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## VETERINARIAN GUIDELINES & EXPECTATIONS

### Our Vision:

To provide outstanding care for every client and every patient, every day.

Ours is a client-centered practice composed of patient advocates.

#### A. PATIENT CARE

1. A thorough exam of all body systems, including otoscopic and ophthalmic examinations, will be performed on all pets examined. There are two exceptions:
  - A. Medical Progress exams, which may be limited to the system(s) being re-evaluated
  - B. Pre-anesthetic exams, which may be limited to the body systems which have the potential to impact the anesthetic risk or plan
2. Attempt to make a specific diagnosis in each case rather than electing symptomatic treatment only.
3. In every case, the best interest of the pet should be of primary importance and guide all diagnostic and treatment plans.
4. Preemptive analgesia, which is multimodal in most cases, should be provided in every surgical procedure including dental extractions, and any painful or potentially painful procedure (i.e. During exams)
5. All patients with anesthetic procedures should have:
  - Pre-anesthetic laboratory testing
  - Individualized anesthetic, analgesic, monitoring, recovery, and emergency plans
  - IV catheter & fluids
  - Effective staff and electronic monitoring with at least three methods of monitoring such as electronic respiratory monitor, blood pressure, pulse oximetry or ECG monitoring; rectal temperature should also be monitored
  - Warming blanket(s), preferably both circulating water and forced air
6. We have an obligation to be patient care advocates, not advocates for the client's finances. We should never prejudge a client's ability or willingness to pay for recommended care.

7. A plan for the next day's care should be recorded in the medical record for every hospitalized patient. If a hospitalized patient exam by another veterinarian is part of that plan, every effort should be made to discuss the case with that veterinarian.
8. It is the veterinarian's responsibility to provide/assure appropriate follow-up on cases with the goal of providing optimal care and exceeding client expectations.
9. All veterinarians should provide veterinary care for their personal pets in compliance with our practice care recommendations, just as is expected of other practice team members and is recommended for our clients. Review our Practice Team Member Handbook for details.

## **B. CLIENT INTERACTIONS FOR OUR CLIENT CENTERED PRACTICE**

1. Clients will not be held accountable to consent to substandard care for their pet. Public policy mandates that veterinarians are obligated to protect the client and the patient which infers that at all times nothing less than the accepted minimal standard of care will be offered and practiced. Our obligation is to always offer the best care and to never practice below the peer accepted minimal standard of care. Lack of money on the client's part will not be a legally acceptable excuse for a lesser recommendation. Significant deviations from standard care protocols must be documented as such.
2. We have an obligation to our patients to offer the best diagnostic and treatment options to all clients without regard to preconceived notions about the client. Other options are discussed if the client is unwilling or unable to pursue the best options.
3. Advise everything the pet needs, but nothing it doesn't need. Clients must be made aware of costs of care, cost of follow up care and the time investment of care
4. Always be honest with clients and fellow practice team members.
5. Under promise and over deliver whenever possible. This is particularly important when dealing with time intervals such as how soon the client can pick up their pet or receive a call with diagnostic test results.
6. All client calls should be returned on the same day. Twelve hours should be the outside limit for returning a client's call. All veterinarians will be allowed time during each workday to call clients that were seen the previous day.
7. Our obligation is not only to provide the best care available for our patients, but also to provide outstanding client service, i.e. keep the clients happy.
8. We have an obligation to our clients to ensure informed consent diagnostic/ treatment plans by outlining the benefits and risks associated with each as well as the risks associated with not pursuing a given diagnostic/ treatment plan. Written consent should be obtained via client signature. Clients should also be made aware of reasonable alternatives. True informed consent means the client understands and can repeat back to you the events/procedures that are advised to take place. Always verify that consent is given by the client listed on the medical record as owner or co-owner.
9. Clients should be made aware of overnight care options.

10. Clients should always be offered a necropsy in the event of an unexpected patient death.
11. Clients should be called by a veterinarian within two days of every veterinarian visit (exams for patients with problems and with preventative care, procedures, surgeries, etc.). These calls should be made by the veterinarian that provided the care, but if this is not possible within the two day period, the veterinarian that provided the care should make arrangements with another veterinarian to make the calls.

The goals of these calls should be:

- Assessing patient status (progress report) if medical or surgical problems were treated
  - Ensuring that communications during the visit were understood and effective
  - Providing results of diagnostics and additional care recommendations if appropriate
  - Inquiring if the client has any additional questions and answering as needed
  - Assuring that a follow-up visit was schedule and if not attempting to schedule the appointment  
(includes dentistry and next preventative care visit if appropriate)
  - Verifying that reminders/recalls are correct and modifying as needed
12. Veterinarians scheduled time for Client Communications should field all calls from clients and perspective clients with questions instead of providing information for another practice team member to relay to the pet owner.
  13. Clients will be called by a veterinarian with significantly abnormal diagnostic test results within 12 hours of our receiving those results.
  14. Client requests to speak to a veterinarian should always be honored.
  15. Veterinarians should review Animal Health Plan exam reports and/or Home Care Instructions with clients either in person or on the phone.
  16. A veterinarian should speak to every client that drops off (early admission) their pet for care provided by a veterinarian. This may be done by phone or in person depending on client preference.
  17. In cases of emergency, a veterinarian can act on the behalf of the client for the patient.
  18. Handouts, links to websites, links to videos should be used to aid in client education and understanding. These can be reviewed in person, over the phone, texted, email or mailed.

### **C. PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

1. Veterinarian should ensure that every service and inventory item is entered into Cornerstone and “sign off” on the patient visit list using their group code that provides dental grading and their name.
2. The burden of proof of the events that occur to a patient in our care is on us. Only what has been documented in the medical record is proof of what happened. Record keeping is important – if in doubt, record it in the medical record. This includes every diagnostic and treatment procedure and client communication whether in person or by phone. However, don’t enter derogatory comments about people or pets and information about client finances that is not strictly factual in the medical record.

3. Every prescription should be applied to the invoice.
4. Veterinarians should arrive at a time before the first appointment time of the day with sufficient time to evaluate hospitalized patients and be present for morning rounds/huddles. In general, this means arriving 10-30 minutes before the first appointment. Except in the case of a true emergency, the first morning outpatient appointment should never be kept waiting.
5. Since we represent to our clients that we are available for emergency care during office hours, veterinarians should remain in the hospital until the end of their scheduled shift. For the same reason, a veterinarian should be on the premises during all schedule hours including during lunch breaks.
6. It is the veterinarian's responsibility to ensure that all patients in their care have a reminder, recheck, and/or recall scheduled at the time their visit is completed.
7. Client compliance with our patient care recommendations is our responsibility and is tracked regularly for progress. Veterinarians should communicate health care recommendations with confidence and conviction and they should be recorded in the medical record.  
Follow through is the biggest barrier to high levels of client compliance with patient care recommendations, so it is imperative that veterinarians work with other practice team members to schedule appointments for any recommended services.
8. Handwritten notes to clients are strongly encouraged on new client and referral letters. Incorporate recheck times in the new client notes if applicable.
9. Refer financial matters to the hospital manager, Cassy, the client care coordinator, the patient care coordinator, Dr. Welborn, Dr. Lassett, or if necessary refer to written hospital policy. Any A/R must be pre-approved by the veterinarian and one of these individuals. See our payment policy.
10. Along with many within our profession, we define a current veterinarian-client-patient relationship as an examination within six months. Accordingly, all patients should have an examination by one of our veterinarians within six months in order to refill prescription medications. The exceptions are heartworm preventatives, which require an examination and a negative heartworm test (dogs) within one year.
11. With the exception of heartworm preventatives, all prescription medication refills should be authorized by a veterinarian in writing within the medical record.
12. The authorizing veterinarian should verify that each prescription medication and label is correct by inspecting the drug and label and then entering their Rx code in the Patient Visit List. This is not required for heartworm preventatives or topical parasite control products.
13. Veterinarians should ensure that appropriate diagnostic codes are entered into the electronic medical record.
14. We are always striving to continuous quality improvement in patient care and client service. Please bring any suggestions to the attention of Dr. Welborn or Dr. Lassett.

15. Every veterinarian has an obligation to actively pursue continuous quality improvement in patient care and client service for themselves and the practice. This includes, but is not limited to, active participation in journal club and continuing education opportunities. Every veterinarian should review the Florida Practice Act annually, ensure licensure and insurance are current and keep current with Pharmacy and Health Certificate requirements.
16. A professional appearance should be maintained at all times. This includes a pressed white coat and tie (men) when in the presence of clients.
17. Future care recommendations, including rechecks, should be recorded in the medical record. Changes in dosages of medications prescribed which are communicated to the client verbally should also be recorded in the medical record.
18. Any manual client discounts should be entered utilizing the veterinarian's Discount by Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ code rather than entering +1/-1 or simply not charging for services.
19. Veterinarians should work from their Daily Planner in Cornerstone every day, close out pending recalls, and make their personal recalls to clients for the day.
20. All medical note templates (MNTs) are to be completed within 24 hours of patient examination. The Addendum MNT is to be used to make any updates to the patient's record after that 24 hours period. A notation of normal, abnormal, or not examined with explanation as needed for each item will be recorded on the MNT. A blank entry can imply negligence for no diligence exercised. Always make a Problem or Diagnosis with a Differential.
21. Always list a client's reason for declining recommendations, and always ensure item is 'declined to history' on the PVL

I agree to abide by the above Veterinarian Guidelines at all times while employed by the Tampa Bay Veterinary Group hospitals.

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DVM Signature

Printed Name

Date