Do you want to be a clinical trial investigator?

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A clinical trial investigator plays a critical role in the advancement of veterinary medicine. Veterinarians can enhance their professional development and their sites' scientific credibility; all while offering novel therapies that would otherwise not be available for their clients.

Companies ("sponsors") involved in the development of novel medical therapies for animals invest significant time and resources to pursue marketing approval from regulatory agencies for their products. According to the Animal Health Institute, the development of a major new animal drug or vaccine can cost a sponsor up to \$100 million USD and take up to 10 years of research.

The EMA Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use and FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine have similar roles in review of marketing applications from sponsors: to ensure that safe and effective medicinal products are available to treat animals. In addition to satisfying regulatory agency requirements for safety and efficacy data, clinical trials conducted in

animals to support marketing applications must be run in accordance with Good Clinical Practice (GCP), a set of internationally recognized ethical and quality standards for the design, conduct, recording and reporting of clinical trials. Compliance with GCP provides assurance that the rights, safety and well-being of trial participants are protected, and that the results of the clinical trials are credible and accurate.

Investigators must be appropriately qualified, by training and experience, to conduct clinical trials. The requirements of a clinical trial protocol may differ from standard of care and clinic practices, yet the investigator must agree to adhere to the study protocol as a condition of participation. In addition, the documentation and resource requirements during a clinical trial are often greater than for standard clinical practice. Investigators are required to provide and oversee sufficient qualified staff to ensure all protocol requirements can be met. Other requirements of investigators per GCP include maintenance of full accountability of investigational veterinary product (IVP) disposition and provision of secure (locked) storage space for IVP and study records.

Veterinarians interested in becoming clinical trial investigators should not be intimidated by the requirements. A good sponsor and/or designee will provide the necessary protocol and GCP training prior to study kickoff and ensure ongoing support throughout the study to maximize clinical trial site and investigator success.

Scoring the customer experience in the consultation room: seven steps to excellence

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INTRODUCTION

Assessing the standards of non-clinical care in the consult room has always been difficult and qualitative. However, perhaps the biggest problem has been that the provision of great customer care has not been viewed as a priority by many veterinary clinicians. Consultation delivery and approach varies enormously and a lack of focus throughout undergraduate training has resulted in vets and nurses simply adopting their own style according to their own rules of how to carry out a consult. Self-appraisal is almost impossible – only with a standard scoring process can clinicians now experience the consult through the eyes of the owner.

OBJECTIVES

By adapting the Calgary-Cambridge model of patient care taught in human medicine, a '7 steps' process has been developed to help vets and nurses deliver excellent customer care in the consult room. Training embeds the process and scoring the results against standardised benchmarks allows clinicians to objectively appraise their performance and implement changes where appropriate.

METHODS

Each consult is scored on the '7 steps':

- Prepare yourself (tidy the room, wear uniform and name badges, have equipment to hand)
- Create a rapport (make eye contact, use names, involve the pet)
- Ask open questions
- Carry out an obvious pet examination
- Make clear recommendations
- Check and signpost understanding
- Book the next client contact

Each criterion is allocated a score and thus every consult generates an overall rating, allowing for comparison with historic data, with colleagues and national datasets. Consultations can be recorded and watched back at a later date, or assessed in the room by a third party assessor.

RESULTS

Practices where the '7 steps' are routinely used and measured report tangible results such as:

- Improved owner compliance
- Increased Average Transaction Value
- More appointments booked

Using a standardised and robust scoring system allows clinicians to measure performance, set targets and ultimately develop better customer care skills, which has been proven to offer practices a competitive advantage.

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CONCLUSIONS

Using the '7 steps' process helps vets and nurses provide great care for the owner as well as the pet.

Quantifying telephone customer care in the veterinary profession: data collection drives significant improvement

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INTRODUCTION

The telephone is the first and most regular point of practice contact: a superior customer experience here is vital and has been overlooked both in terms of significance and value. A large national UK database of approximately 4500 small animal practices has been developed that allows comparison of telephone call handling between local competitors, different regions and also enables changes to be plotted over time. Variations in customer experience by time and day can be measured, and differences recorded according to practice size and ownership (corporate groups or independents).

OBJECTIVES

To assess if practices collecting data deliver a better customer experience than those who do not.

METHODS

Every month, calls are made to around 1,500 small animal practices in the UK and Ireland.

As a result each quarter, every practice in the country is called by a researcher asking for advice and information as a potential client. Practices are rated on key criteria and then awarded an overall score. Practices that elected to receive this data for a period of at least a year were compared to those that did not.

Prospective evaluation of concerns in new-graduate veterinary surgeons performing canine ovariohysterectomies (COVH) over the first year of general practice.

Collecting accurate and detailed insight into real behaviours leads to positive behaviour change and an improved customer experience.

RESULTS

Data from January 2014 to August 2014 from practices receiving monthly reports (Dataset A) and using its insight to improve the customer experience, was compared to those that did not. (Dataset B). The figures shown in Table 1 are the overall scores.

	Dataset A	Dataset B
Business basics	60.97%	49.2%
Engagement levels	67.17%	58.92%
Information provided	53.35%	31.4%
Asked animal's name	31%	3%
Appointments offered	65%	24%
Overall score	61.94%	39.08%

Table 1.

There was a positive impact of the Call Coaching programme.

Detailed call analysis found that the highest customer experience ratings were recorded on Monday between 9–11am, whilst the lowest were found on Friday between 1–3pm. Through the week, the customer experience in the East Midlands improved by 2%, whilst in the North it decreased by 9%.

Newark was the best-performing town, with appointments offered to 29.41% of callers in dataset B practices, whilst in Plymouth this figure was just 4.55%.

CONCLUSIONS

The data identified a better performance from practices that receiving monthly reports when compared to those that did not.

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AIM

To document veterinary practitioners' causes of concern during COVH at three time points: one month before graduation and after 6 and 12 months of clinical practice.