



## The “Vets in Mind” App is launched to support the mental health and welfare of the whole veterinary sector

In a global first, the newly formed not-for-profit **Vets in Mind Alliance** has launched its free to use app to support the health and welfare of all members of the veterinary profession.

The aim is to give the whole veterinary team the tools to become cognizant of the range of mental health issues by providing short general information on a number of mental health topics (such as anger, anxiety, substance abuse, depression, burn out, self-harm and suicide), as well as what measures one can take for oneself, or to help a colleague, friend or family member to help signpost them to appropriate professional support and providing help line contact numbers in many countries. It also provides information on how one can build up one’s own resilience and wellbeing to reduce the chances of suffering from such conditions.

The app very importantly does not register user details so that privacy is ensured.

The App is provided by a not-for-profit consortium of interested parties The project has been funded by Petplan Charitable Trust, the North American Veterinary Community, Circa Healthcare and Vetstream; as well as Members who are providing content and marketing services such as The British Equine Veterinary Association, American Association of Equine Practitioners, American Association of Equine Veterinary Technicians, Crampton Consulting, Veterinary Support Northern Ireland and Scotland, VetTechLife, and National Association Veterinary Technicians in America, Not One More Vet, and The Riptide project who all have a vested interest in helping our colleagues and who also have significant mental health experience and are well placed to provide a valuable tool to reduce the burden of mental ill-health and to increase the wellbeing of the whole veterinary sector.

Vets in Mind Alliance Founder Dr Mark Johnston said, “Having experienced burn-out myself when working in at Rossgales in Newmarket and having also experienced the loss of my father who took his own life when I was 10 years old, I have long wanted to help members of our profession with something tangible and really supportive. Developing an app that anyone can have in the palm of their hand, wherever they are, I believe will be more than just helpful; it will be live-saving. “

The App does not pretend to be a single solution; it aims to complement and be a useful tool to sit alongside many other initiatives and existing programmes already in place run by various associations, organizations, charities and support groups around the world for all members of the veterinary market whether they are in practice, academia or companies and charities in the veterinary market.

**Main Purposes of the App:**

Reducing stigma surrounding mental health through stories/information etc. ensuring anonymity so users can look up information without any perceived or real risk of people seeing what a user has looked at -- because the App does not track usage data by users.

The launch edition of the App contains

- More than 500 resources including links to TED talks, and A-Z of Mental Health conditions from UK Charity Mind;
- Video and written stories from a variety of different people, detailing their mental health experiences;
- The provision of helplines and other contact points from more than 50 countries;
- A news section highlighting new research and initiatives, as well as streams at forthcoming meetings and events;
- Tools to assess mental health or to relieve stress at critical moments;
- Books, and podcasts;
- eLearning courses;
- Links to other apps, blog posts and products that might be helpful.

The App will be regularly updated with new content and initiatives that will be highlighted on its social media feeds

The App can be downloaded from the:

- Apple App Store: [apps.apple.com/gb/app/vets-in-mind/id1541127430](https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/vets-in-mind/id1541127430)
- Google Play Store: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.vetsinmind.app>

David Simpson, Chairman of The Petplan Charitable Trust which provided the initial funding for the project commented on the launch of the App: “The mental and social wellbeing of the veterinary profession is of paramount importance to all of us involved with the profession. The Petplan Charitable Trust is honoured to be associated with the Vets in Mind initiative and its aim to provide an information resource for the global veterinary community that can inform and add to the amazing work of the practical initiatives run by associations and interest groups around the world. The willingness of so many associations and contributors to provide material to Vets in Mind’s testament to the need that exists”

Gene O’Neill, CEO of the North American Veterinary Community, a lead sponsor of the project said: “The mental health and wellbeing of our veterinary professionals continues to be a problem of crisis proportions. The NAVC is committed to providing support as a community on all levels and the Vets in Mind App makes critical, life-saving resources immediately accessible to all who need it. We are pleased to partner with Vets in Mind and other members of our community in making this resource available to every member of the veterinary community, their colleagues and family members.”

Steve Kirton, President of the international animal health advertising agency, Circa Healthcare, also provided core funding and today said: “As a global team who are privileged to work in Animal Health, we recognize the challenges faced by veterinary staff all over the world. So, when we were introduced to the idea of the Vets in Mind app, we were more than happy to support this wonderful initiative which helps to put practical resources and wellness supporting tools in the hands of

veterinary staff who are on the frontline of the Animal Health industry, and who need wellness supporting activities and resources, now more than ever.”

Dr Shane Ryan, Past President of the World Small Animal Veterinary Association said: “Well-being is a complex interaction that includes physical and mental, emotional and social health - altogether, the individual’s quality of life. And daily life as a veterinary professional – anywhere in the world - can put negatively impact any component of well-being. Should this occur, it is important that family, friends, and colleagues are aware of the potential issues and can provide knowledgeable & timely support. Vets in Mind is a valuable additional resource to help improve the awareness & understanding, and to enhance access & availability of materials both for the individual & the support community.”

The future direction of the App will be guided by an Advisory Board which is the process of forming. Please do contact Mark Johnston if you might be interested in being an active participant in the project.

#### **Note to Editors**

The Vets in Mind Alliance was formed as a Company limited by Guarantee in August 2019.

#### **For further information please contact**

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