

Guiding Your Team to Achieve YOUR Clinics Standard of Care.

This is a Big Topic; it is often raised in the group coaching calls, or questions on FB. So, the following is attempting to simplify this complex competent of your day to day operation within your vet business and achieve your strong standards of care.

Please note: As this is a primary topic, it is difficult to offer constructive comments in a small half page article, so today I am presenting the start of the article and then offering a link to download the full article. Even the full file is a summary.

What, when, where why and how of Standards of Care.

What are standards of care? They are established guidelines, protocols, and ethical considerations that dictate how the practice should operate and deliver services to ensure the well-being of animals and meet the expectations of clients. Are you team clear on that?

What analogy is there to veterinary standards of care? Strange as it may seem, you could use traffic rules and driving standards. There are clear regulations and guidelines that govern how people (all of us) should operate their vehicles on the road, obeying speed limits, following traffic signals, using turn signals, and stopping at stop signs, etc.

When are standards of care to be followed: ALL THE TIME !! That is why they are there.

Whose responsibility, is it ? Firstly, vet management to ensure they are established, made very clear and understood by all team members.

Secondly, for all team members to adhere to these standards, just like drivers are responsible to adhere to traffic rules.

Where are standards of care also required? Many other industries such as Human Healthcare, Dentistry, Pharmaceuticals, Agriculture, Childcare, Biomedical, etc. the list goes on. It is not only within the Vet industry. Need to offer that message to some in your team.

Why is it a challenge for some veterinary staff to maintain the practices SOC? It could be attributed to several reasons, such as - Diversity, workload, time constraints, pressure, low self-confidence, etc. The big one for many vets would be client expectations and financial restraints, the emotional pressures and mindset of what they think is best for the client.

Who losses out when not applied? EVERYONE! The patient not getting the first class treatment or quick appropriate medication. Clients not getting the best result. The business for not maximising opportunities that they can offer, finally the team member for falsely believing they are offering first class result.

Who benefits when it is applied – EVERYONE!! Even though some may consider otherwise.

How does a manager encourage and guide their team to apply it? Motivating employees to work within the standards of care involves understanding and addressing psychological factors that influence behaviour. A couple of areas are:

- Clear expectations - Clearly define the standards of care, outlining specific behaviours and outcomes expected from employees. Clear expectations reduce ambiguity and provide a basis for performance evaluation.
- Intrinsic motivation/rewards - By emphasising the meaningfulness and significance of the work. Highlight the value of providing quality care to animals, promoting a sense of fulfillment and pride.
- Autonomy - Provide employees with a sense of autonomy in their work. Allow them to make decisions related to patient care, in line with recommended standards. You are using the standards as a benchmark of recommended treatment. I can hear some saying *"Doesn't that allow them to offer what they think is best and take the cheaper option"*. For some and at times it may, though they must justify the decision, WHY they did what they did. What standards are they basing their decision on, keep them accountable. It is a balance.
- Positive re-enforcement - through recognition and rewards for adherence to standards. Acknowledge and reward employees who consistently meet or exceed the established standards of care.

How to overcome the challenges of vets and change the mindset to implement SOC? A couple are:

- Lack of confidence is largely behind this problem. May be the skill level, feeling hesitant.
 - Solution - Provide mentoring, training, and support around this area, emphasise the value and skills.
- Client relationships – new vets may prioritise building client relationships over financial conditions fearing the challenge charging too much may jeopardise the relationship. Common belief in humans – *"I want to be liked"*.
 - Solution - Emphasise the importance of fair compensation for services rendered. Communicate that clients value quality care and are willing to pay for it.

- Lack of business awareness – the fair and reasonable aspects of running a business. A lack of understanding about why fees are set at that level.
 - Solution – offer business training and educate the true cost of running a business and the sustainability of a business. That is why we recommend using the 100 coin game.

A few more ways to encourage all team members to implement standards of care.

Fee Structure Guidelines: Ensure you have a clear fee structure and guidelines for charging clients. Provide a transparent breakdown of fees for different services, allowing vets to understand the rationale behind pricing.

Mentorship Programs: Implement mentorship programs pairing experienced veterinarians with those who are newer to the profession. This mentorship can include guidance on setting appropriate fees and handling client interactions.

Communication Training: Offer communication training to help vets effectively convey the value of their services to clients. This includes explaining the costs associated with quality care and the benefits to the health and well-being of the animals.

Professional Development: Encourage ongoing professional development to enhance clinical skills and stay updated on industry best practices. This can boost confidence and reinforce the idea that quality care is worth the appropriate compensation.

Client Education: Implement client education initiatives to help clients understand the value of veterinary services. Clear communication about the benefits of preventive care and comprehensive treatment plans can justify fees.

FINALLY - Help them to develop a sense of **worthiness within themselves**. It is about developing positive qualities such as taking responsibility to follow the standards, displaying a high level of competence and integrity.