What’s In Your Medicine Bag?

A Cultural Competency Toolkit for Veterinarians

AVMA Future Leaders Class of 2012-2013
Objectives

• Define cultural competence
• Discuss relevance of cultural competence to veterinary medicine
• Explore strategies to increase cultural competence
What is Cultural Competence?

A set of congruent behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, organization, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations.

"Culture is the *shared knowledge and schemes* created by a set of people for *perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding* to social realities”

Why is it Relevant?
Cultural Competency is vital...from improving communication with clients to providing a better understanding of cultural attitudes and practices that affect animal care to recognizing how differences in gender attitudes affect the work environment, cultural competence touches every aspect of the profession.
Is Cultural Competence in your Medicine Bag?

- How must veterinarians adjust to demographic changes?
- How will veterinarians ensure adequate care delivery and optimal outcomes:
  - Clinical practice
  - Animal agriculture
  - Disaster response
  - Public health
- How can private practitioners utilize demographics to increase revenue?
A Culturally Competent Veterinarian

- Has **interest**, **drive**, and **energy** to adapt cross-culturally

- Possesses an **awareness** and **understanding** of culture and its impact on personal interactions, pet attachment, and business transactions

- **Develops** approaches for and **monitors** the effectiveness of cross-cultural interactions

- **Behaves** appropriately in cross-cultural situations
Achieving Cultural Competency

• **Recognize** broad dimensions of culture
• **Acknowledge** own biases
• **Increase** understanding of various cultures
• **Recognize** impact of cultural difference on veterinarian/client relationship
• **Adapt** services and skills
Changes in How We Practice

• Clinic Website
  – Does your website demonstrate openness to servicing a diverse clientele?
  – How do you reach clients for whom English is a second language?

• Social Media
  – Are you there?
  – The Gen X’ers and Y’s are!
• Phone Calls
  – What assumptions are you making based on voice, dialect, and name?
  – Do those assumptions affect services offered or patient care?
  – How do you handle calls from clients for whom English is a second language?
Changes in How We Practice

• Client Forms
  – As additional designations on the account include partner and significant other
  – Have a staff member available to aide clients who require assistance
  – Based on practice demographic, make bilingual forms available
Changes in How We Practice

• The Examination Room
  – What is on the walls?
  – Is the space inviting and comfortable?
  – What physical and non-physical barriers separate the provider and client?
  – What accommodations exist for hearing impaired or English as a second language clients?
Changes in How We Practice

• Communication
  – Understand the impact of culture on the client’s relationship to the animal
  – Appropriately and effectively communicate
  – Be deliberately conscious of own biases and effect on case management
Impact of poor communication

- Feeling insulted
- Feeling unwelcome, unwanted, and devalued
- Fear of seeking veterinary care
- Confusion about appointments or treatments
- Decreased client compliance
Cultural competency does not require mastery of norms, values, and practices of all cultures but rather requires recognition of one’s own biases, consciousness of cultural dynamics, and a willingness to adapt.
Put Cultural Competence in Your Medicine Bag

*Easy as ABC*

- **A**cknowledge own biases
- **B**enefit from cross-cultural interactions
- **C**onsciously communicate