



WSAVA
Global Pain Council

Press Information

23 August 2016

WSAVA Online Petition to Secure Access to Ketamine Targets Next Milestone

An online petition set up by the [Worldwide Small Animal Veterinary Association](http://www.wsavaveterinary.org) (WSAVA) as part of a campaign to secure access to ketamine as an essential veterinary medicine has secured more than 11,300 signatures - with 15,000 the next milestone. The WSAVA is calling on veterinarians around the world and anyone with an interest in veterinary – and human – medicine to sign the petition to ensure access to ketamine in the face of lobbying by some countries, principally China, to have it put under international scheduling.

According to the WSAVA, proposals for international control stem from the misconception that ketamine is merely a 'recreational drug.' The WSAVA says this is inaccurate and devalues its huge contribution to human and animal medicine. Dr Walt Ingwersen, WSAVA President Elect and Member of the WSAVA's Global Pain Council, explains: "In 2015, the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD) stated that the abuse of ketamine does not cause a global public health threat and that control would limit access for those using it as an anaesthetic. This view was confirmed at a meeting of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2016, helped by strong support view from the global medical and veterinary communities. However, China has repeated its view that ketamine should fall under international scheduling and we have no doubt that it will raise the issue again. This mean the risk to ketamine remains."

He added: "Ketamine is a safe anaesthetic which can be used without oxygen, ventilators, electricity and the support systems required for other products, making it the only anaesthetic suitable for both medical and veterinary use in lower and middle income

countries. If developing countries were denied access to it, which would be the effect of international scheduling, the effects on veterinary medicine, human health and animal welfare would be devastating.”

Dr Ganga de Silva, President of the Society of Companion Animal Practitioners of Sri Lanka, said: “Sri Lanka is a poor country with an underdeveloped veterinary profession. If ketamine was not available, in my opinion, all surgeries would have to cease as almost all of the veterinarians in the country rely on it for anaesthesia. The result would be suffering for animals and it would also seriously impact our ability to control rabies as we would not be able to carry out spay and neuter programs on stray dogs.”

Dr Nancy Shaffran CVT, VTS(ECC), President of the [International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management](#), said: “In addition to its use as an anaesthetic agent, ketamine is a critical medication used in the pain management in animals. The mechanism of action of ketamine (NMDA receptor antagonism) delivered as a Constant Rate Infusion has been well established to be effective in the prevention and correction of severe neuropathic pain and spinal cord wind-up. The loss of ketamine in veterinary practice would result in the needless suffering of many patients and we strongly oppose this action. We are very grateful for WSAVA’s efforts to keep ketamine available for our patients.”

Dr Walt Ingwersen added: “Ketamine is also used in human medicine as it has a particular value for use 'in the field' - for instance, in treating trauma patients, those with traffic and sporting injuries or affected by natural disasters and conflict. Taking these factors together, it is clear that ketamine is an essential medicine and we are determined to ensure that it remains freely available. We are continuing to harness our global veterinary community to highlight the importance of ketamine because this is a battle our patients can’t afford us to lose. We ask all those agreeing with to sign our petition and help our collective voice grow.”

The petition is here: <http://chn.ge/1RFSou6>.

The WSAVA’s Global Pain Council has produced a range of tools and resources, including an infographic, to support its ketamine campaign. They can be accessed here:

<http://www.wsava.org/educational/global-pain-council>

Note to editors:

The WSAVA is an umbrella organisation focused on enhancing the clinical care of companion animals around the world. It represents more than 160,000 veterinarians

globally through 94 member associations. Set up in response to the challenges faced by the profession in diagnosing and managing pain in small animals around the world, the WSAVA's Global Pain Council works to raise global standards of pain management.

For further information:

Rebecca George, George PR, Tel: 01449 737281/07974 161108