

ER Medicine & the Magnificent Misconception of Dr. Magnifico

Last night while waiting to board a flight, I unfortunately stumbled upon a video of Dr. Krista Magnifico ranting about the cost of veterinary emergency medicine (ER medicine). I refuse to repost her video on CriticalCareDVM.com, as I believe strongly I have an obligation to only disseminate accurate information to educate pet parents. To label her diatribe as unprofessional is an understatement. To classify her rant as unethical is irrefutable. Uninformed animal owners have supported her beliefs in droves. I must admit their embracement of her message was quite upsetting to me as a board-certified veterinary emergency and critical care specialist. My thoughts contained herein are *not* meant to impugn Dr. Magnifico's skills as a veterinarian. I wanted - more realistically, needed - to counter her uninformed statements about the financial aspects of veterinary emergency medicine. I hope you'll read my words earnestly, and can ultimately understand why I felt compelled to respond.



ER Medicine - Higher Costs Than Primary Care

Dr. Magnifico knows primary care medicine. She knows how to use social media to manipulate pet parents. But based on her video, I know there's at least one thing about which she clearly knows very little - veterinary emergency medicine.

Emergency medicine is expensive. Why? Emergency rooms have high fixed overhead costs. Whether pet parents bring their animal to the emergency room with a life-threatening condition that requires complex care or whether they have a minor ear infection, the emergency room is staffed 24/7/365 (or at least at "off hours") and has expensive state-of-the-art equipment to maintain. In one way or

another, you pay for all of that whether you need it or not.

Emergency hospitals are for-profit businesses. This is a fact, and it's one we are not trying to hide from pet owners. For some reason - perhaps influenced by the cynical society in which we live - they believe these facilities set their fees at grandiose levels to maximize profit. This is false. The number of times pet parents throw temper tantrums about prices and make ridiculously unfounded statements like "My dog paid for the new wing of your hospital" or "I bet I parked next to your Mercedes in the parking lot" is innumerable. Each time we as emergency clinicians hear such absurd sentiments, we feel like we've been punched in the gut. Dr. Magnifico's inaccurate statements don't support a collaborative partnership between primary care doctor, emergency doctor, and pet parent. While it's true emergency hospitals run businesses with prices set at levels to keep their doors open and to allow advancement of the services provided, all they really want to do is help your pet.

What's the best way to avoid the emergency room? Follow your family veterinarian's recommendation for preventative healthcare. Just like you should see your personal physician routinely, so too should your pets. Unquestionably, preventative medicine can identify health issues early before they become serious ones that are expensive to manage.

ER Medicine - The Fallacy That Cheaper Is Just as Good

Pet parents should not equate lower veterinarian prices with equivalent care. An unmitigated preoccupation with cheap veterinary care has left many pets at risk. Frustratingly, the pet owning public has openly embraced the likes of National Geographic's The Incredible Dr. Pol and Animal Planet's Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet because they have likeable personalities. They seem to have down-to-Earth personalities to which some pet parents are attracted. Yet based on their "performances" in their shows and even complaints filed against them by colleagues and even the American Veterinary Medical Association, many of my colleagues and I are concerned about the level of care they provide. Despite these published concerns about their sub-standard care, many pet owners have embraced their style of care because it's cheap. We know Dr. Young performs surgery while blatantly disregarding minimum sanitary conditions. Look at the

picture below of him performing surgery. If he were your medical doctor, would you let him perform surgery on you dressed as he is for this animal's operation? Yeah, I thought not!



Just as for humans, surgeries on dogs and cats should be performed by veterinarians dressed in appropriate surgical attire, including gown, foot covers, sterile gloves, face mask, and head cap.

Pet parents must decide the level of care they wish for their pets. Do they want human level care provided by ethical and experienced veterinarians in well-equipped facilities prepared to competently handle any potential complications? Or do they want to assume the risks of cheap tests and treatments that puts pets at risk because they fail to meet the acceptable standard of care?

ER Medicine - The Fallout of Our Failure

As one reads through comments posted by pet parents on her website, one can clearly see Dr. Magnifico struck a nerve...regardless of whether the sentiments are accurate:

"I love your forthright talk about the cost of care for our pets. Some of us are living on social security and we have animals."

"Apologize to no one. You have spoken truths that only offend those that are

creating the problem.”

“I think your video is fantastic and no apologies are necessary! Good for you!!!”

The congratulatory and supportive posts go on and on. Thank yous for standing up for animal owners. Kudos for uncovering a scam. To be honest, each comment is a punch in the gut. Why? They cumulatively scream my emergency medicine colleagues and I have been entirely ineffective in conveying to families the value of the services we provide. Apparently, all many pet parents see is the price tag. They don't realize the level of training all the hardworking emergency veterinarians and dedicated licensed veterinary technicians bring to the plate. They don't appreciate the facilities with state-of-the-art equipment used to treat their pets at all hours of the day and night. They're not impressed by the fact their pet essentially received the same level of care (or better) they would in a human hospital. Perhaps most sadly, we emergency veterinarians have failed to impart to (at least some of) our primary care colleagues these same points. To my emergency colleagues I say we still have a lot of work to do to help pet parents and colleagues like Dr. Magnifico understand and support all we do for patients in our care.

The take-away message about Dr. Magnifico's Magnificent Misconception...

President Theodore Roosevelt once said,

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how strong the man stumbles, or where the doer of deed could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood...”

Dr. Krista Magnifico recently criticized emergency veterinarians about the cost of their services. Yet, she isn't an emergency veterinarian. She doesn't even work in an emergency hospital. She truly has no clue about why fees for emergency services are set as they are. I believe her statements were utterly inaccurate. They were divisive, and will likely ostracize her from her colleagues. I know many pet owners have welcomed with open arms her sentiments because she effectively cloaked her disdain for her emergency medicine colleagues as patient and client

advocacy.

Let's be honest folks. The cost of emergency services isn't going down, not even if Dr. Magnifico posts invoices on her social media sites. They won't go down unless pet parents want emergency facilities to severely limit their services or close altogether. We emergency clinicians clearly have more work to do. We not only need to continue to provide the best and most appropriate care for pets, but we must effectively convey to pet parents and some primary care colleagues the value of that extraordinary healthcare.

To find a board-certified veterinary emergency and critical care specialist, please visit the [American College of Veterinary Emergency & Critical Care](#).

Wishing you wet-nosed kisses,

CriticalCareDVM