

Improve patient outcomes with complementary therapies

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Chronic disease is commonplace in veterinary medicine. Following the trends in human medicine, veterinary diseases that are a growing problem are those such as cancer, arthritis, allergies, resistant infections, auto-immune conditions, and metabolic diseases. Conventional medicine has limited tools to bring about long-term cures for many of these diseases and management of these conditions with drugs may come with undesirable side effects making our traditional approach unsustainable in some instances for example:

- A dog with auto-immune disease that is treated with immuno-suppressive drugs succumbs to a urinary tract infection that is only sensitive to an anti-biotic such as gentamycin (potentially toxic to the kidneys) and then develops drug induced kidney failure.
- A cat with an infected wound that will not heal despite several courses of different anti-biotics becomes more and more depressed and debilitated.

Making use of complementary therapies, a wide and diverse range of treatment options, that may be employed by veterinary paraprofessionals, often helps to improve the quality of life of many animals with these health conditions as symptoms improve and health issues are addressed more sustainably.

This approach to veterinary care is a growing demand as public pressure mounts, with more people becoming dissatisfied with strictly conventional healthcare options for themselves and their animals, and complementary options continuing to gain credibility. Integrative veterinary care, combining complementary and conventional options, improves patient outcomes, enhances client and job satisfaction and therefore benefits business.

Combining complementary therapies with conventional veterinary medicine and surgery facilitates optimal care making use of the best of both worlds. A holistic approach to our veterinary patients is imperative, considering the needs of the animal, the animal owner/guardian as well as the environment. This approach is congruent with our One Health model and is an invaluable resource for contextualised / pragmatic care. Additionally, complementary therapies tend to have a lower carbon footprint than many other treatment options.

Approaching health holistically, we recognise the tremendous inherent healing ability of the body. We have a deep trust in the body's ability to heal itself and we assist by gently guiding and supporting this remarkable faculty. To allow for the body's inherent healing wisdom to function optimally we consider three main tiers from which it draws its resources.

Firstly, nutrition is crucial to provide the important micro and macro nutrients imperative for normal physiological function. Some of our most useful therapeutic aids are nutritional supplements, which have traditionally been used by holistic practitioners for many years and have now gained mainstream acceptance. Secondly the healing mechanism must be running smoothly, and thirdly the presence of toxins (exogenous such as foreign chemicals or endogenous such as lactic acid), even in minute amounts, will impede healing. An analogy would be running a car; you may put in all the best fuel but if the engine is faulty or it is clogged up with waste then it will not run smoothly or go at all.

The therapeutic tools at our disposal to help achieve healing are vast. Practitioners generally have their own preferences as to which work better in their hands, just as different veterinarians feel more at home with different therapeutic protocols. Sometimes there is a "magic bullet" that can resolve the problem but more often than not it's a combination of factors that need to be addressed and using treatment modalities in concert help to optimise results. Acupuncture, nutritional medicine, herbal medicine, chiropractics, massage, homeopathy and flower essences are commonly used but there are many more therapies such as NAET (Nambutripad's

Allergy Elimination Technique), hyperbaric oxygen therapy, ozone therapy, Bowen therapy, NIS (Neurological Integration System), osteopathy, mesotherapy, aromatherapy and others that are invaluable.

These gentle therapies generally do not carry the risk of side effects that many conventional treatments do, and they elegantly and effectively support and assist the body to ensure that physiological systems function optimally, and that excellent health and vitality ensue.

Stress and anxiety are often detrimental to the body's ability to heal and when addressed, can work wonders to support recovery. Simple tools such as improved nutrition, flower essences such as Rescue Remedy, Aromatherapy, herbs and supplementation with vitamin B complex and Omega 3 fatty acids can help animals to cope with stress.

Animals presented for integrative veterinary treatment typically suffer from complex disease conditions, often poorly addressed by conventional veterinary medicine / surgery, impairing their quality of life. These can be difficult cases that have seen at least one other veterinarian, and maybe even a specialist or two. Frequently the problem has been chronic and managed with a number of drugs that have been aimed at supporting the animal's quality of life but may no longer be helping or side effects of these drugs have become detrimental. Sometimes the health condition is acute and the owner has financial constraints so the best conventional therapy, such as spinal surgery, may not be an option.

To illustrate further, here are a few scenarios of actual cases:

Woollie, a 14-and-a-half-year-old male Wire Fox Terrier

Due to a generalised stiffness and pain that was undermining his quality of life despite treatment with monthly pentosan injections, regular doses of carprofen, codeine as required for analgesia, and he was maintained on nutraceutical joint support supplements including glucosamine and omega three fatty acids. Acupuncture was initiated, he was immediately more comfortable, brighter in his disposition and he even managed to jump into the car which he had not done for months. His quality of life continued to be maintained with regular acupuncture.

Roxy, a three-year-old female Bischon with acute disc prolapse and hind limb paresis

Surgery had been recommended by her local veterinarian but this was an unaffordable option, so she was sent home on rest with NSAIDS and tramadol. Three days later she was brought in for another opinion. She had made no improvement and still couldn't stand. She was treated with Acupuncture and herbal medicine as well as chiropractics to stimulate healing and address her discomfort. Further treatment with the above as well as five daily sessions of Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy had her walking on her own within a week with no need of conventional meds.

Jess, a three-year-old male Border Collie with auto-immune disease, resistant bladder infection and renal compromise induced by gentamicin therapy

Jess had been on prednisone and immuran for months which had helped to slow the formation of ulcers in his mouth and axillae but had subsequently developed an infection and further complications. He was treated with nutraceuticals such as vitamin C and grapeseed extract, dietary modification and homeopathy. It took several weeks but Jess recovered fully and was completely weaned off all drugs. He went on to live for years with the occasional break out of mild ulceration that was effectively managed with complementary therapies.

Monday, a seven-year-old Saanen goat with resistant helminthiasis

Monday's owners approached us as he was unwell, developing regular bouts of pneumonia as well as suffering from diarrhoea and having repetitively elevated faecal egg counts despite being drenched with several drenches aimed at the resistant parasites and conventional options were now exhausted. On further questioning their husbandry was found to be meticulous and the other resident goats had no evidence of internal parasites. Monday was treated with a combination of herbs and homeopathies as well as NIS (Neurological Integration System, a system of healing designed to support the immune system and normal physiological function). Over time (six

weeks) he developed less frequent bouts of pneumonia, his FEC decreased (without the use of drenches) and the stiffness in his movement which had been a side issue had improved tremendously.

Penny, a 10-year-old female Dachshund with chronic urinary incontinence

Penny had been successfully treated with Propalin syrup for five years and as long as she was maintained on this, she had no incontinence. Her owners were concerned about possible side effects and had noticed the development of some aggression towards other dogs, they wanted to explore other options. Penny was treated with herbs and homeopathy, weaned off her Propalin, her aggression subsided, and she never suffered from urinary incontinence again.

Bella, a six-year-old female golden retriever with atopy, recurrent pododermatitis and ear infections

Having received several courses of anti-biotics, steroids and diet trials which were no longer helping to relieve Bella's problems, her owner sought our help. After changing Bella's diet to include optimal amounts of omega 3 and six fatty acids, anti-oxidants as well as raw unprocessed food and treating her with NAET (a technique that identifies allergies using Kinesiology or muscle testing and then resolves the allergies using acupressure), within six weeks her symptoms had resolved, and she continued to be symptom free of all problems for years.

There are many approaches to health care, and it is a science and art to know which treatment to use and how to integrate them together to create an optimal treatment plan meeting the needs of the patient, client, veterinary professional and business.

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift" – Albert Einstein.

Complementary therapies that may be employed are diverse and aim to address the underlying disease process from different angles. Many are quick and easy to learn and apply and are generally harmless such as the use of nutraceuticals and Flower Essences. Others may take many years of study to master such as homeopathy and acupuncture. Veterinary paraprofessionals are perfectly positioned to facilitate patient care with these modalities to help support primary veterinary care, improve patient outcomes as well as client satisfaction and job fulfilment which ultimately enhance business performance.

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