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Implementing Preventive Care Protocols



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Dear Colleague:

Preventive care is not a new concept, but rather a pillar of ideal care for our patients and their owners. We know that diseases and changes caught early mean we can do more to help maintain quality and quantity of life.

Conceptually, it is easy to understand preventive care; our biggest stumbling blocks can be implementation and communication. It can be like herding cats to get everyone within a practice team to understand, buy into, and work together to build the right messaging about your preventive care program.

What can preventive care protocols do for you and your practice?

- **Preventive care protocols that include diagnostic testing benefit your patients *and* the bottom line.** Consistent delivery of preventive care education and services helps keep our patients healthier and our clients happier. It also builds the bonds of the veterinarian-client-patient relationship, which in turn leads to higher profits through increased compliance.
- **Preventive care protocols help you carry the value from the front desk to the back of the practice.** Each team member needs to know what your protocols are for the various species and life stages you see. Consider integrating that information into the training process to set a foundation for success. Following a template for each patient with preventive care diagnostic profiles is like using a pilot's flight checklist. It helps make sure that all systems are "go" while still allowing the flexibility to adjust for individual patient needs.

What you're holding in your hands right now builds upon a previously released document, *Promoting Preventive Care Protocols: Evidence, Enactment, and Economics* (aaha.org/preventive-care), and is similarly chock-full of practical, ready-to-use information to help you create and implement preventive care protocols today. Even if you already have long-established protocols, it never hurts to review and update them to freshen your team's delivery of care.

At our AAHA-accredited practice in a busy urban area, these publications have become essential time-saving tools as our practice has worked to successfully implement preventive care. We believe they will help you to do so as well.

Wishing you all success,

Margot K. Vahrenwald, DVM, CVJ
Owner, Medical Director, Veterinarian
Park Hill Veterinary Medical Center

Alexandra Smith
Practice Manager



The Importance of Preventive Care Protocols

Are you ready to take your practice to the next level? How about improved relationships with your clients, better care for your patients, and increased revenue for your practice? Implementing preventive care protocols—the focus of this booklet—may help you achieve these goals.

As a veterinary team, you probably already practice some basic forms of preventive care, such as annual physical exams and recommended vaccinations. But implementing an expanded set of preventive care protocols—including routine diagnostic screenings—can help your practice bring preventive care to the forefront.

Implementing preventive care protocols that include routine diagnostic screenings can help prevent disease, promote early detection, manage chronic health problems, and allow for bonding with clients through a shared concern for a beloved animal. And incorporating an expanded system of preventive care into your overall strategy can also help your practice prosper financially.

Preventive care protocols can include:

- Panel design
- Pricing structure
- Staff engagement
- Client communication

This booklet includes tips on implementing preventive care protocols in your practice and advice from others on how they made it work.

Implementing preventive care protocols can lead to higher-quality patient care, richer client relationships, and a stronger veterinary practice. It's a win-win-win!

Patients Win

Preventive care can help veterinarians identify disease much earlier. This allows for expanded treatment options and can lead to longer, healthier lives.

Clients Win

Preventive care gives veterinarians the opportunity to educate clients on how to improve the wellbeing





and longevity of the animals they love. Clients also appreciate being involved in the healthcare process.

Your Practice Wins

Clients who grasp the value of preventive care tend to bond more with their veterinarians. Often, clients will schedule more regular visits, which can result in healthier patients—and healthier practices.

Benefits of Preventive Care

There are many benefits to implementing your own preventive care protocols that include diagnostic testing, but they can be distilled into two main categories: those for the patient and those for the practice.

Patient Benefits

- Early detection of diseases and conditions, leading to early intervention
- Getting baseline values and monitoring trends for individual patients
- If no problems are detected, celebrating good news with clients

Practice Benefits

- Improved practice profitability
- Setting yourself up as an invaluable partner and the go-to source of knowledge for your clients

- Building client loyalty, which can drive practice success long term

Supporting Data

Regular diagnostic tests—even performed on healthy animals—may reveal underlying conditions that can lead to follow-up treatments. That means better care for animals and more revenue for your practice.

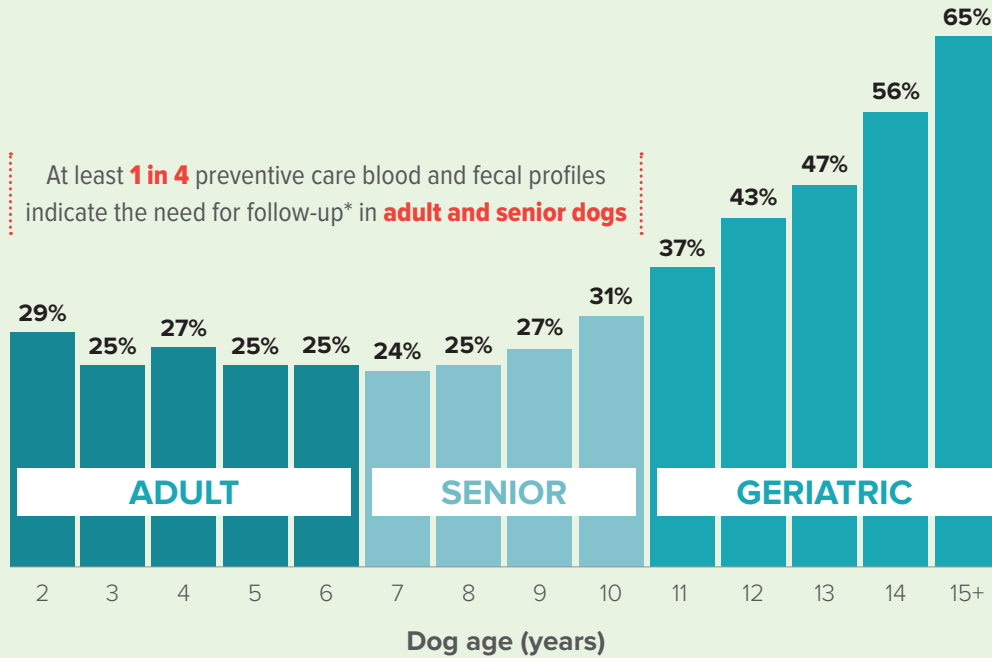
The AAHA publication *Promoting Preventive Care Protocols: Evidence, Enactment, and Economics* referenced a big data study¹ of more than a quarter of a million wellness visits that included a chemistry panel, CBC, and SDMA tests. The study revealed significant findings in patients from adult to geriatric life stages—requiring veterinary follow-up in

- 1 in 7 adults (dogs aged 3–6 years; cats aged 2–8 years)
- 1 in 5 seniors (dogs aged 7–10 years; cats aged 9–13 years)
- 2 in 5 geriatrics (dogs aged 11+ years; cats aged 14+ years)

¹Data on file at IDEXX Laboratories, Inc., Westbrook, Maine, USA. Analysis of IDEXX Practice Intelligence and internal data for 2,543 US practices that use IDEXX for both their in-house and reference lab chemistry testing, 2017.

Preventive care testing is clinically relevant to all adult dogs

According to an analysis of samples from approximately 30,000 dogs



*Due to “clinically significant findings,” which would indicate the need for follow-up, further consideration, or a change in action by the clinician. Clinical significance based on rules determined by an IDEXX veterinarian panel.

Source: Data based on analyses of **29,795** canine wellness profiles (Chem 22 including the IDEXX SDMA® Test, IDEXX CBC testing with reticulocyte parameters, the Lab 4Dx® Plus Test, and Fecal Dx® antigen testing) associated with wellness visits; testing performed at IDEXX Reference Laboratories on July 13, 2016–February 28, 2019. Represented US regions by proportion of included profiles: Northeast (32.0%), South (41.3%), Midwest (17.4%), West (7.6%), and region not reported (1.7%). Data on file at IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. Westbrook, Maine, USA.

A new big data study examined canine wellness profiles run at IDEXX Reference Laboratory, which included an IDEXX 4Dx® Plus Test (for vector-borne disease screening) and Fecal Dx® antigen testing (for the detection of hookworm, roundworm, and whipworm infections), in addition to a Chem 22 with the IDEXX SDMA® Test and IDEXX CBC testing with reticulocyte parameters.

The study found that while most profiles were run on senior canines, preventive care diagnostics are as clinically relevant on adult patients as young as two years of age.

Practical Steps to Implementation

The most important thing to remember when beginning your preventive care journey is this: It is an ongoing process. There is no one-and-done solution. Like your personal budget, your preventive care protocols will need tweaking, monitoring, and adjustment in order to keep working at an optimum level.

The first step is to commit to implementing protocols and making a phased and pragmatic plan that outlines how your practice will achieve success. There's no standard timeline for implementation—some practices can quickly address all of the

components below, whereas others take a slower approach. Speed is not a critical success factor here, so proceed at the pace that works for your practice.

After making the commitment, there are four important parts to making it work.

1. **Decide** on diagnostic panels and protocols
2. **Establish** prices for compliance
3. **Engage** and make the most of your staff
4. **Prepare** client communications and education



Set Up Panels and Protocols

Whether you're meeting puppies and kittens for the first time, caring for young- and mature-adult patients, or treating senior patients, preventive care that includes diagnostics can help patients live longer, healthier lives. Develop protocols and panels for each life stage tailored to your patients.

If you want a simple, easy-to-follow system that everyone can remember, consider a basic two-level system: adult and senior panels. Specific tests will differ based on species, but the age tiers can stay the same so staff have only two options for each patient. For more information and for other ideas, schedule a meeting with your veterinary diagnostic consultant.

Consistency in your protocols makes it easier for staff to know what to do. They don't have to remember which doctor likes which panel, since all doctors use the same ones.



PRO TIP

For more specific advice on creating panels and pricing that fit with your practice, consider scheduling a time to talk to your veterinary diagnostic consultant.

If at First You Don't Succeed . . .

If the panels or pricing structure you set up initially aren't producing the results or levels of compliance you are expecting, you can always change them. Just make sure everyone knows the new protocols.

"You have to recognize, sometimes you're not going to do so well," says Capital Vets practice manager Nancy Drumm, who has successfully implemented preventive care protocols in her four practices. "Sometimes your panel structure isn't working out—so reboot. Get back to it, and do it again."





Set Pricing

There are many variables to consider when developing pricing for your preventive care services. You have to find a realistic strategy that works for you and your clients.

When pet owners are educated, they are more likely to comply with your practice's testing recommendations. Even if they agree on the importance of the tests, traditional markup strategies may prohibit them from moving forward with recommendations because it's not affordable.

What Is Compliance-Based Pricing?

Compliance-based pricing is a strategy for setting prices that will improve compliance, or participation. When adding preventive care protocols, this can mean setting prices that will encourage clients to participate in diagnostic testing for their pets as part of a routine wellness visit. Fritz Wood, CPA, CFP, recommends pricing the diagnostics at a lower price point than you would set for tests on sick animals.

Says Wood, "The price point should be significantly less than similar tests on a sick pet. A sick pet test should cost significantly more than a preventive care test since it will undoubtedly consume much more of the most valuable practice resource—doctor time."

Incremental Pricing

Wood suggests setting prices such that the client sees only a minor increase in cost compared with a regular visit. You're not asking clients to make a significant incremental spend, Wood says. "Assuming the patient already needs a fecal screen and a vector-borne disease screening test, how much more does the client need to spend for a comprehensive panel? Keep that last number modest. That's the compelling value."

Remember: Even if your pricing does not yield a large profit per exam, if more clients say yes, over time your total profit will increase. Consider this example from a grocery store: If you raise the price of milk from \$3 to \$10 per gallon, a few people will still buy it and your profit on each gallon will be much larger. However, instead of selling 1,000 gallons per month you will sell 10 gallons per month. If milk costs you \$2, you now make \$80 of profit per month and you used to make \$1,000. It is obviously better for you to sell milk at \$3 than \$10.

Pricing for Your Market

Traditionally, lab prices have been focused on sick animals and calculated as a function of cost. For example, a practice might multiply the cost of a test by 2 or 2.5 or sometimes even more to arrive at a price.

Compliance-based pricing, on the other hand, instead of starting with cost, starts with the pet owner or "the market." At what price will the number of pet owners saying yes to preventive panels result in the greatest number of patients being tested or the greatest profitability? Like all pricing, compliance-based pricing is more art than science, but very importantly, it's responsive to the things that matter most—patients and their owners.

—Fritz Wood, CPA, CFP



Reach for the Low-Hanging Fruit

Early detection of disease at the time of a preventive care visit can lead to an increase in all aspects of your hospital, which can include an increase in visits (in the form of rechecks), surgery, other diagnostics, pharmacy sales, and specialty diet sales. Preventive care diagnostics are “low-hanging fruit” as they are currently not being done at a very high rate, but have very strong science backing their need.

—Peter Brown, DVM, chief veterinary officer for Cara Veterinary, a network of veterinary hospitals focused on providing the highest-quality medicine in a family environment

Involve Staff

Getting staff buy-in is important for the success and “stickiness” of the protocols within the practice. If your staff believe in the value of the protocols in place, they will consistently and organically engage in conversations about preventive care with clients and encourage participation.

Sometimes it can seem unnatural to talk about pricing and profit with the entire staff. After all, most veterinary professionals are in the profession to help animals, not just to make money. However, having honest discussions about the practice’s need to stay profitable is crucial to staff buy-in. Frame it in terms of providing better care for patients.

SQUAD GOALS

On average, practices generate 14% of their total revenue from laboratory testing.² Challenge your team to bump that figure up to 20%!



²Financial and Productivity Pulsepoints, Tenth Edition, AAHA Press, 2019.

Engage Your Staff

Your entire practice team has a role to play in implementing preventive care protocols and ensuring your practice's success. From the receptionist at the front desk to the veterinarians and technicians in the exam room, each team member should be familiar with their role in promoting and following through with your practice's preventive care protocols. Use the information below as a starting point for determining specific roles and tasks.



Front Desk

The customer service representative (CSR)/receptionist's role is critical. The CSR makes first contact when the client calls to make an appointment and is also the last person the client sees as they follow their dog's happily wagging tail out the door.

- **When a client calls to schedule a visit**, the CSR can set the expectation for preventive screenings from the get-go. By saying, "We're going to draw blood for some testing we need to do today," they can plant a seed in the client's mind that diagnostic testing is going to be recommended and is part of a typical visit.
- **At check-in**, the CSR can mention the services included in that patient's visit, including all

diagnostic preventive lab work. Again, they are setting the expectation for compliance, and normalizing your protocols.

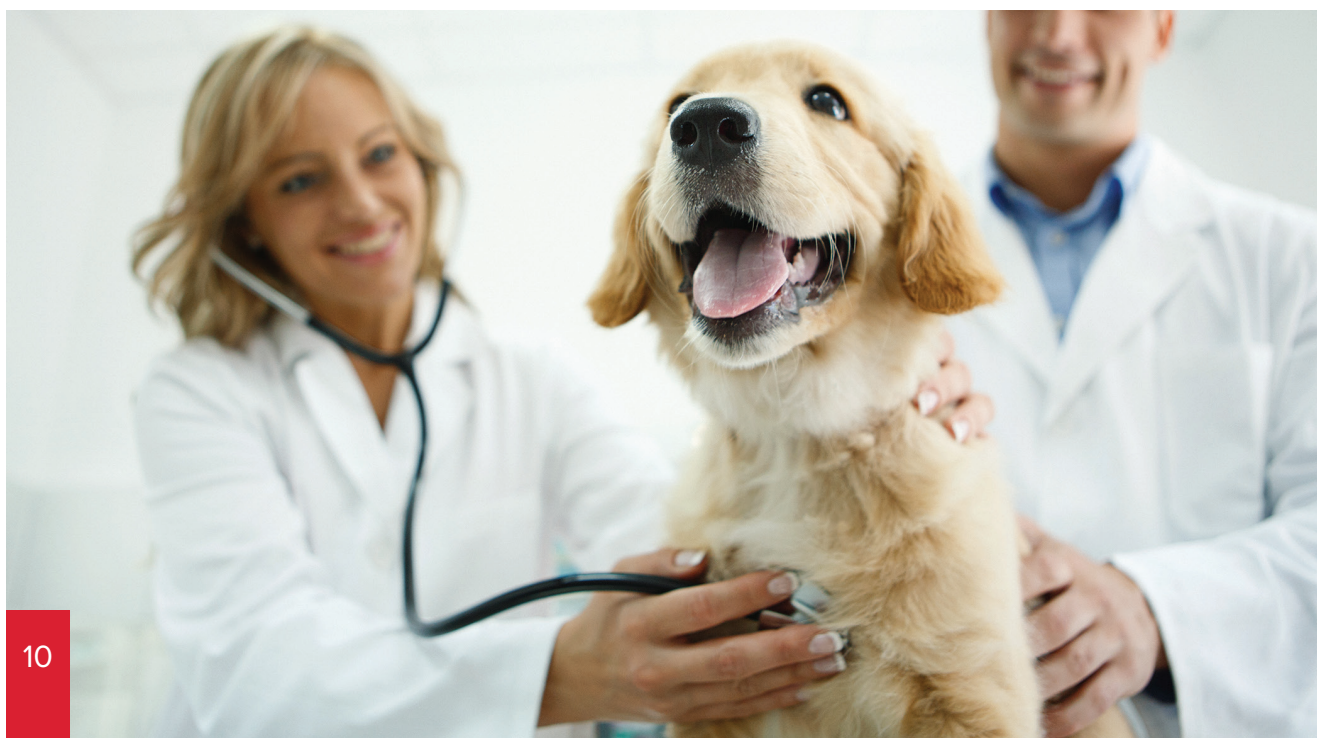
- **At checkout**, the CSR can provide positive feedback for clients who followed recommendations for screenings. Also consider forward booking: as the client checks out, schedule their next appointment, and mention the diagnostics that you recommend for that next exam: e.g., "We'll do some preventive bloodwork at Sadie's next appointment as well."



Technicians and Assistants

Front desk staff pass the torch to technicians and assistants to continue the conversation. When a tech is in the room with the client, she can reinforce the importance of diagnostics during the visit. While taking the patient's history, she can reiterate the need for preventive care screenings, increasing the odds a client is "sold" on the procedures when the doctor comes in.

Since technicians and assistants have an important role in many of the diagnostic procedures, they can also answer questions about the screenings and why they're needed, and after the results are in, they can report the results to the client—especially when there is good news.





Veterinarians

The veterinarian's role is multifaceted, and she shoulders much of the responsibility for the medical case for preventive care. Her role includes

- setting the practice's wellness standards for patients;
- leading team education and discussion on the medical reasons for implementing preventive care protocols, including being a champion for the preventive care cause among the staff; and
- explaining screening recommendations in detail to clients

If a client has been educated and prepared for testing recommendations by the front desk and technicians, the veterinarian's role should simply be to make the recommendation and get the OK from the client.

The reality is that most client conversations are not this smooth, so see page 13 for guidance on client communications.



Managers

The practice manager's role revolves around the logistics of implementing preventive care protocols. This includes

- planning and scheduling team training and education sessions,
- setting practice goals,
- coordinating the launch of your new protocols,
- client communications, and
- tracking metrics

Once the protocols are in place, keeping track of how the practice is performing is important. The manager should also keep tabs on how the staff is managing with the new protocols in place and be willing to tweak procedures or adjust goals to compensate for any bumps in the road.

All Aboard

Imperative to a successful implementation of your new process are creating consensus within the practice and training staff on what to say and how to say it. Educate your staff on what each panel is and why following the protocol is doing right by your patients.

The flow chart on the next page shows the impact a coordinated team and consistent message can have on compliance.

The Power of Stories

Connecting on a personal level with clients is a great way to bond the client to the practice. One way of doing this is by telling stories about your own experience with preventive care. Give your staff the opportunity to tell a personal story by making it easy for them to test their own pet with the new protocols you have in place. Once you start preventive care screenings, you are bound to find some conditions that need treating. Having anyone on staff relay these anecdotes can go a long way with clients who are on the fence about following the practice's recommendations.



Choose Your Own Narrative

This flow chart shows two scenarios. The blue boxes show how a visit can go with the proper staff training: Staff is aligned, and the client feels confident and more closely bonded to the practice. The red boxes show what can happen with no staff training and no alignment or buy-in. In the red case, the client receives mixed messages and may choose to take her business elsewhere. Which path will you take?

Meet Kate. She adopted Clancy, a six-year-old Chihuahua, a few years ago and recently moved to the area. Through word of mouth, the AAHA-accredited hospital locator, and reading online reviews, she found Dr. Janson's hospital.



Meet Dr. Janson. Her motto is "Prevent the preventable!" Dr. Janson met with her team and established roles and responsibilities for educating pet owners on preventive care.

Did they get the message?

Kate checks Clancy in with the CSR

The CSR tells the tech that Kate and Clancy are ready to be loaded into the exam room.

Since Clancy is considered an adult dog, the CSR advises Kate that Dr. Janson believes in the importance of diagnostic testing to detect early changes in his organ functioning. Since Kate has received communications from the practice telling her what to expect during her visit, she is not surprised. The CSR tells Kate that the tech will explain more once she goes into the exam room.

The technician brings Kate and Clancy into the exam room, takes a brief history, discusses vaccines, and leaves to find Dr. Janson.

The technician brings Kate and Clancy into the exam room, takes a brief history, and discusses vaccines and preventive care. She touches on what type of diagnostic testing would be beneficial for Clancy and gives an estimate that includes lab work that is specially priced for client compliance.

Dr. Janson introduces herself, examines Clancy, and recommends diagnostic testing in addition to Clancy's vaccines. Dr. Janson shares the cost estimate for these recommendations.

Kate is surprised at the news that her dog needs any diagnostic testing since he seems healthy, and she balks at the cost. She declines and leaves, feeling disenchanted by the whole experience.

Since she understands why Dr. Janson is recommending lab work, Kate consents to the specially priced diagnostic panel. She leaves feeling like Dr. Janson's team leaves no stone unturned and wants the best for her and Clancy.

When everyone in your practice is clear on their role and how they play a part in successful implementation of preventive care protocols, it's a huge accomplishment for your team. Change is hard, so congratulate your team on achieving this new way of working together.



Client Communications

Communicating with the client before, during, and after their visit is a key part of successful implementation of preventive care protocols in your practice. Clear communication about what they can expect and more importantly *why* you are doing what you're doing builds trust and can lead to increased compliance.

Consider also the mode in which you communicate. Your clients most likely span several generations, from millennials to baby boomers, and they all prefer different ways of communication. Boomers might prefer a personal phone call, whereas a millennial might rather see a text or check an app for messages. During checkout, ask the client what they prefer and make a note in their record. Oftentimes, however, a combination of methods will pack the most punch.

Layer Your Messages

Phone calls, postcard reminders, text messages, brochures, posters, computer monitors that show results, and even social media are all different layers of communication you can use to get your message across. Make sure you are utilizing all modes of communication for maximum exposure before, during, and after the client's visit.

Why Are We Doing This Again?

If a client asks why you are recommending preventive care diagnostic testing, you can say . . .

- Pets can't talk, so test results give pets a voice
- It leads to earlier detection of disease and treatment for otherwise undetected conditions
- Establishing baselines allows us to track results year after year
- It helps us provide longer, happier lives for pets!

The Wow Factor

You want clients to say, “Wow.” How? You’ve got to show them something they don’t know or didn’t expect. This can be with posters in your practice or visual displays on tablets or large-screen TVs, including graphs and images. Couple this with your knowledge of how *their* pet can be helped through preventive care diagnostics, and you are almost guaranteed a “Wow, I didn’t know that.” See below for tips on “how to wow.”



Before the Visit

When the client calls to schedule the exam, set the expectation that preventive bloodwork will be performed. For example, you can say, “We’ll be drawing blood today for some tests.”

After the exam is scheduled, continue to share information on the importance of preventive care screening through multiple methods, including postcard reminders, emails, phone calls, and text messages.

Social media can also play a role in improving compliance. Interesting, fun posts about preventive care can be helpful. Don’t be too heavy-handed though. Keep it light to keep people engaged.

HOW TO WOW

- Age charts showing how pets age faster than people
- Findings of big data study: e.g., “Did you know that preventive care testing for your younger dog is just as important as it is for your older dog?”



During the Visit

Your CSRs, technicians, and assistants can reinforce the idea that preventive care diagnostics are a good idea. Having a script to get the conversation started can be helpful. For example: “The doctor asked me if we could get the bloodwork started.”

Visual aids can be an important tool in improving compliance. In the waiting and exam rooms, posters will draw people’s attention. Consider posters with information on your core preventive care panels, including pricing if you wish. Other posters can outline what clients can expect during visits and the benefits of preventive care diagnostic testing. Having devices and screens in the exam room to display images and data to clients can also be a powerful tool.

These types of things add value by showing the client something they don’t usually see, and by involving them in their pet’s healthcare process.

HOW TO WOW

- Screens displaying data or diagnostic images
- Printed graphs of test results
- Your in-depth knowledge of a particular client’s pet



PRO TIP

Don’t forget to forward book the next exam at checkout. You can promote preventive care diagnostics on the reminder postcard or email.

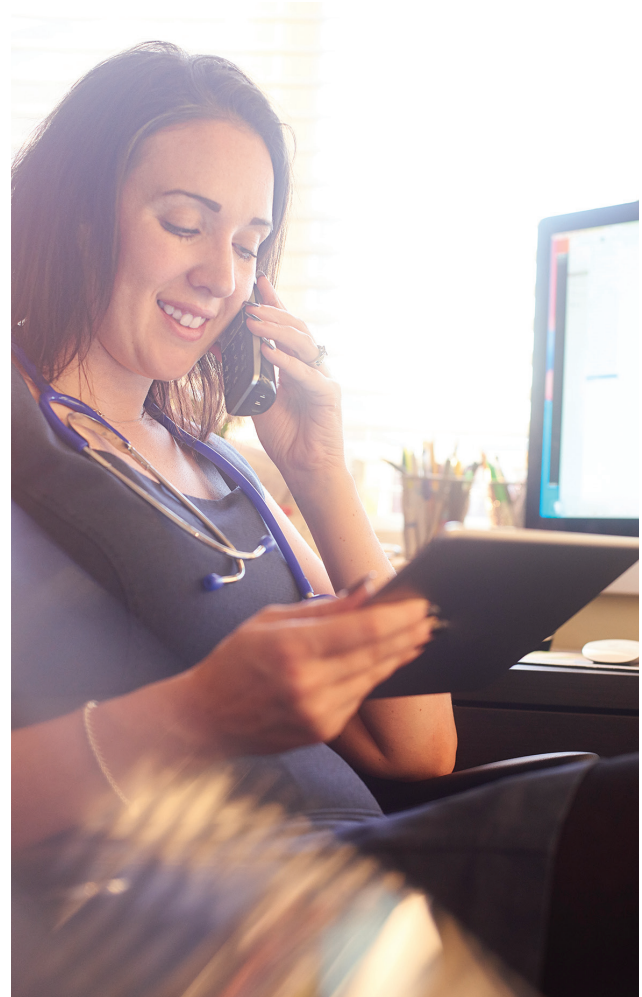
Follow Up

Before you call the client with their pet’s test results, send an email with the results and what they mean for their pet. Including graphs or images in the email will go a long way toward getting the client engaged and invested in regular preventive care screening.

When you call, the client can refer to the information and you can drive your point home. Then you are either celebrating the good results or explaining that something needs to be addressed.

HOW TO WOW

- Email the client with results, graphs, and images
- Reinforce to the client that they are doing the right thing by monitoring their pet’s health
- Tell the client what a great pet parent they are for helping discover an underlying condition early



Get Used to Hearing No—but Don't Give Up

The goal of all this communication is to get the client to comply with regular preventive care screenings. Of course, even the most skilled communicator will not convince every client every time.

At first, you might only get 1 in 10 clients to comply with your recommendations. Don't give up! Set expectations with staff that a 10% agreement rate is OK to start.

Let the staff know that it's all right if clients say no—but they should be resilient. Once a client has declined services, you can let it go for that visit. But recommend preventive care screenings at their next visit. With every recommendation, you're planting the seed. Consistency and layering of messages will build to compliance—maybe not this visit, but perhaps the next.

Celebrate Good News

Keep clients engaged by celebrating good news with them. Instead of saying that you didn't find anything to be concerned about with their pet, look at the bigger picture and let them know that their pet is healthy and that they are playing an important role in keeping track of their pet's health.

Plant the Seed

I educate my staff all the time that we should not expect every client to say yes to preventive care bloodwork. However, if we take the time to educate them in a nonjudgmental way about why we think it is important, then that message is like a little seed. Education takes time and patience and if we treat our clients with compassion and are respectful when they say “No, not today,” then they trust us more over time. Getting your staff to buy into the importance of having the discussion every year is a big step in being successful.

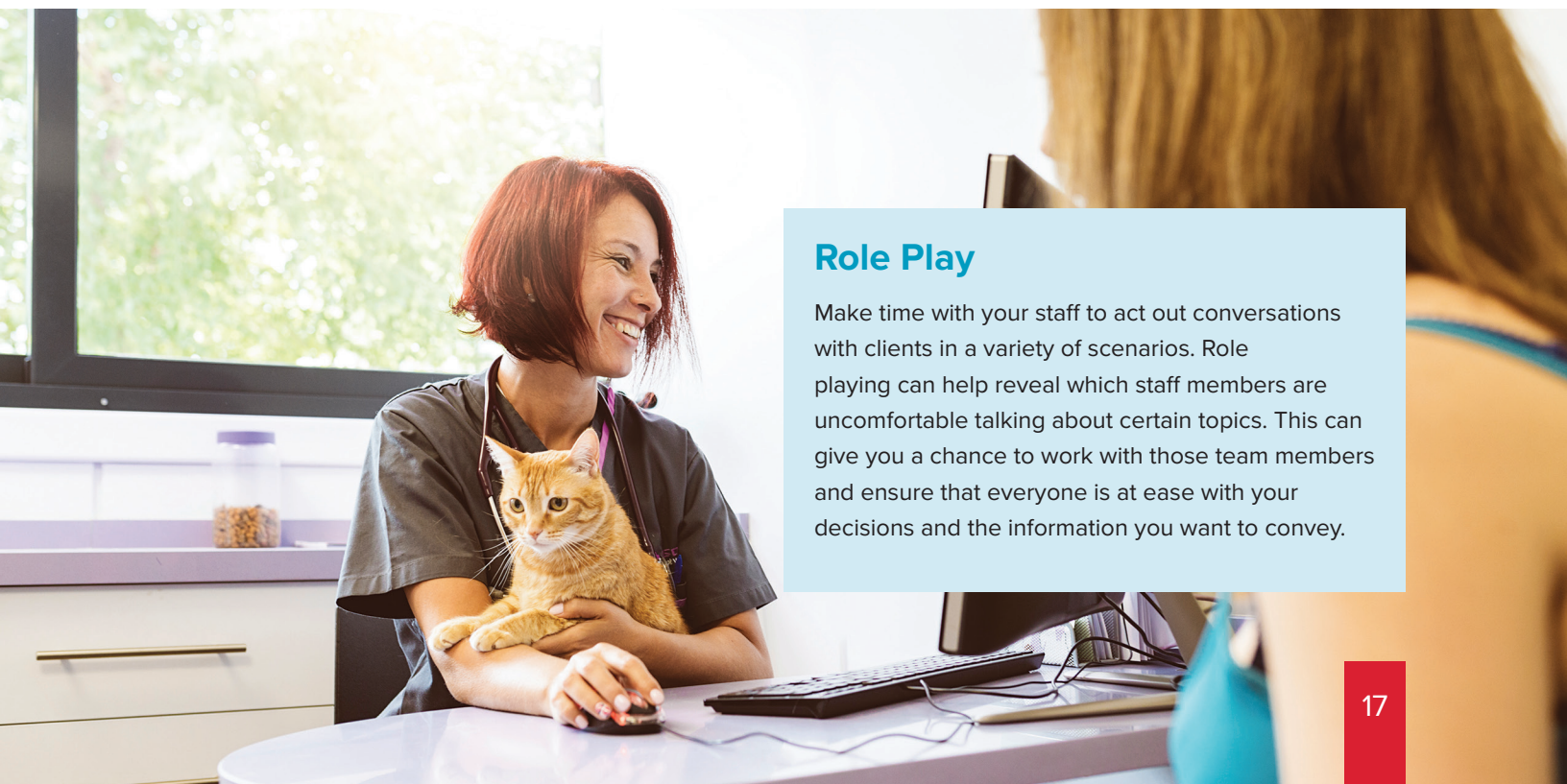
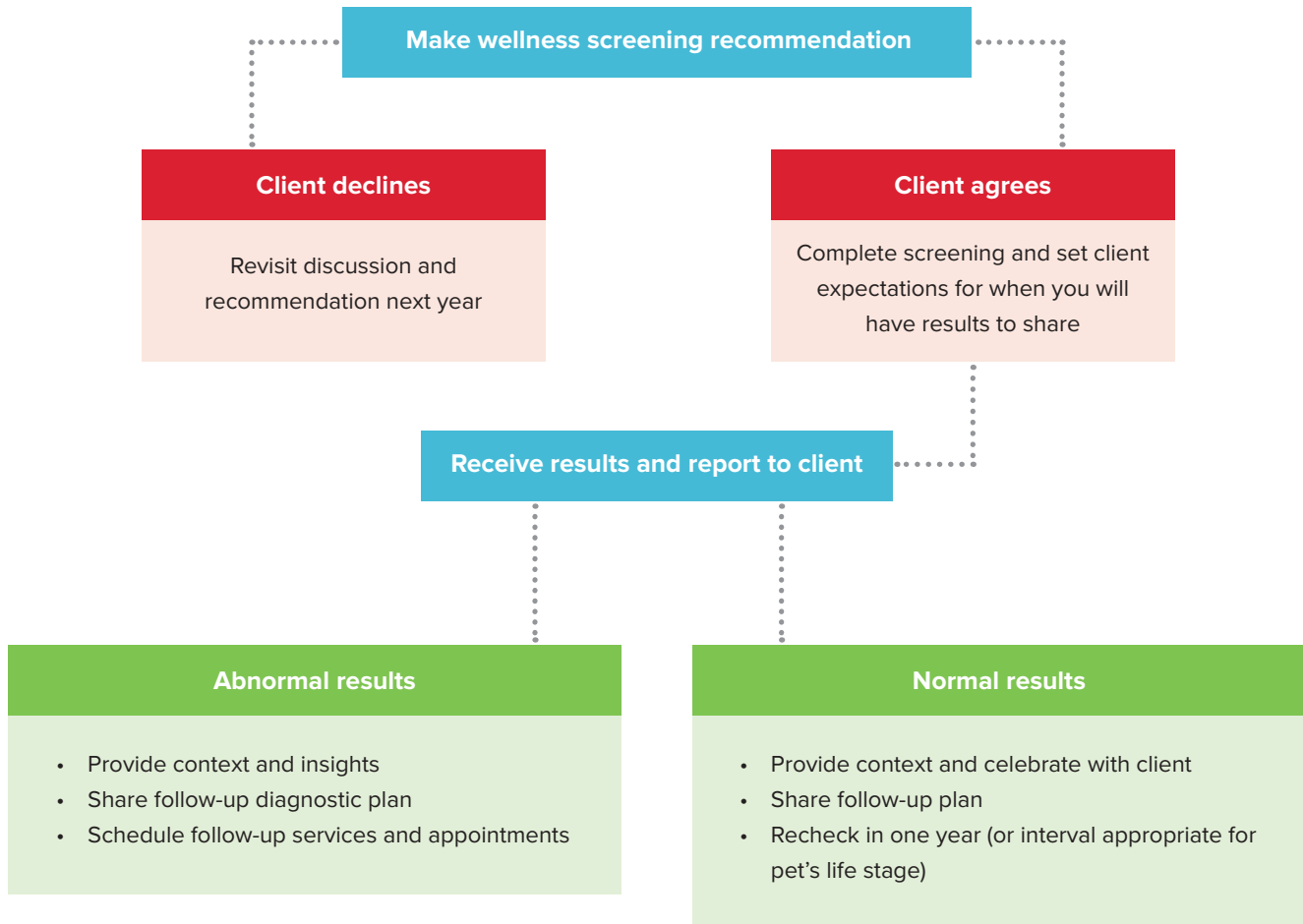
—Julie Miles, DVM, Compassionate Care Animal Hospital

Celebrate *Your* Good News, Too

Once your preventive care protocols are up and running, make sure you share the positive results with your staff. Letting each team member know how they are making a difference in the health of the practice is critical to success.



Communicating with Clients About Screenings



Role Play

Make time with your staff to act out conversations with clients in a variety of scenarios. Role playing can help reveal which staff members are uncomfortable talking about certain topics. This can give you a chance to work with those team members and ensure that everyone is at ease with your decisions and the information you want to convey.

Let's Do This!

Once you make the commitment to implement preventive care protocols, you can take concrete action to make it all work.

Make a Plan

- Arrange a meeting with your veterinary diagnostic consultant for ideas on specific panels and pricing
- Create customized panels with doctors
- Price for compliance; make it affordable
- Set initial goals for success (e.g., 10% agreement from clients, 15% profit increase)

Engage Staff

- Educate your team on the protocols you have decided upon and the rationale behind your pricing strategy
- Identify and communicate how each staff member plays a role and the difference they can make
- Implement a reward system (e.g., gift cards or pizza parties if practice goals are met)
- Make sure everyone understands the value of the preventive care protocols you have in place and that staff are comfortable talking about it with clients

Begin Client Education

- Prepare in-hospital materials (age posters, brochures) to reinforce the value of your preventive care diagnostic recommendations to clients
- Align staff on communicating preventive care protocols to clients
- Decide on methods for presenting lab results to encourage future compliance

Going Forward

Now that you have all the tools to implement preventive care protocols in your practice, you can roll out your protocols, sit back, and watch the clients line up at your door, right? Not quite. While many practices that have implemented preventive care protocols have seen increases in revenue and profits, it has to be an ongoing process.

If something doesn't work, you can revisit with your veterinary diagnostic consultant and make appropriate adjustments to panels and pricing. Keeping your staff engaged, following through with client education, and being willing to try new ideas are all important pieces of the puzzle. Most of all, remember that by implementing preventive care protocols, you are doing right by the patient, and the practice.



How They Did It

These practitioners made preventive care work. Here are some practical tips on how they got everything going.

Capital Vets

Nancy Drumm, practice manager for Capital Vets, which operates four AAHA-accredited small animal practices in the Capital District region of New York:

Tip 1: Show, Then Tell

We have posters in every exam room explaining why we recommend early detection diagnostics as part of our preventive care protocols and use the findings from studies to support the science behind our recommendations.

Tip 2: Start with the Doctors

Developing protocols has to start with the doctors. It is absolutely critical that they define preventive care for the practice because that is what they will be recommending in the room—and it is essential that

it comes from their heart. We can certainly run into problems in multidocor locations when doctors do not agree. It is crucial to listen to everyone, to understand where and why differences occur, and to resolve them as a doctor team before moving on to training and implementation.

Tip 3: Money Talks

It was important to be upfront about the financial implications for the teams when we were discussing implementing these changes in our practice. This is often a hurdle in training for team members, but we need to get it right in terms of the business challenges we are facing in veterinary medicine.

Tip 4: Keep Working at It

This is a process that we see as ongoing and one that we are tweaking and reworking as we go—but at its fundamental level, it is a practice-wide commitment to lifetime bonds with our patients and clients and our commitment to doing our best for every pet, every time—and that is why it works.



Compassionate Care

Julie Miles, DVM, owner of Compassionate Care Animal Hospital in Pickerington, Ohio:

Tip 1: Set Affordable Prices to Engage Staff

Our staff were initially very focused on the value of the bundles that we have created. Most of our clients were doing an annual heartworm test and fecal, so bundling other services allowed us to price the preventive care panels so that it was a minimal increase from the cost of doing the heartworm test and fecal separately. Staff absolutely loved that. We now find that staff appreciate that we are practicing the best medicine we can, and so they really believe in the value of the preventive care panels and don't hesitate to recommend them to clients.

Tip 2: Keep the Momentum Going

We constantly strive to find better ways to educate our clients through handouts, signage in the exam rooms, follow-up phone calls, and how we relay that normal results are good. We also have monthly goals that we set, and if we meet them, the staff get a small gift card. This year, I am considering adding in a monthly challenge that would reward the staff member who has gotten the most clients to agree to preventive care bloodwork with a small prize.



Tip 3: Give Them Something Tangible

Things we talk about can be very abstract to owners. We say, "Yes, the kidney values are great; that's wonderful." But there's nothing they can really see, so I print off the graphs, and I highlight part of it and talk about where we want their pet to be. I'm hoping that (1) they'll put it in their folder so if their pet is sick on the weekends, they've got baseline bloodwork they can show to the emergency clinician, and (2) it gives them something real that they can hold on to.



Boat Club Road and Little Leaf

Des Whittall, group manager of a two-practice group in Fort Worth, Texas:

Tip 1: Get Doctors on Board

Get all your doctors on the same page. They are professionals who have their own opinions, and they need to be part of the process that creates the protocols. Once they are all on board, you can start to work with your senior technicians and other staff members to explain the “why” of what you are doing.

Tip 2: Put It All on the Table

I don't think there are any off-limit subjects; it is OK to talk about ensuring that patients get more than just a rabies shot and why that is important. It's also OK to talk about the financial realities of competing with low-cost care, how we are different, and why bonding clients is a key element of our long-term future in the profession.

Tip 3: Leverage Technology

Our practice management software provided the underlying data for us to be able to calculate how many vaccines and exams we were providing year over year, and for ensuring that we are making progress. Knowing your sales volumes is also critical to being able to take advantage of pricing opportunities and in justifying spending on equipment.





IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. is a member of the S&P 500® Index and is a leader in pet healthcare innovation, serving practicing veterinarians around the world with a broad range of diagnostic and information technology–based products and services. IDEXX products enhance the ability of veterinarians to provide advanced medical care, improve staff efficiency, and build more economically successful practices. IDEXX is also a worldwide leader in providing diagnostic tests and information for livestock and poultry, and testing for the quality and safety of water and milk. Headquartered in Maine, IDEXX employs more than 8,000 people and offers products to customers in more than 175 countries. For more information about IDEXX, visit idexx.com.



Established in 1933 by leaders in the veterinary profession, AAHA is best known for its accreditation of companion animal veterinary practices. To become accredited, companion animal hospitals undergo regular comprehensive evaluations by AAHA veterinary experts who evaluate the practice on approximately 900 standards of veterinary care. AAHA also develops publications and educational programs and resources designed to help companion animal hospitals thrive. Today, more than 3,700 practice teams (15% of all veterinary practices in the United States and Canada) are AAHA accredited. For more information about AAHA, visit aaha.org.