

Lecture summaries

Natasha Summerfield

RC, VTS-ECC

Deputy Head Nurse of the ICU and IMC

Zurich University Animal Hospital

Nurse retention

This lecture examines veterinary nurse retention as a critical issue affecting patient care, staff wellbeing, and the long-term sustainability of veterinary practices. Drawing on published evidence and real-world leadership experience within a tertiary referral setting, it explores why nurses leave and what encourages them to stay. The session focuses on realistic, evidence-based retention strategies that leaders can influence directly, including fair pay, career development, supportive leadership, meaningful work, team culture, and flexibility. Emphasis is placed on practical actions that can be implemented to improve engagement and reduce attrition.

Learning goals

1. Understand why nurse retention matters
2. Explore strategies to reduce attrition
3. Identify retention strategies
4. Discuss what you can affect directly

Beyond clinical practice unleashing your potential (panel)

This panel discussion focuses on how different veterinary nursing qualifications and opportunities can shape professional development beyond day-to-day clinical work. Nurses with varied educational backgrounds will discuss postgraduate certificates, specialist credentials, educator pathways, contribution to literature and advanced training options, sharing insights into the wide variety of options available to nurses and technicians to expand knowledge and skill set. The session aims to demystify further education, clarify expectations and commitments, and help nurses understand how targeted qualifications can expand responsibility, autonomy, and professional influence within nursing roles. Emphasis will be placed on informed decision-making and realistic planning.

Learning goals

1. Identify a range of postgraduate qualifications, specialist credentials, and non-clinical career pathways available to veterinary nurses and technicians beyond routine clinical practice.
2. Evaluate how different educational and professional development pathways can expand clinical responsibility, autonomy, and influence within veterinary nursing roles.
3. Describe the commitments, expectations, and practical considerations associated with pursuing advanced training, postgraduate education, or alternative professional roles.
4. Apply panel insights to make informed, realistic decisions about personal career planning and targeted professional development aligned with individual goals and circumstances.

Does the future look bright? (panel)

This panel discussion takes an honest look at the long-term career prospects for veterinary nurses and asks whether the future of the profession truly looks bright. Experienced nurses from a range of roles and workplace settings will share candid perspectives on career longevity, progression, workload, and sustainability. The discussion will address both opportunities and ongoing challenges, including retention, burnout, and evolving expectations within the profession. The session aims to provide realistic insight into how nursing careers develop over time and what conditions are necessary for nurses to remain engaged and effective in the long term.

Learning goals

1. Discuss factors influencing long-term career sustainability for veterinary nurses.
2. Explore a range of career trajectories available within the veterinary nursing profession.
3. Recognise how lived experiences from nurses working in varied roles and workplace settings inform long-term career development.
4. Identify common challenges and opportunities associated with maintaining a long-term career in veterinary nursing.