

Professional Business Solutions

To: DVM Practice Owners

Practice Tips and Ideas Fax Letter

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VETERINARY STAFF RESPONSIBILITY and sub-standard patient care...

Mistakes DO happen, right? But two different scenarios recently emerged with two practice owners that involved sub-standard patient care by attending staff. Thankfully the patients survived but the corrective actions required for the staff members involved were quite different. Here are the two scenarios and results.

Scenario A: Staff member discharges a feline patient with a commonly used NSAID but miscalculates the dose. She later discovers her mistake, brings it to the practice owner's attention and calls the client to bring the cat back in for care. Appropriate medical treatment is given and the cat survives. The staff member insists on paying the bill. The client comes into pick up her cat and brings a thank-you letter to the staff member and money to reimburse the incurred fees. The staff member refuses to accept the money but thanks the client for her understanding.

Level of Responsibility: HIGH

Result: Staff member was validated for her honesty and was *corrected* using established written Policy & Procedure. She remains part of the high-standards team.

Scenario B: Staff member discharges a small canine patient with a commonly used NSAID but neglects to send the client home with a tuberculin syringe to accurately deliver the dose. She tells the client to "just squirt some in his mouth". The client follows the verbal directions, over-doses the dog, and the next day brings the dog back in for medical care. Appropriate medical treatment is given and the dog survives. On questioning, the staff member shrugs the incident off and says that the client was a nurse and "should have known better". On further questioning, the staff member admits some responsibility but is appalled that the practice owner and head-tech are accusing her of not caring".

Level of Responsibility: LOW

Result: Staff Member was discharged from the high-standards team.

So try this next time you have sub-standard patient care:

1. Don't drop your standards!
2. Look for an appropriate level of responsibility in the staff member. Validate their "rightness" in taking responsibility and positive action.
3. Correct and retain the staff member using written policy and procedure.
4. Replace staff member that place responsibility outside themselves.

Sounds simple? It is. Try it out and watch what happens.



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