

Identifying the prevalence and implications of bullying in the Aotearoa New Zealand veterinary nursing industry

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#### Abstract

Veterinary nursing, alongside other healthcare vocations, has been widely acknowledged as a high-stress occupation. Workplace stress, burnout and compassion fatigue have been described in veterinary nurses, but the prevalence of a bullying culture has not yet been formally identified in Aotearoa New Zealand. Research surrounding bullying in the human healthcare sector and amongst veterinarians exists, yet despite anecdotal evidence suggesting bullying is prevalent, Aotearoa New Zealand veterinary nurses are under-represented in the literature. This study aimed to determine the prevalence and possible implications of bullying within the Aotearoa New Zealand veterinary nursing industry. An anonymous, self-selecting survey was adapted, with permission from the authors, from an existing questionnaire previously distributed in the United Kingdom. It was disseminated online through social media and to New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA) members. A total of 396 respondents met the criteria for the survey: 70.2% (n = 278) of respondents identified that they had been bullied by at least one other staff member in their clinic; 29.86% (n = 83) of those reported being bullied by a veterinarian; and 80.92% (n = 320) of respondents reported they had observed a colleague subjected to bullying within their current clinic. The high incidence of bullying identified in this study warrants further investigation, particularly as this survey was the first of its kind to be distributed in this country. Further research to understand the scope, nature and effect of bullying on Aotearoa New Zealand veterinary nurses is recommended.

Keywords: Veterinary nursing, workplace bullying, mental health, workplace wellbeing

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