

RVN profile: Melanie O'Donoghue

IVNA Chairperson, Georgina Self RVN, interviews Melanie O'Donoghue RVN about advancements in the profession she has seen during her time as IVNA's nurse representative on the Veterinary Council of Ireland



Q.
Melanie, you have been working on behalf of Irish veterinary nursing for a number of years. Tell us about your roles within the VCI and Acovene:

A.
My role on the VCI started in January 2006 just after the new Veterinary Practice Act 2005 came into legislation. I was appointed by the then Minister of Agriculture, Mary Coughlan, after being nominated by the IVNA. My role on the VCI as a veterinary nurse is the only VN post on the council. It is shared with nine registered practitioners and eight lay members. We are all assigned to committees in order to carry out the large volume of work that comes to the table: this ensures that all issues are dealt with as efficiently as possible.
During my time on VCI, I have been on Practice Premises,

Veterinary Education - which is also divided into further sub-committees - Registration, CVE and, since 2012, Veterinary Nursing has been made a full committee of council, which I chair. The Veterinary Nursing committee deal with all of the issues relating to veterinary nursing that come to VCI and also oversees the accreditation of veterinary nursing course providers, ensuring that they meet all of the benchmarks and competencies required in order for their graduates to be registered with the VCI.

In 2010 the VCI were invited to sit on the ACOVENE (Accreditation Committee for Veterinary Nursing Education in Europe) board to hold the Regulatory body position. This committee carries out accreditation visits to course providers across Europe to ensure that they meet the minimum European standards of veterinary nursing. This ultimately ensures that the standard of veterinary nursing education is kept to a set standard. This should help to open up free movement of nursing graduates across Europe. VCI are working with ACOVENE towards affiliation accreditation for our accredited course providers in Ireland.

I am currently acting Chairperson for the ACOVENE board and am due to officially take the Chair in November for a further year. My term on the ACOVENE board will end in 2015 while my term on VCI comes to an end in December this year. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on council over the last eight years. I feel very privileged to have been involved during such a immense transition period in our profession and I would highly recommend serving a term on council: it requires a lot of personal time but is very rewarding when you see the positive developments to our profession.

Q.
What changes have you seen in the job description of veterinary nurse in Ireland during your career?

A.
Huge changes have taken place since I entered the profession in 1990. I went to college in the UK and qualified under the RCVS as a lot of nurses did at that time. I stayed in the UK for five years to gain as much experience as I could before coming home in 1996, by which time small animal

had started to grow considerably. Qualified nurses were still few and far between. They were more likely to find employment in city and town based small animal clinics. Since the change in legislation with the Veterinary Practice Act 2005 nurses were recognised for the first time. This has helped our profession in a number of ways, registered nurses are now widespread across the country, in small, equine and mixed practice, clinics and hospitals are required to employ RVNs. Nurses are an essential part of the veterinary team and have developed their own role within the environment they work in.

Q.
What inspired you to become a VN?

A.
My love of animals and from a very early age my career path was always going to be working with animals. I was about 11 when I met a veterinary nurse who inspired me and from then on it became my focus. I am lucky I knew what I wanted to do and was given the opportunity to pursue it. I was advised by my careers guidance teacher in school that there was no such thing as a veterinary nurse and that I should marry a vet as I would have the best of both worlds. How times have changed! I would like to think that anyone who wishes to pursue a career in veterinary nursing has better career advice available to them now.

Q.
You have had a varied career since qualification. What has been your

favourite job or aspect of nursing?

A.
That's an easy question! The answer is simple I have enjoyed every minute of it. Every aspect of my career has been rewarding. Each career choice has added to the next for me. The time I spent in industry gave me the confidence to set

up my company VetAssist, which I have had since 2003. I recognised a niche business opportunity in practice design and practice development, this allowed me to help vets by designing modern, purpose-built premises which improved their working environment and ultimately their patient's needs. I locumed

throughout to help keep my hand in and that eventually led to me taking a practice manager's position in Oranmore in Galway. I have been in Oran Vet Clinic now for the last 18 months and love being back in practice. I face all of the issues that a small animal clinic has to deal with in the current climate but

Don't share your bed with anyone but your loved one!

stronghold



No room FOR fleas

Flea larvae
Flea eggs

A flea-infested pet spreads flea eggs everywhere it goes – leading to a flea-infested environment.

Only one product offers the single most complete solution to break the flea life cycle, including being approved as an aid in control of existing environmental burden.

Ask your veterinary surgeon for advice



zoetis

stronghold

Zoetis, 8 Riverwalk, Clonsilla Business Centre, Dublin 24. Tel 01-4676653

CHANGES TO VETERINARY PRACTICE ACT 2005

The term 'veterinary nurse' has been protected and recognised as a profession in Ireland since the Veterinary Practice Act was passed in 2005. While qualified nurses have had to be registered since 2008 in order to carry out prescribed duties, during 2012 the legal role and duties of qualified and registered nurses were enhanced and clarified by an amendment of the Act.

As a qualified and registered veterinary nurse you may:

- Use the title 'registered veterinary nurse' and the abbreviation 'RVN';
- Assist the veterinary surgeon with surgical procedures by handling and holding tissues;
- Assist with surgical procedures that are not minor;
- Assist with caesarean section and other procedures to assist labour; and,
- Under supervision by a vet you may induce, maintain and terminate general anaesthesia including endo-tracheal intubation.
- Once directed to do so by a veterinary surgeon, registered nurses may also:
- give medication enterically, intra-osseously or intravenously;
- take radiographs;
- apply casts;
- place catheters;
- apply cutaneous sutures;
- carry out surgical treatment of abscesses and ulcers; and,
- carry out minor medical and surgical procedures such as placement of a nasogastric feeding tube.

Registered nurses are required to undertake a programme of continuing professional development to the value of 12 CVE points each year to keep their knowledge and competency up to date. There are numerous ways to obtain points including reading the Veterinary Ireland Journal!

I enjoy the challenge and no two days are ever the same. I love interacting with the clients and have set up nurse clinics for weight management, diabetes and puppy development. Clients are becoming more aware of preventative healthcare and this is where nurses have a key role in building client bonds in practice. I think the clinics are my favourite, following cases through and seeing the results, healthier pets and happier clients.

Q.
You always seem to be busy but what do you enjoy doing in any free time you have?

A.
My free time is always spent outdoors as we have a small

suckler herd, which we farm in Ballyvaughan, North Clare. I went back to college in 2008 to study agriculture and the farming grew from there. I really enjoy it but I have to admit I am still not fully comfortable with selling our weanlings, that's where the veterinary nurse comes out in me and I want to keep them all! It's great that my husband handles that side of the farm. I also have a few horses which I hack around on: living where we are in the Burren is great as there are many green roads to enjoy. In between the farm jobs we have four dogs who like their walks so I am never idle.

Q.
What are your hopes for the future of veterinary nursing in Ireland?

A.
I hope that the profession continues to develop and that nurses gain the confidence to set up their own clinics. There are great opportunities for nurses now within our profession, nurses can run nursing clinics in practices, do hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, behaviour, practice management and develop careers in industry: we have so many options now available to us...the sky's the limit! Eventually we will have our own Veterinary Nursing Board as this is outlined in the VPA 2005 so that will be a great achievement for nurses too but that will be up to another RVN who serves on council...

Q.
Any plans for after your council role comes to an end?

A.
Take a well-earned holiday! I will miss my involvement with VCI as I have thoroughly enjoyed the last eight years but I think it is time to move on and let a fresh face take on the challenges of veterinary nursing.

NEW RVN BADGE

The IVNA wants to promote the role and recognition of registered veterinary nurses (RVN) in practice and, to this end, has recently introduced a RVN badge. Badges were sent out 'free of charge' to registered nurses on receipt of their subscription to the IVNA this January and it is the committee's hope that new graduate nurses will be presented with a badge at registration on the IVNA's behalf. Badges are available from the IVNA on supply of proof of registration. To help raise awareness of the need for registration the IVNA are hoping nurses will attach the car sticker to their rear windows following its launch at this year's conference.