

P-06-1291 Hold an enquiry into the corporate takeover of the veterinary profession in Wales, Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 31.12.22

To the Chair and Members of the Petitions Committee of Senedd Cymru.

Petition P-06-1291 Hold an enquiry into the corporate takeover of the veterinary profession in Cymru.

I would like to thank you for having the above petition on your agenda today and asking me to comment.

Correspondence from the Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee.

I wish to thank the Members of the Committee for considering my petition and their Chair Paul Davies MS for his correspondence. I value Paul's honesty and I understand completely in regards to the time frame. However as many Members know the matters I raise are also being compounded by the cost of living crisis . So I feel animals welfare together with the wellbeing of their owners is being seriously impacted. I would like a meeting with Paul to discuss these matters directly.

**Professor Noel Fitzpatrick
MVB DSc (Hon) DUniv Cert SAO CertVR DipACVSMR DipECVSMR DSAS (Orth)
MRCVS**

Some Members may be aware of Noel's work in Fitzpatrick Referrals which is the only remaining independently run referral practice of his discipline the UK. Noel and his team treat patients from all over the world including Wales. Like many in his profession he has expressed concern though the years in regards to the corporate equity shareholder companys. Recently he has gone on record stating his profession "is at a crossroads ".

Below I have **paraphrased** Professor Noel Fitzpatrick from his recent publication Beyond Supervet.

" My issue isn't with the individuals within the system, but rather with the system itself. But I feel strongly that corporate entities should also be authentic in total integrity and transparency about which primary care and specialist referral centres they own .Where there may be a financial vested interest in keeping patients within their groups. The reason there are so many complications I think warrants investigation.

My personal opinion is that there are incentives to keep what are perceived as simpler surgeries "in house", and to have them performed by less experienced (and thus less expensive) surgeons. In my experience, most clients do not know this and are not always being offered a full range of options, due to financial imperatives. This may seem like a damning and uncalled for incitement of lack of authenticity in my profession, but if an investigation of fact is warranted, I have spreadsheets of cases to demonstrate that this is my factually evidenced personal experience in scores of patients. In the past year alone my colleagues and I have seen more than twenty devastating complications after poorly performed surgeries of this kind in general practice.

I am sincerely and profoundly concerned that my profession is ignoring shoddy surgical technique performed by inexperienced vets without appropriate in-depth training and with suboptimal implants because they have a vested interest in monetary gain. It seems *wrong* to me, from a perspective of consumer choice and patient well-being, that a client should only have access to a very limited number of referral centres that are owned by the same company that owns your local vets.

I worry that animals, and indeed love itself, are being com-modified. I have seen dogs and cats referred to in paperwork as "RGUs" (revenue generating units). This terminology for our patients is anathema to me. Many of the corporate groups also have as part of their portfolio crematoria, own-brand drugs, online pharmacies, laboratories, out-of-hours surgeries, locum agencies, and online or retail shops which they can market to the human families of their RGUs over their lifetimes. This is good business, but is it transparent?

I worry that the principles I hold so dear will fade away within a generation. "
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During October and November Professor Fitzpatrick embarked on a tour of the Republic of Ireland and the UK. During which in venues containing thousands of people he briefly explained his concerns from the angle of animal welfare the impact the private equity shareholder companies are having on his beloved profession. I went to see him in Cardiff and also had the privilege to meet him in Manchester. Where I was able to tell him about our CIC (Community interest Group) venture Rosa's Milfeddygon Symudol- Mobile Vets Ynys Môn.

Professor Fitzpatrick's observations above are the reason I intend to travel to our Senedd for your meeting to sit in the public gallery.

Next steps.

I am organising an event in the Senedd's Oriel on Wednesday 21st June between 11-12. An invitation will be extended to all Senedd Cymru Members so that they can learn directly from rescues, animal welfare groups, veterinary professionals and companion animals families the impact on animal welfare the present situation is having.

I have requested a meeting with your Chair Jack Sargeant MS as I know Jack will want to have the opportunity to fully understand the situation.

I would like to meet with Lesley Griffiths MS in her capacity as Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd.

I would like to meet with Dr Richard Irvine the Welsh Government's new Chief Veterinary Officer. As our previous CVO expressed her concerns in regards to the situation and stated that it was being closely monitored. I would like to ensure this is still the case.

Once again I would like to thank the support staff of the Petitions Committee and yourselves for your consideration of this matter. As always if I can assist you further I will endeavour to do so.

Cofion Cynnes Dr Linda Joyce-Jones.

Ynys Môn Cymru 1/01/2023 .

1: Beyond Supervet- How animals make us the best we can be Noel Fitzpatrick .
Orion books 2022.