

If we're so efficient, where's pay for VNs?

Dear editor,

After reading the letter "Where's the harm in running successful businesses?" (July 14 issue), I would like to express my feelings (and those of my colleagues) as a head nurse (RVN) working in an incorporated practice in northern England. Mr Stoddard comments on the efficiency of veterinary practices "...charging correctly for products and services we sell". If this is the case, why is it that veterinary nurses are so notoriously badly paid? We, too, study hard for our qualification, "look after our clients and provide a much-needed service".

We work long, hard hours, are multi-taskers, and many of us do the work of the non-existent "three layers of middle management" apparently not required by the veterinary profession. Do we get any recognition? True, we have some clients who show their appreciation, and I am lucky to work in one of the better practices when it comes to pay and conditions. But, we are the ones (along with our trusty reception staff) who bear the brunt of most of the complaints from clients who claim we are "ripping them off". We are the ones who take payments and send out the accounts. We are the ones who deal with clients saying "all veterinary practices care about is the money". And these are often the same clients who are all sweetness and light when they enter the consulting room.

You only have to look at NHS job websites to see the anomalies between veterinary nurse and NHS nurse salaries. Health care assistants are paid more than the majority of veterinary nurses, and as for staff nurses – well, we can only dream of such figures.

If it is really true that British veterinary practices have a 37 per cent return on capital employed, and efficiently charge for the services provided, why are we not paid a fairer salary?

Who knows, if pay and conditions were improved maybe there would be applicants for the vacancies advertised in your publication every week. Maybe veterinary nurses would not be deserting the profession as it appears they are at present.

Yours faithfully,

NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED.

VT 38(30):43

11.8.08