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October Digital Issue 2016

TVC

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From the Heart

TVC Member Southwest Florida Veterinary Specialists is intentional in how it walks clients through the diagnosis and management of congestive heart failure





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In This Together

By Dr. Laura Betts, DVM, Parkdale Animal Hospital, TVC Board Member

Being an independent veterinarian today is

amazing. I can do what I want, when I want and how I want to as a practitioner. I can offer the technology based medicine a large corporate practice can, but I have more freedom to individualize each visit for that particular patient and client. So I have a high-tech, high-touch practice that I'm not sure is possible in a corporate practice.

However, like all businesses, I face heavy competition in the marketplace, often in the form of big box retailers or online sites. The success of sites like 1-800-Pet-Meds and Dr Foster and Smith show that clients want a deal, and they want convenience. To compete, independents must educate clients about the manufacturer's product guarantee (there is none), potential safety issues (expired or foreign product) and the manufacturer's rebates we have to offer (there are none online). But at the end of the day, it's the convenience and price that rule for some.

So we adapt. We open an online store through our practice's website. Some independents will price match and/or offer other incentives to keep the purchase in house, such as buy 12-months of Sentinel and the heart-worm test is free. Everyone has to decide what works for their practice.

Another way to adapt is to band together. In the veterinary world, it's hard to keep up with what companies are merging or being bought out. For practices, it's becoming more common, too. For some it makes sense: pooling of resources, opportunities only afforded to bigger practices and sharing responsibilities.

But what about the smaller practices, like many that belong to TVC? Where does that leave us? In a position to become a truly indispensable partner in caring for the furry family members that

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are such an important part of the client's life. As a small town practice, I know the client's name, which of their children just went off to college, and yes, I do remember that thing "Fluffy" had last year. Can you maintain that in larger, consolidated, corporate practice?

TVC has been a great benefit to my small practice. The logo of TVC sums it up perfectly – many small fish are more powerful than one big fish. As a member of the TVC board, I've learned so much about business and real world issues affecting my business. This allows me to run a more efficient and profitable practice. The fact that we're all in this together – a cooperative – is comforting and helpful.

Learning from other members of TVC, the TVC educational programs, receiving discounts and rebates have made me a more competent and comfortable practice owner. I'm not alone in my single doctor practice – I have all the TVC members as colleagues. Sharing thoughts, problems and solutions on The Hive is invaluable.

As a board member, I see that the voice and concerns of members are taken seriously. It's the members that matter, we're not just a number. You only get that in a member-centric organization – something that is not likely in a corporate owned organization. ■

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TVC's Annual Meeting will be hosted in conjunction with NAVC 2017. This exciting meeting will be one hour long, with a fun one-hour social/cocktail hour to follow. It will most likely be hosted on Saturday, February 4, 2017 at the Rosen Center Hotel. Confirmation of place and time to come out in October/November.

NAVC DISCOUNT

TVC members get a special 10% discount for NAVC registration for being a TVC member.

[More info here](#)

Webinars

CE Course from Purina

Dr. Lauren Pagluighi will conduct a CE talk on Diabetic Management on Tuesday, October 25 at 1:00 p.m. CST.

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a complex disorder characterized by an insulin deficiency or dysfunction that results in hyperglycemia and abnormal lipid and protein metabolism. This presentation focuses on the pathogenesis, clinical signs, and treatment of feline diabetes mellitus. Insulin resistance and its contribution to the disease are discussed at length. Dietary management of diabetic cats includes small meals that are high protein and low carbohydrate. This combination decreases the glucose load allowing insulin to work more efficiently. A small portion of the presentation is dedicated to dietary management of canine diabetes mellitus.

Would you like to participate in this CE course (free)?

[Click here to register](#)

Promotions



Purina update for October

- October Buy One, Get One: DRM Dermatologic Management- Naturals Buy One Get One (Same Item) Valid: 10/3/16 – 10/31/16 NEW SIZES 6, 16.5 and 25 lb. bags
[See the Purina Landing Page for More information](#)
- October News: EN diets have one week left for their BOGO (Lowest fat). DCO Dual Fiber is now EN Fiber. New! DRM Dermatologic management- Naturals + Binder guide all in this month's digest.
[See the Purina Landing Page for More information](#)
- There are also coupons available from Purina.
[Check them out here](#)



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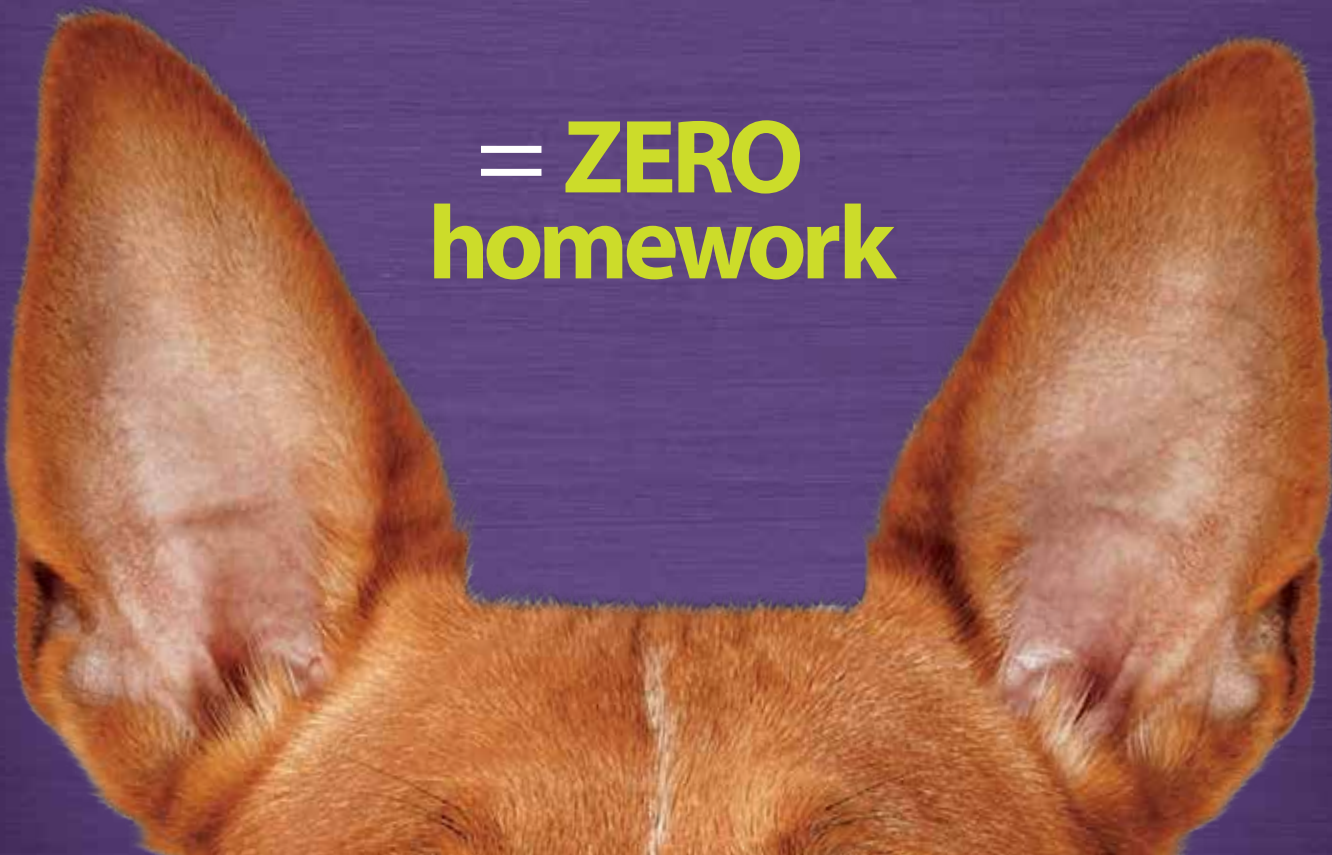
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From the Heart





Curt Rehling, DVM, MS, DACVIM-Cardiology, understands that the diagnosis is a lot to take in for some clients. Perhaps they thought their dog was simply showing signs of age by being reluctant to go on walks, or even just slightly under the weather with a bad fit of coughing.

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But then, after a series of tests, they get the diagnosis – congestive heart failure (CHF).

“It’s certainly a scary term,” says Rehling, a cardiologist for TVC Member Southwest Florida Veterinary Specialists. “Congestive heart failure. Failure of an organ. It’s scary. A lot of people have family members that have been affected by congestive heart failure or other pets that have been through that process. Particularly if peo-

ple are not expecting that diagnosis, it can be a shocking thing for them to hear. You have to be gentle and go slow.”

Southwest Florida Veterinary Specialists’ provides specialty veterinary care and emergency veterinary care to its patients, clients, and referring veterinarians, so it sees more cases of congestive heart failure than the typical veterinary practice. In the following article, Rehling offers advice on how best to approach the client communication process surrounding something difficult like CHF in a pet.

Quality of life is key

For most etiologies, there is no cure for congestive heart failure in dogs. However, therapies such as Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica's VETMEDIN are available to help manage the chronic disease. VETMEDIN is a first-line therapy for canine congestive heart failure (CHF). It has been shown to extend survival compared with treatment with angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors alone and to improve quality of life, according to research. VETMEDIN helps with the management of the signs of mild, moderate, or severe CHF in dogs due to [atrioventricular valvular insufficiency \(AVVI\)](#) or [dilated cardiomyopathy \(DCM\)](#).

However, before they get to the therapy and management options, Rehling says that when speaking with clients about the condition, it's important for veterinarians to empathize, and then understand what their priorities are moving forward.

"A client's number one concern is quality of life," says Rehling. "No matter what the survival rates or research shows, the first thing they want to make sure of is that their pet's quality of life is good."

Fortunately, the quality of life can be pretty good while they are treating the pet, Rehling says. "Our goal is to minimize their symptoms. Also, CHF is typically not a painful condition. Pets with congestive heart failure can be tired, and they can have breathing difficulties, but if we keep the fluid – accumulation (pulmonary edema/ascites) – under control, we can minimize their symptoms, and a decent amount of time the pet can live a long life."

A certain amount of education needs to happen during the visit, but Rehling says providing a brochure with more information for the client to take home is helpful. "You can have some handouts about breathing rates, various types of heart disease, etc. But [the client] may still be thinking about that initial discussion and not hear everything you are saying. Have something they can go home with and read up on when they are ready. We make sure clients get

"You can have some handouts about breathing rates, various types of heart disease, etc. But [the client] may still be thinking about that initial discussion and not hear everything you are saying. Have something they can go home with and read up on when they are ready."

– Curt Rehling, DVM, MS,
DACVIM-Cardiology

a follow up call a few days after the initial visit to answer any lingering questions or to discuss expectations."

Veterinarians need to be prepared for clients who aren't willing to go through with the treatment, whether it be for financial or other reasons. "That is something we all have to deal with in veterinary medicine," Rehling says. "In a way, it's understandable. I want people to make an informed decision. Our goal is

for treatment. And treatment of a condition like congestive heart failure requires dedication on the part of a client."

Hand in hand

Rehling says it's important early on in the process to talk about the short-term and long-term concerns, what they will do to treat the pet in the short term, but also what to expect in the long-term health of the pet. It's at this point that the veterinarian can establish red flags for clients to watch out for, including:

Breathing rates. Is the pet having an increased difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath? It's important to monitor the respiratory rate. Detecting a subtle change helps facilitate timely rechecks to adjust medications. Having the client keep a diary of the pet's respiratory rates can be

particularly helpful in this regard.

Behavior. A lack of energy or withdrawal from ordinary activities may be a sign of the condition worsening. Restlessness could also be a sign.

Appetite. Clients should monitor whether their pets have a loss of appetite or weight loss.

"Once we get started on that road of management, the dedicated clients often feel empowered to give you a call if there is a concern about their pet. Like a lot of chronic diseases that require monitoring, the client and veterinarian can become very close and intertwined in the care of the pet." ■



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Remember: We Serve Humans, and Animals

Edward L. Blach, DVM, MS, MBA, ed@dr-ed.com, www.IsMyPracticeHealthy.com

Veterinarians must satisfy two cus-

tomers. One is the client (human), and the other is the patient (animal). This dichotomy seems simple, but it's not always easy to remember this concept and to deliver accordingly. Satisfying both customers is important to ensure a healthy practice.

The animal's needs are typically obvious, in that veterinarians are well trained to identify, diagnose, and fix the issue presented by the patient. This is what we do. We judge our success at satisfying our patients by our ability to do all that we can or are allowed to do by the human who brings the animal in.

The human has needs that go far beyond what the patient needs. Humans need to be treated in a manner that satisfies them. And that manner differs greatly at times. They want communications to be clear, timely, and confident, and in the best interests of their patients. To them, your communications extend far beyond what you say or write. They include how your team presents your services, how you handle their animal, how well you listen, the cleanliness of your facilities both in appearance and smell, and all of the other non-verbal communications that impact human perception. Humans judge you and your team by how well you interact with their animal. Your manner with their animal shows your level of respect or lack thereof for them, the human.

Remember to constantly remind your team that you serve two customers, and both are important. Many people are attracted to veterinary medicine because of their love for animals. That is wonderful, but we must remember and constantly remind each other that we serve humans. We must love to serve humans if we are to be successful in veterinary medicine.

Two perspectives

Since we must strive to serve both humans and their animals, there are two distinct experiences and outcomes that

must be managed. It is crucial to continually work as a team to satisfy both experiences and outcomes and to remind each other that both are important to a healthy practice.

The patient experience involves how they are handled, the veterinary care that they receive, and the outcome in medical terms that are achieved. The veterinary team must strive to provide an exemplary experience to optimize patient outcome, and they must acknowledge that sometimes the outcome is out of their control. Thus, the experience and process that is delivered is important, as the outcome can still be negative, and yet the client can

still be very satisfied if the team did everything in their power to serve the needs of the patient, in the context of the decisions made by the client.

The client experience is complicated. This is the part that many veterinarians do not enjoy, and some may even avoid. Yet, it is probably more important to the over-all success or failure of a veterinarian and their practice than any other component of the service.

The client can be upset and emotional due to the condition of their animal. This can result in less than optimal interactions, though when handled appropriately, your most loyal

clients will come from those who are most emotional, if they are handled with extreme respect and care throughout the process. These emotional and stressful times are what cement in their minds what kind of veterinarian you are, when your influential actions might be more associated with your communications and respect delivered in that emotional and stressful time.

When you're there for people in their time of need, they will remember you and they will be loyal. You serve both humans and animals. Do well at both, and your practice will be healthy. ■

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Industry NEWS



Survey shows health benefits of pets linked to improved veterinary care

The Human Animal Bond Research Initiative (HABRI) Foundation and the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) announced the findings of a new survey on how knowledge of the scientific benefits of the human-animal bond impacts the way pet owners care for their companion animals. The survey asked pet owners about their awareness of research that shows pets improve human health and found that this knowledge motivated them to take better care of their pets, including a significant, positive impact on veterinary care. Among the findings, when 2,000 pet owners were educated about the human health benefits of pet ownership: 92% said they were more likely to maintain a pet's health, including keeping up with vaccines and preventive medicine; 89% said they were more likely to maintain a pet's health, including regular check-ups with a veterinarian; 88% said they were more likely to provide a pet with higher quality nutrition; 51% said they were more likely to purchase pet health insurance; 62% said they were less likely to skip visits to the veterinarian; 89% said they were more likely to take better care of a pet.

Obesity leads to rise in number of dogs suffering with arthritis

According to The Telegraph (UK), the number of dogs suffering with arthritis has tripled, figures show, as vets warn more pampered pets are struggle with obesity. Figures released by pet insurer Animal Friends shows the number of claims for treatment for the disease have more than tripled since 2015. The research, based on a study of 20,000 pet health records, also predicts cases of the disease are set to increase even further, with veterinary experts warning pet owners are making their pets fat by overfeeding them and indulging them

with scraps and treats. The breeds most likely to develop the condition are Golden Retrievers, followed by Labrador Retrievers, Greyhounds, Boxers and Rottweilers.

Physical rehab for pets on the rise

Once considered strictly for humans, physical therapy is now a growing alternative for pets coping with ailments like arthritis or an amputated leg, according to CBS Chicago. It reported on a new rehabilitation center at Buffalo Grove's Veterinary Specialty Center that is dedicated to the practice. For Dr. Lindsay Seilheimer, it's personal. "That's how I came to love rehab, because my own dog is an orthopedic disaster," she says. These treatments are available for dogs and cats but aren't always covered by pet insurance. Individually, they cost about as much as a regular visit to the veterinarian; so, just as medicine is helping people live longer and more comfortable lives, it's a growing possibility for pets, too.

Bayer and Monsanto sign definitive merger agreement

According to the St. Louis Business Journal, Bayer AG has won over Creve Coeur-based Monsanto Co. with an offer of \$128 a share. The companies said in a release that they signed a merger agreement under which Germany-based Bayer will pay all cash for Monsanto, in a deal which would be worth about \$66 billion. Bayer said it's committed to retaining a strong presence in the U.S. with the combined companies' global Seeds & Traits and North American commercial headquarters in St. Louis. The combined global Crop Protection and overall Crop Science headquarters will be in Monheim, Germany, and the company will have "an important presence" in Durham, North Carolina, and many other U.S. and worldwide locations, officials said.