

Communication with health care professionals

Online survey results May 19, 2018- July 22, 2018

Total respondents 1156 - 120 were removed for insufficient number of questions answered

Total responses for analyses: 1036

Demographics

They were slightly more females (57.9%; 587/1014) respondents than males (41.7%; 423/10014), with 0.4% (4/1014) stating other/NA. Sixty five percent of respondent were age between 20 – 39 years of age and most respondents were educated to college or degree level. (See table 1)

Table 1a. Respondents' age and education level.

	n	%
20-29	315	31.1
30-39	344	34.0
40-49	171	16.9
50-59	99	9.8
60-69	66	6.5
>70	17	1.7
Total	1012	100.0
	n	%
High School	97	9.6
Some college	335	33.1
4 year degree	396	39.1
Graduate degree	185	18.3
Total	1013	100.0

Table1b. Respondent ownership of at least one dog, cat and access to a primary care physician

	Dog		Cat		Human (PC physician)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	838	85.5	559	57.0	877	85.2
No	198	14.5	477	43.0	148	14.8
Total	1036	100.0	1036	100.0	1025	100.0

Dogs

Table 2. Preferred method of contact in relation to specific dog health problems/advice

	In person n (%)	Text n (%)	Phone n (%)	Video conference from home n (%)	Email n (%)	Online chat (e.g., Facebook messenger) n (%)	Total
My dog is not acting like him/herself	237 (28.3)	72 (8.6)	347 (41.4)	48 (5.7)	90 (10.7)	44 (5.3)	838
My dog is limping (new problem)	439 (52.4)	40 (4.8)	209 (24.9)	77 (9.2)	49 (5.8)	24 (2.9)	838
My dog is limping (ongoing condition)	342 (40.8)	56 (6.7)	257 (30.7)	71 (8.5)	83 (9.9)	29 (3.5)	838
My dog has diarrhea (new problem)	261 (31.1)	69 (8.2)	329 (39.3)	53 (6.3)	74 (8.8)	52 (6.2)	838
My dog has diarrhea (ongoing condition)	336 (40.1)	58 (6.9)	259 (30.9)	58 (6.9)	97 (11.6)	30 (3.6)	838
My dog has a skin problem/condition (new problem)	395 (47.1)	46 (5.5)	211 (25.2)	86 (10.3)	62 (7.4)	38 (4.5)	838
My dog has a skin problem/condition (ongoing condition)	325 (38.8)	56 (6.7)	260 (31.0)	75 (8.9)	93 (11.1)	29 (3.5)	838
My dog is not eating (new problem)	350 (41.8)	60 (7.2)	284 (33.9)	42 (5.0)	66 (7.9)	36 (4.3)	838
My dog is not eating (ongoing condition)	354 (42.2)	59 (7.0)	261 (31.1)	60 (7.2)	76 (9.1)	28 (3.3)	838
Post-surgery follow up	483 (57.6)	46 (5.5)	167 (19.9)	69 (8.2)	52 (6.2)	21 (2.5)	838
Management of my dog's diabetes	318 (37.9)	62 (7.4)	253 (30.2)	58 (6.9)	111 (13.2)	36 (4.3)	838
Nutritional advice	111 (13.2)	82 (9.8)	345 (41.2)	47 (5.6)	193 (23.0)	60 (7.2)	838
Acute or sudden pain	529 (63.1)	40 (4.8)	160 (19.1)	47 (5.6)	39 (4.7)	23 (2.7)	838
Chronic pain	427 (51.0)	56 (6.7)	197 (23.5)	50 (6.0)	82 (9.8)	26 (3.1)	838
Behavior training/modification	294 (35.1)	54 (6.4)	235 (28)	79 (9.4)	123 (14.7)	53 (6.3)	838
Follow up questions from my last visit	93 (11.1)	88 (10.5)	402 (48.0)	49 (5.8)	167 (19.9)	39 (4.7)	838
Question about my dog's medications	90 (10.7)	100 (11.9)	424 (50.6)	58 (6.9)	121 (14.4)	45 (5.4)	838
New puppy consult	516 (61.6)	38 (4.5)	145 (17.3)	43 (5.1)	66 (7.9)	30 (3.6)	838
Generally unsure if my dog needs medical attention	248 (29.6)	58 (6.9)	356 (42.5)	74 (8.8)	62 (7.4)	40 (4.8)	838

Cat

Table 3. Preferred method of contact in relation to specific cat health problems/advice (n=555)

	In person n (%)	Text n (%)	Phone n (%)	Video conference from home n (%)	Email n (%)	Online chat (e.g., Facebook messenger) n (%)	Total
My cat is not acting like him/herself	182 (32.8)	48 (8.6)	192 (34.6)	28 (5.0)	71 (12.8)	34 (6.1)	555
My cat is limping (new problem)	278 (50.1)	35 (6.3)	142 (25.6)	50 (9.0)	33 (5.9)	17 (3.1)	555
My cat is limping (ongoing condition)	215 (38.7)	45 (8.1)	160 (28.8)	51 (9.2)	60 (10.8)	24 (4.3)	555
My cat has diarrhea (new problem)	210 (37.8)	38 (6.8)	186 (33.5)	42 (7.6)	50 (9.0)	29 (5.2)	555
My cat has diarrhea (ongoing condition)	222 (40.0)	32 (5.8)	164 (29.5)	43 (7.7)	70 (12.6)	24 (4.3)	555
My cat has a skin problem/condition (new problem)	251 (45.2)	30 (5.4)	141 (25.4)	58 (10.5)	55 (9.9)	20 (3.6)	555
My cat has a skin problem/condition (ongoing condition)	204 (36.8)	33 (5.9)	161 (29.0)	54 (9.7)	79 (14.2)	24 (4.3)	555
My cat is not eating (new problem)	250 (45.0)	31 (5.6)	164 (29.5)	44 (7.9)	42 (7.6)	24 (4.3)	555
My cat is not eating (ongoing condition)	240 (43.2)	39 (7.0)	147 (26.5)	45 (8.1)	59 (10.6)	25 (4.5)	555
Post-surgery follow up	301 (54.2)	33 (5.9)	107 (19.3)	59 (10.6)	41 (7.4)	14 (2.5)	555
Management of my dog's diabetes	200 (36.0)	46 (8.3)	157 (28.3)	38 (6.8)	91 (16.4)	23 (4.1)	555
Nutritional advice	68 (12.3)	48 (8.6)	207 (37.3)	42 (7.6)	142 (25.6)	48 (8.6)	555
Acute or sudden pain	348 (62.7)	25 (4.5)	99 (17.8)	40 (7.2)	26 (4.7)	17 (3.1)	555
Chronic pain	275 (49.5)	31 (5.6)	124 (22.3)	52 (9.4)	55 (9.9)	18 (3.2)	555
Behavior training/modification	173 (31.2)	30 (5.4)	147 (26.5)	57 (10.3)	110 (19.8)	38 (6.8)	555
Follow up questions from my last visit	62 (11.2)	49 (8.8)	244 (44.0)	45 (8.1)	123 (22.2)	32 (5.8)	555
Question about my cat's medications	53 (9.5)	47 (8.5)	294 (53.0)	37 (6.7)	101 (18.2)	23 (4.1)	555
New kitten consult	320 (57.7)	25 (4.5)	98 (17.7)	43 (7.7)	46 (8.3)	23 (4.1)	555
Generally unsure if my cat needs medical attention	166 (29.9)	30 (5.4)	237 (42.7)	48 (8.6)	45 (8.1)	29 (5.2)	555

Cost of different form of consultation/advice

There was a consistent view that forms of advice sought through Text, email, phone, and chat should cost less than a clinic visit or there should be no cost involved (see table 4). There was some disagreement in relation to the cost of video consultation as 26.8% of respondents stated this should cost the same as a clinic visit, whereas the highest proportion (58.3%) stated it should cost less than a veterinary visit.

Table 4. How much respondents would pay for dog and cat advice received via the following methods

	More than clinic visit n (%)	Same as clinic visit n (%)	Less than clinic visit n (%)	I don't think I should have to pay for this n (%)	Total n
Text consultation	22 (2.1)	87 (8.5)	457 (44.6)	458 (44.7)	1024
Email consultation	23 (2.2)	97 (9.5)	457 (44.6)	447 (43.7)	1024
Phone Consultation	29 (2.8)	121 (11.8)	486 (47.5)	388 (37.9)	1024
Video Consultation	45 (4.4)	274 (26.8)	597 (58.3)	108 (10.5)	1024
Online chat (e.g., Facebook messenger) consultation	23 (2.2)	133 (13.0)	473 (46.2)	395 (38.6)	1024

In relation to respondents views on the accessibility of their veterinarian. Online chat, text and email were deemed least accessible with 69.0%, 60.6%, 47.8% respectively stating with these methods their veterinarians was either not very accessible or not accessible at all. The most accessible method was a scheduled appointment with 73.6%, followed by a phone call (46.1%) and onsite/same day visit (31.1) stating this method their veterinarian was very accessible (see table 5).

Table 5. Respondents views on the accessibility of their veterinarian through various methods

	Very accessible n (%)	Somewhat accessible n (%)	Not very accessible n (%)	Not accessible at all n (%)	Total n
On-site/same day visit	304 (31.1)	478 (48.9)	152 (15.5)	44 (4.5)	978
Scheduled appointment	720 (73.6)	163 (16.7)	60 (6.1)	35 (3.6)	978
Email conversation	123 (16.0)	279 (36.2)	218 (28.3)	150 (19.5)	770
Text conversation	100 (14.3)	175 (25.1)	196 (28.1)	227 (32.5)	698
Online chat (e.g., Facebook messenger)	67 (10.4)	133 (20.6)	173 (26.7)	274 (42.3)	647
Phone call	446 (46.1)	370 (38.2)	111 (11.5)	41 (4.2)	968

The biggest barrier which prevented respondents from visiting their veterinarians was expense as 67.7% stated this was a big or very big barrier to visiting their vet. There was disagreement amongst respondents in relation to time as a barrier, as around 40% stated this was a barrier and 60% stated not much of a barrier or not at all (See table 6 for all results).

Table 6. Biggest barriers for respondents to visiting their veterinarian

	Very big barrier n (%)	Big barrier n (%)	Not much of a barrier n (%)	Not a barrier at all n (%)	Total
It's too expensive	283 (28.8)	382 (38.9)	205 (20.9)	112 (11.4)	982
Time	101 (10.3)	298 (30.3)	384 (39.0)	201 (20.4)	984
My pet hates it	108 (11.1)	213 (21.8)	334 (34.2)	321 (32.9)	976
Transportation	60 (6.2)	111 (11.4)	288 (29.6)	513 (52.8)	972

A variety of ratings highlighted the factors which owners felt were most important when choosing a veterinarian. The three highest ratings related to the veterinarian's communication (78.8) prompt attention and cutting edge diagnostics and treatments (see table 7).

Table 7. Ratings of importance when selecting a veterinarian.

	Very important n (%)	Somewhat important n (%)	Not important n (%)	Total
Cost	591 (57.7)	385 (37.6)	48 (4.7)	1024
Communication - Being listened to, feeling vet understands my concerns	807 (78.8)	190 (18.6)	27 (2.6)	1024
Efficiency	658 (64.3)	330 (32.2)	36 (3.5)	1024
Prompt attention	717 (70.0)	278 (27.1)	29 (2.8)	1024
Your experience in the clinic	403 (39.4)	525 (51.3)	96 (9.4)	1024
Cutting edge diagnostics and treatments	694 (67.8)	284 (27.7)	46 (4.5)	1024
Accessibility to the veterinarian in the clinic	685 (66.9)	301 (29.4)	38 (3.7)	1024
Accessibility to the veterinarian outside the clinic	338 (33.0)	486 (47.5)	200 (19.5)	1024

Video consultation with a veterinarian statements

Table 8. Views of pet owners in relation to statements about video consultations

	Agree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Disagree n (%)	NA n (%)	Total
How I might look on video impacts my willingness to use video to receive veterinary advice from my vet	131 (15.1)	180 (20.7)	502 (57.8)	55 (6.3)	868
How my house might look impacts my willingness to use video to receive veterinary advice from my vet	145 (16.7)	190 (21.9)	475 (54.7)	58 (6.7)	868
I am concerned about how the video with my vet will be saved/stored	174 (20.0)	202 (23.3)	430 (49.5)	62 (7.1)	868
I think my vet needs to see/touch my pet to know what is going on	495 (57.0)	223 (25.7)	109 (12.6)	41 (4.7)	868

Human

Traditional forms of communication such as face to face and phone calls were preferred by respondents. Although there was evidence of differences of communication method which were dependent upon individual health problem/advise. For example 21.2% of respondents would use email to contact a human health physician in relation to nutritional counselling. Text, video conference and online chat (through Facebook) were only the preferred method in less than 10% of respondents regardless of the health problem or advice required. (Table 9.)

Table 9. Preferred method of contact in relation to specific human health problems/advice.

	In person - go into doctor's office	Text	Phone	Video conference from home	Email	Online chat (e.g., Facebook messenger)	Total
I am not feeling well and wonder if I should come in	133 (15.3)	56 (6.5)	515 (59.3)	34 (3.9)	92 (10.6)	38 (4.4)	868
I am having problems walking (new problem)	439 (50.6)	43 (5.0)	260 (30.0)	58 (6.7)	44 (5.1)	24 (2.8)	868
I am having problems walking (ongoing condition)	326 (37.6)	48 (5.5)	304 (35.0)	56 (6.5)	106 (12.2)	28 (3.2)	868
I have diarrhoea (new problem)	208 (24.0)	79 (9.1)	401 (46.2)	39 (4.5)	97 (11.2)	44 (5.1)	868
I have diarrhea (ongoing condition)	301 (34.7)	52 (6.0)	327 (37.7)	52 (6.0)	109 (12.6)	27 (3.1)	868
I have a skin problem/condition (new problem)	393 (45.3)	47 (5.4)	244 (28.1)	76 (8.8)	75 (8.6)	33 (3.8)	868
I have a skin problem/condition (ongoing condition)	323 (37.2)	58 (6.7)	273 (31.5)	66 (7.6)	121 (13.9)	27 (3.1)	868
I am vomiting (new problem)	309 (35.6)	58 (6.7)	359 (41.4)	35 (4.0)	64 (7.4)	43 (5.0)	868
I am vomiting (ongoing condition)	366 (42.2)	57 (6.6)	281 (32.4)	44 (5.1)	95 (10.9)	25 (2.9)	868
I have no appetite (new problem)	239 (27.5)	65 (7.5)	369 (42.5)	57 (6.6)	100 (11.5)	38 (4.4)	868
I have no appetite (ongoing condition)	293 (33.8)	67 (7.7)	313 (36.1)	44 (5.1)	124 (14.3)	27 (3.1)	868
Post-surgery follow up	547 (63.0)	19 (2.2)	167 (19.2)	65 (7.5)	49 (5.6)	21 (2.4)	868
Management of diabetes	407 (46.9)	50 (5.8)	205 (23.6)	63 (7.3)	114 (13.1)	29 (3.3)	868
Nutritional counselling	258 (29.7)	59 (6.8)	251 (28.9)	73 (8.4)	184 (21.2)	43 (5.0)	868
Acute or sudden pain	552 (63.6)	41 (4.7)	180 (20.7)	47 (5.4)	34 (3.9)	14 (1.6)	868
Chronic pain management	439 (50.6)	53 (6.1)	200 (23.0)	51 (5.9)	98 (11.3)	27 (3.1)	868
Follow up questions from last visit	156 (18.0)	72 (8.3)	391 (45.0)	46 (5.3)	173 (19.9)	30 (3.5)	868
Follow up evaluation following a surgery	539 (62.1)	38 (4.4)	163 (18.8)	51 (5.9)	58 (6.7)	19 (2.2)	868
Questions about my medications	98 (11.3)	79 (9.1)	453 (52.2)	51 (5.9)	150 (17.3)	37 (4.3)	868

The vast majority (>60%) of respondents indicated that methods including text, email, phone, video or online chat should all be less cost that what would be paid for a face to face visit with a physician (table 10).

Table 10. How much respondents would pay for human advice received via the following methods

	More than physician's office visit n (%)	Same as physician's office visit n (%)	Less than physician's office visit n (%)	I don't think I should have to pay for this n (%)	Total
Text consultation	17 (2.0)	74 (8.5)	377 (43.4)	400 (46.1)	868
Email consultation	17 (2.0)	83 (9.6)	355 (40.9)	413 (47.6)	868
Phone consultation	25 (2.9)	100 (11.5)	383 (44.1)	360 (41.5)	868
Video consultation	32 (3.7)	227 (26.2)	494 (56.9)	115 (13.2)	868
Online chat (e.g., Facebook messenger) consultation	24 (2.8)	78 (9.0)	405 (46.7)	361 (41.6)	868

The majority (80.9%; 702/868) stated that they have never used video consultation with a human health physician. The remaining that had stated the frequency as 1 – 2 times (12.0%; 104/868, with the remaining stating more than twice but less than ten times (6.6%; 57/868) and the remaining stating more than ten times (0.6%; 5/868).

In regards to accessibility of a human primary care physician face to face same day visit and scheduled appointment were mainly regarded as accessible. This was also the case for phone calls. There are a split in agreement in relation to email conversation as 55.3% deemed it accessible and 44.7% found it not accessible. The majority of respondents generally found text conversation and online chat not accessible form of accessing their physician. (Table11.)

Table 11. Respondents views on the accessibility of their primary care physician through various methods

	Very accessible n (%)	Somewhat accessible n (%)	Not very accessible n (%)	Not accessible at all n (%)	Total n
On-site/same day visit	192 (22.2)	379 (43.9)	218 (25.2)	75 (8.7)	864
Scheduled appointment	595 (68.7)	187 (21.6)	62 (7.2)	22 (2.5)	866
Email conversation	123 (17.6)	264 (37.7)	161 (23.0)	152 (21.7)	700
Text conversation	68 (11.2)	126 (20.8)	158 (26.1)	254 (41.9)	606
Online chat (e.g., Facebook messenger)	50 (8.9)	105 (18.7)	133 (23.6)	275 (48.8)	563
Phone call	249 (29.3)	361 (42.4)	183 (21.5)	58 (6.8)	851

Video consultation – Statements

Table 12. Human views on statement related to video consultation with primary care physicians.

Physician	Agree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Disagree n (%)	NA n (%)	Total
How I might look on video impacts my willingness to use video to get medical advice from my physician	208 (24.0)	194 (22.4)	419 (48.3)	47 (5.4)	868
How my house might look impacts my willingness to use video to get medical advice from my physician	180 (20.7)	206 (23.7)	441 (50.8)	41 (4.7)	868
I am concerned about how the video with my physician will be saved/stored	270 (31.1)	209 (24.1)	347 (40.0)	42 (4.8)	868
I don't feel comfortable having someone see me on video	209 (24.1)	216 (24.9)	398 (45.9)	45 (5.2)	868
I think my physician needs to see/examine me to know what is going on	484 (55.8)	229 (26.4)	132 (15.2)	23 (2.6)	868