be considered as these may be limiting factors for your individual practice:

- Quantity – If you have four or more employees with similar learning needs, in-house training will ensure the practice receives focused training, tailored specifically to meet your requirements whilst achieving previously mentioned financial benefits. Groups that are smaller than this, with different learning needs, are better suited to external scheduled courses.
- Variance – Even if in-house training is the most appropriate method for one training need, do not always disregard external training. Varying training

between both types is important, as it allows you to keep up-to-date with best practice as well as allowing you to network externally and share ideas. These are valuable benefits.

- Preparation – Make sure that you discuss your requirements with the trainer well in advance of the desired date to ensure that they can tailor the training course to suit you.

Summary

Any CPD undertaken should be of benefit to your personal development, to the practice you work in and the patients entrusted into your care. It will help you provide a better service to your clients, which will, hopefully, encourage client loyalty, resulting in increased practice revenue. In-house CPD enables whole teams to get together and make change happen far quicker than is achievable by one member of the team attending an external course.

Useful Resources

- Most, if not all of the pharmaceutical and pet food companies offer in-house training sessions and these are an invaluable way to keep updated on new products.
- Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons <http://www.rcvs.org.uk/education/cpd-for-vns/>
- Links to some providers of in-house CPD providers: www.exoticsmadeeasy.co.uk
www.synergycpd.com
www.vetwoundlibrary.com