



World Organisation  
for Animal Health

# **SKETCHING CHANGE**

**TALES FROM VETERINARIANS ACROSS ASIA-PACIFIC**



**THE HEALERS**



Scan the QR code to access the comic stories in this publication in digital format, and to read several others.

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# ABOUT THIS VOLUME

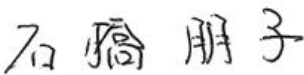
The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) is committed to strengthening gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) within the veterinary sector. Our recent work in Asia and the Pacific has shown that, while there is a growing number of qualified women and diverse professionals in the sector, many still face barriers shaped by longstanding norms, insufficient adjustments and unequal opportunities.

As noted in regional studies conducted by WOAH in Asia-Pacific, gender stereotypes influence perceptions within the veterinary sector, and the absence of reasonable accommodations reinforces the exclusion of persons with disabilities. These findings highlight the need for continued awareness and action across institutions, training systems, and professional communities.

To foster this change, WOAH has expanded its GEDSI initiatives, including awareness raising events and partnerships with veterinary associations and networks in Asia and the Pacific region, in particular the Federation of Asian Veterinary Associations (FAVA), the Asian Association of Veterinary Schools (AAVS) and the International Veterinary Students' Association (IVSA). The Comics Competition Promoting GEDSI in the Veterinary Sector, organised between December 2025 and January 2026, invited veterinary students and professionals to reflect creatively on what an inclusive profession looks like.

The competition aimed to celebrate storytelling, artistic talent, veterinary commitment and GEDSI values, and to inspire dialogue through accessible and engaging narratives. Among the winning submissions, the comic presented here captures the imagination, concerns, and aspirations of veterinarians in different parts of the Asia and the Pacific region. The story reminds us that inclusion is not only a policy goal—it is a shared cultural commitment that strengthens the profession and the communities it serves. While we could not award all participants with prizes, we appreciated all entries and will be sharing additional comic stories of note on our website (see QR code on the cover inner page).

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the winners of this competition, and thank all participants for adding their voices to this important conversation. This comic enriches WOAH's ongoing efforts to promote a veterinary sector where everyone can thrive, advancing our mission to improve animal health and welfare globally and ensure a better future for all.



**Dr Tomoko Ishibashi**  
*WOAH Regional Representative  
for Asia and the Pacific*



**Dr Naree Ketusing**  
*WOAH Sub-Regional Representative  
for South-East Asia*





If healing in veterinary medicine can take many forms,




then healers can too.



# THE HEALERS






the day I had always  
feared finally came


CHIEF ROOM  
DRH SARAH



my worst nightmare

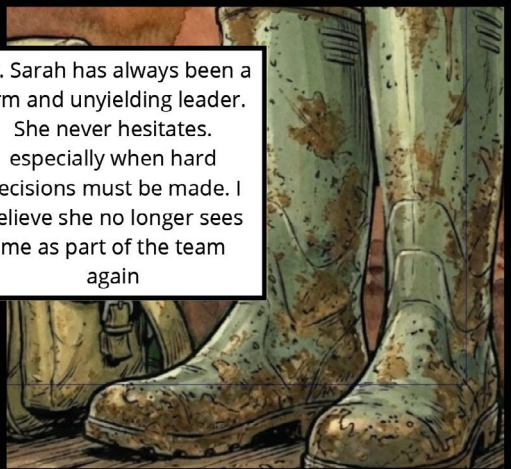


I can no longer work as a  
wildlife veterinarian.



this is my dream job  
since I was a student

now that I'm no  
longer useful, Dr.  
Sarah called me in  
her office to talk



Dr. Sarah has always been a  
firm and unyielding leader.  
She never hesitates.  
especially when hard  
decisions must be made. I  
believe she no longer sees  
me as part of the team  
again

It seems I was right.

PERFORMANCE  
REVIEW

I kind of miss those old days

2 years ago

We went deep into the forest to release birds back into the wild after it injured

I hope they won't be hunted again. There aren't many of them left in this forest.

yes,

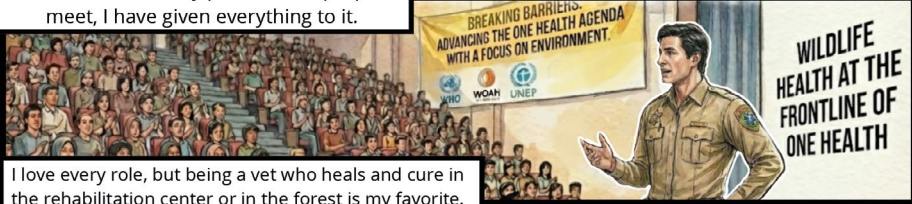
For some species, this might be one of the last chances. You treated the bird very well, Doctor. Look he can fly freely again



*Buceros bicornis* (Great Hornbill). Vulnerable.  
Any inaccuracies are unintentional. Corrections are welcome.

*Nisaetus bartelsi* (Javan Hawk-Eagle). Endangered

This field is where my passion and purpose meet, I have given everything to it.

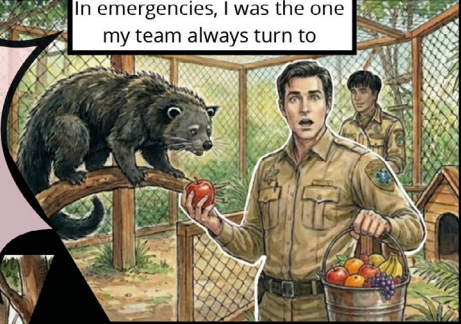


I love every role, but being a vet who heals and cure in the rehabilitation center or in the forest is my favorite.

In emergencies, I was the one my team always turn to



Doc Dimas! We need to move fast. The forest rangers reported that a Sumatran tiger has entered a village and is being attacked by locals, bleeding heavily. If we don't act quickly, we could lose it



*Arctictis binturong* (Binturong / Bearcat). Vulnerable  
Any inaccuracies are unintentional. Corrections are welcome.



together we healed and saved countless animal lives



*Pongo spp.* (Orangutan)  
Critically Endangered

*Panthera tigris sumatrae* (Sumatran Tiger). Critically Endangered

In healing them, I found my purpose



*Rhinoceros sondaicus* (Javan Rhinoceros). Critically Endangered  
Any inaccuracies are unintentional. Corrections are welcome.



*Elephas maximus sumatranus* (Sumatran Elephant). Endangered

A couple of months after the Sumatran tiger had recovered, I led another mission.



Doc Dimas, the tiger has been sedated. It should fall asleep within a few minutes. The helicopter and the team are ready to relocate it to a safer forest area. Dr. Sarah has chosen you to lead this release mission.

okay, i will prepare and checked the tiger condition now



everything was under control, the tiger was released safely



mayday! mayday!

We're losing stability! Unstable airflow

**SEVERE  
TURBULANCE!  
HOLD TIGHT!!**

After that, everything went blank. The moment still hurts



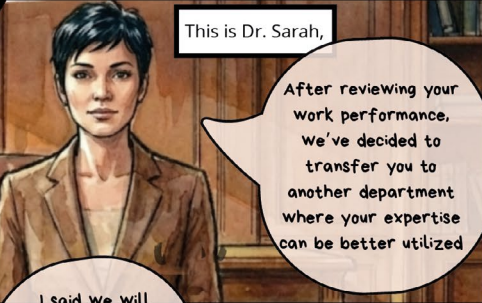
During our departure from the release site, we were forced to fly low over the dense tropical forest again due to strong winds and poor visibility at higher altitudes. Even though the cage was empty, we maintained a low flight to minimize instability. However, navigating so close to the canopy created unpredictable airflow. Combined with worsening weather conditions, severe turbulence violently shook the helicopter. We managed to land, but the impact left me physically shaken.



The doctor said my spine was broken, causing a fracture at T9 and leaving me paraplegic. I'm now paralyzed from the waist down, completely reliant on a wheelchair. I can no longer move as freely as before, and I can't heal and cure for animals the way I used to, neither. Everything feels limited, i feel useless as a vet. this wheelchair makes me feel useless



there you are Dimas, we need a quick talk



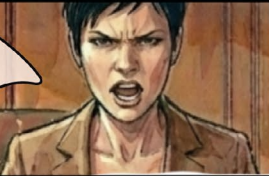
This is Dr. Sarah,

After reviewing your work performance, We've decided to transfer you to another department where your expertise can be better utilized

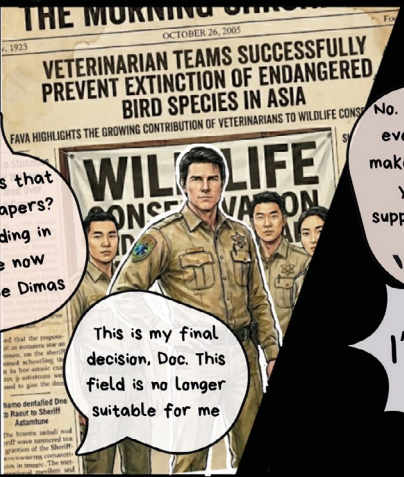


Resignation letter

I said we will transfer you to another department where your expertise can be better utilized. im not accepting your resignation.




Where is Dimas that I see in newspapers? the one standing in front of me now isn't the same Dimas



This is my final decision, Doc. This field is no longer suitable for me

No. This field is suitable for everyone. We just need to make a few adjustments for your condition. We will support You. You need to try again, Di...

I'VE TRIED!




I've tried, but I still I can't examine them, Doc. I can't heal and cure them. All I do now is paperwork. administrative tasks. What is that even for?. Am I still a doctor?. Am I a veterinarian?

No need to use that, Doc Dimas. Please stay in the safe area we'll keep you informed


I accept my limitations. I understand that a tropical rainforest is not built for a wheelchair. But losing access to the forest was not the only loss. I couldn't even conduct basic examinations on those high table exam or let alone perform procedures or surgeries that require a proper exam table. The rehabilitation cage was inaccessible too. narrow doors, uneven ground, steep ramps. The stairs! Losing those acces for someone who loves this work, it hurts.

there is an emergency doc! we need to move fast!




yes I cant even move faster right now, but why you didnt count me in the emergencies again? Deep down, I still want to be part of the team. for someone who once ran ahead and led the way, being left behind cuts deep

Let me help you doc




do you need help doc?

I wanted to be my old self, i wanto help and heals them so badly, but now I've become the one who always needs help. im losing my skill slowly

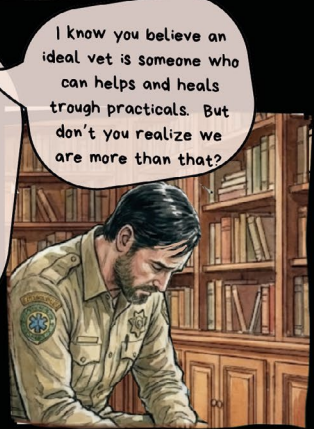


i hate this wheels chair!!

All of this... it's because of this wheelchair."



Don't you remember when you shared those brilliant conservation ideas in our meeting? you are still part of our team. You're not losing your skills, Dimas. You just don't see your other potential.



I know you believe an ideal vet is someone who can helps and heals trough practicals. But don't you realize we are more than that?



I've thought about this for a long time, for you. I was waiting for the right time to say it. I know your deep passion for healing and curing animals through practical always been extraordinary.

she is thinking about me?

I've been thinking have you ever considered working in pet clinic?



After handling exotic and wild animal for so long, maybe this is the time to try something different. exotic pet practice might be more manageable and better suited to your current condition.



How could I forget?

I met an old colleague, Dr. Lee. He's already heard your story, and he'd be more than happy to have you join him at his clinic



Go, Dimas. Face this new field with confidence. I know you'll do great there too



doc...

Why do you keep believing in me?

How could I forget? our most empathetic leader. Even in this condition, she continues to support and still sees the potential in me.



no Dimas, thank you for always being our great team member

thank you Doc.. thank you for always being a great leader



A couple of months later, I began my new journey in exotic pet practice, having prepared my knowledge and skills for this field.

this is Aurora and Doctor Lee

Maybe Dr. Sarah is right. this field is more manageable than being in the wild and conservation field

Doctor Dimas has arrived

Hi, Doctor! I'm Aurora, vet nurse. I'll help you with all of your assessments. you must check your cool adjustable-height desk, Dr. Lee got it just for you!!



I hope this will be a new fresh start

pleasee give us some stories how is it to handle a tiger??

this is Maria, our receptionis, and this is Denis our vet nurse! oh we love to have you here!

our new client!!

CLINGG!!

We have tiger too btw, its white small one her name is Princess hahaha

oh Paula comes too

Hi, I'd like to do Rotxoo's and Paula's monthly check-up. Is Dr. Lee in today?

its Rotxo and her mom! ohh he is a good boy!

come here Rotxoo!!

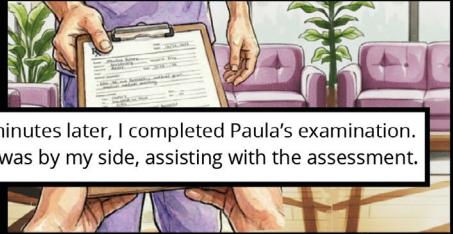
okay miss, please wait there, Let me check for a while

Hello. Rotxo will be checked by Doctor Lee and Paula will be checked with our new doctor today. He's recently joined our clinic and has anoutstanding background in wildlife and conservation medicine.





Rotxo comes first, then Paula



A few minutes later, I completed Paula's examination. Aurora was by my side, assisting with the assessment.



I've done it. I did it! the new exam table is great, i can perform well on that new table

Hey, can I request Doctor Lee for Rotxo's and Paula next examination?

May I ask if there's any issue with our current doctor on Paula Check up, Miss?

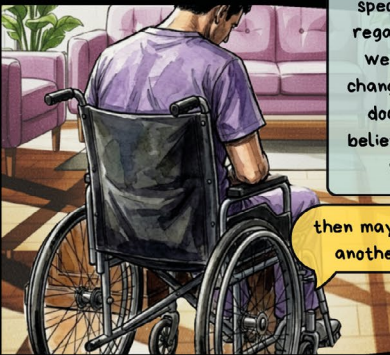
did I do something wrong?

No, no, everything looks fine. I just need someone.. professional.

He is professional, Miss. He has extensive experience, including a strong background exotic and wildlife medicine.



Yes, I heard about that. But I need someone who's... I already trust?



If there's no specific complaint regarding his care, we're unable to change the assigned doctor miss. we believe Paula in the right hand

then maybe i'll just look for another clinic for Paula



doc, there is nothing wrong with you.. you.. its.. its.. its normal.. you.. you dont need to worry

i know, its because of my wheels, right?

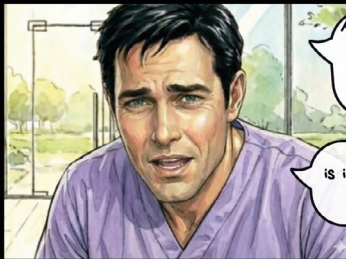


hello dimas, there you are.. Wellcome on your first day. so.. Dr Lee inform me that you have a grat mission in this clinic, this clinic will start their own teleservice, and you will be responsible to handle it! wow!

Maybe this is how they see me now. Not on the ground—but behind a screen.



Aren't they rejecting me because I use a wheelchair?



Am I really that incapable of healing just because I can't stand where I used to?"

is it because of my wheels?

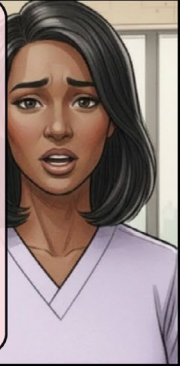
I was trained and learn to heal "if I'm not the one holding the scalpel, then what am I doing here?"

Why they didnt trust me? Am I suddenly less of a doctor because my body no longer looks the way people expect it to?



I understand you believe an ideal vet is someone who help and heals trough procedure.1 But don't you realize we are more than that?. you will still do the exotic pet checks up

There's nothing wrong with you, Doc. This is just one of the challenges in pet clinic practice. you have to earn clients' trust. You have strong skills and a solid background especially in exotic pets. It's your first client, In time, they'll recognize your abilities and trust you more.



Chasing the old you is pointless Dimas. That version is gone And yes, that's painful

you just need to learn again. You were rejected by patients? learn again. because you're not an expert in this field yet. You can't move freely like before? learn again. Learn what your body needs can do. You can't heal and treat patients the way you used? so what? learn again. Adapt and find the other way!.

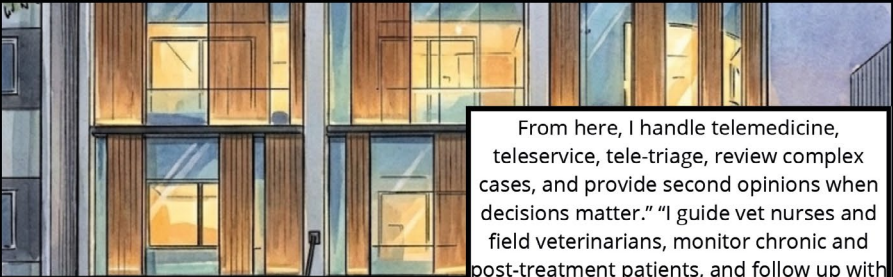
I've written down everything you need to get started with our telehealth service. All the patient details are there—you can check them on your computer





And listen, if you ever need to talk, someone who can help you see things from another perspective, I have a friend I trust. I've written down their number. You don't have to go through this alone.

Lets push and dont loose hope for one this little chance, shall we?



From here, I handle telemedicine, teleservice, tele-triage, review complex cases, and provide second opinions when decisions matter." "I guide vet nurses and field veterinarians, monitor chronic and post-treatment patients, and follow up with clients when care doesn't end at the clinic door



Doctor, please help! I'm outside now with my daughter's dog, Lucy. She's panting so hard and lying down—she doesn't want to move. she's starting to tremble a little. I can't carry her... what's wrong with her??"

"Ma'am, may i know your name? what breed is she? Where are you now? Can we open a video call?"

"I can't diagnose definitively right now. It seems she has heat stress and needs emergency treatment. How far are you from the clinic?"

I thought it was just another ordinary teleservice task, something I did every day without much thought.

I can't drive! I'm panicking and calling every vet number for help! Please help me! Can you send someone to our location??

Yes, yes, we can. I'll call send someone to your location Don't panic. Can you move her to a cooler place? Somewhere with AC or at least shade and some water? Can you find someone to carry her?"

Tell them Lucy needs ice packs or wet towels on her paws and belly. If keep her on her side to prevent choking, don't try to force water, and keep her cool with wet towels. I'm sending doctors and a vet nurse to your location. The team I'm sending will handle treatment as soon as they arrive. Stay calm and keep monitoring her breathing."



5 hours later

That was the moment my perspective shifted.

Hello, may I help you

"I'm here to see Dr. Dimas."

May I ask the reason why do you like to see Dr. Dimas?



thankyou doc Thank you for helping me with Lucy If you hadn't helped us, Lucy might not have survived

Day by day, working in teleservice, I began to realize that healing does not always happen through hands-on procedures.



Thank you for staying with my mother when she panicked. You helped both of them.



Doctor Sarah was right. I needed to let go of my old self, and my old perspective.



I decided to relearn myself all over again

I relearn what my body needs—and what it can still do.  
I found a community that understands, without explanation



I learned to share my struggles with professionals.  
They helped me see my situation from another perspective.



Im letting go my old self I relearn  
what healing means. I realized my  
impact could extend beyond physical  
presence.



And day by day, I found my purpose again.



There are still bad days sometimes, but it feels lighter  
now.

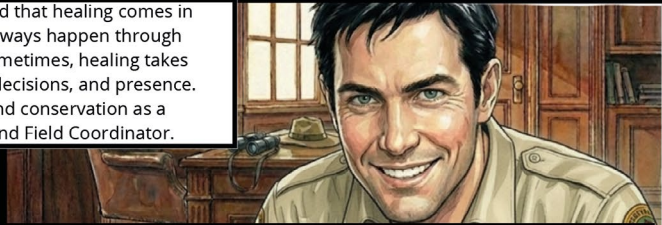


I learned to pursue my old dream with a different perspective. And that  
path led me back to wildlife and conservation



Most importantly, I learned that healing comes in many forms. It doesn't always happen through hands-on procedures. Sometimes, healing takes shape through guidance, decisions, and presence.

I returned to wildlife and conservation as a Veterinary Consultant and Field Coordinator.



I learned that I am still a doctor. I can still heal and cure, even when I'm not the one performing the procedures. I also learned that it was never because of my wheelchair, but because of my perspective and the system that wasn't ready. Now, I can still perform procedures using an adjustable bench. I can access ramps in forest and rehabilitation cage with an off-road wheelchair.

Meeting all of them made me realize that I'm not alone in building a better system for all of us



This is Dr. Amelia, an exceptional surgeon who uses mobility assistance. Together with Dr. Kean, a medical scientist, she co-developed a standing wheelchair that enables her to perform surgical procedures safely and effectively."



"This is Professor Tomas With appropriate support and accessibility, he continues to excel as a lecturer. continues to contribute significantly to medical education



Dr. Handoko with hearing impairment. Together with his team, he developed a digital stethoscope that is now used by doctors who require more precise diagnostic measurements."



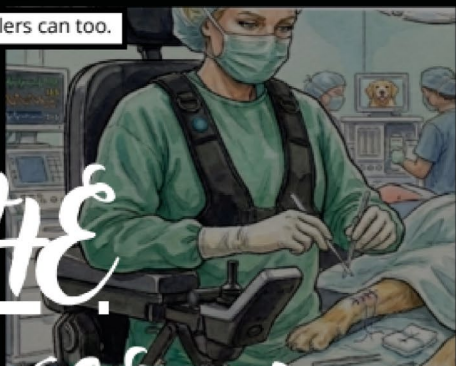
Dr. Harris, works with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, supporting disability-inclusive development by integrating accessibility and equity into health and education programs across partner countries



If healing in veterinary medicine can take many forms,



then healers can too.



# THE HEALERS



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## Virginia Ayu Kinanti

My name is Virginia Ayu Kinanti, a veterinary student at Airlangga University, Indonesia. This is my first comic.

This comic was born from my deepest fear during the early years of my veterinary education. In my first year, I heard the tragic news of a senior who passed away while examining an elephant. As I searched further, I encountered another report about a veterinarian who died in a helicopter accident during his wildlife work. These incidents deeply shook me. For the first time, I realised that being a veterinarian is not only about curing animals, but also about the risks inherent in the profession and the importance of safety for those who dedicate their lives to it.

From that fear emerged a question that continued to haunt me: What if one day I survived such an incident, but lived with a disability? Is the field of veterinary medicine prepared to support professionals with disabilities? Would I still be able to examine patients and do the clinical procedure? Would I still be considered a veterinarian? Within veterinary education and professional practice, my early understanding of the medical profession was shaped by a narrowly defined traditional framework: being a doctor or veterinarian with continuous hands-on clinical work and physical presence in the field. Over time, I realised this perspective proved to be limited. I came to recognise that the professional identity of a doctor is not determined by location or physical role, but by education, competence, ethical responsibility, and the capacity to make informed medical decisions.

Through Dimas, an idealistic and highly skilled wildlife veterinarian who strongly adheres to this traditional definition and becomes paraplegic following a work-related accident, I aimed to explore these questions honestly. Dimas does not lose his competence because of his disability. Instead, he is constrained by poor accessibility, unprepared systems, doubts of clients, and internalised stigma. Dimas's journey reflects not only physical disability, but also mental and emotional distress, an often overlooked form of disability: he is grieving the loss of his professional identity and the version of himself he once believed defined his worth. Even when surrounded by supportive colleagues, he struggles to receive their encouragement, as grief itself can function as an invisible barrier.

Through this comic, I hope to communicate meaningful messages to readers. First, we must continue to improve veterinary work systems to be more inclusive for professionals with disabilities, because disability is not the absence of ability but often the result of systems that fail to accommodate diversity. Second, overlooked disabilities, particularly those related to mental health, are real, impactful, and deserve recognition and support. Finally, as veterinarians, our value is not defined solely by physical performance, but by our knowledge, responsibility, and capacity to heal in many different forms. Healing, like medicine itself, can take many forms—and so can healers.

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