



ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Developing practical recommendations for preventative healthcare consultations involving dogs and cats using a Delphi technique

Z. Belshaw, N. J. Robinson, M. L. Brennan, R. S. Dean

Introduction

Preventative healthcare consultations (PHCs) account for over a third of small animal consultations, yet the evidence base describing how these consultations can be optimised is limited. The aim of this study was to use an evidence-based methodology to develop consensus recommendations to improve dog and cat PHCs.

Approach

A Delphi technique was used to recruit a panel of veterinary surgeons (n=26) and owners (n=8) with considerable experience of PHCs. The panellists took part in three rounds of an online questionnaire in which they were asked to agree, disagree, suggest rewording or request further information for 18 recommendations. These recommendations, based on previous research, described potential ways of optimising PHCs.

Results

Overall, 22 veterinary surgeons and seven owners took part in at least one round of the questionnaire, giving an overall response rate of 85 per cent. The panel reached consensus on 13 of the 18 recommendations of by the end of the process. An overview of the results from the questionnaire rounds is presented in Fig 1.

Interpretation

While the recommendations highlight ways in which PHCs could be optimised, until they are applied to practice and appropriate

Z. Belshaw, N. J. Robinson, M. L. Brennan, Centre for Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine, School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, The University of Nottingham, Loughborough, UK

R. S. Dean, VetPartners, York, UK
email: rachel.dean@vetpartners.co.uk

This is a summary of a paper that is published in full at vetrecord.bvpublications.com

Published Online First 14 February 2019

Veterinary Record (2019) 184, 348

Cite as doi: 10.1136/vr.104970

KEY FINDINGS

- Of the 18 recommendations to optimise preventative healthcare consultations (PHCs), 13 reached a consensus of at least 80 per cent agreement among the panel and five did not reach consensus.
- These recommendations provide a starting point for veterinary practices looking to optimise their PHCs.

outcomes audited, their true effect remains unknown.

Expert opinion, through the Delphi technique, helped identify which recommendations may be more likely

to help than others, but individual practices may need to consider all 18 recommendations to decide which may be appropriate and feasible in their own setting.

Significance of findings

This study is the first of its kind to involve pet owners in developing veterinary guidance, and it has produced the first evidence-based recommendations aimed at optimising PHCs.

Further work is needed to understand how these recommendations can be implemented in a range of veterinary practice settings. Collection of data from practices where recommendations are implemented will be useful in determining their impact on a range of outcomes.

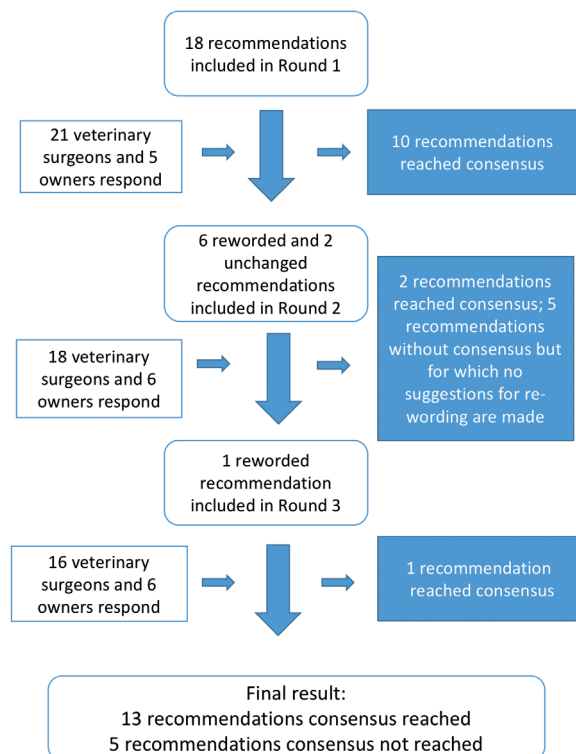


Fig 1: Flow chart detailing the three rounds of the questionnaire conducted as part of the Delphi process