Achieve Better Compliance and Enhance Your ‘Top Line’

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For The Education Series

With great teamwork, you can provide the best care for your patients and drive more revenue into your practice. Many practices do not capture sufficient wellness revenue not only because of poor client compliance with recommended services, but also because they miss opportunities to offer what is best for their patients.

Commonly missed services include complete senior pet lab screening, fecal exams and deworming, heartworm testing and vaccinations appropriate for the patient’s lifestyle. Suppose your practice has 2,000 patient visits per year and gains only 25 percent compliance with annual fecal examinations. Say your fee for a fecal exam is $28. If you increase compliance to 50 percent, you could add $14,000 to the “top line” of your annual profit and loss statement—gross revenue.

Similarly, how many opportunities to recommend heartworm testing and prevention are passing you by? If your fee for a heartworm test is $39 and you increased compliance by just 15 percent, you could realize nearly $12,000 in additional gross revenue annually and also gain profits from the sale of 12 months of heartworm prevention for the pet.

We all know if we send a client home with just six months of prevention, that supply often will be divvied up over one year and the pet will not be protected.

Common Themes

How can you achieve greater client compliance, accomplish what you know is best for your patients and thereby drive more revenue? Begin by randomly reviewing patient records every week and searching for missed opportunities.

Do you see a common theme? For example, are patients with chronic conditions and on long-term medications receiving appropriate laboratory testing for their diseases? Are patients receiving recommendations for indicated annual testing and lifestyle-appropriate vaccinations—such as felines living predominately outdoors?

How many opportunities to provide needed dental care are walking out the door? Almost every pet over 3 years of age needs dental care. Most practices see a patient one to two times annually at best and you do not want to miss the opportunity to recommend all care indicated for your patients.

Once you have determined common opportunities for recommendations, focus on these areas at team meetings. Give your staff appropriate training and motivation to recommend services and educate clients about their value.

Remind your team members that, as veterinary professionals, we have an obligation to be advocates for the pet. You can find a number of free team training webinars online. Have team members review them so they can confidently deliver recommendations and help you drive more revenue while doing what is best for pets and their families.

Consider rewarding your team members for their efforts if the practice meets or beats quarterly goals for increases in practice revenue or meets a specific goal such as increasing the number of heartworm tests provided.

Educate and Inform

How many times have we heard clients say their dog could not possibly have fleas because it lives in the house? First, we know the dog must be going outside to eliminate. In addition, we all know fleas can make their way inside—possibly motoring in on the client’s indoor/outdoor cat, which is not on flea control and has not been in to see you for several years.

What about those folks who decline fecal examinations for their pets? Your team should be educating clients that gastrointestinal parasites are zoonotic and that you want to ensure that all family members—the humans, too—are not exposed to these organisms.

Clients often decline heartworm testing and prevention because they believe their pet is never exposed to mosquitoes even when the family resides in a heartworm-endemic area. Suggest that these clients visit the American Heartworm Society website (www.heartwormsociety.org) for information about this deadly disease.

Educate your clients, inform them that prevention is by far better than the cure and remind them that heartworm prevention also will protect their pet from many gastrointestinal parasites it may encounter. Once you have performed a thorough physical examination, reinforce the suggestions made by your staff, advocate for the pet, and gain client acceptance of your recommendations.

Last but not least, focus on improving service utilization in your practice to have a positive effect on your top line.

Every Month Should Be Dental Month

If your practice is like many, you may not be deriving all the revenue you could from providing dental care. Suppose the average invoice for a dental procedure in your practice is $300. If you could increase the number of dental procedures performed by two per week, you could see an increase of approximately $30,000 to the top line of your profit and loss statement.

Perform dental examinations and educate clients about the importance of good dental health for their pet during all well-pet visits. If the patient is cooperative, both you and your technician should show clients their pets’ teeth and any dental disease observed.

Patient histories should include inquiries into the pet’s comfort when eating and any oral cavity odor the owner has noted. Clients should be made aware their pets may be in pain and also could develop systemic disease if dental disease is left unchecked.

Characterize the dental services you will provide as “treatment” and not simply as a teeth “cleaning.” Every month should be dental month. Clients should understand that treating existing dental disease immediately could be just as important as managing an open and infected wound promptly.

If you and your staff members routinely determine all the services needed for your patients with each visit, educate your clients and advocate for their pets, your practice will provide not only the best care for your patients and their families, but enjoy increased annual revenue while doing so.

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