

0:00:04.6 Katie Berlin: Dr. Addie Reinhard, thank you so much for joining us.

0:00:06.7 Addie Reinhard: Thanks for having me. It's good to be here.

0:00:08.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah, you're speaking this week, and you are up to all sorts of amazing things outside of speaking at conferences. So would you mind just telling us a little bit about what you're doing right now?

0:00:20.1 Addie Reinhard: Yeah. So I guess relevant would be kind of my story of how I got here, maybe to this conference, even.

0:00:27.5 Katie Berlin: I love that.

0:00:27.6 Addie Reinhard: I'm a 2015 grad from University of Tennessee, practiced small animal in the Lexington, Kentucky region for around four years. And in my early career, I have already experienced pretty severe burnout twice, so once at about eight months out and once at again about three years out, and I think through those experiences really recognized how important it is to have good mentorship and support. And fortunately, I did have good mentors and out of my practices that could help me through those really tough moments. But starting to talk more openly about my burnout, I realized that a lot of my other classmates were going through very similar things and really saw this gap in resources for early career vets.

0:01:11.0 Addie Reinhard: And so wanted to really create something that would provide a resource to all early career professionals as they're transitioning into practice and just give them a little bit of a soft landing as they're entering in practice. And so I actually quit my full-time job back in 2019, went back to school at University of Kentucky, I got my Master's in Community and Leadership Development. And I spent two years researching veterinary well-being and specifically the transition to practice and what causes stress in the transition to practice. And then we piloted the first iteration of MentorVet in the summer of 2020, so right as the pandemic is starting, got some really amazing research results from the pilot. One of my research mentors, Elizabeth Strand, connected me with leaders at Merck Animal Health, they found out about what we were doing with MentorVet and wanted to help support it in whatever way possible, so they became a founding sponsor in the spring of 2021, and from there have just been helping us grow and expand MentorVet to reach more and more early career vets.

0:02:14.1 Addie Reinhard: So in our first large cohort last fall, we had about 75 vets go through our program, the spring, 140, and then this fall, we have about 200 vets going through our six-month mentorship program. So super excited to see it grow and expand and help more vets. So that's kind of my full-time gig now is running the MentorVet program, I'm the founder and CEO, so I do a lot of program maintenance and doing things like this, speaking at Connexity and exhibiting, and I also do a lot of well-being research. So I'm on the research team for the Merck Animal Health veterinary wellbeing study. So we released those results earlier this year, which is really exciting. And yeah, it's just been really wonderful to get in the space of helping others in the profession. So that's a little bit about me. As we're looking forward to the future of MentorVet, it's really exciting to see this intervention help support early career vets, so we're also looking at other areas of support for other life stages of the veterinarians as well as the veterinary team.

0:03:22.1 Katie Berlin: That is a lot packed into one short bio.

[laughter]

0:03:27.9 Addie Reinhard: How did I do on time?

0:03:30.2 Katie Berlin: And one short career so far in Vet Med for you to have done all of that since you graduated and to have so much more in mind for the future is pretty inspiring. And I was wondering, because we're at Connexity right now, and the theme this year is, Create a Better World. And I have a feeling you just told us a lot of the things that you're already doing to Create a Better World, but what does a better world in Vet Med look like to you?

0:03:56.1 Addie Reinhard: Yeah, I think right now recently, we've had a growing concern about mental health challenges in the profession. I don't think they're brand new issues, I think they're just now coming to light because people are being more open about talking about mental health, which is fantastic, and we're starting to break down some of those stigmas. And knowing that, I also see that we have a big opportunity for growth in the mental health and well-being space, to create a profession in which any veterinarian or veterinary team member can have a sustainable career in this profession. And I think that for me, a sustainable career, it just means that you can find joy and passion in your career as well as find a space that's very inclusive to everyone. And so I think really looking at veterinary medicine as we go forward, I just hope that we can continue to create healthier workplaces, healthier communities and just communities of support where we all support one another in this sometimes challenging career. And it's always gonna be stressful, that's Vet Med. So learning how we can make it through the day, have the right resources and support, and having the people there to support you as you go forward in the career. So that's a big part of what we do is just helping people be able to help themselves and others.

0:05:28.4 Katie Berlin: I love it. I think you're already doing a lot to make that better world happen, and you really have started a movement. Mentorship is something that is a hot topic, it's a buzzword right now, people are really interested in talking about mentorship. And I think you're a large part of that because when I graduated in '09, no one was talking about that, at least not that I heard. And part of that is that social media has really taken off since then, we weren't connecting on Facebook then like we are now and through other channels. But I'm really so impressed with how you've managed to really start a movement. And I was wondering how you feel about that? What do you think was that factor, the turning point where things really took off? Was it because you have master's now? Was it because you had connections to the right people? Was there a magic formula that had that take off? Or do you feel like starting a movement, being a movement maker is something that other people can do in this profession, no matter where they're coming from?

0:06:35.3 Addie Reinhard: Yeah, first, thank you. That was very touching and just... Yeah, it's often overwhelming in a really beautiful way to see this happening. And I think what I'm seeing, before I address your question, is we are changing the definition of what mentorship means. So traditionally, when we think about mentorship in Vet Med, it's been a very clinical focus and learning from a more experienced vet, getting more confident with your medicine. And I think what we're seeing is we now need more in different areas, so mentorship and support, and maybe that looks like emotional support, or maybe that mentorship and support looks like helping you learn how to better navigate conflict with clients and your team, and... So I think the definition of mentorship in Vet Med is completely changing to something new and different, and I attribute a lot of my own success to the mentors that I've had along the way.

0:07:44.6 Addie Reinhard: And so I think back on, there's been a few different moments of MentorVet that have been really points at which I could have stopped and not kept going. And I remember the first day of my grad school program, one of my research mentors, they said, "Come with some ideas of what you wanna work on during your two years here at UK for your research project, for your thesis." And so they're like, "Come with three ideas." So I had a list of my ideas, and one of those was creating a mentorship, a national mentorship program for young vets. I remember telling her the idea and she said... I said, "Do you wanna hear the next two ideas?" She's like, "Stop." She's like, "Stop. We're gonna do that thing, you have no clue yet, but this is gonna be so successful, this is gonna help so many people." And so just having that confidence in me to really push me forward with that vision, and then just giving me the resources and support that I needed to create this thing.

0:08:51.1 Addie Reinhard: And then the other mentors along the way, so Elizabeth Strand connecting me with Merck Animal Health, and then the leaders at Merck, I didn't even know at the time, I was looking for jobs, and I was like, "Oh, MentorVet can be a side thing," and the leaders at Merck, I remember Christine Royal and Judson Vasconcelos, I presented my research and the presentation was good. I look back at the slides, I'm like, "Woah, those don't look great," but they saw...

0:09:19.6 Katie Berlin: You have to start somewhere.

0:09:19.7 Addie Reinhard: Yeah, we all have to start somewhere. But they saw and recognized in me and in MentorVet and just had this belief of what the world could be from my vision and what I described, and so they said again, "You don't know how successful this is gonna be, but we're gonna help you get there." And even over the past year of just growing this thing, and I didn't take any formal business training, so being a CEO, that feels like a big deal. And so along the way, all the lessons learned on how to be an entrepreneur and how to grow something, I just attribute so much of it of being able for me to reach out for help and get that support from others. Which is so fitting right, because I'm doing this thing where we're building mentorship and connections, and the only way that this would have happened is for me to have mentors and supporters.

0:10:13.6 Addie Reinhard: And so it's just been really, really amazing to see. So, to answer your question, I think that anyone has the power to start a movement, and I think a big piece of that is not being afraid to ask for help along the way, because there's a lot of things that you won't know as you're going forward. And then also, yeah, just having the vision and being able to articulate what you see the world being. And if you can get good at that, then people can stand behind what you see the world to be.

0:10:54.0 Katie Berlin: That's fantastic. There are so many pieces to that, but there's the theme through that story is that you saw a need in the profession and you said, "Why couldn't I be the one to start this conversation in a different way than we've been having it?" And that takes a lot of guts, to just say, "I think I kinda wanna tackle this problem." And you did have support from people who saw how important that idea was and how much there was a need for it, but to just open your mouth and say that. I mean, obviously, it hadn't been something someone else said or it would have happened, and that's brave and also very honest and saying, "I don't know how I'm gonna do this. But I think we should do it." And asking for help is also brave. So I think you should get a lot of credit for that, even though you've had support, like you were the one who said, "This is something

I needed, and if I needed it, other people need it too." And you're so right about that.

0:11:56.0 Addie Reinhard: Yeah. It's been really just fascinating to see how creating these structures for mentorship and support can just help so many people. And seeing how much my own mentors continue to help me as I grow this, and so it's been really, really amazing to see not only my journey, but then also all the mentees who go through our community, and we're up to, I think, almost 400 people in our community, and just... We have a growing community of about 150 mentors and people who have been through the program, people who are currently in the program, and I just look up and I'm like, "It's been a year." And to see this just blossom. And so it's really exciting also to see how far we've come in a year, and then knowing how far we'll go in the next year, and just some really exciting things coming up for us.

0:12:54.2 Katie Berlin: I feel like sometimes people put a lot of pressure on the recent grad or the person who needs that support to ask for it and to say, "I need you to be my mentor, I need your help." But it can be really hard to say that because you don't know if the person you're talking to is gonna be receptive, and if you work for that person or with that person, it could be a little bit uncomfortable. So I feel like a lot of the onus is on the more experienced people to offer that assistance and to say, "I'm here for you. What can I do for you if you want help?" So say there is a practice, somebody's listening and they're saying, "Okay, I kinda wanna be that person for somebody on my team." What's that first step? How do you offer yourself as a mentor, as a more experienced professional to somebody who you see needs a little bit of that support or you see something you wanna nurture in them?

0:13:45.0 Addie Reinhard: I love that question, and I think it's a lot about just being there and being present and showing up, and just being really open and willing to be someone's mentor. And I think you can't make anyone ask for help, and that's a lesson that's kind of hard to learn and something that I've had to learn along the way. Because we might have people sign up for the MentorVet program and then they drop out within the first month, a pretty low rate. But those are the people that need it the most. The ones that feel overwhelmed and stressed. But I think for me, when I'm thinking about the best mentors that I've had and them reaching out to me, it's been people who just show up and they're there every day and they're willing to answer questions. And I think that once you start building that trust in that relationship, then it might just be a matter of asking, "Hey, can I be your mentor?" And setting up some formal structures around, "What does that look like? Do we meet once a month? How do I help you? What do you need?" So yes, I think it's just a matter of showing up and then asking.

0:15:04.4 Katie Berlin: I love that. You can't expect that somebody knows exactly what they need, so those regular check-ins are really helpful.

0:15:11.2 Addie Reinhard: Yeah, definitely. And yes, I think that not only is mentorship within practices important, but also starting to grow out our definition of mentorship and having multiple mentors, so having a mentor in your practice, but then also having somebody outside your practice that maybe you can talk to about... As a third party, so maybe you can talk about things that are happening at work and not have the risk of repercussions. And so I think being willing to accept that help as a mentee is also very important and as a mentor, searching for mentees outside of your practice. And MentorVet always need more mentors, so if there are people out there listening that are interested in mentoring and maybe don't have somebody in their practice that they can mentor, we have plenty of vets who need support and who are asking for it, so yeah, just check us out.

0:16:08.3 Katie Berlin: I love it. And we'll make sure that you know where to do that too if you're watching or listening. So, Dr Addie Reinhard, thank you so much for stopping by and looking forward to your presentations this week and having you hear at Connexity and thank you so much for all the work you're doing. You really are making Vet Med a better place and I just can't wait to see what you do next.

0:16:29.0 Addie Reinhard: Thank you so much for having me. It was a great chat.