Veterinary Communication for Professional Excellence
Clinical Communication Skills Coursework

Introduction
The CSU communication curriculum is 52 hours, 20 of which are laboratory-based, of core experiential communication coursework, integrated throughout the four-year curriculum. Although an evolving process, the curriculum as developed over 10 years (2005-2015). The Communication curriculum is composed of three communication modules, two intensive junior practicum and one senior clinical rotation.

What is in common to all the communication coursework is preparatory readings and/or quiz beforehand, classroom communication interactive exercises, followed by a client interview or small group communication laboratory and concludes with a video review and reflection assignment. The significant feature is the communication laboratory, where students interview simulated clients individually or in small groups, receive individualized coaching and feedback from their peers and client and reflect on a video recording of their performance in a small group setting.

Year 1
Freshman Foundations Communication Module (2013)
Format: 2-hour workshop (70 students) and 1-hour communication rounds (10 students)
Description: Students video-record themselves interviewing an animal caregiver; write a reflection paper on what they observed and learned about their communication skills and what clients are looking for in the veterinarian-client-patient relationship; and present their lessons in communication rounds.
Objectives: Conduct an interview and elicit the client’s perspective
Communication Skills: Open-ended questions, reflective listening, empathy and non-verbal communication.
Assessment: Video reflection assignment

Year 2
Sophomore Foundations Preventive Medicine Module – Fall (2015)
Format: 2-hour workshop (70 students) and 1-hour communication laboratory (5 students)
Description: Combined communication-preventive medicine module, in which students gather a wellness history, interact with a simulated client in a small group setting, and reflect on their communication skills development.
Objective: Gather a wellness history
Clinical Scenario: Canine obesity
Communication Skills: Identifying the client’s agenda, eliciting the client’s perspective and summary
Assessment: Video reflection assignment

Sophomore Foundations Ethics/Communication Module - Spring (2012)
Format: 2-hour workshop (70 students) and 1-hour communication laboratory (5 students)
Description: Combined ethics-communication module, in which students interact with a simulated client in a clinical scenario that involves ethical, financial, animal welfare and communication challenges, and write a reflection paper on their communication skills development, professionalism and ethical lessons.
Objectives: Delivering bad news, managing emotions and rebuilding relationship
Clinical Scenario: Emergency canine gastric dilatation and volvulus
Communication Skills: Offering partnership, asking permission, eliciting client’s perspective, chunk and check and signpost
Assessment: Case quiz and video reflection

Years 1, 2, 3
Healer’s Art (2012)
Format: 5 hours workshop (35 students) and 10 hours recitation (5 students) (elective)
Description: This small group course provides an opportunity to incorporate healing, service, wholeness, grief/loss and relationship into veterinary education in a discovery model that encourages honest and mutually respectful sharing of experience, belief and personal truths.
Objectives: Self-care, support and community building
Communication Skills: Generous listening
Assessment: Journaling, readings and reflection paper

Year 3
Fall Junior Practicum I (2005/2008)
Format: 12-hour workshop (25 students) and 9-hour communication laboratory (5 students)
Description: The fall course focuses on establishing rapport through a strong introduction, gathering the medical history and building a long-term client relationship.
Topics: Initiating the interview, gathering information, building relationship, providing structure, managing emotions and collegial interactions.
Clinical Scenarios (10)
Communication Skills (10): Introduction, identifying the client’s agenda, open-ended questions, pause, reflective listening, eliciting the client’s perspective, empathy, non-verbal communication, logical sequence and summary.
Assessment: Skills quiz, video reflection and group feedback

Spring Junior Practicum II (2010)
Format: 12-hour workshop (25 students) and 9-hour communication laboratory (5 students)
**Description:** The spring course focuses on providing explanations in language that clients can understand, creating partnerships with clients to enhance adherence and follow through on recommendations, and closing the interview with a complete summary and check for remaining questions.

**Topics:** Promoting adherence, conducting financial discussions, delivering bad news, disclosing medical errors, managing emotions and collegial interactions.

**Clinical Scenarios (10)**

**Assessment:** Skills quiz, video reflection and group feedback

**Communication Skills (10):** Assessing the client’s knowledge, chunk and check, using easily understood language, relating explanations to client’s perspectives, signposting, offering partnership, asking permission, summary, contract for next steps and final check.

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**Year 4**

**Senior Community Practice Rotation (2007)**

**Format:** 1-hour video review session (5 students)

**Description:** All companion animal and general practice track veterinary students engage in a 2-4-week Community Practice rotation, in which they videotape 1-2 real client interactions and write a reflection paper on their communication skill development, present their video for feedback in video review session.

**Communication Skills (20):** Listed above.

**Assessment:** Video Reflection

**Future Curricular Development**

1. Development of a Foundations in Veterinary Medicine Communication Module in Year 1 Fall semester.
2. Incorporate a communication coach alongside the simulated clients in the Year 2 communication laboratories.
3. Provide in-the-moment communication coaching for Year 4 veterinary students during the Community Practice clinical rotation.
4. Incorporate communication assessment into all of the clinical scenarios in the Years 1, 2 and 3 capstone examinations
5. Create an objective structured clinical examination to integrate into the Year 3 practical component of the capstone examination.