



PRESS INFORMATION

Mental Health in the Global Spotlight as WSAVA Strengthens its Professional Wellness Group

Three new members have joined the [World Small Animal Veterinary Association's](#) (WSAVA's) Professional Wellness Group (PWG) to accelerate its work to improve the health and wellbeing of all members of the veterinary team.

The mental health of veterinary professionals has been a concern for some time with the PWG's 2019 study into globally veterinary wellness confirming that it is an issue in all parts of the world and a particular problem in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. The COVID-19 pandemic has, in many cases, only increased the strain on all members of the veterinary profession.

The PWG is co-chaired by human psychologist Dr Nienke Endenburg, whose work includes teaching veterinary students at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands, and Derick Chibeu, a veterinarian working in general practice in Nairobi, Kenya. The new members are:

- Dr Veerle van Geenhoven, senior veterinarian at the Center for Clinical Veterinary Medicine at the Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich. Dr Van Geenhoven has a particular interest in the integration of psychosocial competence in the veterinary

profession. She adopts the Balint method from human medicine to understand the psychodynamics in vet-pet-pet owner relationships.

- Dr Elli Kalemτζaki, a veterinarian who is also a Certified Professional Coach. Her focus is to help veterinarians develop their leadership skills; inspire and motivate their teams and engage with clients
- Dr Debbie Stoewen, a veterinarian and social worker and creator of an accredited veterinary continuing education program called 'The Social Side of Practice,' which focuses on the human-animal bond, veterinary wellness, communication, teamwork, organizational culture and leadership.

The PWG's first priority is to complete the development of the WSAVA's Global Guidelines for Veterinary Wellness. They will form an evidence-based but accessible set of tools and other resources to support veterinary wellness, which embrace the differing regional, economic and cultural needs of WSAVA members around the world.

Dr Elli Kalemτζaki said: "I was very excited to find out about this role as I have a special interest in advancing the health and well-being of veterinary professionals globally. Problems such as burnout, depression and anxiety account for a significant proportion of mental health issues in the veterinary profession. I firmly believe that all veterinarians should be able to work in a supportive, professional and caring environment, where they are valued and respected.

"I am very keen to start working with the PWG team and hope to contribute to the improvement of the health and wellbeing of our veterinary colleagues worldwide."

Dr Nienke Endenburg said: "The PWG is working to support the well-being of the thousands of veterinary teams around the world who work, day in, day out, to care for animals and their owners. I am delighted to welcome our three new members who bring new skills and who join us a time when our work has never been more important.

“We are looking forward to moving quickly with the development of our Global Guidelines for launch in early 2022. We expect them to mark an important step towards bringing about positive change and enhancing the wellbeing of all veterinarians globally.

“We could not do our work without the support we receive from WSAVA Gold Partner Hill’s Pet Nutrition. On behalf of the PWG, I would like to say a big thank you to the company for its commitment to veterinary wellness and EDI.”

More information on the WSAVA Professional Wellness Group is available at <https://wsava.org/committees/professional-wellness-group/>

The WSAVA represents more than 200,000 veterinarians worldwide through its 115 member associations and works to enhance standards of clinical care for companion animals. Its core activities include the development of WSAVA Global Guidelines in key areas of veterinary practice, including pain management, nutrition and vaccination, together with lobbying on important issues affecting companion animal care worldwide.

Note to editors:

The WSAVA Professional Wellness Group comprises:

- Dr Nienke Endenburg, Co-chair
- Dr Derick Chibeu, Co-chair
- Dr Janet Donlin
- Dr Patricia Dowling
- Dr Vicki Lim
- Dr Elli Kalemtzaki
- Dr Michael Paton
- Dr Debbie Stoewen
- Dr Veerle van Geenhoven

WSAVA Executive Board Member Dr Ellen van Nierop serves as Liaison with the Executive Board.

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