

Study helps veterinarian mental health

April 18 2017, by Jo Manning

A Murdoch University study is investigating why there is a high rate of suicide and mental health issues among veterinarians.

Karen Connell, from the School of Psychology and Exercise Science, is working with the veterinary profession across Australia, asking vets to complete an anonymous survey that will help her to understand their mental wellbeing and their client and colleague relationships.

Research has shown veterinarians have a [suicide](#) rate four times that of the [general population](#).

"Members of healthcare professions like veterinary have to cope with working in professions that have a reputation for a high level of psychological distress and risk of suicide; above that of other professions and the general population," said Ms Connell, who is a Provisional Psychologist and PhD candidate at Murdoch.

"They are working daily in often stressful environments trying to juggle treating the animal while talking with the owner and their colleagues. Our study will help us to understand what role this plays in their mental health.

"We encourage all vets, including those who feel they are coping well, to participate, as this will provide valuable information about what contributes to resilience for vets."

Ms Connell said it was critical to conduct research into the underlying

causes of [mental health issues](#) in the profession and she said her study would provide vital information on the workplace factors affecting vets.

"The study will also provide important practical contributions, including informing veterinary practitioners on [suicide risk](#) and guiding the structure of suicide early prevention strategies for practitioners," she said.

"It will also help with the development of staff training to facilitate colleague and client interactions, leading to improved staff relationships and client satisfaction."

Ms Connell said the findings could have wider applications to other caring professions, like doctors, dentists, nurses and veterinary nurses.

The survey is available on the study [website](#).

Provided by Murdoch University

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