

The Ides of March (the "middle of March") is the 15th day of the Roman month of *Martius* and is most closely associated with Julius Caesar - it was not a good day for Julius - he got stabbed 23 times by his "trusted" friends on this day in 44 B.C. - most of us know how that feels.

I was just asked this past week to submit an article to a national magazine on comparing practices. At best, comparisons are odious. How would you compare an apple to a watermelon, since they are both red? How would you compare a sea slug to a Great White Shark, since they are both live under the surface of salt water? How would you compare one-doctor veterinary practice, in a one exam room leasehold facility, with two part-time staff, in a depressed catchment area (family income 30% below major community average), with most clients having less than a high school education, to a progressive, six consult room, free standing, three doctor practice in an upscale community with an average "college degree" client base?

The article for this Fortnightly is discussing Emotional Intelligence (EI) instead of IQ, since the depressed community EI may in fact be higher than that of the upscale community . . . and the practice that underestimates the HAB and EI of their clients will likely plateau and wither away. I have seen it happen, and in one case, the consulting client forbid me to discuss programs when trying to rally support from her tenured staff. Three months later she came back and asked "Which Programs should we start with to get buy-in". The challenge was deeper than that - she had hired technicians who were all breeders, so they naturally answered all questions on the phone and kept clients from coming into the practice. We had to find programs for each staff member that would require them to bring clients into the practice.

In another recent practice consult, we were converting from a spay-neuter practice to full service, but referral of well-care issues to staff was not occurring. We first issued pocket notebooks to each staff member, with programs across one margin and provider vets along the other, and each week, notebook pages were provided the manager to count the in-house referrals, and veterinarians who had sworn to the SOC well-care compliance issues yet had no referrals to staff had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the medical director/practice owner, to discuss their SOC compliance rates and well-care commitments. This required a confrontation, which most veterinarians try to avoid, so I had the leaders read *Crucial Conversation* by Patterson, et. al., and made them address the practice health vs "nice guy" paradigms. When the smoke cleared, it was all EI factors!

Hope you enjoy this edition, and please think about the Alaskan Seminars at Sea 2014 in August, (http://drtomcat.com/site/view/214832_pml), since these type issues can become your tailored open one-on-one discussion time to help YOUR practice. The optional pre-cruise rail trip to Denali and the optional post-cruise trip to the Canadian Rockies are added benefits for making this a family outing to remember . . . adventures like this make continuing education a memorable time.