

Policy Paper on face to face career guidance

Career guidance at schools refers to services and activities intended to assist students in making educational and occupational choices and to manage their future careers.^{1,2} The importance of career guidance and information at all levels of education has become of great importance worldwide as societies prepare to face new challenges in the future.^{2,3} Providing various educational opportunities for students to learn about nontraditional job opportunities in veterinary medicine helps students make informed decisions about their future jobs or further education.² Educating students about career options also enables them to strategically expand their career management skills, thus allowing the educational system to meet its goal of preparing students to be productive members of society.^{2,4,5} Career guidance can also assist in reducing unemployment numbers by helping young people find a profession that suits them best or by encouraging them to follow alternative jobs in veterinary medicine.^{4,5}

Although much information about professions and career management is currently available online, this information is unfortunately not accessible to a significant amount of people who might greatly benefit from it.² In many developing countries for instance, schools are not equipped with an internet connection and/or students cannot afford an internet connection of their own. Students in this situation thus cannot access the necessary resources to educate themselves about all of their career options. However, even if they can, the quality of what they find can in no way be assured. The abundance of unchecked material available online can easily lead to misinformation. Actual correct information on the other hand, tends to be very general and mostly lacks individually tailored quality necessary for proper career guidance. This is why face to face career guidance remains very essential: it not only helps give all students access to trustworthy resources, but also gives them the opportunity to interpret those resources properly and choose a profession using the best, individually applicable assistance available.

There is a general consensus on the international level that proper career guidance is lacking at most schools.² There are no basic standards in place and therefore most career guidance is performed by untrained people instead of career counsellors.^{1,2} Especially when it comes to veterinary medicine, this lack of proper guidance can lead to problematic misinformation. This is because, unfortunately, the general public is still not fully aware of the scope of veterinary medicine or the amount of career opportunities a person holding a veterinary degree has. The result is that most students don't become aware of this until they start studying veterinary medicine. However, it also means that there are students, who might excel within veterinary medicine, choosing not to study this subject because they have an incorrect idea of what the profession entails. This example emphasizes the need for proper career guidance, not only with regards to the veterinary profession, but to all professions.

The introduction of properly trained career counselors in schools would solve many problems. However, with education itself being substandard in many countries and no approved training protocols in place, proper training of counselors is currently

not possible in every country. Until education systems are in place in which career guidance can be introduced without any problems, IVSA calls on all veterinary students and veterinarians to support the profession by visiting both primary and secondary schools to spread knowledge and guidance. IVSA also strongly supports schools organizing excursions to the nearest University of Veterinary Medicine, so that young students can become acquainted with veterinary schools and their facilities. Actions such as these will not only ensure the spread of correct information amongst students, but will also help tackle other issues raised above, such as public awareness about the scope of veterinary medicine.



Cited articles:

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