

# Realistic assessment of why suicide is rife

Dear editor,

I would like to applaud Shams Mir's comments in his letter (June 2 issue). It was most refreshing to read a realist's opinions on why suicide is rife among the profession.

I felt both embarrassed and patronised by a BBC Radio Four presenter announcing that the reason I, as a veterinary surgeon, am at risk of slitting my wrists is because I euthanise fluffy animals on a daily basis. Everyone entering the profession is well aware of this aspect of the job; in the vast majority of cases, I am pleased to perform the task as, without it, the animal would suffer.

Let us cast aside the rose-tinted spectacles; the reason we all go to work in the morning is to earn a living. Is it so blasphemous to expect a good salary and working conditions for all that commitment and sacrifice?

I am not a naive, militant assistant who assumes my gratuitous salary is growing on the tree in the car park. There is a plentiful source of practice income in return for high-quality, efficient and well-explained medicine, as well as surgery, for everyday problems.

As a profession, we only have ourselves to blame. My dentist expects full payment before treatment commences; my GP has opted out of out-of-hours provision, yet, as a collective, GPs negotiated a huge salary increase. What have we, as vets, done? We lay down and took it when told we must provide a service (written prescriptions) and, wait for it, *not* charge for our efforts. If we do have such a corrupt monopoly of the veterinary drug market, why are there not more of us residing in large country houses, with Range Rovers on the gravel driveway? For the record, I'm one of the lucky ones. I feel totally valued by my employers, receive a good salary, and find my chosen career thoroughly rewarding.

Yours faithfully,

RACHAEL E J NAYLOR, BVM&S, MRCVS,

4 Forest Avenue,

Goostrey,

Crewe CW4 8LX.

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