COMMENTS by WJD 07.02.14

Dear Delegate:

We believe that you may be unaware of two ~~2~~ research studies comparing non-anesthetic dental scaling with scaling performed under anesthesia. One is currently under way but the first one, performed at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, showed that, when done properly using the appropriately selected patients ~~proper candidates~~, the two procedures were equivalent, just as they are in human dentistry.

All pets’ mouths should be examined by a veterinarians, and all ~~All~~ dental procedures should be ~~done~~ performed under the supervision of a veterinarian. ~~But~~ However, to require anesthesia for all dental scaling as part of AVMA policy on veterinary dentistry is tantamount to second guessing (undermining ?) the professional judgment of ~~micromanaging~~ the individual veterinarian. Veterinarians are trained to use their best judgment in the practice of veterinary medicine, and this is one case where the judgment of the veterinarian comes into play. If a veterinarian or their veterinary technician or dental technician is able to properly perform this procedure without anesthesia, they should not be discouraged from doing so. If they are unable to properly control a patient or accomplish the procedure effectively, then they should certainly use anesthesia. But the decision should be up to the veterinarian, not dictated by policy which likely will be viewed by state veterinary boards as The Standard of Practice.

If veterinarians feel that they cannot ~~can’t~~ perform dental scaling without anesthetic for fear of repercussion, the procedure very likely will “go underground”, with unqualified lay people filling the gap. We have already seen some of the associated problems when that happens, such as broken jaws, and missed molar fractures and tooth ~~dental~~ abscesses. ~~and the public perception of these people as heroes and veterinarians as the bad guys.~~

Veterinarians know the science and research behind dental procedures. Please let them practice the science and art of medicine, using their judgment without undue restrictions.

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