

Just Say NO to bad medicine.

The CVO has done it again. For those readers not from Ontario, the CVO is the College of Veterinarians of Ontario and is the body that regulates our profession in this province (www.cvo.org). What they have done (this time) is come out with a statement that looks at the other side of informed owner consent.

Here is a link to my previous article that looks at some CVO positions and statements, including the issue of informed owner consent - [CVO position.pdf](#). Here is the full position statement on informed owner consent as posted on the CVO site: [Informedconsent.pdf](#).

Now we are looking at the issue of what to do when we have informed the owner but they do not give their consent. Specifically, what do you do when you have given the owner all the medically appropriate options and they request another, inappropriate plan? See page 10 of this issue of the CVO newsletter from December of 2009 - [UpdateDecember2009.pdf](#). The link at the beginning of page 10 in the CVO document to the paper on informed consent seems broken, but I have provided you with a good link at the end of the last paragraph so use it.

In essence, this statement tells us that we have a responsibility to provide the client with the various appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic options, with the pros, cons and expected outcomes of each. We similarly have a responsibility to refuse to provide care that would be considered medically inappropriate even if this is what the owner requests. In other words, if the owner requests a treatment plan that is not appropriate, your responsibility to the patient dictates that you refuse.

The example that the CVO provided was that of a dog with a fractured leg. I will offer a dental one. A dog presents with an acute facial swelling below the right eye. You recommend a detailed dental examination with intra-oral dental radiographs to assess possible causes of the swelling (endodontic disease, periodontal disease, foreign body, neoplasia). The client declines the plan and asks for some antibiotics. As this is not a medically appropriate plan, we

have a responsibility to say 'no' and to refuse to dispense the medications. At this point in the process, we do not know if the swelling is the result of infection or neoplasia. If it is the result of a dental infection, no amount of antibiotics will remove the source of the problem and so will provide no lasting relief.

Rather than allowing ourselves to be talked in to a plan that has little or no chance of providing effective relief, we must advocate for the animal and insist on getting a diagnosis first so that we can then develop an appropriate treatment plan and finally, carry it out.