Effects Of Free Culture And Sensitivity Testing On Prescribing Behaviour

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Veterinarians often cite cost of culture and sensitivity tests (C&S) as a barrier to performing susceptibility testing.[1] This study aimed to investigate if free C&S for urinary tract disease affected antimicrobial prescribing behaviour.

From January to December 2022, 10 general practice veterinary clinics in Victoria were given access to free urine C&S as part of an intervention study. The participating clinics also received a decision support tool for the treatment of sporadic urinary tract disease in dogs and cats. The control group consisted of cases where urinalysis was performed from 12 general practice clinics not involved in the intervention study during the same period. Clinical histories were analysed.

A total of 480 urine C&S submissions were received from the intervention study and 636 had urinalysis in the control group. Cats were more likely to be prescribed analgesia compared to dogs. Patients in the control group were more likely to be prescribed empirical antimicrobials. A higher proportion of cats in the control group received cefovecin (28/65, 48%) compared to cats in the intervention group (9/41, 22%); where amoxicillin-clavulanic acid was prescribed more frequently (29/41, 71%). Patients in the study group were also more likely to be prescribed a shorter duration empirical antimicrobials (median 7 days) than the control group (median 10 days).

Laboratory testing is important to select the appropriate antimicrobials, but cost is a barrier to susceptibility testing being undertaken. Removing the barrier of cost combined with the decision support tool resulted in positive changes to antimicrobial prescribing.

References:

1. Hardefeldt LY, Gilkerson JR, Billman-Jacobe H et al. Barriers to and enablers of implementing antimicrobial stewardship programs in veterinary practices. *Journal of veterinary internal medicine* 2018;32:1092–1099.