

## Marketing to Referring Practices: What is Most Essential?

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1. [2006-2007 AAHA Forum was on Veterinarian – Veterinary Specialist Referral Issues Report, Key Findings and Best Practices](#)
  - a. Objective: foster better communications and relationships between general practice vets and specialists, promoting the idea that the best medicine is delivered by collaboration between a practice team at an AAHA-accredited practice working with board-certified specialists when appropriate.
  - b. 194 attendees: 121 specialists and 73 general practitioners
  - c. Questions on:
    - i. Communication
      1. Verbal
      2. Written
    - ii. Client service to pet owners
    - iii. Barriers to referral
    - iv. Quality of care issues
    - v. Economic issues
    - vi. Marketing by specialists
2. Question 1: What constitutes a good referral experience?
  - a. Communication (general)
    - i. Timely updates
    - ii. Discussion on phone prior to referral
    - iii. Team approach
    - iv. Collaborative relationship
  - b. Communication (verbal)
    - i. Mutual respect
    - ii. Follow-up phone calls
      1. Complicated cases
      2. Critical cases
      3. Pet owner is likely to call GP right away
    - iii. Brief
      1. Building relationships
      2. Clarifying expectations
      3. Promoting patient advocacy
  - c. Communication (written)
    - i. Faxed written reports within 1-2 days
    - ii. Thorough reports
  - d. Communication (ER-specific)
    - i. Would like to be consulted re: whether to transfer back to GP or to a specialist
    - ii. GP would like case sent back when they “feel comfortable managing”
    - iii. Clients’ wishes must also be taken into account

3. What constitutes a good referral experience (beyond communication)?
  - a. Accessibility and availability
  - b. Good client service to pet owners
  - c. “refer to specialists with whom I have good communication and with whom I have developed a personal relationship”
4. **Question 2: What marketing tools that the specialty practice uses do GPs find the most helpful?**
  - a. CE on what conditions and diseases to refer and when to do so
    - i. Evening
    - ii. Weekend
    - iii. Lunch
  - b. Rounds
  - c. Newsletters
  - d. Brochures, business cards, magnets
5. **Question 3: What do GPs think about specialists marketing directly to the public?**
  - a. Sponsor community events
  - b. Increase pet owner awareness about the availability of specialty care
  - c. Focus on promoting the entire veterinary profession
  - d. GPs did point out that they do not want specialists telling pet owners to come to them directly. They do not want to “lose involvement with cases or have owners bypass them to go directly to specialists.”
6. Things AERC does to market to GPs
  - a. Bring specialists (or ER vets) – and donuts
    - i. 15-30 clinic visits prior to each specialist starting (or in their first week) – depending on specialty.
    - ii. Additional as needed
  - b. Mail printed 4 and 5 star reviews, including client’s name, to the GP with a handwritten note like: “Thank you for the recent referral! Here is what your client had to say about their visit. Feel free to share this on client or staff bulletin boards!”
  - c. Include them in ads i.e. veterinarian testimonial commercial, email, or fax: “I send all of my patients to ABC specialty hospital because they’re the BESTEST!”
  - d. Feature their clinic on social media
  - e. List them on website
  - f. Do feel-good stuff that benefits them, their staff, their patients and clients
    - i. Pet loss support group
    - ii. Vet tech party/Vet tech of the year contest for GPs techs – winner gets \$100 VISA gift card
    - iii. Angel fund
    - iv. Minnesota Veterinary Medical Foundation fundraisers
  - g. Provide business-knowledge CE in addition to scientific
    - i. Practice managers’ conferences
    - ii. New Clinic Owners’ lecture series (highlight local ownership)