

Pet Medications Workshop, Project No. P12-1201

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to inform you of my many concerns regarding written prescriptions which will be discussed at the Pet Medications Workshop, Project No. P12-1201. My concerns include compliance by the owner getting the medications filled/refilled in a timely manner, lack of human pharmacist veterinary knowledge regarding different requirements between species, the time involved by the veterinarian to educate the owner about medications and answering questions, medications not being guaranteed by the manufacturers and breakdown of medications when mail ordered, and lost revenue source for veterinarians requiring other services to become more costly.

At my hospital I write prescriptions for owners whenever they ask. However, this leads to a discussion on why veterinary medications are better (formulated so they are easier to give to the pet), not being used off label, and potential side effects. We follow up with clients a few days after their visit to ensure they are not experiencing any difficulties giving their pets medications and ensure they are responding to treatment. At least 50% of the time, owners have not had the prescription filled, which delays treatment.

Veterinarians spend a minimum of 4 years of professional training, not including 3-4 years of college pre-requisite training, learning about our animals' unique needs and how they differ from humans. Currently, in Florida, there are no requirements for pharmacists to have any education regarding veterinary medications. Pets often require anywhere from 2-10 times the dosage of medication as a human does. For example, a 130 lb human requires 100 mg of Doxycycline twice daily for a tick bite versus a dog of the same weight requires 500 mg of Doxycycline twice daily. Dosage requirements and medications vary between species. For example, cats cannot tolerate a variety of medications our dogs can. Recently at a meeting of veterinarians throughout the state of Florida, about half of us had a problem with pharmacists changing the prescription without notifying the prescribing veterinarian or hospital. This leads to inaccurate medical records and can potentially lead to fatalities (one veterinarian had an issue with a pharmacist changing an insulin dose). Personally, I have had 2 pharmacists modify the prescription written either by changing the dose or by modifying the quantity without my permission. They never called to okay any change on the prescription written. One client, a senior citizen, was talked into increasing the quantity of medication to help "save her money" in the long run. My concern is that #1-the medication was a chemotherapy drug and #2-my client was charged over \$500 for this medication that if dispensed as prescribed would cost significantly less.

Veterinarians cannot act as pharmacists and are required to have a current veterinarian-client-patient relationship. In Florida, that means we have to examine a pet at least yearly in order to be able to dispense medications. Also according to the Florida laws, we have to use medications approved for pets, even if there is a human equivalent. Using a human

formulation would be an off label use which requires informing the owners of off label drug use.

Medications, such as heartworm prevention, available from online pharmacies (i.e. Pet Meds Express) are not guaranteed by the manufacturer. If an owner purchases heartworm prevention from a veterinarian, the manufacturer knows where the product came from and it was stored properly, so they offer a guarantee which will help cover the costs of heartworm treatment if a pet develops heartworm disease after receiving the medication properly. However, the manufacturers do not sell these medications directly to online pharmacies. They are often diverted, expired, or medications from other countries. Often these medications are not sent in their original packaging and do not include safety information. Studies have also proven medications breakdown when not stored properly (i.e. not at room temperature). Mail ordered medications can be less effective since they breakdown in the heat during transport/after delivery and may have been stored in a non-air conditioned warehouse. Because of these reasons, manufacturers (such as Merial and Novartis) will not guarantee their products effectiveness.

Veterinary hospitals use medications as a source of revenue to help generate income. If we lose this source of income, it will cause the cost of other services (like examinations and diagnostic testing) to increase in order to keep hospitals profitable. This increased cost to clients will be needed to cover the time it takes to educate clients about the medications their pets will be receiving.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kerri Slomcenski, DVM
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