

# Mixed methods study investigating the effect of veterinary experiences prior to and during veterinary school on job satisfaction in mixed practice

**P. M. Gibbons**, BVetMed(Hons), DACVIM DipVetEd; **J. Roberson**, DVM, PhD, DACVIM; **S. Robertson**, DVM; **R. Pierce**, DVM, DACVS; **K. Fogelberg**, DVM, PhD  
College of Veterinary Medicine, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, TN 37752

## Introduction

Factors attributing to the high veterinary attrition rate are numerous, but previous studies have focused primarily on small animal veterinarians.

## Materials and Methods

Veterinarians within 5 years of graduation who entered mixed practice (MP) were recruited to complete an online survey covering their veterinary experiences prior to and during veterinary school, and any challenges faced in MP. Survey results were analyzed quantitatively. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted and qualitative analysis is ongoing.

## Results

Out of 40 responses, 7 reported no longer being in MP. Four left MP between 1 and 2 years. In total, 85% worked in a clinical setting prior to veterinary school, 45% had 9+ weeks unpaid practice experience, and 38% and 50%

reported 9+ weeks externships prior to, and during, clinical year, respectively. Only 7.8% reported employment where they worked prior to/during veterinary school, whereas 50% were employed where they completed an externship. There was no significant difference between veterinarians still in MP and those who left. The challenges of “on call”, “working more hours than scheduled”, and “financial issues” were most frequently reported. Overall, 80% of respondents reported being satisfied with their career choice; 60% reported that unpaid and 67.5% reported that paid experiences prior to veterinary school prepared them for practice; and 85% reported that externships prepared them for life in practice.

## Significance

Challenges faced by MP do not differ substantially from those reported by other studies. Veterinarians value paid veterinary experiences and externships in preparing them for MP.