



QI Boxset

Podcast transcript: Why is QI important in veterinary practice?

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RCVS Knowledge:

Welcome to the Quality Improvement Boxset by RCVS Knowledge, a series of webinars, podcasts and video interviews for practices and practitioners.

Pam:

Hi everyone. Today, I'm talking to Angie Rayner, who's Director of Quality Improvement at CVS. Hi Angie.

Angie:

Hello, Pam, hello.

Pam:

Lovely to talk to you. So, Director of Quality Improvement, that's an interesting title. What do you think, how does quality improvement work in veterinary practice? Why do you think quality improvement is important?

Angie:

Well, I think quality improvement is really about getting people together, isn't it, and supporting each other and finding new ways of working and really supporting each other to do the best that we can for our patients and for our clients and how we can support each other in that process. so yeah, it is about, I'll quote you Pam, is how we can look at what we're doing and how we can possibly do it better.

Pam:

Thank you. Yeah, no, I mean, I'm sure that's what everyone in veterinary practice wants to do is improve our outcomes, improve the care for our patients. That's the most important thing, but how would you encourage practices to get involved with quality improvement?

Angie:

Yeah, so, and it is about encouraging people. I think it's about building that culture of why it's important and, and how it can be worthwhile, and showing those examples, and telling those stories. And I think RCVS Knowledge is really a good resource for that. I mean, you are really good storytellers and that's what reaches people. So, it is important to you to share our experiences and our stories about how quality improvement has helped us, whether that's improve our wellbeing or improve our patient care or our client's experience. So yeah, it is important in, that really supports us as teams and we need that more than ever.

Pam:

Absolutely. And talking about RCVS Knowledge, you were one of our RCVS Knowledge award... QI award winners, weren't you. That was a project, which was a group wide project, I think in CVS, wasn't it?

Angie:

Yeah. Well, I think the awards are a really good way to encourage people as well to be recognized for your work in, in quality improvement and... it's really, really helpful and really a lovely thing to do. And so, yes, we did controlled drugs. we used these sort of the practice standards scheme, you know, to identify this as an area that we needed to improve. And because we look at all the assessments reports that come in and we realized this is an area that we need to support practices better. So, uh yes, we looked at controlled drugs recording, and of course the first year we had lots of improvements to be made. But over the subsequent three years or so now that we've been doing this, practice teams have made remarkable improvements and they really just, you know, taken this on board and feel a part of the process, I think, and so, I mean every year when people send in their audit results and they're emailing me, they're asking you to Angie, how are we doing? Are we better than last year? You know, how did we do? And I'm just like, hang on. I haven't calculated the results yet, but, uh, but they're super keen and that's a lovely thing, you know, that they feel a part of a part of this big project.

Pam:

And as a Practice Standard Assessor, that's music to my ears that controlled drug issues are obviously high on the list very often for practices and a very important area, aren't they to get right, that's the other thing. But that's great that those are sort of group wide activities. Are there any other group wide activities that you do?

Angie:

Yeah, so I think... one barrier to quality improvement that we've recognized is that it just needs to be easy. And so we try and make it as easy as possible. And with the access to data, I think is quite a challenge for everyone. As far as, you know how do we measure our progress and getting access to data is part of that. So we give data to practices in order to help them undertake clinical audit in the areas of... what analgesia are we using for our neutering cases

and also post-op complications for our neutering procedures. And we need... the vetADUIT website that RCVS Knowledge promotes is very much a part of that. We use that as a benchmark for our post-op complication rates. So yeah, so we have a few things as far as your cytology projects and things like that to promote responsible use of antibiotics and things. So it is really about trying to make it as easy as possible.

Pam:

Absolutely. I think you're right. That is one of the big barriers is not knowing where to start, isn't it. And having, and as you say, RCVS Knowledge is a good place for people to see real case examples and see what people have done that. So that's good. So you have your group projects, but I presume that practices can also have their own local projects, QI projects...

Angie:

Yes, absolutely. And I think it's really important that quality improvement starts locally. And you know, it is, it is really a matter of what's important to your team and where do you see that improvements need to need to happen? Because it will be different. You know, of course, there are similarities in our work, but we will be different in the ways that we work or even improvements need to be made. So it is important that we identify where improvements needed to be made and whether that's off of the back of an event or a complaint, or even if there's just something that's niggling you, that you want to make better, all those things, it's just trying to find a place to start. And that's what we try and give people.

Pam:

Yeah. So significant events, it doesn't always have to be something really dramatic that has gone wrong. Does it?

Angie:

No, I mean, it can certainly be a near miss that's happened. I think trying to think about a near miss that that we've seen and that, you know, it can be near misses with swab counts, even, it's like, oh we almost left a swab inside. Like let's just take step back and, and reassess what our systems that we have in place to prevent a swab being left behind. And maybe we just need to revisit our checklist and make sure that we're using that appropriately, you know? So it's... it really is personal to the practice and will vary between practices. But a lot of them take on board the surgical safety checklists and clinical audits and things like that. So we try and give them the framework to do that.

Pam:

So well, that's great because as I say, that's one of the really big barriers, but another barrier I've found, I'm sure you have is time people having time to do this. So how does that work with your, your team members having time to actually do these projects?

Angie:

Yes. Well, it is, it is helpful having one person within the practice whose responsibility it is to ensure that these processes are happening, whether it's a meeting or reviewing a significant event or ensuring checklists are being used, it's helpful to have that person promoting within the practice and championing the cause. So... but practices do still prioritize a bit of time, you know, and... but really right now it is a bit more of little bits more often, you know, so it's easier to just spend 15 minutes chatting about something rather than trying to reserve a whole hour to try and get the whole team together. So it is about sort of letting go of what we would normally do in normal times, but adapting to what we can do now and how that looks.

Angie:

Absolutely. And I think you're right. I think if it can be done in bite size bits, that's going to be really helpful. And that's another place where RCVS Knowledge has a lot of quite short resources that they've got. There's an hour's clinical audit course, but there's lots of little bite-sized resources and practical case examples that take five minutes to read. So, you know, I think the thing, as you say, just keep chipping away at it with little bits of time can be really helpful, but you just alluded to what's going on now, which obviously the whole world's changed and veterinary practice has certainly changed an awful lot. Do you think the practices that are engaging with QI have found any of the challenges of COVID easier to deal with or have used QI in these circumstances?

Angie:

Yes, certainly. I think they you know, using that sort of quality improvement mindset and the sort of education they've received or the experiences that they've had, and it, I think has made it easier for them to step back a little and look at their ways of working and their systems of working and saying, okay, now where are the inefficiencies? Or, you know, where are we getting blocked here? And so in what do we need to improve? So, a couple of examples is trying to find a client in the car park, you know, something as simple as that, that can really infuriate you, I think, or... trying to find a silver car in the car park is quite difficult. So, some practices have numbered car spaces now. So... or put, have put orange cones in the car park with a number on them, and so a client can say I'm in space, number five, rather than trying to find a silver car. So it's been really helpful sort of in systems of work that people put in place equally. Another great example from another practice is they've developed client information sheets for surgical procedures and that's really streamlined their whole admitting process for surgery and really improved communication between the practice and the client. And so it's really resolved

a lot of anxiety around that and, sort of complaints potentially. So they've done a really great job with that project.

Pam:

Absolutely communication is key, isn't it? Communication is key to everything in veterinary practice, and it must be very much more difficult now with PPE and social distancing and clients not coming into the practice. So therefore looking at other ways to make the communication clear is, is a great idea. And I love the system of work of identifying the cars rather than looking for the needle in the haystack of the one silver car amongst all the rest. So I think those are great examples aren't they of where systems of work and I think systems of work are really important. Aren't they to try and make life easier for everybody and try and reduce the possibility of errors happening.

Angie:

I think that, and one way another system that people have used is our team huddles. And it's really, you know, getting the team together, whether it's at any point in the day. But I think I hear about most often happening at the beginning of the day, and it's a point for the team to get together. And it's not about a leader telling everybody what to do. It's the team giving feedback on where they need support, what needs to happen that day. Everybody is very clear on what roles they are fulfilling that day and I think it just helps to reduce the anxiety, people know what they're doing. And, and it's very clear and equally at any point, if things start to veer off plan, as it can do you get an emergency and then all of a sudden your plans, are blown away, but, you know, at any point you can stop and say, okay, let's revise the plan. What do we need to do now? So what do we need to do and respond to changing environment? So it's really helpful, I think for teams to communicate together and see where we need to support each other.

Pam:

I think that's a great idea. I think that one thing that's very unsettling for everyone is the uncertainty that, that we all deal with at the moment. So having at least a bit of certainty of what your role is that day and what the plan is for the day, even if, as you say it may go astray is, is a really good way to support team members, I think. And that's great, but also I'm sure you must have practices where teams are working as separate bubbles, so to try and prevent infection. So presumably in those teams, it's really important that case handovers and things which can't necessarily happen face to face happens in a systematic way.

Angie:

Yes and certainly our teams have been using clinical note templates to ensure that we're recording all the information we need to record just assist that little admin more, isn't it, to just

to jog your memory and just say, Oh yeah, I need to talk about this. And because case continuity, isn't always possible now, as we're working in teams and your colleague and who's going to see your patient tomorrow when you're not here really needs to know all the information. So that's one system of work that teams have been using. But equally in order for us to help us stay in bubbles. Another practice example is if they've had a vet and a nurse working together in a team in a consult room doing consulting, and they've brought sort of a mini pharmacy into their consult room so that they can stay in that consult room and dispense medications and such, without having someone going roaming around in the dispensary, you know, not able to socially distance and all of that. So it really helps them stay in their bubble and keep everybody safe.

Pam:

Yeah. So veterinary practice dispensary are often not big enough to allow social distancing. So that's a good idea. And it's about working with what you've got, isn't it, and trying to make it all work more smoothly.

Angie:

Yes, absolutely. And I think they've really been able to take a step back and say, okay, what can we do differently here? You know, and to really streamline our day, help us work safely and support each other. And it's been really, a lot of... I think there are some really good things that have come out of looking at our ways of working. One example I can think of is there's a lot more case collaboration now, you know because people are there in the prep room or working on cases and they've got a colleague that there, that they normally wouldn't have there. And so now there's a lot more case collaboration happening, which I think is really fantastic, isn't it? 'Cos it's also helping with a lot of sort of personal development and skill and upskilling, which I think is really fantastic, which really can also make you feel really good about your work every day, when you've done something differently and that you've not been able to do before, because you've had some support there, which is fabulous.

Pam:

Sounds really great that they're actually using what we could very easily be perceived as negatives and to some extent are, but using them in a really positive way to find new ways of working. And that is absolutely the principle of quality improvement. Isn't it? That as we said at the beginning, look at what we do and trying to do it better and try to do it better sometimes in adverse circumstances as well. So it sounds like that your teams have been really, really taking that on board. And I agree with you on your last point about job satisfaction. I think knowing that what we're doing is making an improvement is really powerful for job satisfaction because that's what we all want to do. And the other thing that quality improvement helps, I think it perhaps is to engage with it as the whole culture of the practice.

Angie:

Yes, yes. I think certainly during keep going back to pandemic conditions, but certainly it has worked to really bring the team together. And that whole collaboration aspect, supporting each other through this and looking at our ways of working, how can we keep communicating with each other, improve communication with our clients and how does the tools that we've relied on for so long... How do those help us? And so, and it's like those, the huddles, the checklists talking about when things don't go to plan, those are really key to keeping that culture of learning and support alive. So it's really, I think, demonstrated that it can happen even in adverse times like this.

Pam:

Oh, thank you so much for sharing all that with us Angie because I think there's some lovely, really useful practical examples there. And yeah, they are, they are difficult times, but, quality improvement I think can help. Thank you very much for sharing what you're doing and keep on doing it.

Angie:

Yeah, no, it's... I'm sending lots of love to everybody out in practice and they're doing an amazing job. It really is just really fabulous and really heartening to speak to everybody and see what the amazing work that they're doing right now and continuing to do every day. So lots of love to them.

Pam:

Absolutely we're in awe of them working in practice and there'll be adverse conditions with the PPE and everything. So thank you again Angie. Thank you.

Angie:

You too. Bye everybody.

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