Empathy: What’s all the fuss?
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Americans have increasingly scrutinized the quality of their healthcare, and for the human and animal loved ones in their lives. There is strong evidence in both human and veterinary medicine that how healthcare professionals communicate has a significant influence on the quality and efficiency of patient care delivery. The backbone of this communication is based on the honoring of relationships (human-animal relationships, client-veterinary practitioner relationships, veterinary team relationships) where empathy is valued and practiced by all. Providing communication training with empathy at its core is a wise investment that can lead to satisfied clients and health care team members, healthy patients, and a successful practice. For example, the predominant decision for patients pursuing litigation against their physicians is the perception of a lack of caring. Similarly, reports from the AVMA Professional Liability Insurance Trust report that approximately 60% of veterinary claims are due to miscommunication with lack of caring being a common theme. An underlying premise is that improved empathic communication among members of a veterinary team, between practitioners and clients, and even between veterinary specialists and referring veterinarians will cut down formal complaints and litigation and enhance outcomes for all. This keynote presentation will provide an overview of the role of empathy and compassion in veterinary medicine, with references to research evidence, the landscape of medical training, and empathy skill awareness and development through video case study.

References
4. Personal communication, Linda Ellis, DVM, AVMA PLIT, 2011.