

CASE STUDY

How Telemedicine Enhanced Revenues and Patient Satisfaction for a Veterinary Practice



Aaron Smiley, DVM, oversees two veterinary practices in Central Indiana. Dr. Smiley has been a practicing veterinarian for over a decade and his medical interests include feline medicine and soft tissue surgery.



Challenge

Several years ago, Dr. Smiley found his time increasingly stretched thin as he received a growing number of client requests and questions via email, text, phone calls and social media messages. **Dr. Smiley estimates that he received one such request every hour of the day that he spent seeing clients in-office**, creating a backlog of unpaid work that he had to manage in addition to his in-person appointments.

Many of these inquiries involved minor issues that did not require an office visit, but the situation left Dr. Smiley with what he considered two undesirable choices: First, he could request that clients bring their pets for an office visit in order to earn compensation

for his time delivering care, but many clients would likely object to the inconvenience and expense of having to take off work to address their pets' minor issues. Alternatively, Dr. Smiley's other option was to continue providing uncompensated remote care, a practice that resulted in Dr. Smiley devoting valuable billable hours to tasks that didn't generate any revenue for his practice.

"Clients always contacted me for these inquiries with the best of intentions," Dr. Smiley said. "Nobody was being nefarious. **The issue is that vets haven't traditionally charged for this service, so clients were operating within their own paradigm.**"



Solution

Dr. Smiley knew something had to change, that he had to find a way to earn compensation for the time he spent fielding roughly 40 remote inquiries per week from clients. After reading an article on the benefits of telehealth for humans, Dr. Smiley became intrigued with the possibility that the technology could relieve his challenges with providing remote, uncompensated care.

Dr. Smiley began doing research and eventually cold-called telehealth solution-provider Medici to discuss the possibility of leveraging its platform for veterinary telehealth. Upon further investigation, Dr. Smiley was impressed with the platform's ease-of-use and security, prompting him to adopt the technology and begin offering virtual visits via telehealth to his clients.



Results

Since adopting Medici, Dr. Smiley uses the platform every day to deliver virtual care to clients. Telehealth visits have generated an additional \$1,000 in revenues per month, but perhaps more importantly, have boosted client satisfaction, according to Dr. Smiley.

"I have found that clients don't mind paying for virtual visits," he said. "They previously just didn't know that veterinarians consider it to be billable work."

Clients now have convenient, cost-effective access to veterinary care from their own homes and workplaces for everything from general questions to diagnoses of new issues. Dr. Smiley can log on or off the platform as time permits, often performing virtual visits during in-office down time.

The platform gives Dr. Smiley the option to approve or reject each client so that he only provides virtual care inside a Veterinarian-Client-Patient Relationship or VCPR.

Clients connect with Dr. Smiley via text, calls, live video conferencing or photo uploads. The Medici platform makes it easy for Dr. Smiley to prescribe medications, bill for consults and send marketing messages to clients.

In his experience, Dr. Smiley has found that telemedicine is best suited for non-emergent, follow-up visits with patients that the veterinarian has previously examined in-person at least once. **"Telehealth goes a long way in making veterinary medicine less expensive and more convenient,"** Dr. Smiley said.



Dr. Aaron Smiley practices small animal medicine in central Indiana. He leads two practices and provides guidance to eight other practices as chief of staff advisor for VetCor. He is the president of the Indiana Veterinary Medical Association and is on the University of Illinois Veterinary Alumni Board. Dr. Smiley is an early adopter of telemedicine technology and has completed 2,800+ cases. He is an expert on incorporating virtual care into practice and has lectured on the topic at national meetings.

Dr. Smiley is also the co-founder of VetMed2.0, a think tank focused on discovering divergent ideas in veterinary medicine. The company organized the first annual Hackathon at the University of Illinois and is currently developing a technology to match veterinary mentors and mentees.