



Clinical governance and continuous Quality Improvement in the veterinary profession: A mixed-method study

By Tom Ling & Lucy Hocking

Welcome to this podcast from Veterinary Evidence, an online open-access peer-review journal owned and published by RCVS Knowledge.

Hello, I'm Tom Ling Head of Evaluation at RAND Europe, a not-for-profit policy research institute. I'm joined by my colleague, Lucy Hocking, to share with you the findings of a study we conducted to explore Quality Improvement in the veterinary sector. The study was commissioned by RCVS Knowledge. The research resulted in an article published in *Veterinary Evidence* on Quality Improvement in the veterinary profession. And the article was co-written by Ashley Doorly and Chris Gush from RCVS Knowledge. The world of animal health care is evolving rapidly with new technologies increases in client expectations, new organizational structures, recruitment challenges, and resource constraints, all changing the way in which veterinary professionals can provide care. These changes in the profession create new opportunities for putting Quality Improvement at the heart of how services are delivered. Of course, there is nothing new about veterinary professionals wanting to improve the care they provide, but Quality Improvement takes a formal and explicit approach to improving current practice. This can ultimately help improve both the efficiency and the quality of care provided to animals. However, Quality Improvement is not an easy fix. It requires long term engagement, time, and resource alongside behavioural and cultural change. While the veterinary sector has made a lot of progress in introducing Quality Improvement since the late 1990s, it is not yet embedded in day-to-day work within the sector. This is where our study comes into play

On the back of this context of Quality Improvement. Our study aimed to firstly, understand what the new profession is currently doing in practice to improve quality. Secondly, to understand what shapes or could shape the professions motivations for being engaged and involved in Quality Improvement, and finally explore what key veterinary stakeholders, could do to overcome barriers and support the enablers of engaging with Quality Improvement. To address these research questions, we took a mixed-methods approach to the research, which involved a review of documents, interviews a large survey, focus groups and hosting a summit event. We received great engagement from our research participants, which lead us to identify some interesting themes relating to Quality Improvement.

One of the overall key messages is that Quality Improvement was viewed positively by our participants and professionals felt as though it provided a benefit to animal care. Veterinary professionals are already spending time on Quality Improvement in their day-to-day practice. And this includes activities such as audit, developing protocols and checklists and offering continual professional development to staff. However, we identified a number of barriers the profession faces when trying to get involved in

Quality Improvement. The most significant of these are a lack of time challenges in obtaining buy-in from colleagues and not knowing where to start with Quality Improvement.

The views collected for this research suggest that the focus should be on evolution, not revolution, much of the Quality Improvement architecture is in place already. It just needs some nudging and reshaping. To continue this evolution we have identified key areas in which to focus in the coming years. One accumulating solid and robust evidence on Quality Improvement in the veterinary profession and prioritizing efforts based on this. Two delivering leadership and engagement, to support the profession, to make sense of Quality Improvement. Three to reshape existing activities and organizations to make Quality Improvement as easy as possible, and finally, to pursue consistent, prioritized and sequenced activities in a stable improvement landscape.

To hear more about the findings of this research, please take a look at our article as well as the full report, which is available on the RCVS Knowledge website.

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