



Relationship-Centered CARE



Anthony L. Suchman, MD, of the University of Rochester defines relationship-centered care (RCC) as a clinical philosophy that stresses partnership, careful attention to relational process, shared decision-making, and self-awareness.¹ The term was originated in a milestone monograph written in 1994 by the Pew-Fetzer Task Force entitled *Health Professions Education and Relationship-Centered Care*.

While founded in human medicine, the four principles of RCC also apply to relationships with animal health care providers. They are:

- ① Relationships in health care should include the personhood of the participants.
- ② Emotion is an important components of these relationships.
- ③ All health care relationships occur in the context of reciprocal influence.
- ④ Forming and maintaining genuine relationships in health care is morally valuable.²

Simply stated, relationship-centered care in veterinary medicine leads to a positive, meaningful relationship between clients and the veterinary team. In her book *Client Satisfaction Pays: Quality Service for Practice Success*, Carin Smith, DVM, writes that “the connection between the veterinarian and client is the thread that weaves client satisfaction and a successful practice together. It’s what makes clients feel loyal, follow instructions, pay their bills on time, forgive mistakes, feel confidence about your competence, and send friends to your practice.”³

Skillsets addressed in this article: self-awareness; social awareness

The March 2010 issue of *Exceptional Veterinary Team* focuses on relationship-centered care, including practical guidance for every member of the practice team.

References

1. A New Theoretical Foundation for Relationship-Centered Care: Complex Responsive Processes of Relating. Suchman AL. *J Gen Intern Med* 21(Suppl1):S40-44, 2006.
2. Relationship-Centered Care: A Constructive Reframing. Beach MC, Inui T. Relationship-Centered Care Research Network. *J Gen Intern Med* 21(Suppl1):S3-S8, 2006.
3. Client Satisfaction Pays: Quality Service for Practice Success. Smith C, Brown S, Wood S, et al. *Amer Animal Hosp Assn*, 1998.