

Interview from Royal College Day 2023

Sam McGaw

Hi, my name is Sam McGaw, I'm an emergency critical care registered veterinary nurse at the QMH at the Royal Veterinary College, and I also work as a clinical educator at the RVC's Veterinary Nursing School.

It feels really fantastic to be highly commended. It's just so lovely that all these months of hard work have been recognized, and it's such an honor to receive the highly commended award today.

So I was actually on a run, and checked my emails afterwards, and saw the email to say I'd received the highly commended runners up award, which was so exciting. And it was also fantastic to find out that the main award went to my colleagues doing the CertAVN program at the RVC Vet Nursing School as well.

So I'm an RVN in emergency and critical care. So I work in the intensive care unit and the emergency room of a busy referral teaching hospital. And so within my role, I decided to look at auditing an area of practice that we could improve in. And I really found that as nurses working with patients that are arriving as emergencies and needing stabilizing, we are very much focusing on that side of things and nutrition wasn't necessarily always in the foreground of our thoughts despite our best intentions.

So I decided to audit the patients that were arriving in practice as emergencies and assessing whether their provision and nutrition essentially, so whether they were being offered food, whether their resting energy requirements were being calculated, and whether those requirements were being met as well. So based on my findings from the initial cycle of my audit, I made some quite basic simple changes. I just made some changes to the kennel sheets. I also hosted a series of meetings with my colleagues just to emphasize the importance of nutrition for emergency and critical patients and demonstrated to them all of the evidence that I had found to support this.

And I added calculate RER to our kennel sheets as a treatment. And from that I found that there was a massive increase in the provision of nutrition to our patients and just a big increase in the conversation around nutrition as well. It's something I've continued to spearhead within

my department, and I'm also now part of a newly formed group at the QMH, which is the Nutrition Champions Group. And we are looking just to further the nutritional support of patients across the board at our hospital across all departments.

Honestly, I don't think I could have done this audit without the RCVS knowledge team. The resources that I was provided with were absolutely fantastic. So I actually undertook the audit initially as part of some studying that I was doing. So I have recently completed the postgraduate certificate in Advance Veterinary Nursing in Emergency and Critical Care, which is provided by the RVC. They were the main winners of the QI award today. And as part of our studies, we were encouraged to perform an audit and directed to the resources available from the RCVS knowledge team. So using the evidence-based veterinary medicine toolkit that was provided there was just super helpful. I just had a real step-by-step practical guide as to how to perform an audit, what challenges I may face, and it really just helped guide and support me throughout that whole process.

I actually now work as a mentor for new students studying for the CertAVN, and I've been pointing all of them in the direction of the RCVS knowledge resources just because it's a real helpful, practical guide that makes achieving an audit really available to anybody in practice.

I would say go for it. Honestly, this has just been such a boost to my confidence. It just really validated the work that I do in practice and has allowed me to realize just how much I can achieve as a veterinary nurse in practice, both clinically as well as in the educational side of things. It's something that was really, really achievable and just made some real life improvements to my patients in terms of their welfare and their nursing care. And just further the discussion around nutrition in practice. And it doesn't have to be about nutrition. It can be about whatever you are passionate about as a nurse. We so often hear of audits taking place around infection control, which is of course a very important subject, but it can be whatever you're interested in, whether that be something clinical or otherwise.

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