Could a new app spark change in the veterinary market?

The introduction of a first-of-its-kind veterinary app for cat and dog owners may disrupt practice as we know it

**SARAH WARREN**
Sarah is a veterinary dermatologist with 20 years of clinical experience and is currently President of the British Veterinary Dermatology Study Group. She’s a key opinion leader for 10 leading pharmaceutical companies and highly experienced in CPD provision and postgraduate teaching in dermatology.

**PAUL HALLETT**
Paul has built a successful marketing agency where he led global marketing campaigns for renowned brands. He gained significant experience in med-tech, having worked at board level with Ash Patel (ex-Babylon Health) and Rich Mills (ex-Google).

**ROBERT DAWSON**
Robert is a vet with 28 years of clinical experience. He spent 25 years in Highcroft vets, helping to make it the largest veterinary group in the South West. Since co-founding Vet AI in January 2018, he has been fully immersed in exploring the potential of technology to improve animals’ lives.  

**V**e**terinary Practice** magazine spoke to co-founders of Vet AI, Paul Hallett, Sarah Warren and Robert Dawson, about the development of the new pet health app, Joii. Launching in April 2019, the app is designed to give pet owners access to vets without having to visit a practice.

The app will be a cost-effective means to allow the many pets in the UK that are not registered with a vet professional to receive advice and care. The team plans to introduce artificial intelligence to detect and predict conditions in pets and envisions positive changes to the work/life balance of veterinary professionals.

**How will the app work?**
**RD** The app will give owners access to free veterinary advice in the form of a triage process that’s been written by our own veterinary team in conjunction with vets from pharmaceutical companies.

The triage process will tell them whether they need to go and see a vet, whether it’s a problem that they don’t really need to worry about, just keep an eye on, or if it’s something that we can deal with in the form of a remote veterinary consult. If our triage process advises a remote consultation when the pet has a problem that requires a visit to a veterinary practice, they will not be charged for the remote consult.

**SW** We’re focusing on dermatology at launch; we know that’s beautifully aligned with remote consultation, because it’s such a visual disease. When we were designing the app and the triage process, we collaborated with some European veterinary specialists and took part in a feasibility study. It proved that remote consultation for dermatology cases was just as accurate in providing differential diagnoses as it is in clinic.

**What are the main aims for the app?**
**RD** The idea behind the app is to try and bridge that gap between Google and veterinary practice; almost everyone goes to the internet to try to find out what a problem is first, unless it’s an absolute emergency. We’re trying to engage people with the veterinary profession at the earliest possible stage.

**PH** We’re finding that more and more people are avoiding the vets because of price. And that ultimately is an animal welfare issue. We feel that by providing this service, we’ll have an impact on animal welfare.

**INNOVATION**

We’re trying to engage people with the veterinary profession at the earliest possible stage

**RD** The bigger picture is that we’re going to be recording the data we get from people entering problems into the app and from the veterinary consultations in a structured way. It will give us insights into pet diseases and health that haven’t been available before. Our ultimate goal is to have a system where we can increasingly predict disease and inform owners on how to prevent the disease rather than waiting for it to come along.

**If the triage is free for the client, how is the app financed?**
**PH** We will sell products and do tele-consults straight away. But the bigger picture is to work with the large pharmaceutical companies and help them reduce spends on drug trials and improve medication – things like that. I think we’ll be able to leverage our data when it becomes significant enough.