

## **Telemedicine, Virtual Care, And Adopting Best Practices**

Aaron Masecar, MA, PhD

### **Summary**

This past year we saw telemedicine come to maturity with AVMA/AAHA's "How to" guide, but many are still asking about legalities and implementation practices. Remote diagnostics and more specialized referral networks are becoming a reality, but how do veterinarians take advantage of them? This session will explore the latest in telemedicine and provide practical strategies on practice upgrading.

### **Regulatory – USA and Canada**

The regulatory landscape is quickly evolving. The Ontario VMA led the way early on with recommendations for telehealth use for practitioners. Since then, the American Association of Veterinary State Boards has adopted a new model act of practice that allows the veterinarian to exercise his or her professional medical opinion without the necessity of a hands-on examination. Two states (Colorado and Oklahoma) have already adopted a version of the practice act and many more are considering something similar.

### **Telemedicine/Teletriage/Telehealth/Virtual Care**

There are many names for many different kinds of activities. Some telehealth services like whiskerDocs and Guardian Vets offer services direct to consumer, whereas others, like Televet and Medici are apps that allow veterinary professionals to connect with their client. The kind of software tool that is used depends on the kind of problem that is being addressed. For example, excess call volume during regular hours or after hours means that using a service that attaches to your phone line would be beneficial. If, on the other hand, you're looking for a revenue capture method, then using an app that allows you to connect with your clients might be a better approach.

### **Remote Diagnostics**

The wearable market is maturing with new use cases becoming quickly defined. For example, post-surgical monitoring tells the veterinary professional about the activity level of the animal. In addition, activity trackers are being used for early diagnosis of OA in the feline population. The large animal market is benefitting from implantables that measure temperature levels of the animal to be able to quickly identify an animal that might be on the verge of sickness. We are just beginning to see the use of at home treat feeding technology as a means of tracking behavioral issues and possibly health issues as well. The market isn't quite saturated yet, but it is getting there.

### **Implementing the Solution**

Fuzzy Digital Health has been leading the way in providing teletriage and teleadvice care for clients from San Francisco to New York. They have a series of recommendations that help to create an exceptional experience for the client. Those recommendations include taking a great patient history, never diagnosing or prescribing in the absence of a VCPR, always providing multiple differentials, and always following up. The main thing when starting a telemedicine service is to understand your client needs and your business needs and start small. Don't offer the service to everyone right away; instead start with a particular subset of your clients and expand outwards from there.

### **Results from Telehealth Services**

Members who use telehealth services spend on average 25% more than those who don't use telehealth. 93% of referrals come from people who have used telemedicine services.