Feel Good February

In February 2017, students at Glasgow Vet School ran a Wellbeing campaign called 'Feel Good February'. The campaign's aim was to encourage the staff and students in our community to create a more positive campus. We wanted to encourage everyone to be more open and honest about how they were feeling by talking to their friends. How many times a day do you answer the question 'how you doing?' with 'Yeah, I'm fine thanks!' or 'I'm good, you?' - are you actually okay or is it just an automatic reaction?

The phrase 'How you doing?' has become more of a greeting, the Vet Times reported we answer this question over 10 times a day. Our idea was if you could try to answer at least one of these times honestly about any stresses going on that day then it might help to take a little weight off your shoulders - after all, a problem shared is a problem halved!

We also wanted to encourage anyone who is struggling and perhaps feels they don't have anyone to talk to, to be able to make the decision to tell someone, be it a friend, family member, one of our Peer Supporters or a member of staff. The first step to get help needs to come from them. From this we devised the hashtags #howyoudoing? and #Utakecareofyou.

We really wanted this campaign to be a whole student body effort, it was co-ordinated by our Vet Student Society (GUVMA) Presidents and had inputs and events from as many representatives on our committee as possible. A special Thank You to our Peer Supporters and our Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) Chapter who both rose to the occasion and ran various events throughout the month! We chose February as everyone needs a boost after January and there are lots of great events in our calendar for February already so we wanted to build on these; Vetball, Mr Vet School, Old Boys and Gals Sports Day, 3rd years Halfway Ball and the GUVMA Elections.

Some of our Feel Good February events included:

- Cup of Tea Tuesdays - these were sponsored by a different group each week - sponsors included: Vets4Pets and Glasgow’s own peer-tutoring group, Farm Animal Vet society, Pathology club and the Equine Vet society. As well as being around for a chat, free tea and coffee were provided in conjunction with a charity bake sale by Students for Animals In Need (SAIN) or the Glasgow Rodeo Committee.
- Throwback Thursday - this was a weekly lunchtime talk organised by SAVMA and Peer Support by a clinician or lecturer about own vet school experience and the road after which lead them to Glasgow including any struggles they faced. These were a great opportunity to get to know our staff better and allow them to pass on some very useful advice!
- Feel Good 5K - despite poor weather conditions there was a great turnout and everyone really enjoyed themselves - even if we were all a little damp! Glasgow University’s Garscube Sports Centre worked with us to map out the route and allow us space to run the sign in and t-shirt pick up point on the day and Tunnocks very kindly provided a box of Tea Cakes and Caramel Wafers for the finishers - they were very well deserved!
Garscube Sports Centre also set up a ‘Feel Good February Fitness Pass’ for two weeks free access to their gym and sports facilities, they ran gym induction sessions and a ‘Feel Good Fighting Fit’ class which was boxing based and a great stress reliever! A big thanks to April and the team at Garscube for all their support with the campaign!

Peer Support (sponsored by DMS Plus Ltd, MediVet, SPVS, Burns Pet Nutrition Ltd, and BVA) pulled out all the stops hosting a Finding Dory Movie Night on campus complete with popcorn and other movie treats, a De-Stress not Distress seminar and ‘Massage Your Worries Away’ head and neck massages. Peer Support ensured that the end of February did not mean the end of feeling good as they have Guide Dogs Scotland coming to visit in March for a day of doggie cuddles to de-stress. We will hopefully get an update on the two puppies Glasgow Vet School has named after our fundraising efforts - Ian and Clover!

Our GUVMA Sports Reps organised a Feel Good February Dodgeball Tournament for the final day of February, which got most of our vet sports teams involved as well as teams from all years and some staff too! What better stress relief is there?? Well done to Men’s Rugby who came out on top!

Freebie Friday was a huge success with all of the first round of freebies gone within minutes! Vetlife, BVA, RCVS Mind Matters Initiative, Vets4Pets and Burns Pet Nutrition Ltd all very kindly sent us bags and items to include in them.

The ‘Feel Good February’ Logo and writing was hand drawn by our GUVMA Treasurer, Alison and we had this printed onto pens and t-shirts which, thanks to our wonderful sponsors were able to be given out for free to all participants of our Feel Good 5k and on our last Motivation Monday with the last of the Freebies!

Prior to the start of our campaign, we sent out a survey asking questions such as:

- ‘Do you regularly feel stressed at Vet School?’
- ‘Do you think it’s normal to be stressed during a veterinary degree?’
- ‘Have you felt able to share your stresses or anxiety with a friend?’
- ‘What do you do to relieve stress at Vet School?’

We received 314 responses from both vet students and vet bioscience students which really opened our eyes to how things are at Glasgow specifically. Some answers were shocking but there were lots of lovely messages of support coming in - we decided to use these throughout the month and so ‘Motivation Mondays’ were added to the line up!

Every week in February we sent an email out first thing on Monday morning with a different message in each one; on the first week we focused on speaking out if you’re struggling and shared messages from the student body along this theme. Week 2 focused on using sport and exercise as a way to relieve stress and shared the number of students who had told us this through the survey encouraging anyone who hadn’t tried it to give running or the gym a go especially with our Free Feel Good Fitness Pass!

Week 3 focused on a current Final Year student who wanted to share her story with the lower years, passing on advice on what helped her when she was struggling with mental illness earlier in her vet school career and letting them know that no matter how bad things seem, you can get through it.

For our fourth and Final Motivation Monday we collated our favourite motivational messages received through the survey to round off the month on a high and created a document to point anyone who is in need of help in the right direction; where to go and what services are available to them. The emails were sent to students and staff and also included a rundown of the events on offer for that week to keep everyone up to date with what was going on.

We are privileged to call Double European Champion and British Record holder Laura Muir (final year) our classmate here at Glasgow and she said:

“Running during my vet studies has been such a huge help in coping with the stresses of keeping up with notes and studying for exams. When I go for a run it allows you to think about things, clear your mind and you feel so much better afterwards both mentally and physically. I find that exercising despite taking some time out for it, makes me so much more productive
with my studies and I think I have performed better in my exams because I have taken part in sport. It also means you can have that extra piece of chocolate too!"

STV Glasgow came out to film with Erin and Lucy (our GUVMA Presidents), interviewing them on what the month was about and the ways we are trying to tackle Student Wellbeing at Glasgow. Professor Ian Ramsay was also interviewed about the profession as a whole and the issues we are facing, mentioning a need to focus on prevention at the level of the student. Donations raised through the week went to Vetlife who provide such a valuable service to the veterinary profession - they are always there if you need to talk, simply call 0303 040 2551 for their 24 hour helpline or visit their website and there is information on how to email them anonymously. Please, if you’re struggling, talk to someone!

Our hope is that this will become an annual event and Glasgow can continue to feel Good in February, bringing staff and students in our community closer and reducing the stigma of talking about stress and anxiety at Vet School, it’s okay not to be okay! We are planning on carrying out another survey now the month is over to find out whether some of the answers have changed.

We put together a video, which summarises some of the statistics from our survey and the events, which were run throughout the month, as well as some of the motivational messages from our students; it can be viewed on our Facebook Page or through our Google Drive.

Thank you so much to our sponsors who we couldn’t have run the month without: GUVMA, our Peer Support Group, SAVMA, The University of Glasgow School of Veterinary Medicine - especially the University staff, who were a huge support and without their help the campaign would not have been possible, Vets4Pets & Companion Care, AVS, BVA, SPVS, MediVet, DMS Plus Ltd., Burns Pet Nutrition Ltd., with freebies sent from Vetlife, RCVS Mind Matters Initiative and Tunnocks!

The STV clip can be viewed at http://player.stv.tv/video/4g1h/live-five/day-in-the-life-of-a-vet/
Vetlife’s JustGiving page can be found: https://www.justgiving.com/vetlife
VetLife’s 24 hour helpline can be reached on 0303 040 2551 and their website (www.vetlife.co.uk)

Some of our favourite motivational quotes:
"We’re all in this together! - Troy Bolton, High School Musical"
"D is for Degree, you only NEED to know half, 50% is a pass....now that’s much more manageable already!"
"ALWAYS speak to someone, everyone is in the same boat and feels the same way!"
"You’re not alone! Expressing stress is not Weakness!"
"Vet students stick together!"
"Just do your best and the rest will fall into place!"
"Vet School is a family and everyone will help you through!"
"You have made it through every bad day so far, you will make it through the rest!"
"Take a day and get away from vet school. Go for a hike, see a movie, read a book that has nothing to do with school"
"Reset and remember taking a break doesn’t mean you wasted a day!"
"Believe in yourself, You got this!"