Promoting veterinarian wellbeing by preparing students to practice across the spectrum of care

There are many factors that may contribute to veterinarians' wellbeing as they seek to provide the most appropriate care for their patients. Veterinarians report facing frequent ethical dilemmas, which contribute to their work-related and moral stress. Ethical challenges are often rooted in conflicts between client factors that influence care options and the type of care that students are typically taught in the veterinary school curriculum. Client factors that impact care options include the client's unique goals, values, expectations, beliefs, abilities, and resources. As students transition into general practice, they may perceive that they are failing as doctors if they cannot provide the 'gold standard' of care they were taught. This misperception can negatively impact new graduates' wellbeing as they navigate the realities of the general practice context. Additionally, the extent to which the professional identities and goals that students develop in training misalign with their workplace experience can also negatively impact their emotional wellbeing and career satisfaction.

Preparing graduates to practice along the spectrum of care may help improve veterinarian wellbeing in a variety of ways. By teaching students that there are multiple appropriate answers to a problem, and that the best course of action depends on the unique circumstances of each case, we can develop students' resilience as they navigate the many contextual challenges associated with providing care in general practice. Being able to offer a range of care options can also help veterinarians treat more patients, which may affect the rate of economic euthanasia, and address issues surrounding access to care, thus improving veterinarian mental health. Finally, improved communication between veterinarians and clients about the care involved in treatment plans, costs associated with those plans, and the role of clients in helping to make care plans successful can lead to more collaborative treatment decisions and more positive interactions.

Learn more about how the AAVMC's Spectrum of Care Initiative is enhancing and supporting spectrum of care training in veterinary education here:
https://www.aavmc.org/the-spectrum-of-care-initiative/

Check out the following sources to learn more about the connections between spectrum of care practice and veterinarian wellbeing:

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