Report for Hill's Pet Food Company – Sponsors of Client Simulations in VET442 2013 (semester 1, 3rd year)

The cost of salaries for the client simulations exercise this year was almost $4200; details are shown in the attached page. One tutor (a veterinary practitioner) has not accepted payment for at least three years; she was given a $50 gift voucher for her dedication. A formal evaluation of student's responses to the sessions was not run again this year as these have always been very well received. Instead, I requested feedback from actors (simulated clients) and tutors; these responses are attached. Four actors and two tutors responded.

Again, four small animal cases were used for the simulation classes with the object of combining communication skills with diagnostic pathology; connecting with a client, taking a history, making and explaining a diagnosis without using jargon. Questions on diet are also included in the history taking process, and clients were provided with specific information about diet. Two cases were reasonably straight forward and were used at the start, then two others involved either 'breaking bad news' or dealing with a challenging client. All cases included negotiating costs, justifying tests, and expressing empathy. Client scripts incorporated many practical points, (e.g. legal age is 18; pensioner needs; variable human-animal bonds, different client personalities, etc)

More resources are required to perfect client simulations, both in venue and organisation.

a) Venue –5 individual consultation rooms are needed, with a central 'control room' and waiting room for the clients. This year we used the anatomy museum and two adjacent rooms, with one group outside.
   We are in consultation with the new local Fiona Stanley medical hospital hoping to share their 'state of the art' facilities in the future, possibly 2015.
b) Organization – a dedicated staff member is needed to run coaching and training sessions for both clients and facilitators to ensure correct & consistent techniques are being used. Sessions may need to be run after-hours, or repeated as new facilitators & clients are recruited. Dedicated educators in client communication are now on staff at some veterinary schools.

The students experience a second level 'client simulation' exercise in second semester third year, dealing with challenging situations (justifying costs, angry client, communicating mistakes, delivering bad news). We find that using the same simulation techniques, most students demonstrate their ability to reinforce and build on their foundation skills encountered in the VET442 practical classes.

We are extremely grateful to Hill's Pet Food Company for sponsoring the simulations this year. We would be more than happy to provide any further information if required.

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