



Advisors for Veterinary Clinic Success

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Dear Friend,

Advances in science, technology and standards of medical care continue to change the face of veterinary medicine. Doctors that continue to adapt their medical protocols and charge accordingly for their services will better serve their clients and themselves.

Anesthesia, as well as associated items like blood work and IV catheter and fluids, are generally non-shopped individual services. Establishing anesthetic protocols and charging fairly for anesthesia is a win-win-win: the patient is safer, the client pays fairly, and the clinic gets a fair price with profit.

Veterinary Anesthesia

While the specific protocols for anesthesia and surgery will be different for each practice, there should be a minimally acceptable level of standards for all clinics to follow. The anesthesia protocols established by the practice will affect the quality of medicine being practiced and will get the doctors and staff on the same page.



It is essential that all team members, including the receptionist who is directly involved with the client, have a clear understanding of the anesthesia protocols for their practice, what the fees are and why they are represented through surgical estimates and invoices.

Veterinary staff should also acknowledge the seriousness of anesthesia and surgery for every animal patient at their practice. This will ensure that all pets receive the best possible care before, during and after surgery.

Pre-Operative Protocols

Medical Records

The medical records of the animal should be reviewed thoroughly prior to surgery. Was there an additional procedure recommended? Ears flush, lumpectomy or dental? Is the pet up to date on heart worm test, internal parasite exam, vaccines?

Physical Exam

All animals receive a physical exam on the day of the surgery, prior to undergoing anesthesia. Does the clinic have a "standardized" report card? Does the client get a copy? A blood screening can be used to determine if the animal is healthy enough for anesthesia and if they have any

conditions or problems that could affect anesthesia.

In most states, there is minimal exam data to be recorded:

- Weight
- Temperature
- Pulse rate
- Capillary refill time
- Respiration rate
- Lung sounds
- Surgical Release Form

Before the surgery is scheduled, it is important to communicate the procedures to be performed with the pet's owner and get a surgical treatment plan signed. Reviewing the pre-surgical information with the client is so that options for IV cath and fluids can be recommended if they aren't required.

Standard pre-op instructions regarding food and water intake should also be provided at this time - sending an email to the client is the best.

Anesthesia Protocols

Establishing veterinary protocols for anesthesia vary depending on the practice. However, getting the entire team on the same page is a necessity.

Method of Anesthesia

- The majority of surgical procedures done today are with inhalation anesthesia.
- Is there a minimum amount of time for gas anesthesia? (30 minutes?)
- Does the gas anesthesia time start at intubation or when the doctors begin surgery?
- Do you charge for additional anesthesia?
- The animal may be given a pre-op sedation before anesthesia - are the doctors in agreement as to what to give and how to price?

Vitals to Monitor

- Pulse rate, rhythm and quality
- Respiratory rate and pattern
- Capillary refill time
- Mucous membrane color
- Size of pupils
- Eye position
- Temperature

Ongoing Assessment

- Monitoring the animal throughout the surgical procedure is critical to provide a higher level of safety for the patient.
- Is this done by the tech or veterinary assistant?
- Additional equipment such as a pulse oximeter or blood pressure machine is recommended.
- Is the client provided a list and shown the pet's vital statistics while undergoing

anesthesia?

Post-Operative Care

- The veterinarian in charge must ensure continuous and direct observation of the animal during recovery.
- Monitoring the animal can identify possible post-operative complications such as hemorrhaging, respiratory or cardiac complications and pain.
- Post-operative management is vital to the overall care and safety of clinic patients and should be part of the protocols for the practice.

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