Consultation Skills for Veterinary Nurses Mini Series

Session 3: Keeping Standards High with Consistently Excellent Consult Skills

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This webinar is the first of a series of three concerning the customer experience in the consult room:

1. Delivering a better consult room customer experience

2. The seven steps to excellent customer care in the consult room

3. Measuring and managing customer care in the consult room

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You will remember that last time we looked at the seven steps model, adapted from the Calgary-Cambridge model, used for many years in human medicine:

1. Prepare yourself

2. Create rapport

3. Use open questions

4. Undertake a visible pet / horse examination

5. Make recommendations

6. Check understanding and signpost next steps

7. Closing the consultation

In order to really make this process work for you, and deliver tangible improvements at your practice, it's important to quantify implementation of the seven steps.

Self-assessment after the event is difficult and unlikely to be truly accurate, and therefore collecting evidence is essential here.

And the easiest and most accurate way to do this is by filming consultations for review and scoring after the event.

Filming consultations - some key points

- It's legal, as long as you follow guidelines on data protection and seek owners' permission in advance

- Team engagement with the whole idea is vital

- Consult filming is most effective when part of a learning culture of open and honest feedback

- Remote access allows for third-party neutral assessment

Practicalities of installing audio-visual equipment

- Cameras are less intrusive than personal observation

- Images are easy to capture, viewing them back at a later date is more challenging

- Capturing good quality audio is more tricky - consult room acoustics are generally not great

- Use a company that is experienced in the veterinary sector for best results

Measuring consult skills and reviewing regularly is a very useful training tool both for new starters as well as for established clinicians who may have developed bad habits.

It allows practice benchmarks to be set, and provides useful data for appraisals.

A standardised process, such as ConsultTrack, provides robust and reliable data.

Kolb's Learning cycle
After a learning experience, Kolb hypothesised that we each review and reflect on it, making conclusions about the experience before trying out what we have learned. We then review and reflect on this active experimentation and so the cycle goes on.

Ongoing measurement and analysis of the seven stages of a consult raises awareness of possible gaps and enables clinicians to modify their approach in order to maximise the customer experience. Percentage scores are allocated to each of the seven steps, resulting in a total score for each clinician that can be plotted over time and compared against colleagues.

To create a sustainable culture we need to understand the learning process

1. Personal and practice growth

    a. Plan - do - review - grow
        i. What gets measured gets better - personal and practice

    b. Feedback is a gift

    c. Development doesn't just 'happen', it must be managed

    d. What is your own preferred style?

2. Key stages of growth

    a. Change follows a predictable pattern - the Kübler-Ross change curve

    b. Understand and spot the different steps:

        i. Shock

        ii. Denial

        iii. Frustration / anger

        iv. Depression / lack of energy

        v. Experiment - initial engagement

        vi. Decision - feeling more positive about working in the new situation

        vii. Integration

When we see how we really communicate, not how we think we communicate, it is very enlightening. Knowledge is a powerful driver, allowing the team to modify their approach to consult communications in order to deliver excellent customer care.

Monitoring and measuring drives real change.