“Creating a new future for vets and nurses”

1250 sites and counting

IN THIS REPORT

FIGHTING ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE
EDUCATING BRACHYCEPHALIC CLIENTS
DIGITALISING PET CARE
“We are creating new career possibilities for all our vets and nurses”

Contents

04 Caring is core to our success
Introduction by IVC Evidensia CEO, David Hillier

06 Values
The essential core values that define our business

09 Principles
The six key principles that we are built around

10 Timeline
Major milestones in our group’s history

14 Doing the right thing
Why ethically led decision-making matters

18 Fighting antibiotic resistance
The group’s ‘One Health’ approach to AMR

20 The true cost of a cute face
Educating owners about brachycephalic dog breeds

22 Group Veterinary Advisors
The senior vets who are sharing their experience

26 IVC Evidensia puts people first
Senior recruitment manager Debbie Loding

28 Becoming part of the group
Questions most commonly asked by practice owners

30 International Vet Academy
How we are making staff training a priority

34 Meeting the needs of modern vets
The many benefits of efficient central procurement

36 Farm and equine veterinary work
Our approach to the rapidly changing sector

38 Digital transformation
How patient data is changing veterinary medicine

42 Building referral practice expertise
The challenge of creating an integrated business

44 Change and continuity
Blackness Vets in Dundee gets a brand new home

48 United Kingdom

50 Sweden

52 The Netherlands

54 Finland

56 Germany & Switzerland

60 Norway

62 Denmark

64 France

66 Ireland

68 Our group in pictures
Snapshots of vets and their patients

70 IVC Evidensia by numbers
Since our foundation, we have always wanted to be at the forefront of the profession. Now that we are the largest veterinary group in Europe, we believe we have a responsibility to put our resources and ideas at the service of the wider community.

Whether it’s infection prevention, promoting the responsible use of antibiotics or championing different animal welfare issues, we can raise awareness and change attitudes. Likewise, our focus on quality enables us to support lifelong careers through education, coaching and defining best practice in every aspect of clinical work.

WORKING ACROSS BORDERS
One of our greatest advantages is that we can draw on the experiences of a huge number of talented people who may be approaching similar issues in subtly different ways. For instance, Finland is at the forefront of identifying the importance of good dental health in pets. We’re taking that as inspiration to ask whether we could be doing more in other countries to help educate our clients, to train in dentistry and to invest in new technology.

looking ahead
While our focus on clinically led decision-making and personal advancement will never go away, over the coming year I think we will see a lot more of our innovations in the digital space. And we’ll be doing some exciting work around wellbeing to improve the lives of animals under our care.

We will also be celebrating the opening of a number of hospitals and specialist facilities. By pushing out the walls on some clinics and investing in others, we will offer a far greater degree of advanced care. Those concentrations of skills, combined with our network of first-opinion practices, mean that once again, by acting as a group, we are able to improve our outcomes: for our staff, for our clients and, of course, for the pets and animals who are at the heart of everything we do.

David Hillier
CEO, IVC Evidensia
We care
We care for animals and people, keep our promises, treat each other with decency and respect.

We dare
We dare to innovate, encourage entrepreneurial thinking and identify opportunities to succeed in a changing world.
Our principles

OUR WHOLE BUSINESS IS BUILT AROUND SIX KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Belief in people
   The success of a practice is down to the individuals that work there. That’s why we invest in continuous professional development for all IVC Evidensia staff.

2. Clinically led practices
   We believe the best practices are led by vets and we want it to stay that way. That’s why we place so much emphasis on our clinical boards.

3. Investment in your practice
   We invest our money in refurbishments, facilities, equipment and technology so that you can provide the best possible care for your patients.

4. An independent spirit
   Your clinic is the heart of your community and we want it to stay that way. We always keep the spirit of the original practice intact.

5. Exceptional care
   We know your primary concern is delivering the best possible care. That’s why IVC Evidensia practices always put their patients first.

6. Sharing expertise
   We’re incredibly proud of the depth of talent among our referral clinicians, as well as their state-of-the-art facilities.

We share

We share knowledge, best practice and make decisions based on trust, dialogue, commitment and engagement.
Our company’s timeline

FROM A SMALL GROUP OF PRACTICES IN THE UK IN 2011 TO A NETWORK CURRENTLY SPANNING 10 COUNTRIES, IVC EVIDENSIA HAS COME A LONG WAY IN JUST A FEW YEARS. HERE’S HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 2011</td>
<td>The IVC Group is established in the UK, with an initial platform of 20 practices, including 14 from a single existing group. Pet Health Club programme for pet owners launched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2012</td>
<td>300 Evidensia staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 2012</td>
<td>Pet Drugs Online website relaunched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2013</td>
<td>50 sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Evidensia entry into Denmark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2014</td>
<td>75 sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Launch of Evidensia Academy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 2014</td>
<td>My Family Vets website launched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 2014</td>
<td>First intake of 15 young vets into the two-year Graduate Training Scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>870 IVC staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2014</td>
<td>100 sites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TIMELINE | IVC EVIDENSIA

**MAY 2016**

**150 SITES**

**IVC Evidensia formed**

**MAY 2017**

**IVC Evidensia launched its Animal Care Guide in Sweden as a best practice guide for all vets**

**MAY 2017**

Clinical boards established in every IVC Evidensia country

**JUN 2017**

Centralised acquisition strategy established across the entire expanded group

**AUG 2017**

32 sites added through the acquisition of Pro-Vets

**SEP 2017**

First items in a range of own-brand products available to customers

**OCT 2017**

Apprenticeships launched

**JAN 2018**

The acquisition of Vets Now puts the number of UK sites alone at 500

**MAR 2018**

The group acquires the Netherlands’ largest crematoria

**APR 2018**

Pan-European headquarters and shared service centre opened in a converted chocolate factory on the outskirts of Bristol, UK

**JUN 2018**

Pet Health Club, My Family Pet and My Family Vet are all rebranded

**SEP 2018**

IVA website goes live

**OCT 2018**

European Graduate Academy founded

**APR 2019**

The acquisition of Vets Now puts the number of UK sites alone at 879

**JUL 2019**

16,300+ IVC EVIDENSIA STAFF

**JAN 2019**

1,250 SITES

**NOV 2018**

1,000 SITES

**DEC 2017**

**700 SITES**

**DEC 2016**

**2,600+ EVIDENSIA STAFF**

**DEC 2015**

**2,200+ EVIDENSIA STAFF**

**THROUGH 2015**

Evidensia enters Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland

**SEP 2016**

Nurse Academy and Nurse Evolve training programmes launched

**SEP 2016**

Exceptional Receptionist and Reception Academy training programmes launched

**SEP 2016**

IVC Academy training programme launched

**APR 2015**

100 SITES

**MAY 2016**

**150 SITES**

**APR 2015**

PetDrugs Online named Mobile Site of the Year and Best Pharmacy and Health site at the Online Retail Awards

**OCT 2015**

The Next Appointment initiative was launched

**OCT 2015**

Pet Drugs Online named Mobile Site of the Year and Best Pharmacy and Health site at the Online Retail Awards

**SEP 2016**

Nurse Academy and Nurse Evolve training programmes launched

**APR 2016**

250 SITES

**SEP 2016**

3,431 UK STAFF

**DEC 2015**

2,400 UK STAFF

**DEC 2015**

2,200+ EVIDENSIA STAFF

**THROUGH 2015**

Evidensia enters Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland

**JAN 2019**

The acquisition of Vets Now puts the number of UK sites alone at 879

**MAY 2017**

IVC Evidensia formed

**2015**

**2016**

**2017**

**2018**

**2019**
1,233 clinics and hospitals across ten countries.

And counting...

**Norway**
- 18 clinics
- Evidensia Norway’s current initiative is to improve clinical care across all its practices
- **NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 307

**Finland**
- 39 clinics
- Pet owners in Finland expect the highest levels of care
- **NEW CUSTOMERS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS:** 60,000

**Sweden**
- 64 clinics
- Meeting customer expectations means combining veterinary care with equally good service
- **NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:**
  - MALE 150
  - FEMALE 1,390

**United Kingdom**
- 879 clinics
- The group started here in 2011 with just 20 clinics and continues to grow
- **NUMBER OF ACADEMY GRADUATE TRAINEES:** 234

**Ireland**
- 11 clinics
- We moved into Ireland when we saw the high-quality work delivered by Irish practices

**Denmark**
- 8 clinics
- Evidensia Karlslunde Referral Hospital provides 24-hour emergency care for animals
- **NUMBER OF ACTIVE CUSTOMERS:** 19,000

**France**
- 2 clinics
- 2019 is the first full year that IVC Evidensia has been up and running in France

**Switzerland**
- 5 clinics
- Swiss clinics are sites of referral excellence for the Evidensia DACH region

**Germany**
- 20 clinics
- Evidensia vets are using heart monitoring vests to monitor dog patients over long periods
- **GROWTH IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS:** 71%
“ONE OF OUR GREATEST ADVANTAGES IS THAT WE CAN DRAW ON THE EXPERIENCES OF A HUGE NUMBER OF TALENTED PEOPLE” – DAVID HILLIER, CEO

2.82m
CUSTOMERS RELY ON PRACTICES WITHIN IVC EVIDENSIA TO SERVE THEIR PETS’ HEALTHCARE NEEDS

16,300
...AND COUNTING. THE NUMBER OF OUR EMPLOYEES ACROSS EUROPE CONTINUES TO GROW EACH AND EVERY MONTH

4,238
OF OUR VETS ARE WORKING IN TEN COUNTRIES, TREATING SMALL ANIMALS, HORSES AND LIVESTOCK EVERY DAY

1,500
NEW CLIENTS TURN TO IVC EVIDENSIA EVERY DAY SO THAT WE CAN HELP THEM GIVE THEIR PETS THE BEST POSSIBLE LIVES
“If we can be seen as a positive influence across the whole profession, why wouldn’t we aspire to that?”

ALISTAIR CLIFF – UK CLINICAL BOARD CHAIR
INTERVIEW

Alastair Cliff
VETERINARY CLINIC CROWN VETS REFERRALS, INVERNESS
EXPERTISE SMALL ANIMAL ORTHOPAEDICS
GROUP ROLE UK CLINICAL BOARD CHAIR

THE GROWTH OF IVC EVIDENSIA MEANS THAT WE ARE BECOMING A FORCE FOR CHANGE WITHIN THE VETERINARY SECTOR. WITH THIS POWER COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY... WHICH IS WHY ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING AND COMMUNITY-LED ACTIONS ARE SUCH DEEPLY INGRAINED VALUES. VET ALISTAIR CLIFF EXPLAINS

Back in the early 2000s, a little-known company called Google added three words to its code of conduct – “Don’t be evil”. The origins have been disputed since – it may have been a lofty ideal or just a sly little dig at its rivals – but in a business as cut-throat as digital, aspiring to simply not be the bad guys has always been regarded as a serious statement of intent.

Of course, for everyone else, not being evil is taken as a given. And as a business founded on welfare and caring, IVC Evidensia has always set its sights so high, it would give anyone in the tech world a neck strain. The group doesn’t just have to be good, it has to aspire to do the right thing, all the time. And Inverness vet Alastair Cliff is proof of that.

THE IVC CLINICAL BOARD

Alastair works in small animal orthopaedics and his ‘day job’, as he puts it, is running Crown Vets Referrals, a multi-disciplinary referral centre. Since 2014, he’s also chaired IVC’s clinical board, a role that he now regards as his second day job. Created to be the link between IVC’s executive management and its clinical staff, the clinical board ensures that doing the right thing is always part of the process – and never tacked on to business decisions as an afterthought. With the clinical board affecting top-level decisions and IVC’s group veterinary advisors (see page 22) supporting practices, the group ensures that the wishes and experiences of the frontline clinical staff regarding the needs of patients are translated into company policy.

“Non-clinical management teams always listen to us, which never ceases to impress me,” says Alastair. “They will always choose and use products, service approaches and strategies that have clinical interests at the heart and tend to consider the financial aspect only after they have decided which is best.”
Creating lasting change

IVC Evidensia is one of the larger veterinary groups in the UK and already the biggest across the UK and Europe. This puts the business in a position to not just effect change internally but also to change practices and perceptions across the sector.

“We’ve started to realise that we could, and should, make a mark on the profession,” says Alistair. “Putting industry-leading measures in place is a new concept, but if we can be seen as a positive influence across the profession, why wouldn’t we aspire to that?”

To support this ambition of lasting, widespread change, the group veterinary medical board (GVMB) has recently been created to allow the flow of ideas from country to country. Meeting quarterly, staff from each IVC Evidensia country meet to share ideas and approaches to projects. “What this means,” says Alistair, “is that as a practitioner in the UK, I am now influencing projects which are happening in the Netherlands, France and Germany, and vice versa.

Creating joint initiatives based on the very best approaches from across the group has the potential to be absolutely colossal.”

A recent example of why some ideas are best tackled without borders is antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which is talked about in greater depth on page 18. “There’s an emerging concept generally termed ‘One Health’ – the idea that animal health and human health should all be considered within a joined-up approach,” says Alistair. “There are some very scary projections about what the devasking of antibiotics will mean for both human and animal medicine in the future, so by creating joint initiatives around this, we can effect positive change which will not only help our patients, but also our children and grandchildren.”

By supporting individual clinical teams with equipment and advice, by educating pet owners and by ensuring that IVC Evidensia investment is backing the best possible outcomes for patients, the company truly has made doing the right thing a core part of its business. The clinical board may only be one part of this – but it’s a key part of ensuring that the important ‘why’ never gets left out of the debate surrounding ‘what’ and ‘how’. It’s for the welfare of the animals. It always has been.
Fighting antibiotic resistance

M edically produced antibiotics have only been available since the latter part of World War 2 yet in the decades since, their effectiveness has been continually eroded. The overuse and misuse of antibiotics has given rise to strains of bacteria that are not only resistant to them but also thrive in environments where the drugs have wiped out all other non-resistant strains. Resistant bacteria are a well-known cause of hospital-acquired infections (HAI) within human healthcare. Animal HAIs cause of hospital-acquired infections (HAI)

Antimicrobial resistance – AMR – is reducing the effectiveness of antibiotics and threatening the health of humans and animals alike. That’s why we are responding to this threat swiftly and decisively.

AMR is the term given to the development of antibiotic resistance – the ability of bacteria to survive and thrive in an environment that contains an antibiotic that would normally halt its growth. They do this through a variety of mechanisms, including changing the target site for the antibiotic, decreasing the number of targets available, or by actively expelling the antibiotic from the cell.

With the Nordic countries leading the fight against AMR, it was the natural home for the group’s evolving infection prevention and control (IPC) programme. Group hygiene director, Anna-Maria Andersson, is also a part of the GVMB. With a background in clinical work, research and the National Veterinary Institute in Sweden, she is now working on creating group-wide preventative hygiene standards. “When fully developed and implemented,” says Anna-Maria, “the group’s IPC programme will be a quality assessed and quality assured programme that will take the lead on prevention and control of infections within veterinary care.” This programme is working on two key aspects:

1. Infection prevention

Best practice for veterinary staff such as hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection routines combined with rigorous risk assessment protocols can do a lot to minimise the risk of spreading infections. simply planning which areas a possibly infected animal can access, then having effective hygiene barriers, are effective tools to control the potential spread of infections. Using the gains already made in Sweden, GVMB’s group-wide set of quality assessed and quality assured routines will maximise patient safety and contribute to a worldwide One Health approach. As Marlene notes, “A large animal hospital in Sweden, Evidensia Specialistdjurshuset Strömsholm, proved that you can perform complicated surgeries without preventive antibiotics, if you have ideal ventilation and good techniques.”

With the new programme, the group is taking an important step into the future. “The recipe for success and superiority of the frontline quality and patient safety work within the group, lies in the fact that we are medically highly qualified veterinarians put in positions where we can also influence company policies,” concludes Marlene. “It’s not business managers making clinical decisions – it’s veterinarians, who know science, clinical work and risk assessment. The One Health approach of taking responsibility for global sustainability and fighting AMR is just one example of this.”

Taking a ‘One Health’ approach to hygiene protects both the patients and the staff.

2. Infection control

The GVMB is currently working to implement an antibiotic stewardship programme across the entire group. This will guide vets to optimise the selection of antibacterial drugs as well as their dosage and duration of treatment in order to achieve the best clinical outcome with the least risk of AMR. “We already have a similar programme in Evidensia Sweden’s animal hospital Helsingborg,” notes Anna-Maria. “Our aim is to expand that model to other clinics.” In the common cloud-based record system used in Sweden, antibiotic usage and complication reports are automatically generated, allowing more advanced data analysis and improved guidelines. The plan is for the whole group to adopt a similar record system.

Even small things can make a big difference

When it comes to infection control, simple routines can have a huge impact. Protocols such as using alcohol hand sanitisers, or cleaning tables and floors between patients, can do a lot to minimise the spread of any contagious disease brought into a clinic. Similarly, controlling the flow of patients, staff, equipment and air within a facility can avoid the spread of infectious agents throughout a facility and between staff, patients, patients’ pets and visitors. Simply planning which areas a possibly infected animal can access, and determine how effective different treatments are.

The Nordic countries leading the fight against AMR, it was the natural home for the group’s evolving infection prevention and control (IPC) programme. Group hygiene director, Anna-Maria Andersson, is also a part of the GVMB. With a background in clinical work, research and the National Veterinary Institute in Sweden, she is now working on creating group-wide preventative hygiene standards. “When fully developed and implemented,” says Anna-Maria, “the group’s IPC programme will be a quality assessed and quality assured programme that will take the lead on prevention and control of infections within veterinary care.” This programme is working on two key aspects:
The true cost of a cute face

Dog owners in the UK have fallen for breeds such as bulldogs — but are often unaware of the underlying health issues the dogs’ characteristic faces can cause. How do vets inform owners without sounding preachy?

Dogs have become fashionable items at the moment, with certain breeds in vogue — including pugs, English bulldogs and boxers. Unfortunately, these are brachycephalic breeds, whose sought-after look gives them broad-yet-short skulls. This look has been bred into them, but along with it comes an anatomical disadvantage which affects the quality of their lives. But at the same time, we are not the animal police, so we can’t tell owners what to do. That’s why IVC Evidensia has taken the decision to advise owners, because the danger of not offering help to these dogs is that their health can suffer. We want to improve their wellbeing, and also that of the owners. But long term, we would like to change buying patterns and improve the anatomy of these breeds. This cost is also driven by a very strong consumer demand.

NOT THE ANIMAL POLICE
“We have to accept that these dogs are bred, and we accept that they have clear anatomical disadvantages which affect the quality of their lives. But at the same time, we are not the animal police, so we can’t tell owners what to do. That’s why IVC Evidensia has taken the decision to advise owners, because the danger of not offering help to these dogs is that their health can suffer. We want to improve their wellbeing, and also that of the owners. But long term, we would like to change buying patterns and improve the anatomy of these breeds. This cost is also driven by a very strong consumer demand.”

Edward Davies, clinical director of Cheshire Pet in Holmes Chapel, believes practices should embrace these pets and their owners, rather than judge them. “Sometimes vets have been accused of finger wagging at the owners of these pets,” he admits, “but we see things from both points of view. The problem is that the value of these dogs has risen, making them very valuable to breeders. This cost is also driven by a very strong consumer demand.

INFORMATION ON THE CARDS
Most pedigree breeds tend to have some associated health issues with them. For that reason the group has produced a series of information cards on the 50 or so most popular dog breeds in the UK. Each series of information cards on the 50 or so most popular dog breeds in the UK. Each card has information on health issues associated with the breed, plus exercise and dietary advice and details of vet costs. “People have probably made their minds up to get a brachycephalic dog so you have to tread carefully,” he says. “Telling them it’s a stupid idea is the wrong thing to do. It’s better to make people aware that these breeds can require a lot of vet attention. Insurance policies mean that a lot of brachy dogs fall into select-breed policies, where premiums can be expensive.”

The Kennel Club. “I’d actually like to work even more closely with them,” says Edward. “Vets are sometimes accused of stamping their feet over these breeds — but long term, the owner said she was embarrassed by which was noisy with its breathing, and the smallest, weakest puppy in the litter. A problem child, as he puts it. Yet this love has come with a price tag. The current round of treatment has cost around 2,500 CHF (€2,250); on top of the €1,000 (€1,300) he’s paid out over the past three years.

According to surgeon Andreoni, the number of nose and throat operations on French bulldogs has increased dramatically. He now performs a procedure around 60 times a year. This will take a long time, obviously, but we often get people coming into the surgery with brachycephalic dogs who say, “This is normal, isn’t it?” No, the way some brachycephalics breathe may be normal for that breed, but it is not natural. If we can slowly improve that breed, we will gradually improve the health of dogs.

We have to get clients to recognise the deformities seen in certain breeds of dogs to the Kennel Club, so they can act and try to change the process of breeding. "It’s a difficult concept to get people to buy into," says Edward. "But long term, the prepurchase consultation is a great opportunity for clients to change buying patterns and help to these dogs is that their health can suffer. We want to improve their wellbeing, and also that of the owners. But long term, we would like to change buying patterns and improve the anatomy of these breeds. This cost is also driven by a very strong consumer demand."
When the IVC Group was formed in 2011, while it needed to be successful, a core tenet was to make it a veterinary led, ethical organisation. How else could it convince practice owners across the UK – and ultimately across Europe, too – that they should join the group if it couldn’t prove that animal welfare always came first?

Since vets needed to have a say in the boardroom, the common sense decision was taken to put vets in contact with the IVC Evidensia board. It took a while to settle on a name but group veterinary advisors – GVAs – were appointed based on experience, enthusiasm and a desire to get things done. On a constantly evolving mission to improve clinical matters, GVAs are now a fixture across the group.

John Dinsdale is the chief veterinary advisor, which makes him the head GVA. Typical of most, he’s an ex-vendor with 34 years in practice and broad experience across veterinary care. He’s been partner manager of an out-of-hours veterinary service, a graduate support officer for the British Veterinary Association and started a mixed practice with a small pet bias.

After bringing his practice into IVC Evidensia, John could have taken a step back from management. Instead, like all the other GVAs, he has thrown himself into making ethically led decisions and creating clinically determined policies that are shaping the way the group operates.

SUPPORTING CHANGE AND PEOPLE

“Had I come into this business and it hadn’t been ethical by living up to its stated core principles, then I would have walked,” notes John. “But as GVAs, we’ve managed to become almost the grandfathers and grandmothers of the group. We’ve got some analytical GVAs who can see the bigger business perspective, we’ve got problem solvers, some great mediators and strong, clinically focused moderators. We’re all very different but also consistently calm and measured in our responses to situations. So when someone rings up with a problem, we’re very much, ‘That’s fine. We’ve seen that before.’ We either have advice or know someone else who’ll help.”

The GVAs are seen as the clinical deliverers of IVC Evidensia’s business arm. They sit in the operations teams but also have relations with professional bodies such as The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. They feed back on recruitment and retention, as well as on development of veterinary surgeons and complaints. This wide-ranging remit ensures that practical veterinary concerns are always considered when business decisions are made.

IVC Evidensia prides itself on being a business full of entrepreneurs. Instead of IVC Evidensia’s enthusiastic and dedicated teams that create such high clinical standards. GROUP VETERINARY ADVISORS help them by using their years of experience to influence policy and practice at every level.
of a rigid, top-down structure, it supports new ideas from its staff rather than dictating to them. It does this by taking the fear away from new managers who have never managed or been financially trained. For the GVAs, this often means helping clinical directors make the right ethical decision while also factoring in the bottom line.

“We realise that the bottom line can be influenced by a massive range of things,” says John. “Everywhere from people and teams, to training, finance and local demographics. But we support the idea that we should always do the right thing and should respect IVC Evidensia’s core principles. We are advisory, helping to implement but also guiding and nudging people along. If our company principles are right, that’s usually the right decision.”

NURSING AS A LIFE-LONG CAREER

“I think there’s a general misunderstanding of what nurses do and we need to change that,” says John. “No practice can function of what nurses do and we need to change that.”

“I think of nurses as a vital part of the veterinary clinical team,” says Liz. “We're helping nurses to not just work in their own area but collaborate with other professionals in the group.”

“With IVC Evidensia meeting the increased interest for training that addresses the ever-changing demands of our patients, clients and staff, I believe it’s a very exciting time to be a veterinary nurse within the group,” says Liz.

SUPPORTING TALENT;
STRENGTHENING THE GROUP

The importance placed on GVAs by IVC Evidensia reflects the holistic approach of the whole business. If one aspect of it isn’t working right, then it will affect another part, so why not try to find a single solution that works?

While the wide remit of GVAs can sometimes appear to be a scattergun approach, it’s one that is clearly working. As part of a support network that includes CED and one-to-one advice, while at the same time shaping best practice, GVAs ensure that staff enjoy independence, while still delivering progressive, high quality veterinary and nursing care.

“A core group tenet is clinical freedom,” says John. “We don’t set prices for each practice to charge, which the GVAs support. Even if there's pushback from practice owners or other areas of the business, we support our vet's decisions. We always stick to our core principles.”

Of course, having influence across the company means that the work of the GVA can never be complete. Something John is keen to concentrate on next, for example, is the poor retention rate in the veterinary sector, which sees close to 45% of vets and nurses leaving the profession within the first seven years. “We need to change this,” he says, “and currently, it seems that vets are selected on whether they have been successful students. Perhaps we need to concentrate more on their people skills and whether staff have been given a broader set of skills to survive the business side of it. I don’t know. We’ll see.”

Historically, veterinary nurses have always been well trained and passionate about their jobs, yet often have not seen any progression. Over time, this has been a source of frustration for many nurses who have never been able to fully utilise their vast range of skills. Conscious of this, IVC Evidensia is supporting practices to widen the remit of the nursing role.

With the move in veterinary medicine towards wellness and a more prevention-based model, there are now many areas beyond treating sick animals that nurses are perfectly placed to manage and lead as part of the clinical team. These areas include physiotherapy, blood pressure monitoring, as well as running specialised renal, diabetic or arthritic clinics.

“IVC Evidensia is firmly committed to developing veterinary nurses as a vital part of the veterinary clinical team,” says Liz. “We're helping nurses to not just work better within teams but also lead and manage them. Veterinary nurses have opportunities that were unimaginable just a few years ago and are now recognised as professionals in their own right.”

“I'm really keen that veterinary nursing is seen as a career for life and, with the support, training, development and opportunities we offer, I hope that career will be with IVC Evidensia.”

As group nursing advisor, Liz Cox brings her passion for veterinary nursing and experience to everyday practice. She visits practices, shares ideas and looks for different ways of working that improve patient care provision and teamwork. Having also worked for The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, she is pleased to help advise on the future direction of the group’s veterinary care.

Liz Cox
Group nursing advisor

“IVC Evidensia is committed to developing veterinary nurses as a vital part of the veterinary clinical team”

Liz Cox – GROUP NURSING ADVISOR

“This is a new direction for the group’s veterinary care. Historically, veterinary nurses have always been well trained and passionate about their jobs, yet often have not seen any progression. Over time, this has been a source of frustration for many nurses who have never been able to fully utilise their vast range of skills. Conscious of this, IVC Evidensia is supporting practices to widen the remit of the nursing role.

With the move in veterinary medicine towards wellness and a more prevention-based model, there are now many areas beyond treating sick animals that nurses are perfectly placed to manage and lead as part of the clinical team. These areas include physiotherapy, blood pressure monitoring, as well as running specialised renal, diabetic or arthritic clinics.

With IVC Evidensia meeting the increased interest for training that addresses the ever-changing demands of our patients, clients and staff, I believe it’s a very exciting time to be a veterinary nurse within the group,” says Liz.

SUPPORTING TALENT;
STRENGTHENING THE GROUP

The importance placed on GVAs by IVC Evidensia reflects the holistic approach of the whole business. If one aspect of it isn’t working right, then it will affect another part, so why not try to find a single solution that works?

While the wide remit of GVAs can sometimes appear to be a scattergun approach, it’s one that is clearly working. As part of a support network that includes CED and one-to-one advice, while at the same time shaping best practice, GVAs ensure that staff enjoy independence, while still delivering progressive, high quality veterinary and nursing care.

“A core group tenet is clinical freedom,” says John. “We don’t set prices for each practice to charge, which the GVAs support. Even if there's pushback from practice owners or other areas of the business, we support our vet's decisions. We always stick to our core principles.”

Of course, having influence across the company means that the work of the GVA can never be complete. Something John is keen to concentrate on next, for example, is the poor retention rate in the veterinary sector, which sees close to 45% of vets and nurses leaving the profession within the first seven years. “We need to change this,” he says, “and currently, it seems that vets are selected on whether they have been successful students. Perhaps we need to concentrate more on their people skills and whether staff have been given a broader set of skills to survive the business side of it. I don’t know. We’ll see.”

Historically, veterinary nurses have always been well trained and passionate about their jobs, yet often have not seen any progression. Over time, this has been a source of frustration for many nurses who have never been able to fully utilise their vast range of skills. Conscious of this, IVC Evidensia is supporting practices to widen the remit of the nursing role.

With the move in veterinary medicine towards wellness and a more prevention-based model, there are now many areas beyond treating sick animals that nurses are perfectly placed to manage and lead as part of the clinical team. These areas include physiotherapy, blood pressure monitoring, as well as running specialised renal, diabetic or arthritic clinics.

With IVC Evidensia meeting the increased interest for training that addresses the ever-changing demands of our patients, clients and staff, I believe it’s a very exciting time to be a veterinary nurse within the group,” says Liz.

SUPPORTING TALENT;
STRENGTHENING THE GROUP

The importance placed on GVAs by IVC Evidensia reflects the holistic approach of the whole business. If one aspect of it isn’t working right, then it will affect another part, so why not try to find a single solution that works?

While the wide remit of GVAs can sometimes appear to be a scattergun approach, it’s one that is clearly working. As part of a support network that includes CED and one-to-one advice, while at the same time shaping best practice, GVAs ensure that staff enjoy independence, while still delivering progressive, high quality veterinary and nursing care.

“A core group tenet is clinical freedom,” says John. “We don’t set prices for each practice to charge, which the GVAs support. Even if there's pushback from practice owners or other areas of the business, we support our vet's decisions. We always stick to our core principles.”

Of course, having influence across the company means that the work of the GVA can never be complete. Something John is keen to concentrate on next, for example, is the poor retention rate in the veterinary sector, which sees close to 45% of vets and nurses leaving the profession within the first seven years. “We need to change this,” he says, “and currently, it seems that vets are selected on whether they have been successful students. Perhaps we need to concentrate more on their people skills and whether staff have been given a broader set of skills to survive the business side of it. I don’t know. We’ll see.”

Historically, veterinary nurses have always been well trained and passionate about their jobs, yet often have not seen any progression. Over time, this has been a source of frustration for many nurses who have never been able to fully utilise their vast range of skills. Conscious of this, IVC Evidensia is supporting practices to widen the remit of the nursing role.

With the move in veterinary medicine towards wellness and a more prevention-based model, there are now many areas beyond treating sick animals that nurses are perfectly placed to manage and lead as part of the clinical team. These areas include physiotherapy, blood pressure monitoring, as well as running specialised renal, diabetic or arthritic clinics.

With IVC Evidensia meeting the increased interest for training that addresses the ever-changing demands of our patients, clients and staff, I believe it’s a very exciting time to be a veterinary nurse within the group,” says Liz.

SUPPORTING TALENT;
STRENGTHENING THE GROUP

The importance placed on GVAs by IVC Evidensia reflects the holistic approach of the whole business. If one aspect of it isn’t working right, then it will affect another part, so why not try to find a single solution that works?

While the wide remit of GVAs can sometimes appear to be a scattergun approach, it’s one that is clearly working. As part of a support network that includes CED and one-to-one advice, while at the same time shaping best practice, GVAs ensure that staff enjoy independence, while still delivering progressive, high quality veterinary and nursing care.

“A core group tenet is clinical freedom,” says John. “We don’t set prices for each practice to charge, which the GVAs support. Even if there's pushback from practice owners or other areas of the business, we support our vet's decisions. We always stick to our core principles.”

Of course, having influence across the company means that the work of the GVA can never be complete. Something John is keen to concentrate on next, for example, is the poor retention rate in the veterinary sector, which sees close to 45% of vets and nurses leaving the profession within the first seven years. “We need to change this,” he says, “and currently, it seems that vets are selected on whether they have been successful students. Perhaps we need to concentrate more on their people skills and whether staff have been given a broader set of skills to survive the business side of it. I don’t know. We’ll see.”

IVC EVIDENSIA | GROUP VETERINARY ADVISORS

IVC EVIDENSIA | GROUP VETERINARY ADVISORS

IVC EVIDENSIA | GROUP VETERINARY ADVISORS

IVC EVIDENSIA | GROUP VETERINARY ADVISORS

IVC EVIDENSIA | GROUP VETERINARY ADVISORS

IVC EVIDENSIA | GROUP VETERINARY ADVISORS
While it can sound clichéd to say that any business is nothing without its staff, within such a customer-facing sector as veterinary practice, it’s a truism when it comes to IVC Evidensia. “If we don’t have skilled staff, we can’t run a practice – it’s as simple as that,” says senior recruitment manager Debbie Loding. “We aim to attract the top talent, which helps with both our client and staff retention. We have highly skilled veterinary surgeons and nurses in all our practices, each one will be able to offer more services to clients, which in turn attracts more clients and helps to grow their practice further. They are also an invaluable support for our more junior clinicians.”

**A CAREER FOR LIFE**

From the very beginning of every veterinary career, IVC Evidensia offers training initiatives and promotion opportunities. A vet coming straight from a practice without ever having to leave. “We want our newly qualified vets to have the knowledge and support they need to progress with us.”

The group’s more experienced staff are also cared for by the company, notes Debbie. “All our employees need support and the opportunity to continue to grow and develop. At IVC Evidensia, we are providing an excellent benefits package and flexible working hours. Our refresh programme provides training and support to anyone looking to return to clinical work after a break. We also now offer support for the LGBT+ community with the group, with wellbeing champions that are available for any of our staff to contact if needed. “We’re always looking at what further support and development we can provide for our employees. We listen to them and to what they tell us they need. We are also in the fantastic position of being able to offer so many different opportunities to veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses across the UK and Europe.”

There isn’t another employer that can offer the wide range of opportunities that we can. So if you are an experienced surgeon or nurse, you can rely on us to find you a perfect role. You do not need to use agencies or approach other companies.”

IVC Evidensia’s International Vet Academy is a key element to both staff and Graduate development. “We want our practices to offer a gold standard of care to their patients – and so do our clinical staff. The Academy provides them with access to industry-leading programmes across all levels, from graduate to leadership programmes. They can grow their knowledge and progress their career within the academy. It is for them to choose their career path with us.”

**A PLACE FOR PEOPLE WITH PASSION**

This feeling being part of the group, IVC Evidensia constantly encourages the former owners turned clinical managers to run their practices with the same entrepreneurial flair. “You don’t learn to run a business at vet school,” notes Debbie, “so experience has made our vendors highly skilled veterinary surgeons with entrepreneur mindsets. It’s challenging to get a veterinary practice off the ground with so much competition in the industry, so it takes someone with determination and a natural gift for business and management to succeed.”

Experienced vets who have been sole traders and who have sold their practices to IVC Evidensia might experience a difficult transition, but Debbie says that’s understandable. “I believe it would be a hard transition for anyone who has been running their own business for so long – but the beauty of our group is that it was created exactly for these vets. It allows them complete freedom to continue to manage and drive their practice forward. “We give them complete autonomy and it has been wonderful to see these business owners really enjoy their role, without the additional stress of running the business. They can be vets again and still be the boss.”

“It has also been fantastic to see these former vendors move into non-clinical roles within the group. They are working in many of our central functions teams, as they are a such a great asset with all the knowledge and skills they bring.”

**PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER**

IVC Evidensia’s significant market share means that the group’s culture can have a positive effect on the culture of veterinary practice. “We have a great opportunity now to change some of the factors that have negatively affected our industry for the last few years. Providing a better work/life balance for our employees, excellent career opportunities along with fantastic support and development, are essential to help with this culture shift. I believe we are already starting to influence that change.”
My IVC Evidensia

Becoming part of our group

The key to our rapid expansion has been the acquisition of well-established practices. Senior M&A manager Kim Mohan answers the questions most commonly asked by owners thinking of selling their businesses.

WILL IVC EVIDENSI A CHANGE THE WAY I RUN THE PRACTICE?
The group’s CEO, David Hillier, once noted that, “From the outset, we understood that our greatest strength was that the practices were being run by motivated vets with a wealth of management experience.” The veterinary skills, local knowledge and established teams that come with every new practice are more important to the group than the bricks and mortar of each site. Because we know that you know what’s best for your practice, we like to keep it that way. The group offers support – handling procurement and offering HR advice, for example – but regardless of whether you’re an independent owner or a group clinical manager, you are still running the practice the way you see fit.

HOW WILL MY STAFF BE IMPACTED?
In the short-term, they might not even notice it. The decision to become part of IVC Evidensia is for you as the practice owner to make, so you can talk to your staff about that in your own way. Once the practice has joined the group, they may only notice that their monthly payment notification looks different.

In the medium- to long-term though, staff will enjoy the benefits of being part of a larger group, with access to extra training and career advice. Through the group’s intranet, they will also be able to seek advice and share ideas with other teams across the UK and Europe.

WHAT SUPPORT WILL I GET?
As soon as it joins the group, each practice is assigned a business support manager for on-site help whenever it is needed. These managers won’t dictate how you should run things but they can offer assistance and access to the services the group offers. There is a wealth of group expertise in areas such as health & safety, human resources, finance, marketing and continuous personal development for every staff member.

Regional meetings also allow staff from local IVC Evidensia practices to meet their colleagues in a relaxed environment. We really must stress this point – the group doesn’t force anything upon a practice. The group’s resources are there for anyone to access should they need them.

WILL JOINING AFFECT OUR CLIENTS?
In our experience, the majority of clients rarely realise that a practice has joined the group. Your clients have always come, and will continue to do so, because they value the service they get from you and your team. Joining IVC Evidensia shouldn’t change that – we don’t rebrand practices, change everyone’s uniforms, or interfere in your local culture. It is important to us that you carry on being a local practice employing people from the local community and offering the same care you always have. We are there in the background to help you with the administrative side of running a practice, allowing you to focus on providing excellent patient care. Ideally, any effects will be positive ones.

Contacts

If you own a veterinary practice and are interested in becoming part of IVC Evidensia, contact:

NORDICS - axel.lindsten@evidensia.se
UK & IRELAND - kchandler@independentvetcare.co.uk
kmohan@independentvetcare.ie
GERMANY/SWITZERLAND/AUSTRIA - heiner.langbehn@evidensia.de
BENELUX - joop.van.As@evidensia.nl
FRANCE - christophe.farah@evidensia.vet
Investing in careers

THE INTERNATIONAL VETERINARY ACADEMY WAS ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL OF OUR EMPLOYEES AND SUPPORT CAREER DEVELOPMENT AT EVERY STAGE. THE ACADEMY IS NOW FLOURISHING, WITH MORE EMPLOYEES THAN EVER TAKING PART.

A LAUNCHPAD FOR SUCCESS

Back in 2014, IVC UK launched its Graduate Academy by taking in a class of 15 newly qualified vets and giving these academically qualified recruits a broader set of real-world skills that included such aspects as teamwork and handling the expectations of pet owners. Such was its success that the UK IVC Academy was created in 2016. This saw the development of the Nurse Academy for newly qualified RVNs and regional Nurse Evolve CPD for all IVC nurses.

IVA courses and programmes are primarily targeted at all members of the Practice Team wanting to develop their skills within chosen fields. Training covers theoretical and practical aspects and can be delivered either as short standalone events or more structured post graduate modular programmes.

IVA courses and training programmes are arranged across the IVC Evidensia Group countries. We also have an international programme, the IVA Graduate Academy.

TESTIMONIALS

Reception Academy

OFFERING COURSES HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RECEPTIONIST IN CREATING AN EXCEPTIONAL CLIENT EXPERIENCE, HOW TO DEVELOP THIS AND HOW THE GROUP’S ‘MYSTERY SHOP’ SUPPORTS IT

One area in any practice that always needs some improvement is asking for payment. We don’t join the profession with this in mind, but we cannot fulfil our work without the need to ask for payment for what our care is really worth.

Our whole practice attended the ‘Taking Payments With Confidence’ course, provided by the Reception Academy. Coinciding with our push to reduce the time spent chasing payments, it has been ideal in bringing the team together and giving them the confidence and tools needed to address one of the stressful parts of our job.

“It has been ideal in bringing the team together and giving them confidence”

ANDY BARWISE | DE MONTFORT VETS

I absolutely adored the Leadership course. You might not be able to teach an old dog new tricks – but you can definitely teach an experienced practice manager new tricks! Plus, I got to meet a great bunch of people who now class us as friends along the way.

I absolutely adored the Leadership course. You might not be able to teach an old dog new tricks – but you can definitely teach an experienced practice manager new tricks! Plus, I got to meet a great bunch of people who now class us as friends along the way.

Name: Andy Barwise
Role: Practice manager
Based: De Montfort Vets, Leicestershire, UK

Name: Nicola Morris
Role: Practice manager
Based: Burch Tree Vets, Lancashire, UK
**TESTIMONIALS**

**Vet Development**

**THE GROUP VALUES EVERY VETERINARY SURGEON AND OFFERS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL IN WHICHEVER DIRECTION YOU WISH TO TRAVEL IN YOUR VETERINARY CAREER**

Name: Femmy Stoffers M.Sc  
Role: Veterinary surgeon  
Based: Mijn Dierenkliniek, the Netherlands

I’m having a good time at the IVC Graduate Academy. It’s great to see all the young vets around Europe learning together and sharing their experiences. I’m looking forward to learning together and sharing their experiences. I’m happy to be a part of a program for newly graduated Veterinarians.

Name: Sofia Wijkmark  
Role: Veterinary surgeon  
Based: Evidensia Djursjukhuset Göteborg

A really great initiative to start an International Education Program for newly graduated Veterinarians. I’m happy to be a part of a program investing in further knowledge and development for veterinarians.

---

**Nurse Development**

**THE GROUP IS COMMITTED TO INVESTING IN NURSING TEAMS BY OFFERING A RANGE OF PROGRAMMES TO ADVANCE YOUR SKILL, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE, WHATEVER CAREER STAGE YOU ARE CURRENTLY AT**

Name: Debbie Anslow, RVN, BSc, VNS, N Cert Animal Behaviour  
Role: Registered veterinary nurse  
Based: Clockhouse Veterinary Group, Gloucestershire, UK

As a self-confessed continuous professional development (CPD) addict, the IVA has been a dream come true. The Nurse Evolve and Nurse Refresh courses are a fantastic update and a great reminder that I do ‘know my stuff’. The Nurse Academy recently invited both myself and my head nurse to attend a coaching session, which updated our teaching methodologies and taught me a great deal about my personality type, allowing me to be more patient and effective in my work.

Name: Jane Lewis, BSc, RVN, VNS  
Role: Nursing manager  
Based: Manor Veterinary Clinic, Kent, UK

The IVA Nurse Academy is great to be involved with. Having seen two nurses attend so far, it’s amazing to see how both have grown in their skills and confidence. You can easily track their E-CPD online, as well as completing your own, which is a benefit of mentoring them. Our academy nurses have brought new ideas and enthusiasm back to the practice too. I would recommend sending a newly qualified nurse to the Academy to anyone who can!

Name: Sarah Ramirez  
Role: Registered veterinary nurse  
Based: Holly House Vets, Yorkshire, UK

The IVA Nurse Academy reminded me that I am a newly qualified nurse, which is easy to forget when you get your badge and green card. It was an opportunity to take back the most up-to-date information to enhance client and patient journeys. The support available via the Nurse Development Team was invaluable. The year went really quickly, but I hope to be back providing support to future Academy nurses, as I strongly believe the year is essential for growth – both personally and professionally.

---

**Our approach to building skills...**

**Setting the gold standard**

IVC Evidensia is committed to being Europe’s number-one choice for staff working within veterinary care.

**Career development**

We continue to encourage and help facilitate further development of skills and special interests for staff of all skill and experience levels.

---

For more information and to discuss booking courses, please email academy@evidensia.com or IVCE@independentvetcare.co.uk.
Meeting the needs of modern vetcare

A

ninisterial work is an unavoidable reality for most professionals and one that tends to absorb more time as careers progress. This is certainly the case for veterinarians moving into clinic managerial roles which take them away from their main concern – treating patients.

The process of negotiating terms, unavoidable reality for most administrators, is an essential part of the job. Gillbro notes, “The fact that we are the largest veterinary group in Europe not only provides us the opportunity to buy at very competitive terms, they also expect to get competitive terms, they also expect to get exceptional care, which means the group’s practices must have access to the very latest medical equipment.

The group’s continuing investment has ensured that many of its practices now own equipment that, until just a few years ago, would have been found exclusively in human hospitals. CT scanners, for example, are now installed in all the largest animal hospitals in each country but are also increasingly found in medium- and small-sized practices too. Several practices within the group that are near each other have even pooled their resources to share the cost and use of a single machine.

The example of Gammelstaden Hospital in the north of Sweden illustrates how efficient procurement helps here. The hospital has been extensively upgraded and extended and, as part of these improvements, it acquired a new CT scanner. “It’s been a great advancement for us,” says Karin Sandström, chief veterinarian and a small animal specialist. “It enables us to offer more advanced surgery and treatments.”

IVC Evidensia’s procurement director, Johan Gillbro, heads the team that helps all practices get what they need. “Evidensia receive the support of a central practice managers working within IVC and specialised experience. That’s why facilities ideally requires focus, time and investment in negotiating suppliers and investing in personnel who are trained to do and be where they are most valued – providing exceptional veterinary care” says Gillbro. While centralised procurement can often be imposed purely as a cost cutting measure, that’s not the case here. “The task of procurement in the group is much wider,” Gillbro notes. “The fact that we are the largest veterinary group in Europe not only provides us the opportunity to buy at very competitive levels but also allows us to buy the right product, from the right partners and at the right time. Our clinics don’t just expect competitive terms; they also expect to get excellent service and high-quality products and services. This is our procurement mission and it’s how we create value.”

The procurement team focuses on clinical purchases – pharmaceuticals, veterinary diets, medical consumables and medical equipment – as well as non-clinical supplies – office, utilities and insurance. For clinical purchasing, the team works in close partnership with each country’s clinical board, which is made up of veterinarians from both referral hospitals and first-opinion practices. “IVC Evidensia doesn’t do clinical procurement in isolation,” says Gillbro. “Since we do it together with the clinical boards, we can ensure that we always receive a clinical perspective on the product choices we make. These clinical boards always have the final say on clinical questions, so we always seek their approval before we put a new product on our recommended buying list.”

Although the group is seeking to find similarities between clinics and hospitals in order to be able to negotiate bulk orders and the best deals, there will be times when local variations are needed from a pet treatment perspective. “The avian system used by hospitals in Sweden. “Sectra enables images to be shared efficiently across different locations,” says Kristoffer Persson, regional business manager. “This is important because it allows vets instant access to second opinions from highly experienced colleagues located throughout Sweden and is especially important when a case presents an unusual condition or requires a complex diagnosis. Sectra allows us to share the expertise that we hold across the group.”

Clients can now be sure that their pets will receive the highest-quality diagnostics close to where they live.

CASE STUDY

Investing in the future

IVC Evidensia’s customers expect their pets to receive exceptional care, which means the group’s practices must have access to the very latest medical equipment.

The group’s continuing investment has ensured that many of its practices now own equipment that, until just a few years ago, would have been found exclusively in human hospitals. CT scanners, for example, are now installed in all the largest animal hospitals in each country but are also increasingly found in medium- and small-sized practices too. Several practices within the group that are near each other have even pooled their resources to share the cost and use of a single machine.

The example of Gammelstaden Hospital in the north of Sweden illustrates how efficient procurement helps here. The hospital has been extensively upgraded and extended and, as part of these improvements, it acquired a new CT scanner. “It’s been a great advancement for us,” says Karin Sandström, chief veterinarian and a small animal specialist. “It enables us to offer more advanced surgery and treatments.”

IVC Evidensia’s procurement director, Johan Gillbro, heads the team that helps all practices get what they need. “Evidensia receive the support of a central practice managers working within IVC and specialised experience. That’s why facilities ideally requires focus, time and investment in negotiating suppliers and investing in personnel who are trained to do and be where they are most valued – providing exceptional veterinary care” says Gillbro. While centralised procurement can often be imposed purely as a cost cutting measure, that’s not the case here. “The task of procurement in the group is much wider,” Gillbro notes. “The fact that we are the largest veterinary group in Europe not only provides us the opportunity to buy at very competitive levels but also allows us to buy the right product, from the right partners and at the right time. Our clinics don’t just expect competitive terms; they also expect to get excellent service and high-quality products and services. This is our procurement mission and it’s how we create value.”

The procurement team focuses on clinical purchases – pharmaceuticals, veterinary diets, medical consumables and medical equipment – as well as non-clinical supplies – office, utilities and insurance. For clinical purchasing, the team works in close partnership with each country’s clinical board, which is made up of veterinarians from both referral hospitals and first-opinion practices. “IVC Evidensia doesn’t do clinical procurement in isolation,” says Gillbro. “Since we do it together with the clinical boards, we can ensure that we always receive a clinical perspective on the product choices we make. These clinical boards always have the final say on clinical questions, so we always seek their approval before we put a new product on our recommended buying list.”

Although the group is seeking to find similarities between clinics and hospitals in order to be able to negotiate bulk orders and the best deals, there will be times when local variations are needed from a pet treatment perspective. “The avian system used by hospitals in Sweden. “Sectra enables images to be shared efficiently across different locations,” says Kristoffer Persson, regional business manager. “This is important because it allows vets instant access to second opinions from highly experienced colleagues located throughout Sweden and is especially important when a case presents an unusual condition or requires a complex diagnosis. Sectra allows us to share the expertise that we hold across the group.”

Clients can now be sure that their pets will receive the highest-quality diagnostics close to where they live.
Farm and equine veterinary work

The IVC Evidensia group has a growing number of farm animal and equine practices, with the vets who work there facing very different challenges to their colleagues in the small-animal sector. “We all work with large clients, especially in the dairy industry, and economics plays a big part,” says Jan Lievaart, operational director for farm animals and equine with Evidensia Netherlands. “While a pet owner thinks of only one or a few animals, farmers have to look at things on a herd level.”

This scaling up makes for a rewarding, yet demanding, professional life—one that’s far removed from the world of Yorkshire farmer James Herriott, who would spend working days that combined calving, pet consultations and treating the odd horse. “Vets want to specialise,” says Owain Jenkins, chairman of IVC Evidensia’s farm animal advisory board. “A small-animal vet would struggle to do what we do, just as well struggling to do small-animal work now. They’ve become quite separate skills.”

As clinical director at Delaware Vets in Somerset, Jenkins has seen farm animal practice change over two decades. He now relishes the chance to use this experience to share best practice and expertise throughout the group via the board. “We’ve all worked with large clients, especially in the dairy industry, and economics plays a big part,” says Lievaart. “We have to offer adequate training and a clear career path, and we have to demonstrate the value of our veterinary services to farmers, in order to retain our young vets.”

Reflecting this, the farm animal advisory board is working closely with IVC Evidensia’s Graduate Academy to guide new vets through their first years. The support doesn’t stop there. “When the young graduate has turned into the young assistant and is growing in confidence, there’s a further need for continuous professional development—CPD—to ensure that fully competent vets can sharpen their skills,” says Jenkins. In February 2020, for example, Delaware will hold a two-day session on farm-animal work that will be attended by 20 vets.

EXCHANGING IDEAS

It’s the kind of initiative that reflects the group’s wider ethos of building a mutually supportive network of practices, an ethos it’s hoped will help encourage other farm animal practices to choose to join IVC Evidensia. “We’ve got a wide range of expertise,” says Jenkins. “The guys up in Scotland may be more used to dealing with beef herds, while down here in the south west, we’ve used to dairy animals. That’s why we’re building the network, so that any vet can feel comfortable picking up the phone to share ideas within the group.”

With vets from both the Netherlands and the UK forming separate farm animal advisory boards, there’s an international dimension here, too. “There are things that we do really well here and vice versa, things where they’re excelling at in Holland, so there’s a real potential there for collaboration,” says Jenkins. “In the near future, for example, the boards hope to start an exchange programme so that young vets from the Netherlands and the UK can work in each other’s countries as a way to broaden their experience. It’s an initiative that should also be a selling point when it comes to recruiting the best vets, men and women with the combination of skill, imagination and professionalism needed to face the challenges that lie ahead.”

“It’s really exciting to see young vets come through and develop, and become really good farm-animal vets,” says Jenkins, reflecting on his 20 years in the sector.
Digital transformation

AS WE INVEST HEAVILY IN NEW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, THE WAYS THAT WE LEARN TO ANALYSE PATIENT DATA OVER THE COMING YEARS WILL HAVE A PROFUND EFFECT ON THE FUTURE OF THE ENTIRE VETERINARY SECTOR.

Shopping, banking, making travel plans... the way we now organise our lives relies on the internet. In the age of smartphones, when we all carry a small computer around with us, we want fast and flexible service.

The veterinary sector has to meet these expectations, to offer pet owners the kinds of digitally driven, 24/7 customer experiences that are already routine in other sectors. This means ensuring that practices all across IVC Evidensia use compatible systems so that colleagues can share consistent and accurate data.

"From a digitalisation perspective, that’s the single most important thing and that’s what we’re working on in each country,” says Karl Skarman, group chief digital officer. “The good stuff comes after that.” Two projects illustrate this “good stuff”:

- The creation of online Animal Care Guides to offer advice to pet owners.
- The use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a second-opinion technology

ANIMAL CARE GUIDES

How do pet owners access information about their animals? Increasingly, they begin online with a search engine such as Google, especially when a pet is ill. Yet pet owners do not use the same terminology as veterinary professionals in their searches. For this reason, our Animal Care Guide, an online resource of pet information aimed at pet owners, is based around the kind of language ordinary people use.

The old-school way of doing things would be you would write about cancer or hyperthyroidism,” notes Skarman, “but our new site is much more written around the situations. If a pet owner types, “What do I do if my dog eats chocolate?” then we steer them in the right direction, helping them to understand the most usual underlying question: do I need to come in to the clinic or not?”

If a pet does need treatment, the pet owner can click on a link to book an appointment, although the primary aim of the site is to offer information. “You don’t want to be perceived as selling in that moment, you want to be seen as helping,” says Skarman of dealing with pet owners who may be desperately worried about their animals.

The group has already launched Animal Care Guides in seven countries. The evidence is that offering this kind of useful, free advice helps to drive traffic, so that in Sweden, for example, around 4,000 people visit evidensia.se every day, while the same number again also seek helpful advice from the Evidensia Animal Care Guide on a daily basis.

There are plans to improve the guide by, for example, introducing a traffic light system so that pet owners can see at a glance when a condition is potentially an emergency. Different territories can also translate the Animal Care Guide for their local markets when they are ready to do so.

“It is a resource that will be there to create dialogues for us for many years to come,” says Skarman.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Looking further ahead, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are already achieving impressive results in diagnosing diabetes, hyperthyroidism, abnormal liver function and kidney disease. However, it’s important to see this as a second-opinion technology rather than as usurping veterinary professionals, which is another reason that the group is proceeding cautiously with its rollout under the supervision of the IVC Evidensia medical board.

“It’s a project rich in promise. Ultimately, it means we can have higher precision with treating animals,” says Skarman. “Getting access to this kind of technology is something we want to offer as a benefit for vets and practices that join our group.”
“With the support and training we offer, we hope that veterinary nursing is seen as a career for life”

LIZ COX – GROUP NURSING ADVISOR
Building referral practice expertise

IN A FAST-GROWING BUSINESS, OUR REFERRAL STRATEGY TEAM IS KEY. IT WORKS TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE, TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING ARE HARMONISED IN ORDER TO OFFER PET OWNERS ACCESS TO THE BEST SPECIALIST CARE OPTIONS.

**THE REFERRAL VETS CHARTER**

IVC Evidensia’s first Referral Vets Charter, which was published earlier this year, underpins this work by laying out minimum standards that govern how the group works when referring vets and owners. It was produced following conversations with more than 400 IVC Evidensia first-opinion vets, so it really does reflect the day-to-day concerns of working professionals. Over the coming years, the plan is to build on the Charter, with the overall aim of offering consistently great patient care while developing strong relationships with owners and referring vets.

While the ambition is to be able to offer referral services across all IVC Evidensia countries, the group isn’t quite there yet, as extensive analysis of geographical areas has revealed. The group’s National Practice Strategy aims to address this by increasingly utilising the expertise and insights of colleagues all across Europe. Then there are the challenges around recruitment. In all areas of veterinary care, the best professionals, vets and nurses are in huge demand. Further complicating matters, the group has a mixture of Diplomate-led practices and advanced practitioner-led practices. Each requires a different approach to recruitment, but both are just as important to the group’s future and its commitment to offering the best possible care. We have worked on making vacancies more visible, as well as streamlining processes for putting potential candidates in touch with the right practice for them. We are also strengthening links across national borders to give better opportunities for staff looking to move abroad to work.

**BUILDING RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE**

For those vets and nurses who are already part of IVC Evidensia, career development is vital. This can mean helping first-opinion vets make the transition into being AP referral vets. The group has increased the number of ECVS residencies it can offer, for example. We also now have our own referral vet development schemes, and are actively developing RVNs to offer a referral career path that is both attractive and rewarding.

While much of this work is about empowering colleagues at a local level, we also offer central support. We have a central database of all referral marketing material and are working hard on social media, web design and app development. Finally—and crucially—in the modern age, data is becoming more and more important to veterinary care, whether that be for benchmarking various clinical outcomes, developing key performance indicators or in clinical audits. When the group uses six different practice management systems in its referral practices, standardising data continues to be a challenge, but basic income-generation data for all referral practices has now been established.

**“Career development is vital. IVC Evidensia is actively developing RVNs to offer a referral career path that is both attractive and rewarding”**

Data is becoming more and more important to veterinary care.

**Hydrotherapy safely gets pets back on their feet again after injury or surgery and is offered at many referral clinics.**

Our group wants to connect owners with the teams who have the expertise to help their pets.

**GROUP REFERRAL DEVELOPMENT**
Change and continuity

WHEN BLACKNESS VETERINARY SURGERY IN DUNDEE NEEDED TO EXPAND, THE GROUP WAS ON HAND TO HELP IT MOVE TO A NEW SITE – AND TURN IT INTO A FUTURE-PROOF VETERINARY FACILITY

ack in the 19th century, Blackness was the centre of Dundee’s jute industry – an area of tightly packed mills and tenements that was regarded as an eyesore. These days, its cobbled streets are such a precious reminder of the city’s industrial heritage, it’s been designated a conservation area. It has become a part of the city that many want to visit, work in and even live in, with some of the mills now much sought-after apartment blocks.

In May this year, Blackness Veterinary Surgery moved to new premises at a larger location that reflects how busy the practice has become. “We’d definitely outgrown the old surgery,” says longtime clinical director Barbara Barnard, who sold the practice to IVC in 2014. “Up until now, we’ve routinely had four vets trying to work out of two consulting rooms, so staff had to jump on and jump off the consulting rota. When somebody ran behind, we experienced a small disaster, but whenever there was an emergency, there was no consulting room for them to go in to.”

The new clinic, housed in a former office furniture store, is located about half a mile from the previous location, which had first opened in 1967. As befits such a historic area, the story of Blackness Veterinary Surgery actually goes back much further than that.

Barbara worked with former owner, Margaret Cameron, between 1981 and 1995. Over those years, she heard many tales of the practice’s past, such as how former owner, Professor Spruell, used to “go about the practice’s past, such as how former owner, Professor Spruell, used to “go about it in a Rolls” when the practice was located in a tenement building that was later demolished to make way for a ring road.

SET YOUR SITES HIGHER

Back in 1967, a new surgery was built to be a state-of-the-art facility – but the site has now become too small and it does not have the parking that customers expect. “There comes a point when it’s not worth spending money on an old building,” Barbara says. An old furniture showroom doesn’t seem like an obvious choice for a new clinic but, as Barbara notes, “as soon as you went in, we could see that it’s a nice, bright building on the inside and you could see the IVC head office team thinking, ‘Oh well, maybe this place does have potential after all.’”

With the new site secured, IVC’s help and expertise was key to converting the premises. Not only did the group finance the move and help with myriad pieces of official paperwork, it also found a team of shopfitters who undertook the conversion work quickly and to the highest standard.

Along the way, there were specific problems to tackle, such as ensuring X-ray facilities were properly shielded behind solid walls and that the high roof space above the suspended ceiling was divided up by fire curtains to prevent a small fire from potentially spreading unhindered. The speed of the move was important to maintaining the clinic’s high reputation and not inconveniencing existing clients. The growth in the practice and the new clients has meant we’ve got at the moment,” the speed of the move ensured continuity, which everyone felt was important to maintaining the clinic’s high reputation and not inconveniencing existing customers.

“The new surgery is close to where we used to be, so we hope clients won’t mind the move,” she says. “It’s got good transport links and parking, plus it’s a prominent site. That ticks all the boxes, because we hope to get new clients without losing any clients we’ve got at the moment.”

The speed of the move ensured continuity, which everyone felt was important to maintaining the clinic’s high reputation and not inconveniencing existing clients. The growth in the practice and the new clients means we’ve got at the moment,” Barbara says. “Once upon a time, if your cat was 14 and wasn’t very well, you would tend to sleep. Nowadays, and if clients can afford it, older cats will probably be blood-tested, put on fluids and X-rayed, to find out what the matter is and to see if there’s anything we can do.”

In Dundee as elsewhere in the United Kingdom. “People want to do more for their pets than they used to do,” says Barbara. “Once upon a time, if your cat was 14 and wasn’t very well, you would automatically assume it had come to the end of its days and it would be put to sleep. Nowadays, and if clients can afford it, older cats will probably be blood-tested, put on fluids and X-rayed, to find out what the matter is and to see if there’s anything we can do.”

The practice’s new site offers the space to meet these elevated expectations to benefit both existing customers and new clients. The rich history of Blackness Veterinary Surgery, where at least one client has been bringing in their pets for more than 60 years, is set to continue long into the future.
“I believe it’s a very exciting time to be a veterinary nurse within the group”

LIZ COX – GROUP NURSING ADVISOR
We like to think that by joining IVC, each clinical director knows they are getting the best of both worlds - they have the freedom to work in a practice they often established themselves, but also the security of being part of a larger group.

As a group, we can offer the financial support to refurbish existing premises, to develop new ones and to invest in equipment. In the UK and Ireland, many practices have evolved as conversions of a vet’s former home and so are not necessarily state-of-the-art clinical centres. From a consumer point of view, such sites can be tucked away, have less ambiance or have limited parking, while the vets often have no room to expand. We want to change that.

When I first went there, SCVS shared the site with other small businesses but it now occupies the whole place. IVC has made this expansion possible but, more importantly, a planned multi-million pound investment will develop SCVS into a state-of-the-art referral facility.

This is just one example of what can happen when we back our staff’s ‘give-it-a-go’ culture. In the next few years, we also want to invest in equipment, be that ultrasound, dental X-rays or CTs. Not great veterinary care isn’t all about high-end technology. It’s equally important to supply the basics, so that our vets can do a great job for every pet, farm animal or horse, and that our practices have comfortable, reassuring reception areas.

Paul Cowling
Chief Executive, UK and Ireland
In Sweden, with its high rates of pet insurance, owners demand the best possible treatment.

Johan Wiklund
Country Manager, Sweden

In Sweden, our customers’ expectations are especially high in terms of the quality of care they expect. To meet these expectations, we are currently investing a lot of money refurbishing all our clinics and educating our staff, as well as providing state-of-the-art equipment for clinical work and offering convenient opening hours.

Customers expect us to keep up with the digital developments they see in other sectors, such as retail and travel. They expect online bookings. They want online consultations for their pets through their smartphones. They want online sales of healthy pet-foods. Working to provide these services is challenging but also fun.

One reason we have such advanced care is that Sweden has the world’s highest pet insurance levels, at more than 80% for dogs and cats. In serving such a demanding market, we have achieved the highest customer satisfaction scores that I have ever seen, in any industry. That can only be a good thing.

JOHAN WIKLUND
Country Manager, Sweden

Working at the leading edge of annual dentistry

Magnus Andersson
Small animal clinic chief veterinary officer
Based: Karlköpa, Sweden

What do you do at Evidensia? I co-owned my own clinic with my former wife until 2013, when we sold it to Evidensia. Most of my time is now spent on animal dentistry, with about 20% on administration and training.

What are the advantages of being part of a bigger group? Definitely the access to a network of specialists. Being a major player in the market, Evidensia has the ability to make a big difference. What Evidensia does, its competitors must follow.

Why did you initially decide to specialise in dentistry? That’s funny because a salesman once offered me a great deal on a dental unit and an X-ray machine. I knew nothing about dentistry at the time, so he added a training course as part of the package and told me, “If you don’t get a return on investment within one year, I will give you your money back.”

I thought it was a bit naive, but after four months, we’d hit that point, so he was right. It also made me realize that dentistry is probably one of the most neglected areas of the veterinary profession, and that I found it very challenging and fun in terms of doing surgery. The welfare benefits for the animals are enormous, while at the same time, the work profits our business.

Mats Wänlund is leading a team that aims to build up the largest animal referral hospital in the whole of IVC Evidensia

Mats Wänlund has been director of the busy animal hospital Södra Djursjukhuset since January 2017. He has been working hard to build a culture where both animals and staff can thrive. “Last year, around 35,000 animal owners visited us, mostly bringing cats and dogs,” says Wänlund. “We have staff here 24 hours a day, every day. We have about 160 staff in total, with 60 vets.”

The hospital, four kilometres south-west of Stockholm city centre, has grown quickly, not merely by increasing staff but also by adding expertise. Last January, it had no Diplomates but now it has six. These highly qualified vets, working with skilled nurses, ensure that the hospital can offer top-level care around the clock.

“We have every competence that you need here,” Wänlund explains. “We are open until 9pm, which is convenient for pet owners.”

Recruiting veterinary professionals with specialist skills can be a challenge. “We have to show that we are a good place to come to, because why would anyone leave their good job to work somewhere else unless it was better?” says Wänlund. “That’s why it’s very important to us to have a reputation for being an employer with good leadership and a great energy in the workplace.”

Staff welfare is of huge importance to Wänlund, with sports scheduled at lunchtimes and work schedules arranged many months in advance. This not only lets staff plan their lives better, but also allows pet owners to book return visits with the same vets.

The plan is to expand the hospital by an extra 1,000m² in 2019-2020. “By 2023, we will be as large as we can be on this site,” says Wänlund. “But we can make more of the space we do have. The dental care department will grow from two operating tables to five, while we will have space for more animals to stay overnight.”

Mats Wänlund oversees the busy animal hospital Södra Djursjukhuset

As director, Mats Wänlund oversees the busy animal hospital Södra Djursjukhuset
The Netherlands

MICHEL VAN SILFHOUT, COUNTRY MANAGER FOR THE NETHERLANDS, EXPLAINS HOW EVIDENSIA USES TECHNOLOGY TO HELP RETAIN CUSTOMERS.

There are three main areas where technology really helps us provide great service to our patients: medical, communications and the IT technology we use internally.

New medical techniques are being added all the time – ultrasound, CT and MRIs and lab diagnostics. All make the business more capital intensive, so we need to invest more in the clinics to get to this advanced level of clinical care. Customers know about these techniques from human hospitals, so they expect the same treatment for their animals.

Digital technologies are changing customer behaviour. As soon as you’ve got online booking for your clinic, for example, the majority of your customers switch to booking this way instead of picking up the phone. The majority of your customers switch to booking this way instead of picking up the phone. They not only want to show what goes on in a large hospital with specialists and experts, but also the many unusual animals we treat.

Marc is a member of the Evidensia Netherlands clinical board as well as being a practicing vet, so explaining his clinic’s work to the public has been hugely important to him. “We talk a lot about the veterinary family, which is one of the reasons we wanted to get involved with the TV series. Obviously, it’s great marketing, but the main thing we wanted to show is how much everyone who works here cares about the animals. We’ve had a lot of positive reactions to how good the staff are and how they are not afraid to show their emotions when something touches them.”

What’s the main advantage of working with a larger organisation? “As a decentrally organised company, Evidensia very much let us get on with our own marketing,” he notes, “and while the hospital hasn’t been open for long, we have seen enormous growth here. Partly that’s because we know how to treat exotic pets, which is a service you can’t get anywhere else. But we’ve also seen people come some distance to visit us because they’ve seen us on television.”

The Netherlands

Combining hands-on vet work with project management

Name: Merel Rooijmans
Role: Compani on animal veterinarian in the flex pool of Evidensia and project manager

What do you do within Evidensia?

Besides working as a vet, I also work on projects related to veterinary law, regulations and quality assurance. Occasionally I help out clinics with issues regarding practice management.

How long have you been with the group?

I started as an acting companion animal veterinarian and, since January 2019, I’ve worked as a project manager at Evidensia Support Office. Before joining the group, I worked as a vet and practice manager.

How has your career progressed within Evidensia?

As well as veterinary medicine, I have studied business administration. It is great to be able to mix being a clinical veterinarian with project management.

What is the main advantage of working for a larger organisation?

It’s so good to see the many types of veterinary clinics, with their differences in size, culture, patients and clients. By working in several clinics, you can find out which environment suits you best. I like to learn new things, and to pass on my tips and tricks. For instance, after eight years of being a veterinarian, I recently learned a new technique for collecting blood samples – which is extremely handy.

Initiative

Lights, canaries and... action!

EVIDENSIA NETHERLANDS IS STARRING IN ITS OWN TV SHOW! CLINICAL DIRECTOR MARC MAAS EXPLAINS WHY HE WANTS US TO GO BEHIND THE SCENES.

Staff at an Evidensia clinic in the south of the Netherlands have recently become television stars. This year, 10 episodes of Dierenkliniek: Hart van Brabant (Animal Clinic: Heart of Brabant) have been shown on the RTL5 channel, showcasing the work of the Dierenkliniek De Langstraat and Evidensia Dierenziekenhuis Hart van Brabant – a clinic and a referrals and emergency hospital that share the same site in the city of Waalwijk.

Marc Maas, the clinical director of De Langstraat, explains, “They wanted to make a series about veterinarians, with an emphasis on the relationship between people and animals, rather than the technical side of the practice. They not only wanted to show what goes on in a large hospital with specialists and experts, but also the many unusual animals we treat.”

Marc also appears on screen, showcasing his specialist in exotic animals, including reptiles and birds. While he couldn’t resist tuning in, “you do always criticise yourself and wonder why you didn’t brush your hair!”

“As a decentrally organised company, Evidensia very much let us get on with our own marketing,” he notes, “and while the hospital hasn’t been open for long, we have seen enormous growth here. Partly that’s because we know how to treat exotic pets, which is a service you can’t get anywhere else. But we’ve also seen people come some distance to visit us because they’ve seen us on television.”

PROFILE | THE NETHERLANDS

52 | NC Evidensia 2019 | ivcevidensia.com

53 | NC Evidensia 2019 | ivcevidensia.com
IMPROVE ALREADY HIGH STANDARDS  

Finland  

DURING 2018, EVIDENSIA FINLAND BOTH TREATED SIGNIFICANTLY MORE PETS AND INCREASED REVENUE, EXPLAINS COUNTRY MANAGER JUKKA TOIVANEN  

Last year was a time of vigorous growth and development for Evidensia Finland. Our overall revenue increased 8.5%, while the number of pets we treated increased by 10%. This has been possible due to the hard work of our wonderful staff members. It’s always been very important for myself and our vice-president, Anssi Tast, to visit clinics as often as we can. It’s only by seeing what happens day to day and meeting staff that we can get a clear picture of the business. In 2018, we launched our new strategy and better. They add more details, give more examples and suggest more specific improvements. We’re taking this as sign that the direction we have chosen is the right one.  

The development of veterinary care and digitalisation, as well as the advent of new service and business models, will transform the veterinary industry. In Finland, we have already invested in building new hospitals, adding new services, buying equipment, training our personnel and engaging the very best professionals. We want to raise the level of veterinary care in Finland and we also want to be the ones redefining the whole business. At the heart of everything we do is our passion for veterinary care.  

Jukka Toivanen  

Country Manager, Finland  

Collaboration across corporate boundaries  

EVIDENSIA FINLAND OFFERS VETERINARIANS THE OPPORTUNITY TO COLLABORATE WITH COLLEAGUES. THIS BENEFITS THE WHOLE BUSINESS  

The idea of providing the best possible care in all situations lies at the centre of veterinary medicine. According to Mirja Kaimio, medical director of Evidensia Finland, this idea doesn’t just benefit patients, but also vets, who share in the expertise of colleagues. “When referring vets send a patient to Evidensia for further treatment or examinations, we always provide feedback to the veterinarian,” says Kaimio. “Thus, referring a patient is beneficial not only for the patient and the customer, but also for professional development.”  

In Finland, Evidensia is working to make it as straightforward as possible for veterinarians to refer a patient for further examination or treatment at Evidensia clinics. When a veterinarian refers a patient using a web form, the clinic contacts the client directly within one working day. To ensure this system runs smoothly, every Evidensia clinic now has a referral coordinator.  

One especially important area where Evidensia Finland’s veterinarians provide expert assistance lies in challenging patient cases. When a veterinarian wants to consult a more experienced colleague, he or she can contact Evidensia’s patient consultation group. The consultation group comprises more than 30 veterinary experts in various fields, including all Diplomates working in Evidensia Finland.  

“Our experts advise colleagues on request in all areas of veterinary medicine from orthopaedics to dental care and from oncology to the treatment of exotic pets,” says Kaimio. “Consultation requests are received daily. In acute situations, colleagues can also call vet-to-vet hotline numbers of our clinics directly.”  

To ensure this kind of expertise is passed on, Evidensia Finland runs ongoing programmes with students and has an extensive training programme for colleagues.
Evidensia in Germany and Switzerland is a young part of the group. We only started to form our team in 2017 and recently moved into new offices in Munich. We aim to establish a culture of trust, collaboration and mutual care across the group.

To do this, we offer a wide range of support to our clinics, from HR, recruitment and IT to procurement and finance. We also help with marketing, both of individual clinics and of the overall group, promoting what we do and asking patients when a single trip to the vets isn’t enough – for example, when a dog experiences heart rhythm disturbances. These may only occur randomly and are therefore hard to track. Long-term ECG monitoring is also suitable for some breeds of dogs – Dobermanns, for instance – to detect commonly occurring heart muscle diseases at an earlier stage, allowing for a greater chance of successful intervention and treatment.

One big challenge shared by all clinics, doctors, so the problem is to manage the administrative side on top of that. Our role as the central team is to come up with ideas, as well as gather those from our local teams. Together, we bring these ideas to life and develop the group in a way our staff will like. We can – and will – only be successful if we have a group of professionals who take an active part in Evidensia.

We also encourage and support cooperation on veterinary medicine-related topics. For example, we have a cardiology interest group led by two Diplomates. We have an online discussion forum and members of each interest group also meet in person. We are also working on a training programme for vets and nurses in cardiology. Similar initiatives are planned within dental care.

Where clinics are located close enough, we bring our colleagues together in regional meetings so that staff can get to know each other. This may, for example, lead to local sharing of vets, perhaps because one of the clinics needs a specialist for one day each week. But again, we don’t impose this. We always respect our clinics’ independence.

Dr Christoph Dänzer
CEO, Evidensia DACH Region

We are the central Evidensia DACH team, which is a small group of professionals who problem-solve every day.
“We support the idea we should always do the right thing and should respect the group’s core principles”

JOHN DINSDALE – CHIEF VETERINARY ADVISOR
Norway

AFTER SPENDING 2018 BUILDING BUSINESS FOUNDATIONS, NORWAY’S COUNTRY MANAGER CECILIE RYAN YTTREIDE IS LOOKING FORWARD TO EXPANDING CLINICAL SERVICES

Ever since Evidensia’s journey in Norway started in 2012, we’ve seen steady growth, with the previous 18 months particularly exciting time. We established a country-specific head office in 2017, so 2018 was very much building our foundations until now, our plans include attracting more practices in 2019. We want our vets to spend as much time as possible with our clients and pet patients.

We are very proud to welcome two new clinics and a crematorium into our group. We also opened a new regional referral hospital in Trondheim, which provides an extended range of services, including a CT scanner. Our market share is around 10% of a potential of services, including a CT scanner.

Throughout 2019 and beyond, we will be working on an exciting mix of projects and new initiatives, most of them aiming to give both our customers and employees the best possible experience – which is where our focus and hearts need to be!

Cecilie Ryan Yttreide
Country Manager, Norway

Creating a regional hub

AS THE GROUP CREATES CLINICAL NETWORKS THAT WORK TOGETHER, EVIDENSIA NORWAY OPENS A NEW HOSPITAL TO SERVE AN ENTIRE REGION

Being such a long, thin country, it’s hard to say that any part of Norway is in middle, although Trondheim comes close. Norway’s third-largest city is a 500km drive north from Oslo but also being over 1,100km further south than Tromsø means there’s plenty of tundra between it and the Arctic Circle.

As clinic manager Iselin Evedahl Solnes explains, these distances were one of the reasons to build and open Trondheim Dyresykehus, a new animal hospital. “Our goal is to become the referral hospital for the whole north of Norway,” she says.

“Currently, anyone in Norway with a difficult or unusual case has to get to Oslo, which can mean an internal flight or a very, very long drive. We also want to be able to provide 24-hour emergency cover, seven days a week, although that will take a little time to put into place.”

Another reason for the new facility is that Evidensia found itself with two small clinics on the outskirts of Trondheim, one of them just five minutes away from a third clinic. By closing two and bringing the staff into a larger, more central facility, the city’s needs are being better served.

This new facility is in a converted building but while the external walls are still standing, the extensive refurbishment changed everything inside. Twice the size of the previous largest clinic, it has four consultation rooms and two much larger operating rooms. A new X-ray machine, ultrasound and CT machine have also been bought, with the latter being the facility’s biggest selling point. “Previously”, says Iselin, “pet owners would have to drive for hours but now we can usually offer an appointment on the same day.”

The facility opening in February 2019 and employs more staff than both old clinics combined. Collaborating with other clinics in the area, it has staff on call all night once a week, plus one weekend a month. This combination of better equipment, longer opening hours and ever-improving referral skills means that Trondheim Dyresykehus now offers central Norway the very best planned and emergency veterinary care.

Improving specialist eye care for pets

Name: Siv Grosås
Role: Nordic Eye Scheme examiner, resident in ophthalmology
Based: Oslo, Norway

What do you do within Evidensia?
I work in a clinic with medical and surgical eye cases, mainly for dogs and cats. Student tutoring and ophthalmology seminars for other vets are another important part of my job, plus I also work on research projects and rounds as a part of the residency programme in ophthalmology.

How has your career progressed within the group?
Evidensia has always been supportive of me, investing in my education and giving me time for academic work as a part of the residency programme. Evidensia sees the opportunities in expanding its staff through long-term training.

What benefits of such a large group are seen by the pets and their owners?
By being big enough to support so much training, Evidensia now has specialists across numerous disciplines, so when a complicated interdisciplinary case arises, we can deal with it. A continuous search for improvement and a focus on education provide better outcomes and prognosis for the patients. Yet since Evidensia also focuses on professional client communication, we can also all get a better deal with the owners, which gives them a far better service too.
Danish veterinary group Evidensia has made a strong commitment to teamwork across its network of clinics.

**Country Manager: Ulla Pless**

Ulla Pless, Country Manager of Evidensia Denmark, has observed the benefits of a strong team culture across the company.

In Denmark, we have always put a strong focus on working together as a team - both at local practices and across clinics and hospitals.

Our emergency service is an excellent example of the value it gives to both our employees and patients when our veterinarians, nurses and students from different clinics work together. Teamwork allows us to share knowledge and practical skills in an emergency situation. It also gives our young students, as well as experienced regional vets who may have never worked in a larger practice. Such an internship allows them to experience within a couple of months what they would get working for years in just a small practice. We even arrange internships for both newly qualified vets and experienced regional vets. There's such a big network behind Evidensia Denmark that people at work at the same time - a mix of general staff and specialists. So we all get to share knowledge and experience. You also get to know each other across the clinics, so it's easier to call somebody and ask them professional questions.

In the centralised team, there are more emergency teams that work together. Teamwork means that if you need a second opinion, you can easily call a colleague in to help. Video calls especially mean that if you don't know how to resolve a situation, you can almost always get a colleague in to help. Video calls especially mean that you need a second opinion on an X-ray, for example, they can see what you can see. Image diagnostics is in the cloud, so any vet can access that if you need them to. Telemedicine is the future. It's a way to break down borders across the countries and use specialists throughout the company to make the best diagnosis.

Emergency situations turn up at once - which can easily happen during a weekend - patients with the highest risk and medical condition are treated first. At the same time, the staff are always able to call for further assistance during our emergency service from a senior vet or nurse.

A combination of veterinary talent, a top professional referral hospital with the latest up-to-date equipment, including smart use of technology, gives pet owners access to emergency treatment 24 hours a day.
France

EVIDENSIAS ONLY RECENTLY EXPANDED INTO FRANCE YET COUNTRY MANAGER PATRICK GOVART SAYS IT’S ALREADY SUPPLYING SPECIALIST CARE ACROSS BORDERS

Evidensia France is a recent venture and while we have expansion plans, our base is currently the Oncovet clinic in Lille. It’s a very specialised referral centre that has made its name dealing with complicated oncology cases for cats, dogs and sometimes horses too. Lille is very close to the Belgium border, with many of our customers coming from the Benelux region. We also treat pets from the UK and, occasionally, referrals from an oncology centre in Barcelona, Spain. Around a quarter of our business comes from abroad.

There are only two radiotherapy centres specifically for veterinary use in all of France and while it may be possible to access similar facilities in some universities, it’s usually simpler to travel further and come to us. The owners can stay at a nearby hotel but since some treatments can last several weeks, the pets often stay with us. To cope with this, the clinic has a room laid out like a living room so that owners can sit on a couch and spend some quality time with their pets for a few hours during these long-term hospitalisations.

These complicated treatments are becoming more mainstream as more owners use pet insurance. In France, the percentage is still in single digits but it does mean that when an expensive treatment like radiotherapy is needed, owners can afford it.

This location at the heart of Europe is ideal for a referral facility without borders. We are developing a new website in Dutch and English, as well as French, to help bring in more patients. We already know that we have the highest levels of expertise and experience. Going forward, we need to spread the word.

Patrick Govart
Country Manager, France

Managing, caring and sharing ideas with the group

Spreading the word about radiotherapy

EVIDENSIAS SPECIALIST ONCOLOGY CENTRE CAN DEAL WITH THE COMPLICATED CASES THAT FEW OTHERS CAN HANDLE

The Oncovet clinic in Lille has concentration of equipment, staff skills and experience seen almost nowhere else. However, this specialisation has created its own problem. “Vets never learn about radiotherapy at university. Just some basic concepts about oncology,” explains Oncovet’s Jerome Benoit. “So what we wanted was to give referring vets enough information to discuss complicated cases with pet owners without always having to talk to us first.”

The solution was OncoXpert – a bespoke online tool that the clinic offers to its referral vets. Created by a company that specialises in using Artificial Intelligence for analysis and clinical trials in human hospitals, the online system asks vets a series of questions relating to species, type of cancer and symptoms, before returning an outline of an ideal radiotherapy treatment, a prognosis with and without treatment, some cheaper alternatives, plus an idea of costs for each protocol. “It’s not an exhaustive evaluation,” notes Jerome, “but it does give the vet some level of expertise while they are talking to the client.”

OncoXpert predicts life expectancy based on the species, course of treatment and type of disease, using data sets that the clinic created by combining its own data with scientific literature. Since radiotherapy is such an expensive procedure, it is used to start a discussion about what the owner wants. Where do they live, how many times can they visit the clinic, what costs and side effects can they cope with? “For example, while the optimum protocol might suggest 20 treatments spread over four weeks,” says Jerome, “if your dog is very old and has a radiation-sensitive tumour, it could be that fewer sessions requiring less sedation might be a more suitable, yet still effective, treatment.”

With the service available in French, Dutch and English, OncoXpert is an innovative way of using available technology to extend expert opinion and market reach across international borders.
The dedication shown by vets in Ireland fits perfectly with the IVC Group’s way of doing things.

The dedication shown by vets in Ireland fits perfectly with the IVC Group’s way of doing things.

Ireland

Senior M&A Manager Kim Mohan on the importance of understanding the region-specific needs of vets during our first year in Ireland

Having already forged a strong IVC presence with around 30 practices in Northern Ireland, we were exploring an expansion into Ireland in 2017. I was then working for the UK IVC acquisitions team but when the opportunity came up to go back home to Ireland for work, the lure was irresistible.

Prior to moving, I went to veterinary shows across Ireland to meet people. Compared to many other sectors, the veterinary industry is small but it’s even smaller in Ireland! Everybody knows everybody else, so you need to have a very personal relationship with people. By the time I started talking about IVC practices outside of the large cities also having a farm and equine element. It was also vital we understand what practices want from us. Financial backing – yes – but many practices want to be part of a bigger group.

After a strong first year in Ireland, IVC will continue to invest heavily in both people and practices. 2019 should be an exciting year, with many more practices joining our group.

Kim Mohan
Senior M&A Manager, Ireland

Becoming part of IVC in Ireland

WITH IVC EVIDENSIA MOVING INTO IRELAND IN 2018, WHAT BETTER WAY TO GET TO KNOW THE COUNTRY’S VETS THAN WITH A ROUND OF GOLF?

There’s always been a certain caution among vets in Ireland about groups such as Independent Vetscare becoming established in Ireland. So this May, in order to meet in a relaxed atmosphere, IVC welcomed colleagues from the Irish veterinary sector to the Carton House Hotel in County Kildare for a day of golf.

The event was an informal gathering, with some vets who have already joined the group, others in the process of joining, some curious about the whole venture and, of course, members of the IVC team. Several organisers of key Irish vet shows had also been invited.

The day started with a warm welcome over a hearty breakfast before a day out on the renowned Montgomerie golf course. The evening started with a drinks reception followed by a three course meal and a prize ceremony for the winning teams.

“IT was important for us to allow the vets to chat with each other to get a true sense of what it is to be part of Independent Vetscare,” says Senior M&A Manager, Kim Mohan. “We are delighted with the practices that have joined us in Ireland already and we hope that events like this continue and allow us to meet and chat with like-minded vets in the future. The day ended on such a high and we hope this is the beginning of an annual tradition for IVC Ireland.”

The Carton House Hotel was the backdrop of our first event in Ireland

The Carton House Hotel was the backdrop of our first event in Ireland

Golf, good food and greetings to Ireland

IT was important for us to allow the vets to chat with each other to get a true sense of what it is to be part of Independent Vetscare,” says Senior M&A Manager, Kim Mohan. “We are delighted with the practices that have joined us in Ireland already and we hope that events like this continue and allow us to meet and chat with like-minded vets in the future. The day ended on such a high and we hope this is the beginning of an annual tradition for IVC Ireland.”

There’s always been a certain caution among vets in Ireland about groups such as Independent Vetscare becoming established in Ireland. So this May, in order to meet in a relaxed atmosphere, IVC welcomed colleagues from the Irish veterinary sector to the Carton House Hotel in County Kildare for a day of golf.

The event was an informal gathering, with some vets who have already joined the group, others in the process of joining, some curious about the whole venture and, of course, members of the IVC team. Several organisers of key Irish vet shows had also been invited.

The day started with a warm welcome over a hearty breakfast before a day out on the renowned Montgomerie golf course. The evening started with a drinks reception followed by a three course meal and a prize ceremony for the winning teams.

“It was important for us to allow the vets to chat with each other to get a true sense of what it is to be part of Independent Vetscare,” says Senior M&A Manager, Kim Mohan. “We are delighted with the practices that have joined us in Ireland already and we hope that events like this continue and allow us to meet and chat with like-minded vets in the future. The day ended on such a high and we hope this is the beginning of an annual tradition for IVC Ireland.”

The Carton House Hotel was the backdrop of our first event in Ireland
A day in the life

WORKING WITH ANIMALS IS BOTH AN ADVENTURE AND A PRIVILEGE, AS THESE PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE GROUP SHOW
“Now that we are the largest veterinary group in Europe, we believe we have a responsibility to put our resources and ideas at the service of the wider community.”

DAVID HILLIER – CEO, IVC EVIDENSIAS