

# 'Time to make a stand..'

**WHY do we study long and hard, get into debt and work more stressful hours than anybody we know but for less money?**

Veterinary employers are very lucky that most assistants continue to make sacrifices to their personal lives because they continue to see their job as a vocation.

However, there may also be a less positive explanation. Have we all become so

used to the system we grew up in that we do not even recognise how out of tune our employment situation is with that of the rest of the UK?

Although, as recent correspondence in *Veterinary Practice* has strongly suggested, abuse of staff in the workplace appears to occur all too frequently in self-regulating veterinary UK, assistants are rarely heard. The small number of people who do speak up have their experiences and opinions published anonymously. The few deciding to make a stand against their employer have literally got no one to turn to.

Meanwhile, the SPVS president can go on record saying that any improvements to working time would have to be financed through substantial cuts to assistants' salaries. Would perhaps the most profitable small businesses (*The Times*, 16th June 2008 issue) be the only ones that cannot comply with employment law? Of course not! We are just not used to it. Employers have had their monopoly for too long.

Have assistants become so numb that they have forgotten how to speak up for themselves? When speaking to people about this I have regularly heard comments like: "It is a small profession and I don't want to be seen as a troublemaker; you very quickly get a bad name for yourself."

It is thought that the stigma attached to a troublemaker's reference could get you into serious difficulties when applying for a next job. In our society, not rocking the boat is a value held in the highest regard. Often, we are even prepared to swallow our sense of justice for it. Let us remind ourselves that employees who make a stand are not damaging the profession. Instead, they are invariably on the receiving end of damage done by the profession.

What makes your particular stressful, underpaid job so important that you just take whatever comes your

way? In this free country, is it not somewhat shameful that, even when you decide you've had enough, you

feel you have to write anonymous letters?

Who has managed to instil this fear in us? Even if we would be sacked, there is a continuing shortage of practising vets in the UK and, despite the economic downturn, most of

us are in the unique position that we could have a new job tomorrow!

We are in a fantastic position to make a stand. Why does this not empower us? Why is it only ever asked of employees to keep the peace? Is it not just because, currently, we have no platform to speak about these issues?

Keeping things the way they are completely hinges on employed vets, *en masse*, remaining of the thought that doing what they are told to do is the decent thing. Unite and speak up in any shape or form and the whole system will rapidly fall apart!

Of course it is scary to speak up. Especially when you think you may be the first. Old doubts soon start to re-enter your head: is this really worth upsetting things for? For things to change, the whole mindset on veterinary employment needs to change and this is, surely, never ever going to happen?

Remember: they voted a black man into the White House! And it was not cynicism, fear and tradition that made this possible. Let us no longer be cynical in order to justify our inaction. After reading some of the personal stories in past issues of *Veterinary Practice*, surely, even if a union would only make life easier for one of these people a year, it would be worth setting it up.

There is a clear and confronting choice to be made: either grab your chance and have a positive go, or put up and shut up for the foreseeable future and perhaps for the duration of your working life! Speak up and make a stand for once or accept that we have become too numb to be counted. Let it be a conscious choice.

The proposed union needs your active support. Every single one of you is indispensable in making it a success. Please register your interest by dropping a line on [vets4BVU@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:vets4BVU@hotmail.co.uk) today.



**JAN VAN DIJK**  
calls for active support

# REQUEST

## REAssessing QUinolones European STandards

FIRST GROUP OF EUROPEAN EXPERTS IN FLUOROQUINOLONES FOR COMPANION ANIMALS



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**Our recommendations should help clinicians to better use fluoroquinolones in companion animals**

My assessment of this first day is good. We met and established a programme. We ratified our procedure by agreeing on the methodology of classification of the scientific articles. It is very interesting because the members of the group get along extremely well and yet have different specialties: pharmacology, internal medicine, feline medicine, surgery or microbiology for example.

I am the chairman of this group because I took part in the development of the fluoroquinolones a few years ago. It was a new class of antibiotics used in urology, which is my speciality. Fluoroquinolones brought a real benefit in the antibiotherapy of dogs and there are not so many families of molecules that can claim such success.

Now it is interesting to assess their uses. I have the advantage of having enough perspective to be able to bring my own experience to this subject. I imagine that our future recommendations will include better understanding of the pharmacokinetics of these fluoroquinolones. This should help to refine the clinical applications, in particular in chronic diseases. We will update the therapy, keeping in mind the principle: "primum non nocere".

Pr Jean-Pierre Cotard

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