

# Letter paints depressing caricature of profession

Dear editor,

After reading Shams Mir's article (February 2 issue), I was tempted to cut my throat. What a depressing caricature of my profession he paints. Fortunately, things are not really as bad as he makes out, and by creating such a pessimistic perception he detracts from the credibility of some of the valid points he makes.

The balance of modern society between what one can give and what one can get is all wrong. Rights outweigh duties as ying and yang clash disharmoniously. The extreme tone of Mr Mir's article typifies this. I hope the next article will suggest to vets how much pleasure and satisfaction they can get by contributing to their practices. With the emphasis so markedly towards what one can expect to receive, rather than what one can be prepared to give, dissatisfaction is engendered and some of the problems he alludes to are created.

For example, when one is enjoying a stimulating, rewarding day with one challenging case after another, it can be that one has been engrossed for more than five hours without even considering that one ought to have stopped for a break (you might even find another vet who will sew up the uterus and abdominal wall for you).

The growth of dedicated out-of-hours (OOH) practices is welcome, but there are many practices that do not have the option of subscribing and for which the provision of dedicated night vets is impossible for a number of reasons. Sure, with work conditions becoming increasingly important in modern times, there are vets who don't want to work in practices with their own OOH rota, or whose premises are in terraced houses. The answer is easy – don't work there. We would all love impressive new purpose-built premises, but we can't all have them.

As far as Mr Mir's comments about any table being soiled by urine and faeces are concerned, would not every vet wipe down such a table before any further use for it – clinical or otherwise? An old timer like me reads such a comment with incredulity and wishes for more common sense.

Talking of common sense, Mr Mir mentions the "Health versus (sic) Safety Commission", which serves to remove all common sense from our practices and to treat us like idiots. Health and safety has become a modern euphemism for "can't be bothered – it's not worth trying", expressed by my teenage children as "meh". On our last inspection, the greatest risk to my practice on that day was the inspector – who appeared to be about five stone overweight – having a heart attack or falling down the stairs. Our stairs are very safe, but who says the inspector has to be healthy?

Finally, I remember with such fondness the early years of my career, when I worked all hours in poor conditions, was on duty every other night and weekend (there were just two of us) and got a half day off some weeks if I was lucky. Life was one great exciting adventure of professional growth and achievement. It matched my expectations exactly. Perhaps that's one reason why I'm a grumpy old bugger these days (there are others – the aforementioned teenage children, for example), but at least being such spares me the depressive tendency encapsulated by Mr Mir.

I look forward to the next article and hope that it has a more moderate, positive and realistic balance in its tone. It may then be more effective in helping Mr Mir achieve his goal.

Yours faithfully,

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