



SIX WAYS DIGITAL IMAGING CAN BETTER EXPLAIN A DIAGNOSIS.

For better patient understanding, show, don't tell.

“Don't tell me the moon is shining. Show me the glint of light on broken glass,” said playwright and short-story writer Anton Chekhov. Every writer knows the adage of show, don't tell. It's the difference between:

The night was cold. The sleigh moved through the forest and the moon was shining.

And:

Ekaterina was shocked by the cold. She'd known winters before, but never this far north and never this deep. Burrowed under furs as she was, she still felt her eyelashes freeze. There were crystals of ice on her face where her own breath had frozen solid. It was a clear night, and they raced through the whispering pines, like a feather drawn over a sheet of silver.

Now imagine the same thing with your clients. You can **tell** them what is wrong with their pet. Or you can **show** them. With digital imaging, this is quicker and easier than ever – and especially important with millennials, who respond particularly well to it.



DIGITAL IMAGING FOR PREVENTION



Chris Weaver is an imaging specialist who travels to practices nationally to help with installation and training on digital imaging equipment. He sees the industry shifting toward diagnostics and treatment versus

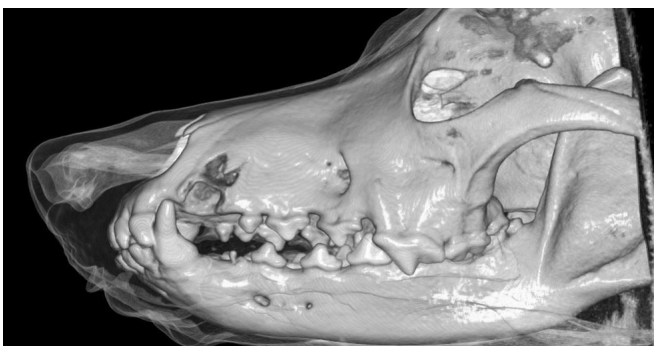
medication in terms of income. With online retailers having disrupted pharmacy sales, shifting toward prevention through digital imaging makes sense.

Recent studies confirm that millennials prefer to have information shared with them versus being told what to do. Since this generation of pet owner outspends other generations on pet care, it only makes sense to accommodate this preference.

Weaver sees six ways a picture can tell a thousand words to clients when it comes to outlining a diagnosis and treatment plan.

1 Weaver said, “The biggest one is going to be **orthopedics**. There’s just nothing like being able to show a clear fracture or some type of arthritis directly to the client that normally they wouldn’t be able to see. Clients will report a dog might have a subtle limp or might be a little bit slower than normal getting up the stairs. But when you can show them ‘The head of the femur is completely worn’ or ‘There’s a clear break in the metacarpal bone,’ you’re going to get more understanding.”

2 Another big one right now is **dentistry**. From a logistics standpoint, this can be difficult for a practice, because the dog is already under anesthesia and the clients have gone off to work. But 80% of all dental disease is below the gum, which means it’s not visible to the naked eye. These scans can be an important way to assuage cognitive dissonance



in clients – otherwise known as buyer’s remorse. Clients see the reason for the extraction, for example, and know where their dollars were spent.

Said Weaver, “Anytime you can pull that infection out of the mouth, it’s beneficial not just for the mouth, but for the other organs as well. You’re doing preventative care at that point, because you’re not going to chronically find infection.”



Dr. Shane Whitaker of Highway 58 Animal Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Weaver helped install and train Dr. Shane Whitaker of Highway 58 Animal Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on the NewTom 3D CT scanner, which generates a 3D reconstruction. At Highway 58, every single one of their dentals gets a CT. Whitaker said, “We CT the full head, teeth, nasal cavity, ears – we get it all in one scan. Just on that one thing – it generates a tremendous amount of work for us because we find things on the ears all the time, we find things in the nose, we’re getting biopsies, it generates other surgeries, we find things in the teeth that we used to not be able to see. Once we recommend it, we start finding things.”

BETTER DISCOVERY WITH FASTER RECOVERY

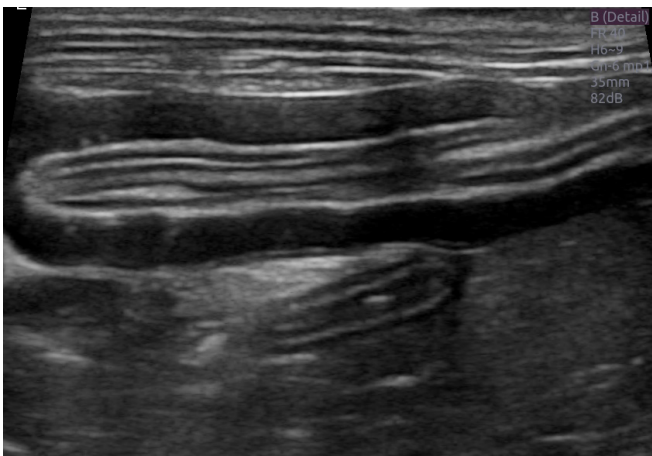
We are living in the future when it comes to video otoscopy. Checking eardrums for redness, swelling or infection is something veterinarians do every day. What does the client see? A veterinarian leaning over and looking down a little scope.

“With the video otoscopy, it sends the image to a monitor that’s in your exam room or directly to an iPhone. The client can actually see what it looks like down in their dog’s ears. That leads to much higher client compliance because they can see all the gunk or with ear mites, they’ll see the little bugs moving in the ear,” Weaver said.

3 “There’s really no way to image the **middle ear** without video otoscopy or without a CT. Those are pretty much the only two ways you’re going to get good images of an ear that a client’s going to be able to understand.”

4 Weaver also sees laparoscopic exploratory surgery becoming more popular. It’s a **minimally invasive surgery** for patients with issues in the abdomen or who have a large mass. “You can make a one-centimeter incision and stick a camera in there and actually see what’s going on. You can actually visualize the spleen, the liver, the kidneys, all the major organs and see what’s going on in there or if there’s any cancer growing. Those are images you can record, too. If your owner’s not too squeamish, you can show the owner as well.”

Weaver adds, “It’s a lot easier for the dog to recover from a five-minute, one-centimeter incision than a 30-minute, six-inch incision.” It can be helpful for clients facing end-of-life decisions as well, to give them more information on, for example, if a cancer is contained or spreading and to gauge the seriousness of their pet’s illness.



SEEING IS BELIEVING

5 Weaver finds practices doing **echocardiograms** with ultrasound are having better understanding from clients about their pet’s health. “They actually put the probe on the chest and clients can see the heart pumping. You can record the image, then show the client the valve if it’s actually not working. You could even slow it down. Clients respond really well to seeing this kind of information. The more you can show them, the more they can relate to.”

6 Digital X-ray is a key piece of equipment for Langston Animal Hospital, located in the Gulf Shores of Alabama. The practice sees cats and dogs but also serves the Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo; it’s important to show zookeepers an image of the issue so they know how to care for the animal. With 500 animals including kangaroos, servals, porcupines and lemurs, the more complete information the zookeeper has, the better they can care for them.



“For me,” Dr. Adam Langston said, “it’s like what I’m not going to practice without. We got **digital X-ray** pretty early on in our practice career. Then we changed practices and had to go back to the old way. It was terrible! So, we’re definitely not going to be without digital X-ray.”

Adam added, “The images are pretty amazing. The newer digital radiographs are much better than even the unit that was made four or five years ago. In addition, they’re producing 75 percent less radiation. So the safety factor is going up for us and our staff. We’re excited about that as well.”

A FEW TIPS AND TRICKS

Weaver says it’s important to help clients get their bearings when showing them the image. “We look at these all the time but it’s important to help them orient themselves. Point out normal anatomy. Point out normal structures. Walk them through it. ‘This left side is normal, but on the right side, it’s full of soft tissue. This is why your dog has a bloody nose and why we need to get a biopsy,’ for example.”

To better communicate health issues and treatment plans, it really comes down to seeing is believing. Nothing helps your patients see it better than digital imaging.

