

Its ok..NOT to be ok...

.....*Lets Talk COVID-19*



On Wednesday 11 March, the WHO declared Covid-19 had become a pandemic and recent government advice has led to a huge impact on businesses and personal lives.

Most businesses are operating their business continuity plans and workers are being told to work from home where possible...for animal technologists this is not an option.

As Animal Technologists, our main aim is the health and welfare of animals, priding ourselves on providing the highest possible standards. Tirelessly, we work 365 days a year including some very long shifts.

Schedule 1 culling of animals, (at the end of a study or when an animal suffers adverse effects) is part of the role of an animal tech. This is a necessity that we conduct, but this can have a detrimental impact on our own health and well being. Animal technicians offset this by understanding the human health benefits of using animals for research, which can sometimes relieve this slightly.

The one thing that is crucial to remember during these difficult times is, we believe in the necessity of research, specifically animal research, for the benefit of human society, that is why we are animal technicians and, at times like this, we rely on animals the most! At present, animals are playing a vital role in developing a vaccine against this horrible virus, and your input is as important, and the IAT are here to support you!

As a professional body, the IAT are looking at ways to develop and support the Mental Health of animal technologists and this is one of the times that this support is absolutely essential! We need your input to ensure we have the right support networks and processes in place.

We intend to send a survey around shortly, regarding Mental Health and whilst carrying out your role, the pressures you experience, and then develop a strategy based on responses.. We need to ensure that the correct support is in place as an industry. This something we were hoping to address at AST 2020 and something we are now looking at separately

In the mean time , during these uncertain times, please be aware that you are not alone in what you are experiencing. Our industry is large and there will be other people experiencing the same feelings of frustration, anxiety and personal isolation as you may currently feel.

It is important to stay connected and positive during this period. A few suggestions to manage this time are below:

- Stay Connected (social media, skype, calls, etc..)
- Manage how you follow the outbreak in the media- take a health balance
- During staff communal times communicate with colleagues
- Volunteer for local food bank drop offs and help neighbours and friends
- Join ` Isolation' app groups
- Clean out your wardrobe
- Garden
- Give yourself a manicure
- Play games
- Call friends, Bake cakes
- Take plenty of exercise

Most importantly you are not alone, and in this unprecedented time its quite common to have feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. If you need further support , please do not feel unable to access this. There are systems in place to help you, you can talk to your line manager, colleagues, mental health first aiders in your establishment, Occupational Health, and friends and family. There are organisations with online access set up to support Mental Health:

Mind.org.uk, nhs/mental health advice among other charities and counselling services so please do not feel alone during this time of uncertainly and unpredictability.

