HOW DO I ORGANIZE MY HOSPITALIZATION SERVICE? PART I

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Background

The purpose of this presentation is to provide important advices related to the control of hospitalization and the function of the nurses in the logistics of this service.

In this first part, we will discuss protocols of organization and work in a basic hospitalization system, with special emphasis on the characteristics of the hospitalization of dogs, cats and exotic animals.

The nurse of hospitalization has always a high volume of work, since this area is usually in most of the clinics the common work site where patients from other services are derived.

Regardless of the size of the center, the nurses must control several important aspects apart from the care of the patients, the care in the operating room, in the reception area and assistance to the veterinarians.

To start organizing the hospital, we will first analyze which are the points that are sometimes left without control or overview.

1.- Admission / discharge

For each patient who enters the hospitalization area, a series of forms must be signed, as this avoids any misunderstandings and future problems with the information transmitted to the owners. For this, the rest of the staff must agree on the way to do it.

All the information should accompany the pet during the hospitalization period and must always be available in case you need to consult it at any time.

It is also important to control the entry of patient objects. In order to avoid losing objects, it is preferable not to accept straps, harnesses, blankets, etc., and if any, it would be useful to label them and keep them in the same place until discharge. It helps to write down everything the pet brings in its hospitalization form.

At discharge, the animals must be clean, and it is essential that before they leave with their owner, the iv cathether, if any, has been removed. If the nurse is the one to carry out the delivery, first check that the economic issue is solved and whether it is necessary to explain any medication, care, dressing, etc.; it is preferable to go to a visit room first and talk to the owner without the presence of the animal, and once the conversation is over, the patient can be delivered. This way, we avoid the owner dedicates himself to
his pet and does not listen to the veterinarian or nurse, who explain the guidelines, and then mistakes may occur at home.

2.- Organization of daily work

With a hospitalization area full of animals, it is essential that the staff is coordinated so that each one handles a part of the work.

The transfer of information between veterinarians and nurses should be done at each change of shift and thus, the information is passed first-hand among the staff. In the morning and evening rounds, the patient's changes are highlighted, as well as potential changes in his condition or work patterns.

The guide of all this is shown in the hospitalization card, which can be adapted according to the type of practice, but which must always include the following sections: control of vital signs, food, walks, pain control and mentation. It is very useful that the design of the card allows adding information, since not all patients require the same care. For example, for post-surgical animals, a Glasgow scale can be added, and for exotic animals such as rabbits, auscultation can be used to check the intestines motility, ultimately adapting the work guidelines to each patient.

In the round of shift change you must establish the work that must be completed during the day. This allows it to be divided so that each veterinarian or nurse is responsible for the tasks that are within their competence.

Making a list helps to focus and prioritize, since the hospitalization area is always subject to extras, emergencies and problems that arise during the shift.

Something visual and very useful is to update the pending work, the drugs needed and where the pets are at any time (the operating room, the imaging area, etc.) on a daily basis on a blackboard visible in the work area and including all the patients in the hospital. Thus, from a simple glance, the pending work is noticed.

As it happens with the operating room or visits rooms, which have a work plan and know what surgeries / visits are scheduled, the hospitalization area should preview the visits of owners and assume that in that period someone of the staff must be attending to the owner while he/she is with his pet.

It is important that the nurse ensures that everything is fine, the animal is clean and the environment is appropriate when the owner goes to the hospital. Hence the importance of enforcing established schedules.

The easiest way for the work to be done in the same way by everyone and to have as few oversights as possible is logging the tasks. To this end, work lists can be adapted to include common tasks that everyone should do during their shift and that should be checked on the next shift. The team decides what tasks to be included, since all of them choose what is considered relevant or not. Someone must check that these tasks are carried out daily, and thus the shortcomings of the equipment are detected.

An example of some tasks to be protocolized could be: labeling of all the sera on the opening date to avoid the accumulation of out-of-date fluids and the expiration of the open ampoules in the refrigerator; the regular cleaning of the cages; medications to the correct hours of all the patients, as well as their
walks, feeding and cleaning, etc. The nurse are fundamental in the control of all this tasks since they are the ones that are continuously working in the area.

3.- Control of expenses

Another part of the work of the nurse is the replacement of the material and products of the service.

Each hospital has its work guidelines, but it is important to control the expenses of the area, since that is for the benefit of all. For this, a useful way to control drugs and consumables is to limit the access to warehouses or to create a record of output products. This allows to see whether there is an over spending of products or whether it is necessary to increase the forecast of others.

In large centers, where the purchasing department or product management is independent of the hospitalization area, in some cases it is necessary to have a somewhat more personalized forecast to avoid the lack of products for the patient. That is, the nurses must control which cases have extra expenses in order to increase the amount of the order accordingly.

4.- Maintenance of the equipment

Good management of the material in the area is everyone's job, but as with all tasks, someone must be responsible for controlling this good use, managing repairs, maintenance or simply reviewing them. Usually nurses are responsible for this. It is best to make an inventory, especially of the most used devices or which need an external repair service such as infusion pumps, shaving machines and ICU / oxygen therapy cages. For this record, it is useful that they have been numbered and marked so they can be located if they are taken out of the area. The record is filled in every repair, and if there is a need to notify the technical service for the same device repetitively, it probably means that it is ending its useful life or that the handling of the device is not adequate.