

A Qualitative Assessment of Veterinary Student Wellness

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Veterinary school can be a stressful environment. With heavy workloads, long hours, and high expectations, the stress acquired throughout veterinary school can carry out to the working field. Veterinarians are four times as likely to commit suicide compared to the general population, and twice as likely compared to other health care professionals. Numerous veterinary schools claim their current wellness programs are considerably inadequate, but crucial questions remain regarding how students define wellness, how educational programs can help support wellness, and what strategies students apply to help promote wellness while enrolled in veterinary medical education programs.

The purpose of this study was to gather data about how veterinary students define wellness, what systems/factors contribute to and inhibit student wellness, and what strategies students apply to promote or maintain wellness while enrolled in The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine program.

Students currently enrolled in the OSU veterinary curriculum were invited to participate in voluntary, moderated focus groups, discussing topics related to wellness. The project included 8 focus groups, with a total of 29 student subjects. Focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and data was coded.

Discussion included topics, such as the definition and domains of wellness, expectations of veterinary school, who contributes and is accountable for an individual's wellness, factors that promote and inhibit wellness, and what is working well and strategies to improve wellness in the OSU veterinary curriculum.

The goal of this project was to bring awareness that wellness, whether physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, financial, intellectual, or social, plays a crucial role in the overall health of a person. Stress, anxiety, burnout, and thoughts of suicide are all possible. Dealing with issues in a way that maximizes wellness is essential. We believe this project will promote advancement in the education and awareness of student wellness.