Experience in Veterinary Communication Education for Practice Success

By, Dr. Cindy L Adams Veterinary Clinical & Diagnostic Sciences, University of Calgary, Veterinary Medicine
OBJECTIVES

- What’s contributed to the uptake of communication in veterinary education & practice?
- Why bother?
- How and what communication skills are being taught?
- Where are we headed?
- How do we maintain clinical communication skills throughout a career?
TOP 10!

What are the top 10 reasons for having good communication skills in veterinary practice, and beyond?
Evidence-Complaints

50-82% of *complaints* related to communication problems:

- Client was misinformed
- Consent was not obtained
- Client felt disrespected
- Client felt like opinion did not matter
- Procedure was not explained

College of Veterinarians of Ontario (2010); AVMA-PLIT (2016)
Evidence: Gap between what clients’ want & what they are getting

- Veterinarians scored low in:
  - discovering the clients views & expectations
  - exploring the disease and the illness experience
  - feelings, ideas, expectations,
  - checking for understanding,
  - encouraging questions.

- Doctor’s think they are doing better with clients than clients perceive them to be.

(Nogueira, Adams, Shaw et al 2018)
Evidence- Anatomy of the Interaction

Data gathering
Primarily closed questions
13 closed questions
2 open ended questions
No open-ended questions in 25% of interviews
6% (2014); 9% (2004)

Empathy
In building relationships with clients
Expression of empathy is infrequent
Empathy statements in only 7% of appointments

(Shaw, Adams, Bonnett 2006)
Evidence-Interruptions

• **Power of the Pause**
  - Interruptions in 55% of visits
  - 72% of clients did NOT complete their response

• **Veterinarians interrupt clients within:**
  • 15.3 seconds

Dysart, L, Coe, J, Adams, C 2011
Evidence: “Oh, by the way…”

Not eliciting the clients concerns at the beginning of the appointment increased the odds (4x) of a concern arising during the closing segment of the interview.

Dysart, Coe, Adams, 2011
Overall goal of communication skills teaching & learning

Improving communication *in practice* to a professional level of competence

- Behavior = what we do anyway
- Professional competence =
  - ↑awareness & attention
  - ↑intentionality
  - ↑ability to reflect on & articulate
    and it’s evidence based
Framework 1
What skills/activities are important during each component of a consultation?
FRAMEWORK: Calgary-Cambridge Guide

Providing Structure

Initiating the Session

Gathering Information

Physical Examination

Explanation/Planning

Closing the Session

Building the Relationship

Adams C, Kurtz S 2017
Types of Communication Skills

Content - what you say

Perceptual skills - what you think or feel
- Thought process (problem solving, reasoning)
- Attitudes, biases, intentions, assumptions
- Emotions

Process skills - how you communicate
- How you structure talk
- How you relate to peers, colleagues, professors, other leaders, clients, patients
- Nonverbal skills

Adams & Kurtz 2017
Framework 2
Approaches to communication

**Shot-Put Approach**
the well-conceived, well-delivered message is all that matters
emphasis on telling, feedback not in picture

**Frisbee Approach**
2 central concepts
- confirmation = to recognize, acknowledge or endorse another
- mutually understood common ground
emphasis on interaction, feedback, relationship
Framework 3
Paradigm Shift

Veterinarian-centered → Relationship-centered

Pew-Fetzer Task Force, 1994
Interactions between the entire veterinary team and the client are characterized by collaboration between partners resulting in the creation of a joint venture dedicated to the health of the animal.
Does Relationship Centered Communication take more time?

Veterinary-client-patient visits that were narrowly biomedical were significantly longer (11.98 minutes) than relationship centered or bio-lifestyle-social communication oriented appointments (10.43 minutes).

(Shaw, Adams, Bonnett, 2014)
Evidence-Adherence

Adherence to dentistry & surgery recommendations

N=350

83 interactions, 30% adhered

1. Adhering clients were more satisfied
2. Interactions resulting in adherence had higher scores for RCC than those leading to non-adherence

(Kanji N, Coe J, Adams, C, Shaw, J 2012)
Veterinarian Satisfaction: Build a Relationship

Veterinarians who used communication skills that build relationship including empathy, greater amount of conversation, were more satisfied.

Veterinarian satisfaction was positively associated with the quality of the vet/client/patient relationship, positive talk, high self-esteem and more balanced interactions with clients

(Shaw, Adams, Bonnett 2012)
Building a Relationship

Kinnison et al. (2014) showed the importance of teams in veterinary practice noting that understanding how to work collaboratively and inter-professionally improved team performance patient outcomes and practice success

Pollard-Williams (2014) show that empathy toward animals declines within years 1-5 of being in practice and that workplace negativity was strongly correlated with this decline
Special Report

The role of veterinary team effectiveness in job satisfaction and burnout in companion animal veterinary clinics

Irene C. Moore, dvm, msc; Jason B. Coe, dvm, phD; Cindy L. Adams, msw, phD; Peter D. Conlon, dvm, phD; Jan M. Sargeant, dvm, phD
So, what does this have to do with teaching communication in veterinary school and beyond?
Can’t have one without the other…

Biomedical Tasks
Can’t have one without the other....

73 skills organized around an expanded framework
What does it take to teach/learn communication skills?
What it takes to learn communication skills?

Knowledge does not translate directly into performance

Essentials needed to learn skills, change behavior:

- Systematic delineation & definition of skills
- Observation
- Well-intentioned, detailed, descriptive feedback
- Practice and rehearsal of skills
- Planned reiteration and deepening of skills

*Small group or one-on-one format*
FRAMEWORK FOR Professional Interactions

Initiating the Session

Gathering Information

Physical Examination

Explanation/Planning

Closing the Session

Providing Structure

Building the Relationship

Kurtz, Silverman, Draper, 2005

Skills for Communicating in Veterinary Medicine

What does it take to enhance communication?

- Simulated clients
- Practice-based scenarios
- Skills-based coaching
- Feedback
Simulated & Real Clients

Trained
Real cases
Patients (real & simulated)
Coach

• Partner with you to achieve success
• Encourage you to perform at a higher level

Who are they?
• Faculty
• AHT’s
• Practitioners
• Industry partners
Small group members

• Provide specific, concrete feedback

• Suggest different approaches to try
Setting the Stage
Case Interactions
Routine wellness visit: Canine Student Instructions

You are a first year student shadowing the practice owner at your local veterinary clinic. The veterinarian is finishing up with another appointment and has asked you to meet with his next client, to gather information regarding the reason for the visit.

Using the skills of the C C G, have a conversation with the client in order to gather the information that you think the veterinarian will need.

You have 15 minutes to complete your task
Active coaching techniques:

**Time-out**
- Seek advice or direction
- Provide an alternative approach

**Rewind**
- Return to a certain point in the interview
- Try a different approach

**Client Voice**
- 1 question “what are you thinking/feeling”
Goals of Effective Communication

Ensuring increased
  Accuracy
  Efficiency
  Supportiveness
Enhanced satisfaction
Improved outcomes
Collaboration & partnership
Mentorship in Practice: What and How?

- Practices can adapt what’s being done in vet med curricula for the practice setting
- Need mentoring in practice to move communication to a professional level of competence
- Evidence-based frameworks can and should be used to achieve essential outcomes in practice
- Skills and approaches can be adapted for use with all members of the practice team
Mentoring, Feedback, Communication CE or on-site training is critical for practice success

- Coaching and Feedback: Enhancing Communication Teaching and Learning in Veterinary Practice Settings
- Cindy L. Adams & Suzanne Kurtz, JVME 2012

ABSTRACT

Communication is a critical clinical skill closely linked to clinical reasoning, medical problem solving, and significant outcomes of care such as accuracy, efficiency, supportiveness, adherence to treatment plans, and client and veterinarian satisfaction. More than 40 years of research on communication and communication education in human medicine and, more recently, in veterinary medicine provide a substantive rationale for formal communication teaching in veterinary education. As a result, veterinary schools are beginning to invest in communication training. However, if communication training is to result in development of veterinary communication skills to a professional level of competence, there must be follow-through with effective communication modeling and coaching in practice settings. The purpose of this article is to move the communication modeling and coaching done in the “real world” of clinical practice to the next level. The development of skills for communication coaching and feedback is demanding. We begin by comparing communication coaching with what is required for teaching other clinical skills in practice settings. Examining both, what it takes to teach others (whether DVM students or veterinarians in practice for several years) and what it takes to enhance one’s own communication skills and capacities, we consider the why, what, and how of communication coaching. We describe the use of teaching instruments to structure this work and give particular attention to how to engage in feedback sessions, since these elements are so critical in communication teaching and learning. We consider the preconditions necessary to initiate and sustain communication skills training in practice, including the need for a safe and supportive environment within which to implement communication coaching and feedback. Finally we discuss the challenges and opportunities unique to coaching and to building and delivering communication skills training in practice settings.

Key words: communication skills, veterinary medicine, primary-care practice, coaching, feedback, Calgary-Cambridge Guide
Mentorship in Practice: What and How?

Preconditions are necessary:

- Supportive work environment
- Hiring practices that screen for relational competence
- Time to coach and be coached
- Ways to record/observe interactions
- Training for the coaches
Summary

- Evidence is helping to move communication from being a minority sport to a mainstream activity
- There are evidenced based methods for teaching communication and changing behavior
- Veterinary education must integrate communication throughout the curriculum
- Communication coaching at the practice level is doable and critical
Improving Animal & Practice Health: Veterinary Communication Summit
Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta
April 26 - 28, 2019

PLUS

Communication Skills that Work
April 25, 2019
University of Calgary, Alberta

www.iccvm.com