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.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A questionnaire regarding cOVH was sent to all final year veterinary students enrolled at five UK universities (group 1). Respondents were asked to complete a similar questionnaire 6 months (group 2) and 1 year (group 3) after graduation. At each time point, respondents graded their current levels of concern categorically [using a 5 point scale from 1 (not at all worried) to 5 (extremely worried)], for each aspect of the cOVH procedure: incision size, leaving ovarian remnants in situ, ligation of ureters, skin suture placement, surgical duration, postoperative infection, incisional herniation, postoperative pain and postoperative haemorrhage.

Mann-Whitney test was used to compare the median scores of levels of concern for each aspect between group 1 and group 2, and between group 2 and group 3. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

This cross sectional study included 196 students in group 1, 55 veterinarians in group 2 and 36 veterinarians in group 3. Between group 1 and group 2, there was a statistically

significant reduction in respondents levels of concern in every aspect of cOVH ($p < 0.05$). Between group 2 and 3, there was no statistically significant reduction in respondents levels of concern in any aspect of cOVH ($p = 0.21$ to $p = 0.97$).

Post operative haemorrhage is the most common concern at all time points: 73%, 32% and 28% of respondents in groups 1, 2, and 3 respectively graded their concern levels as 4 or 5.

In 86% of cases, practices did not expect the respondents to be able to perform cOVH unsupervised immediately after graduation.

For respondents in groups 2 and 3, 87% and 89%, respectively, felt that they received sufficient support from colleagues during cOVH.

CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Employers should anticipate high levels of concerns regarding all aspects of cOVHs in new graduates, who rapidly gain confidence during the first six months. Supervision during this initial period may be particularly useful. Between 6 months and 1 year after graduation, confidence levels are higher and do not improve further. Up to 28% of new graduates still worry about haemorrhage a year after graduation.

Epidemiology of gastric dilation-volvulus syndrome in dogs attending emergency-care veterinary practices in the UK

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Gastric dilation-volvulus syndrome (GDV) is an acute, life-threatening condition with significant welfare implications. Reported risk factors include large bodyweight, certain breeds (Great Dane, Irish Wolfhound and Akita) and seniority. This study aimed to estimate prevalence and risk factors for GDV occurrence in dogs attending emergency-care veterinary clinics in the UK.

The study included VetCompass data on all dogs presenting to VetsNow emergency clinics across the UK from September 2012 to February 2014. Potential GDV cases were identified by searching the clinical free-text and VeNom diagnosis fields using GDV-specific search terms. Retrieved records were evaluated manually for GDV diagnosis and extraction of additional information including date of diagnosis, presenting signs, surgical management and clinical outcome. Descriptive

statistics were used to characterise demography, presentation and management. Risk factor analysis used a chi-squared test or Mann-Whitney test as appropriate to compare the case and control groups.

The study population comprised 77,088 dogs attending 50 clinics. Four hundred and ninety three GDV cases were identified, giving a prevalence of 0.64% (95% CI 0.59–0.70%) in the emergency caseload. Overall, 451 (91.7%) GDV cases were first diagnosed by VetsNow clinicians; the remainder were referred after diagnosis elsewhere. The most commonly affected breeds were German Shepherd Dog (15.0%), Weimaraner (6.9%) and Great Dane (6.7%).

At presentation, 307 (62.4%) cases were ambulatory. Overall, 248 (50.4%) animals died prior to discharge. Surgery was undertaken in 286 (51.8%) cases. Of the surgical cases, 54 (18.9%) died, with 36 (66.7%) of these euthanased. Of the 207 (48.2%) non-surgical cases, 194 (94.2%) died, with the remainder transferred to a daytime practice. Of those that died, 178 (91.8%) were euthanased.

GDV cases were older (median 8.0 years, interquartile range (IQR): 5.9 – 10.1) than control dogs (median 5.0 years, IQR: 1.7–10.0) ($P < 0.001$), and heavier (median 38.8 kg, IQR: 30.0–48.0) than control dogs (median 17.7 kg, IQR: 9.3–28.2) ($P < 0.001$). Compared with the control group, GDV cases were more likely to be male (cases 59.9% versus controls 52.5%, ($P < 0.001$)) and purebred (cases 96.2% versus controls 81.9%) ($P < 0.001$).

This study identified predisposition to GDV in heavier, older, male and purebred dogs. Case fatality was high overall but was less than 20% in surgical cases. These results can help veterinarians to triage potential GDV cases and to offer evidence-based outcome information to owners.