District veterinary nursing

Nursing at home, easier said than done: understanding pet owner challenges

Carla Finzel

The role of the veterinary nurse is met with daily challenges and no more so than supporting our clients with the ongoing care of their pets in the home. Client concordance and stress (both the owner and the pet) can affect diagnosis, treatment plans and patient recovery – not to mention the wider implications such as antibiotic resistance and infection control. This session will look at the missing link in patient care and gain an understanding of client needs, their abilities and disabilities and the provision of a more focused homecare service. The role of the veterinary nurse is not just about patient contact; owner contact and how we communicate with them is as important as the hands-on patient care itself.

The session will also introduce the vision for a district veterinary nurse role within the veterinary profession and its relevance to all practising veterinary nurses regardless of workplace setting and discipline. There are several aims:

- That all owners and patients are offered district veterinary nursing support as part of a prescribed treatment plan, when discharged from any veterinary premises
- That all animals receive their veterinary treatment when the owner's situation or the patient's health may prevent this from being delivered by the owner
- That without judgement and accessible to all, a district registered veterinary nurse 'should be a vision of the NOW' readily offered by veterinary practices no matter what the circumstances, to help support the veterinary profession in delivering the five freedoms and One Health One Welfare
- That district registered veterinary nurses form part of social prescribing and contribute to the profession's compliance with the Equality Act 2010
- That registered veterinary nurses have a clear route for career progression and an alternative career path in different aspects of the community, with the opportunity to develop and utilize additional transferable skills.

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the importance of home care support
- Be aware of the hidden needs of clients and affects on patient welfare and access to veterinary care, observing the Equality Act 2010
- Understand the role of a district veterinary nurse and its impact on diagnosis, treatment, recovery and end-of-life care

Impact of district veterinary nursing in the wider community

Belinda Johnston

District nursing in the human medical field has been a vital part in supporting patients in the community since 1859 but surprisingly the veterinary profession has not had an equivalent role. In Suffolk, a community outreach charity, Our Special Friends (OSF), is supporting the power of animal companionship and has developed an innovative approach to support clients who are experiencing difficult times.

There is a wealth of evidence dating back to the 1980s to demonstrate that a positive relationship between humans and animals can have a vast impact on human mental, emotional and physical health. It is therefore no surprise that an estimated 49% of UK adults own a pet, according to the PDSA's 2018 research conducted with YouGov. Alongside the physical benefits, pet ownership can be particularly beneficial for those suffering from social isolation and/or mental health issues. Delivered by BSA

However, there are times when additional pressures in a person's life can jeopardize the care of a pet and ultimately compromise the welfare of both people and animals:

- Owners may become ill or immobile and need support to help them maintain the animal companionship
- Reluctance to part with a pet can mean owners do not seek help, medical care or comply with advice through fear of being admitted to hospital or a care home and/or not being able to keep their pet
- Terminally ill people may suffer additional anxiety around what will happen to their beloved pet when they pass away.

In such situations, the welfare needs of both human and animal may not be met and people and pets can fall into a void.

OSF has grown out of a desire to support people who are struggling and where pets play an important role in helping them to cope. Our person-centred tailored services are proven to alleviate social isolation, encourage mobility, enhance mental well-being and facilitate independent living and include:

- Attending to the needs of pets when a client is frail, ill or disabled and unable to fully care for the pet

Guest (guest)

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