Nursing Care

Care of the Perioperative Patient

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KEYWORDS

• Nursing process • Artificial airway management • Coupage • Catheter

KEY POINTS

- The veterinary technician must have an understanding and working knowledge of a variety of nursing care techniques.
- The technician should know what it takes to perform the technique and be aware of risk factors and potential complications and what action is to be taken if the complication is encountered.
- As a part of nursing care, technicians should constantly evaluate the patient's condition and ask if the nursing goals are being met and if risk factors are turning into complications.
- It is better to be proactive rather than reactive to potential complications.

INTRODUCTION

Although the veterinarian is responsible for making the diagnosis, discussing prognosis with the owners, performing surgery, and prescribing medication and therapy, the veterinary technician is charged with providing the nursing care. To provide nursing care, the veterinary technician must be knowledgeable and skilled in patient assessment and patient care techniques. The veterinary technician should also be knowledgeable in potential risk factors/complications; this puts the veterinary technician in a position of being proactive rather than reactive to problems. This article reviews nursing care as it pertains to the various body systems and addresses some common risk factors and complications.

DEVELOPING NURSING CARE PLANS

Nursing care plans are developed to meet patient care needs based on the disease processes. The ultimate goal is to enhance the delivery of patient care. There are a variety of ways to develop nursing care plans. The nursing process is a problem-solving

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approach used in the development of a plan of care for each patient. In the case of the veterinary patient, a plan of care is a list of the interventions the technician intends to initiate to restore the animal to a state of well-being.[1] In human nursing, the nursing process comprises 5 phases or components: assessment, nursing diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Veterinary technicians are not allowed to diagnose; therefore, the authors rename the nursing diagnosis the technician's conclusion.

Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to help identify the patient's problems or condition. Patient assessment is the data collection and analysis portion of the nursing process. The basic categories of techniques used in the assessment include interaction, observation, and measurement. Data may come from a variety of sources: owners provide a history, members of the health care team share information concerning the patient, the technician or veterinarian performs a physical examination, review of previous medical history and laboratory data, and collection of physiologic parameters (eg, blood pressure, electrocardiography [ECG], heart rate, temperature, central venous pressure).

Technician Conclusion (Analysis)

In human nursing, the next step is arriving at the nursing diagnosis. The nursing diagnosis is based on the patient assessment and is a label that conveniently describes in a few words what the problem is. The North American Nursing Diagnosis Association (NANDA) developed a list of approved nursing diagnoses. A similar approved list does not formally exist for veterinary technicians. However, Rockett and colleagues[2] provide a list of technician evaluations (**Box 1**) that might be considered analogues to the NANDA nursing diagnosis. The technician evaluation is the veterinary technician's conclusion about the animal's or owner's response to physical and psychological challenges and is based on the data collected during the assessment.

Following the assessment, the veterinary technician analyzes the data obtained in the assessment phase. The technician tries to cluster or group those abnormalities that fit together and help identify a problem. Clustering the signs helps to organize information in a systematic manner and facilitate the formation of the technician's conclusions. Ultimately, the technician's conclusions serve as an aid in determining proper nursing interventions.

The veterinary technician should think about what it takes to meet desired goals and potential risk factors/complications. The veterinary technician should also be aware of how to recognize the risk factors/complications and what actions are taken to correct any problems. In arriving at the technician's conclusions the veterinary technician is not trying to make a diagnosis but rather working with the veterinarian to help provide the best care for the patient. The technician can make a judgment about the patient's response. For example, the veterinarian might ultimately diagnose pneumothorax and hypovolemic shock because the veterinary technician made an assessment of altered ventilation/gas exchange and poor perfusion. Based on the technician conclusion, the veterinary technician could begin to anticipate the needs of the patient and veterinarian and prepare for the appropriate intervention.

Planning Care

The ability to select appropriate interventions should follow naturally from the identification of the technician conclusions. The following questions may be helpful to the veterinary technician in developing nursing care plans:

1. What are the goals of therapy?