Receptionists: Rock the front desk

A micro meeting with workshop tools

Welcome to the Team Meeting in a Box on helping veterinary receptionists answer clients’ most common questions when they call or drop in without a pet to ask, “Look, do I really need to bring ’em in?”

(All right, smartypants, the answer is usually “yes,” but if you want the pet owner to really believe your receptionist’s recommendation, your front-line team members need to be armed to explain why the client needs to come in.)

15-minute activity: Answering the client question, “Do I need to come in?”
OK, meeting leader, let’s look at some common medical questions pet owners spring on your receptionists every day. You might be surprised if there’s some disagreement about how—and how much to explain—when answering pet owner questions.

Pass out “Arm receptionists for questions on common medical problems.” Ask respondents to read the question and answer and share their opinion about whether they’d say it differently. Invite discussion to share best practices for educating clients and encouraging them to visit if they’re concerned about a problem.

15-minute activity: When the client says, “OK, that makes sense, but do I really, really need to come in?”
Time for some role-playing, meeting leader. You’ve read some common client questions. You’ve discussed your typical responses and learned some things.

Now practice in rotating pairs of team members when you get pushback. (You get pushback. Admit it. Come on.)

Start with a Q&A example from the handout “Role-play Activity,” with pairs playing the part of receptionist and pet owner. What happens if you let the client know the situation could be serious and he or she needs to bring in the pet, and they still balk?

5-minute activity: Thank your team
If your team can pleasantly, authoritatively and convincingly talk their way through client questions and concerns like those, you’re golden. Practice it.

But remind everyone not to get too down on themselves, your particular duties or your clients. Everyone worries about money and time and medical problems, and everyone has bad days. You might have caught one of your clients in a tough moment, and they’re pushing back and making you feel attacked. It’s not you! Explain patiently, kindly and firmly whatever your hospital policy is for tackling payment, prescription and treatment questions over the phone or in person. The world needs doctors and technicians to treat patients, but the world equally needs client service representatives and receptionists to soothe client fears, answer tough client questions and encourage pet owners to do the right thing: Visit your hospital and receive your stellar service for a fair fee for high-quality medicine.