Decision-making in the provision of Accessible Veterinary Care

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Abstract : As it currently stands, veterinary care in the United States is not accessible to everyone, and veterinarians regularly face cases of clients who are unable to provide necessary care to their animals regardless of the client's desire to do so. There is currently limited research into how veterinarians address these issues of access to care. It is apparent that veterinarians regularly utilize funding or offer discounted services to treat cases that otherwise would go without care. With need currently exceeding the amount of funds and services available, veterinarians are tasked with deciding which cases are most deserving of assistance. This mixed methods study distributed a survey to companion animal veterinarians practicing in the United States to identify current trends in how these professionals apply principles of distributive justice in the scope of veterinary medicine. Ethical frameworks identified in human bioethics research into distributive justice were presented, along with demographic questions, to identify relationships between veterinarian priorities and the scope of their practice/respective roles/geographic region. By surveying veterinarians across a wide range of specialties, practice types, and clientele this study was able to assess how priorities and opinions shift based on external factors as well as among the respondents themselves. Participants were asked not only to choose how to distribute aid between different clients and case scenarios, but also asked directly which is the best way to distribute aid when need exceeds the resources available.

Keywords : access to veterinary care, bioethics, decision-making, distributive justice, subsidized care
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