Collaboration between Primary Care Veterinarians and board certified veterinary cardiologists leads to longer, healthier life for pets

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Veterinary medicine has benefited from a societal shift in the perception of the companion animal, with family pets increasingly being considered a member of the family. This evolving attitude concerning our pets increases the demand for state-of-the-art medicine and specialized care. In our industry we have seen a proliferation of 24-hour care emergency/specialty hospitals that have delivered the opportunity to provide our patients with exceptional health care. Valid questions remain regarding which patients benefit from referral to a specialist and to what extent specialty care provides measurable benefits with regard to outcomes or quality of life. Logically, the expectation is that the specialized breadth of study and cumulative focused clinical experience of the specialist should result in improved diagnostic accuracy, optimal treatment plans, and improved outcomes, but there is little objective evidence of this within veterinary medicine. Additionally, there is a concern among some veterinarians that referral medicine will lead to a loss of in-house revenue which can influence the decision of referral recommendation.

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We decided to explore the dynamics of referral medicine with a retrospective study looking at both the survival time of canine congestive heart failure patients and the primary care veterinarian’s revenue during that time period. We grouped them based on patients referred with ongoing collaborative care with CVCA and compared their outcomes to patients managed within the primary hospital. We reviewed the records of four referring hospitals over five years and identified 107 potential patients, but due to strict exclusion criteria we were only able to include 26 patients. However, what we found was of interest and statistically significant.

Patients referred for a consultation with CVCA had a 75% increase in their survival time compared to patients managed in-hospital which was statistically significant (254 days vs. 146 days; P=0.012).

Additionally, there was a statistically significant correlation between survival time and the revenue of the primary care veterinarian (P <0.001) with a 22% increase in revenue per patient referred. In short, better medicine can translate to better business and profitability.
The relationship between the specialist and primary care practitioner, in veterinary medicine as in human medicine, is one of support and partnership in order to deliver optimal care and improve the survival times and quality of life of each patient. Collaboration and communication between the specialist, primary care veterinarian and owner is paramount in veterinary medicine. This triad of care will not only provide for the best clinical outcome for our patients but also an enhanced business model for your practice.

Questions, feel free to email CVCA at denise.kessler@cvcavets.com.
Meet Julie Andrie and Kendra LaFauci, our newest residents!

Meet Julie Andrie

Julie Andrie graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor’s degree. She then went on to attend Ross University for Veterinary School and completed her clinical year at Oklahoma State. After graduation from Oklahoma State, she went on to do her rotating internship at Kansas State University.

Dr. Andrie loves spending time with her two German Shepherds, Jackson and Cooper, and her two cats, Weezy and Kira.

Meet Kendra LaFauci

Kendra LaFauci, graduated from Tufts University with a Bachelor’s degree in Biology. She worked in various medical environments including the New England Aquarium, a small veterinary practice and a large human medical hospital in Boston. After a few years, she was fortunate enough to be able to return to Tufts veterinary school where she earned her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine. After graduation, she went on to complete a rotating internship in small animal medicine and surgery at VCA Alameda East in Denver, CO.

Dr. LaFauci’s interests include hiking, traveling and trying new restaurants and breweries. She loves spending time with family and friends and is the proud best friend of a grumpy orange cat names TRex, stepmom to an oversized lap dog named Vince and sibling to a Newfoundland puppy named Seamus.

Thank You!

Thank you to all of the primary care veterinarians who took the time to provide us feedback by filling out the Primary Care Veterinary Survey in May 2016. We encourage you to continue providing us feedback on a daily basis at any time by visiting at www.cvcavets.com and clicking on the “Feedback” button at the top of our home page.

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