

Common pitfalls that derail veterinary surgical success

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No animal hospital is immune to mistakes, which include operating on the wrong limb, enucleating the wrong eye, overdosing a patient by 10 times, or discharging a feline patient with canine nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication.

No employee should be fired because a mistake is made, everyone makes them, however errors should not be repeated. Generally, mistakes are not made because of careless behavior, but because what we do is very challenging and demanding

In human medicine, it is estimated that 100,000 Americans per year die because of medical errors, which is the third leading cause of death in the United States (after heart disease and cancer).

The common cause of most medical errors in veterinary practices is the lack of communication among medical teams, which leads to fatal mistakes. Wrong calculation to a decimal point like 9.0 mg may be misread as 90 mg and .3 mg may be misread as 3 mg.

Multi-check points are used in human medicine and in veterinary university hospitals for control substances prior to administration. Two independent nurses calculate the dosing before it is given, and checklists are implemented. Frameworks have been established to prevent recurrence of errors, which include investigating the root cause, searching for factors leading to the incident, and designing internal systems.

Blaming is not the solution, however getting to the root cause it is. It has been statistically proven that individuals blamed are less likely to report incidences in the future. Transparency and honest discussions should be considered; along with establishing robust internal reporting systems, which would avoid mistakes that could lead to fatalities.

The only way to reduce medical mistakes is to discuss them openly and learn from them.

References

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