



FROM THE TEAM AT DOVELEWIS

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Preventive Medicine and Client Care in the Age of COVID

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- The coronavirus pandemic has affected every aspect of our lives. How do we maintain preventive care and client care during this time?
- The struggles:
 - This is unprecedented during our lifetime, so we have no reference to how to make it work
 - Rapid changes were needed to be able to just stay open, let alone provide excellent care
 - Clinics needed to embrace and utilize technology immediately
 - How do we communicate with clients when we do not see them (most communication is non-verbal)?
 - How do we prevent what happened during the 2008 recession?
 - We are all tired!
- The “silver lining” of pandemic:
 - Increase in cross training staff
 - Re-evaluating staff work loads
 - Transition from paper charts to digital software/increase use of clinic software
 - Focus on preventive care
 - Focus on communication skills (with clients and co-workers)
 - Increase use of Telemedicine
 - Increase use of technology
 - Pandemic puppies!
- Curbside protocol:
 - Define staff responsibilities
 - How do you communicate with clients about curbside protocols?
 - RE-EVALUATE FREQUENTLY AND CHANGE WHAT IS NOT WORKING
- Define staff responsibilities:
 - Reception
 - Assistants
 - Credentialed technicians
 - DVMs
- How are you communicating with clients?
 - Phone calls
 - Email
 - Texting
 - Clinic app
- Clinic app
 - If your clinic does not have one, now is a great time to consider it!

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- If your clinic does have one, what else can you do with it?
 - Clients can text the clinic questions, refill medications, request prescription food refills, schedule an appointment and check their pet's medical history
 - An app gives clients a direct line to you and you to them.
- Clinic app survey performed by Colorado State University (with Vet2Pet) showed:
 - Clients preferred making an appointment through app rather than calling
 - Clients used the app for the following reasons: check clinic hours, make an appointment, check loyalty rewards program, check medical records
- Clinic app offers loyalty rewards
 - Ways to save the client money and continue coming to your clinic
 - The app keeps track of points for your clinic and lets the client know what rewards are available for use at your clinic
- Clinic apps can offer two-way texting
 - Text client's updates +/- pictures of their pets through staff phones
- Client communication through email
 - Not all clients will want to text or use an app
 - Email is standard in modern society
 - Are you obtaining email addresses when clients come in for an appointment?
- Email
 - Can you email directly through your clinic software so that a copy is saved in the record?
 - Email client's pre-exam questions
 - Create a standard template (Look at what questions you ask when taking a history)
 - Email discharge instructions
 - Pre-made, standard instructions for routine procedures
 - Instruction templates for other procedures that can be modified (dental cleanings, growth removal, abdominal exploratory, splenectomy, etc)
- Exams during curbside
 - Clients are excluded from the exam; how can we help ease their anxiety?
 - Can you text or email a photo of their pet receiving their exam?
 - This is not possible for every patient, but it will help with a client that is anxious or if their pet is anxious
 - Do you email report cards for exams?
- PANDEMIC PUPPIES!
 - It is not our place to judge, it is our job to educate clients on how to provide a happy life for their puppy
 - Some of the original negativity and backlash toward pandemic puppies can be from the 2008 recession where millions of families lost their jobs and homes and had to relinquish pets to shelters



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- There are pros and cons of a pandemic puppy
- First contact with the client AND the puppy is important!
 - Congratulate the client on their new puppy when they call, email or text for an appointment
 - The first vet visit for a puppy is frightening and now they are doing it without their family
 - FearFree and Low Stress handling programs help train staff in recognizing dog and cat body language and teaches skills to minimized stress in the clinic.
 - Can the puppy receive treats from staff? Meet different staff members? Go to other areas of the clinic to experience different sights, smells, and people?
 - Communicate with staff that you want to bring a puppy to socialize (make sure a sick pet has not been in that area, is there a dog-aggressive dog in that area, is a cat having blood drawn?)
 - Communicate the importance of *preventive care* at that first visit (and each visit after)
 - Vaccines to prevent disease and expensive treatment
 - Flea, tick, and heartworm preventives
 - Do you send home handouts of information for new puppy owners? Can you scan them and email them instead?
- 2008 recession
 - Veterinary industry was hit hard, and it took several years to recover
 - Clients lost their jobs and homes (foreclosures/housing crisis)
 - Increase in pets relinquished to shelters (they were full)
 - Pets came in for urgent or emergency care and preventive care lapsed
 - By 2014 there were large parvo outbreaks across the US due to lapse in vaccinations
- What can we focus on to prevent illness and keep as many pets as possible healthy during this pandemic?
 - Maintain vaccines
 - Dogs: DAP and rabies at the minimum
 - Cats: FVR and rabies
 - These vaccines help keep diseases at bay in the dog and cat population. Rabies vaccines prevents endemic rabies and protects humans.
 - Maintain preventives to prevent:
 - Fleas
 - Intestinal parasites
 - Ticks and tick-borne diseases
 - Zoonotic diseases related to fleas, intestinal parasites, and ticks
- Parasitic infections affect the pet's immune system and can make the pet susceptible to other infections.



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- Climate change and urban heat islands are expanding the range of mosquitoes and ticks.
- Social Media during a pandemic
 - There is a lot of doom and gloom on SM
 - Veterinary clinics have built in cuteness we can showcase
 - Clients want to see cute not gross or scary!
 - Yes, WE may love lancing an abscess or Grade 4 dental disease, but clients will not appreciate it.
 - A picture of an anesthetized dog looks scary (and dead) to a client.
 - Some resources:
 - Businesses that specialize in training staff to use social media (SnoutSchool.com, SimplyDoneTechSolutions.com)
 - Online resources: DVM360, TodaysVeterinaryPractice.com, Pinterest
 - Social Media content of other clinics
 - DO NOT STEAL CONTENT! Other clinic's SM can be a source of inspiration for your clinic.
 - Veterinary conferences
 - Social Media is its own track at the large conferences now!
 - Review the SM you follow
 - What do you like about it?
 - Is it cute? Fun? Relaxing?
 - What about SM you have unfollowed or that you avoid?
 - What about it did you not like?
- How do you recharge?
 - We are all tired and trying to be productive DURING A PANDEMIC.
 - Self-care, compassion fatigue and burn out were already a huge concern before this pandemic!
 - Do something non-veterinary related on your days off, find a hobby, binge watch TV so your mind can wander, read, play video games, etc
 - Give yourself a break!



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