

## The Monday Morning “Angry Client” Syndrome.

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If you practice veterinary medicine in a typical veterinary hospital, Sunday night brings a distinct feeling of dread. The anxiety creeps in when you realize that Monday morning is very near, and evolves into disgust and depression.

This dread is nothing more than a Pavlovian response to the inevitability of Monday morning and the chaos that it will entail. Immersion in a veterinary hospital on a Monday morning will leave indelible marks on the human mind, scored with hostile phone calls, customer demands and the threat of facing even one irrational and angry client.

“Clients who have medical concerns during the weekday are put at ease, and even wear rose colored glasses regarding a medical condition because they know they have a safety net. They know that as long as the hospital is open, the medical condition can be addressed.” explains Jayna Bonfini MS/MA, a mental health professional and graduate instructor at Duquesne University.

But what happens to those same clients when they realize they need medical attention and the veterinary practice is closed for the night or even for days? Ask any veterinarian who has had that caller on the phone Monday morning. They can be downright unreasonable. These clients will be especially hostile when their emergency stems from treatment provided by your own veterinary practice. Vaccine reactions, ruptured sutures, post- surgical complications, unclear go home instructions, or incorrectly filled prescriptions provided by your hospital are not uncommon, and will all create a legitimately angry client.

“For the veterinarian, leaving work in the evening or on a Friday is terribly worrisome when you have a case that has any potential to worsen. There is a great deal of stress involved when you must explain to your client what conditions will warrant emergency treatment. Especially when I know they won’t be able to reach me that night” says Mike Russman DVM, a practicing veterinarian in the Pittsburgh area. He chose to leave a position in a veterinary hospital that did not offer on call services, for a position in a clinic that does offer after hours’ advice so that he alleviate that stress.

So how does a well- meaning practice owner avoid the angry Monday morning client syndrome? Brad Carmichael DVM, who owns Pleasant Valley Veterinary Clinic in McMurray Pennsylvania, knew he had the answer to that dilemma when he created On Call Solutions over 6 years ago. He designed a system by which he could be on call for clients wherein they pay a fee for the advice of their veterinarian at the time of the call. Payment is processed via credit cards and handled by specially trained agents. Dr. Carmichael has been enjoying the benefits ever since, and he has expanded On Call

**Solutions by allowing other veterinarians to utilize the system he designed. On Call Solutions has revolutionized the way veterinarians are on call by putting a fee in place to stop non-emergency and nuisance calls. While the veterinarian enjoys helping people, and a low call volume, the clients benefit the most.**

**This kind of continuity of care is paramount in client satisfaction, and has been proven through research in other medical care fields. Indeed, it is not only important from a care standpoint, it is also important for a clinician's satisfaction ratings. Research by Christakis et al (2002) indicates that consumers give providers and clinics a higher rating when they have a more continuous relationship with a provider.**

**The importance of the continuity of care is evidenced in interviews of new clients at Pleasant Valley Veterinary Clinic. Many of whom have left veterinarians who did not offer any after hour assistance. Practice owners don't know how many clients or how much money they are losing because there is no way to record how many people had an unanswered emergency. The most demanding clients may call in screaming on Monday, but the rest leave quietly.**

**If you are fearful that your current practice and system may be leaving good clients without reasonable help in their crises, a system like On Call Solutions' would allow you to make a change. A fee based on call system can help you offer the continuity of care that clients deserve, and ease the dread of Monday morning.**

## References

Christakis, D.A., Wright, J.A., and Zimmerman, F.J. (2002). Continuity of care is associated with high-quality care by parental report. *Pediatrics*, 109, 54-58.

Culliton, B. (2002). Doctor, are you there? *American Journal of Medicine*, 109, 602– 604.