Oral presentations

It's not about the form, it's about the (informed) consent

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OBJECTIVES

To investigate the content of consent forms in current use in veterinary practices, and discuss whether these forms support or hinder the consent process.

METHODS

Analysis of textual content of consent forms submitted from a variety of UK and Irish veterinary practices. A total of 60 forms were submitted, uploaded to QSR NVivo, coded and analysed using a thematic analytic approach.

RESULTS

The consent form is used for a dual purpose in veterinary practice. It acts as a record of a consent discussion (nature and risks of procedure) and as a written contract for the payment of fees. The main themes arising from analysis were 1) description of the procedures being performed (consent for the correct treatment) 2) discussion of fees for the procedures and agreement to pay (estimation of costs and formation of the contract) and 3) discussion of risks of treatment (disclosure). However, the main finding from this part of the study was the lack of clarity when describing risks, particularly the lack of reference to the types of risk that judges in medical negligence cases term 'material risks'.

IMPACT

It would be prudent for practices to ensure full disclosure of risks of treatment and to document that disclosure. This could be done in two ways, firstly by adding a clause outlining the main risks (e.g., death of the animal) to the form, or secondly by incorporating a 'free text' box where a list of the risks discussed can be documented.

Delusional parasitosis by proxy – a case report and review of the literature

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OBJECTIVES

To document delusional parasitosis by proxy (DPP) and discuss the diagnosis and management of the condition.

METHODS

An unusual case in which an owner is convinced that worms are present in her dogs is described. The literature concerning previous cases is presented and management of such cases is discussed.

RESULTS

Three dogs were presented by their middle-aged female owner, convinced that nematodes were present in the dogs' ears and eyes and throughout their integument. She also believed that a tapeworm was present in one ear canal and that hydatid cysts were forming on the eyelids. Samples taken by the owner and skin scrapes obtained during the consultation were examined microscopically in the owner's presence. They consisted of skin scales and broken hair shafts. Such evidence did not prevent the owner maintaining her belief that parasites were present. The dogs had been treated with a wide range of parasitocidal products with no beneficial results. Their bedding was washed frequently without reducing the apparent parasite burden. A literature search revealed two publications documenting similar cases of DPP. Successful management is extremely difficult since owners do not believe that they are delusional but rather that their pets are infested with parasites. The owner has given permission for presentation of this report.

STATEMENT

This, the first documentation in the UK veterinary literature of delusional parasitosis by proxy, wherein an owner considers that their pet is infested with parasites but where none are found, seeks to draw veterinary attention to a serious psychological problem.

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