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Sam qualified as a Veterinary Nurse in 1999 working in both general practice and referral practices. Since qualifying Sam has achieved her Advanced Diploma in both Medical and Surgical Nursing plus her Certificate in Education. Sam began her teaching career in 2007 and has been with Abbeydale Vetlink Veterinary Training since 2011 becoming a director in 2012. Sam has also been involved with the BVNA, becoming BVNA president 2015–2017 and is also a Senior Central Qualifications OSCE examiner.

Webinar Review:

A practical approach to nursing care plans

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Overview

This webinar is 57 minutes long and will provide an overview of the nursing process, nursing care plans and nursing models along with how to implement change in the practice. It also introduces advanced planning such as care bundles and integrated care pathways. This webinar is suitable for any student VN or RVN looking to get a different perspective on the use of care plans within practice, Helen provides a unique perspective of using care plans from both her experience as an RVN but also as an RN.

Nursing process, models and care plans- what is the difference?

The nursing process is a pathway we follow when looking at a patient, we plan, assess, implement and evaluate our nursing care. Each step has tasks for the nurse to perform with their patient to ensure a structured path is followed.

Nursing models contain details of what nursing actions to follow, key models used in practice are the human centred Roper, Logan & Tierney (RLT) Model and the Orpet & Jefferey Ability Model specifically designed for veterinary nursing. Both contain the key aspects of what we should check when admitting or caring for patients.

Nursing care plans are the written record of care that you have planned (through the nursing process) and implemented.

Benefits of care planning

Within the human centred field of nursing, care plans are long established. However, in veterinary nursing they are

still new, although have been taught at pre-registration level now for several years.

So, what are the benefits of producing care plans? Firstly, they support the holistic approach to our patient, rather than focusing on the broken leg or the fluid therapy, models of care can be used to gently remind us to consider the whole patient. Planning specific care also encourages us to look at the individual patient, recognising the unique needs to provide the best care for that patient and not relying on medical model of nursing (disease specific).

It is also important to recognise that as RVNs, we have been doing this for a long time! This is really nothing new, RVNs have always been good at adapting care for each patient. Also, we are good at care planning, thinking ahead and planning etc. and we are used to dealing with different diseases, different species even different breeds!

As a profession we need to remind ourselves of our Professional Code of Conduct and document our thoughts correctly and fully, to evidence our care that we provide, to communicate effectively with our colleagues and to reflect on the standards of nursing for each patient.

Barriers to care planning

The barriers to care planning include the time it takes to write them out, confusing terminology, and the feeling you are simply writing down the obvious.

Veterinary Nurses using and teaching care plans in practice tend to be newer qualified RVNs so there may be an issue

here, with the reluctance to change from more experienced staff. Traditionally, RVNs had a subordinate role to the Veterinary Surgeon, so in some cases it might be a change for RVNs to take a leading role determining the nursing care for patients.

The NHS overcome barriers by producing pre-completed standardised care plans to save time, although it takes away from some of the unique features you need to consider for your individual patient, you could end up with a quick 'tick' box care plan.

RVNs also need to appreciate the need to document effectively and fully even if it seems obvious, nursing documents can be a major input to a root cause analysis or even teaching patient care, to junior and student Veterinary Nurses.

Introducing change

Change is a source of stress, and unless a new initiative is introduced correctly,

it will simply fail as the stress will overcome desires to give the new idea a chance. There are many models describing how to introduce change. One such model is the P.D.S.A cycle (plan, do study and act). This cycle is worth considering if you are wanting to implement any change, whether it be a new care plan or even a change in shift structures.

Take home messages

1. Don't be scared or put off by nursing care plans! This is nothing new, a good veterinary nurse would have been unconsciously planning care for patients since registration.
2. Care plans are important not only to improve patient welfare, but also nursing ability and compliance with the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct.
3. Take time to properly implement any changes within the practice team, this will help the success of the new initiatives.

Reflection

This webinar prompted me to consider my own Code of Conduct in relation to my nursing documentation. Some information although may seem obvious and unimportant, I can now appreciate how this could be useful to write down.

To slowly introduce more care plans into use. I would like to consider putting together some pre-prepared care bundles for common procedures e.g. routine neutering. This will make documentation quicker but also more comprehensive.

I also want to consider how care plans could be used more within nursing clinics and for home care alongside the owners. The webinar explained that there is no point developing a care plan for a patient without engaging with the client. Working alongside owners can not only enhance compliance which ultimately improves animal welfare but also has the potential to improve the public perception of RVNs.

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