



News from Avondale

Caring people....caring for pets!

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COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

By Dr. Michelle Heyer



According to recent studies extrapolated from human medicine, the average doctor interrupts a client during an initial interview after only 12 seconds and only 12% of doctors allow a client to finish speaking completely. Similar studies indicate that if allowed to speak uninterrupted, an average client "story" will only last 2.5 minutes. Therefore, according to *Pfizer Frank Communication Conference*, good listening is as much a vital time saver as any other proficient clinical skill.

Client communication is a large part of the veterinary profession. Without good communication skills, it can be very difficult (if not impossible) to practice good medicine with proper client compliance and understanding. With this in mind, it is simple to see that communication is not only important to our veterinary profession, but it is absolutely essential. Although, becoming a good listener may, initially take more time than you currently plan for individual appointments, it does, like any other clinical skill, get easier with practice.

Proper communication among co-workers creates an environment where there are less misunderstandings and stronger team bonding. Although this benefit is extremely important, the relationship building potential with clients that can develop from proper communication is absolutely invaluable.

Pfizer's tips on having a good, efficient and informative interview are outlined in a step-wise manner. The **Initiation** is a brief (but important) portion that allows an introduction, greeting and a few seconds to establish a common ground that builds a rapport which makes it easier for a client to speak candidly with you. As this portion of the interview is very small, it is important that appropriate non-verbal cues be utilized (eye contact, professional dress/appearance, appropriate facial expression, open body posture, etc). Having a positive initiation makes the second step, **Gathering Information**, that much easier.

While gathering information, try to keep your questions open-ended to allow a client maximum potential to provide information to you. Discover the primary caretaker and involve them in the process. Summarize at the end of the clients "story" to reassure the client that you have been listening and clarify so that you are sure that you have picked up all of the important portions of their story.

After the client has given you their information, the next step in a successful interview is the **Explaining and Planning** portion of the interview. Here, you will be relaying to them the valuable information outlining your diagnostic and treatment protocols as well as the purpose and value behind those plans. It is necessary to remember that the vast majority of our clients do not have medical backgrounds, so the use of medical jargon, while this is somewhat of a comfort zone for most medical professionals, should be limited. The use of visual aids and identification of expectations can help to make a brief encounter one that is less likely to end in misconstrued information. It is absolutely essential to remember to check in after a few major points to avoid overloading clients with too much information and to ensure that comprehension is adequate. Additionally, include clients in decision-making. By making them a part of the process and working their expectations, concerns and thoughts into the planning and decisions, this portion of the interview may be one of the best tools for proper client compliance.

Closing the interview allows you one final opportunity to summarize your plans and to assess owner capability. Repetition of plans and concerns can solidify them in the clients minds as well as reassure them that you have their thoughts and feelings regarding their pets in mind.

Finally, **providing structure** within the interview speaks volumes about the organization of a clinic and a doctor as well as that doctor's confidence in what they have to relay (whether these impressions are true or not). Clarification, summarization, cueing transitions and asking the client for permission to progress indicate that you have an agenda prior to entering the exam room and allow a client to follow your progress through the interview successfully.

Although different circumstances allow for different types of interviews, it is possible to provide concise, clear communication in clinics of all varieties and sizes. As medical professionals, it is our absolute duty to ensure that we are providing this as a part of our services. The veterinary profession has traditionally been seen by the public as a trusted and genuine field and by providing good communication to our clients about their beloved family members it is likely to continue in that fashion.



WHAT'S NEW AT AVONDALE?

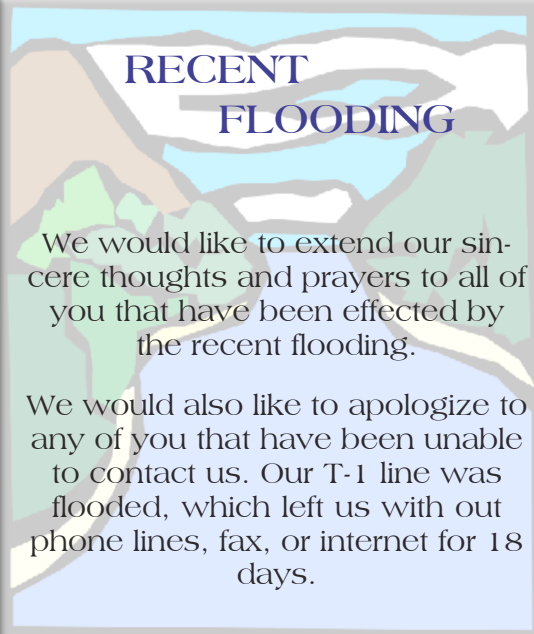
Avondale recently purchased the HILT (High Intensity Laser Therapy) from Cutting Edge. We are proud to be the first veterinary practice in the country to be using this state of the art technology. We are continuing to learn about this new equipment and communicating our findings and concerns with the team of scientists that have been working on this revolutionary Laser therapy.

HILT bases it's effectiveness on a particular and characteristic high peak power Laser pulse. Thanks to these features, it is able to deliver in depth the correct effective dose of energy, without being toxic on the area of incidence and for the deep tissues it is able to reach,

The HILTVET is used for pain treatment and repair of tissue. It is a non-invasive system that penetrates tissue to the damaged area and assists in pain management due to its anti-inflammatory and anti-edema properties.

APPLICATIONS:


- Pain Management
- Strains & Sprains
- Back injuries/IV Disc Disease
- Re-growth of hyaline joint cartilage
- DJD (degenerative joint disease)
- Deep musculoskeletal disorder
- Treatment of Lick Granulomas
- Accelerated healing times for muscle, tendon or bone repair.

RECENT FLOODING

We would like to extend our sincere thoughts and prayers to all of you that have been effected by the recent flooding.

We would also like to apologize to any of you that have been unable to contact us. Our T-1 line was flooded, which left us with out phone lines, fax, or internet for 18 days.



The Power of the Mind!

(This is not a mass of typos. Try to read it.)

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Amzanig huh?

