

# Mental Health and Suicide Risk Among Veterinarians

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## Introduction

- 9.7% of veterinarians experience serious psychological distress, which is a key predictor for suicidal thoughts<sup>1,2</sup>
- Women veterinarians experience higher levels of psychological distress and over 60% of the veterinarian workforce is female<sup>3</sup>
- Veterinarians are approximately three to seven times more likely to attempt suicide in comparison to the public<sup>4,5</sup>
- 1 in 6 veterinarians have contemplated suicide<sup>6</sup>

## Relevance to NORA

- Individuals working in the veterinary industry are considered a high-risk, understudied population for mental health, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts<sup>7</sup>

## Study Plan

- *Study Design.* Cross-sectional survey with demographic questions and questions on burnout, substance abuse, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation
- *Setting and Sample.* Veterinarians licensed in the United States will be recruited via the American Veterinary Medical Association mailing list, state licensing boards, and social media
- *Measurements/Instrumentation.*
  - Copenhagen Burnout Inventory
  - Tobacco, Alcohol, Prescription medication, and other Substance use Questionnaire
  - General Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire
  - Patient Health Questionnaire
  - Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale
- *Procedures.* Surveys will be mailed to the address on file with the AVMA or licensing board or a REDCap survey will be distributed via social media. The survey will take approximately 40 minutes. Double data entry will occur to ensure integrity. An insert identifying the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, Crisis Text Line, and Not One More Vet, which has additional mental health referrals, will be included in the survey packet
- *Data Analysis.* A path analysis will be done to determine if there are causal relationships between the variables

## Impact of Results

- Obtain a baseline understanding of overall mental health among U.S. veterinarians that can be used in future interventional research to mitigate and prevent suicides among this population

## Future Funding

- Potential for federal R01 funding to complete a longitudinal study to track mental health changes and outcomes among this population

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