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# Objectivity or Insensitivity?

Mrs. O'Malley's dog Abigail ingested antifreeze and has been violently ill. Mrs. O'Malley has rushed to her veterinary hospital for help. Meanwhile, Sarah and Dr. Krista, two of the practice's best staff members, are winding down from a long day and discussing plans for the weekend. Mrs. O'Malley is devastated when she hears laughter behind her as she cradles the beloved pet she fears is dying. Her confidence in the practice team is shaken if not shattered.

As medical professionals, we recognize that we cannot share our clients' emotions constantly; we would burn out and become unable to care at all. But care must be taken that professional objectivity is not interpreted by clients as a lack of caring or

compassion. Discuss at a team meeting actions you might take to deal with situations that arise in your hospital. For example:

- Post a sign with an agreed-upon symbol whenever a euthanasia is being conducted so all staff are aware of what is going on.
- Set an "invisible fence" around the reception desk or other areas where clients congregate that staff members agree is off-limits for socializing with one another.
- Place an agreed-upon object (eg, a flower vase or figurine) on the reception desk when a client is dealing with a difficult situation to alert others.
- Agree on a private signal to alert another team member who is behaving in a manner that might be misconstrued by a client. For example, "Sheila needs to see you right away" can be code for "Pay attention and quiet down."

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