

The SkeptVet

*A Vet Takes a Skeptical & Science-Based
Look at Veterinary Medicine*

More Misleading and Unethical Advertising for Alternative Veterinary Medicine

Posted on [April 27, 2012](#) by [skeptvet](#)

I've written before about the [unethical and misleading negative advertising](#) that so often characterizes the promotion of alternative veterinary medicine. But I ran across another example that set my teeth on edge and illustrated a particular problem I have with this kind of thing.

Dr. Karen Becker, a prominent CAVM vet who writes for one of the most notorious sites promoting quackery through denigrating conventional medicine, Mercola.com, [recently blogged](#) about the much-reported decline in veterinary office visits. In this article, she makes a number of assumptions for which there is little or no evidence, and several accusations about the inadequacy of conventional veterinary care.

The accusations essentially amount to saying that conventional medicine ignores preventative care apart from given vaccinations and selling pest-control products, both of which Dr. Becker frequently cites as significant health hazards for our pets.

Perhaps a reason for fewer vet visits is the new canine vaccination guidelines which will hopefully put an end to the dangerous and unnecessary practice of yearly re-vaccinations.

I suspect another reason (aside from today's tough economic climate), is because many traditionally trained DVMs practice 'reactive' veterinary medicine.

This means they don't have much to offer pets unless and until they're good and sick...

...preventive medical care in the mainstream veterinary community has evolved to mean not much more than yearly vaccines and chemicals to discourage pests and parasites like fleas, ticks and heartworm.

There is rarely discussion between vets and pet owners about nutrition (because vet students receive almost no education in the subject), exercise and other physical therapies, or the importance of a strong, resilient and balanced immune system.

This also raises the cliché about conventional veterinarians being ignorant in the area of nutrition, which is nonsense. The definition of ignorance most likely meant here, is simply a failure to agree with specific theories about what constitutes a healthy diet, including the unsubstantiated beliefs often promoted about the benefits of raw diets, the dangers of grains, and so on.

This then leads to the suggestion that alternative veterinarians do a better job of preventative care, because they promote "wellness" therapies.

For some reason the methods used to maintain a pet's vibrant good health – everything from species-appropriate nutrition to maintenance chiropractic care to homeopathic remedies and herbal supplements –

fall into the category of 'alternative medicine.'

Isn't it strange that natural modalities used not to cure illness (although they do that, too), but to maintain health are thought of as 'alternative,' yet chemical drugs and invasive surgery are considered mainstream health care?

Actually, it isn't strange at all. There is no reliable scientific evidence for the preventative health benefits of maintenance chiropractic care, homeopathic remedies or herbal supplements. These products are touted as "wellness" care based solely on the personal beliefs of the vets who use them and the beliefs of previous generations of vets and animal owners. This is the same level of evidence that has supported such winning strategies as bloodletting, purging, and animal sacrifice as preventative health measures.

What is strange is that someone with medical training can so blithely denigrate preventative and therapeutic methods proven to work and wonder at the failure of mainstream medicine to accept without proof her belief that these alternative therapies are better.

I recommend twice yearly wellness examinations to my Natural Pet clients.

A thorough nose-to-tail professional checkup every six months is the best way for you and your vet to detect and stay on top of any changes in your pet's health. This is especially true for older pets.

This is undoubtedly great for the bottom line, but again there is no evidence that biannual or annual wellness examinations recommended for all pets is an effective or efficient strategy for preventing disease or extending length and quality of life. In humans, the [evidence in fact is building against](#) the value of annual exams for well people. There is no evidence either way in veterinary medicine, so while I myself think it likely that regular examinations could have some benefit, there is no objective reason for a strong recommendation of this kind. And certainly such visits are not a substitute for the "chemical drugs" and vaccinations that have been far more effective than any other measure and reducing disease and preserving health in our companion animals.

...Proactive vets are typically obsessive about clinical pathology...most proactive vets recommend annual vector borne disease testing instead of waiting until lyme disease has set in, causing incurable auto-immune polyarthritis.

This is a completely irrational and baseless recommendation. Screening tests without an appropriate reason for doing them waste money and cause far more harm than they prevent. There is a [strong movement in human medicine](#) now to reduce exactly this kind of misguided thinking. So to imply that the care such alternative vets provide is superior to that of conventional veterinarians because the former recommend unproven preventative measures and unnecessary testing is misleading and unethical. Given the complaints so often made by CAM vets about the purported financial motivation behind many mainstream practices, it is quite ironic that this sort of advertising promotes far more aggressive, and likely expensive, use of approaches with no proven value.



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34 Responses to *More Misleading and Unethical Advertising for Alternative Veterinary Medicine*



Art says:

April 27, 2012 at 2:01 pm

Here is a email about annual vaccines sent to me. The promotion about the visit to my office has been fabricated but I am not sure why . Did you get this in your email mail? I suspect they send one out to a lot of vets And plan to do something with the answers since i would guess most vets that do not promote annual vaccines but give them anyhow would respond thinking the person really did come to their office and talk with a employee . I wonder what they are doing. When someone brings up dr dodds vaccine schedule it seems like it ends up they are trying to sell some type of alternative medicine. I am old enough to remember when there were no annual vaccines except human flu vaccines.

Art Malernee dvm

Sent from my iPad

Email Deleted at request of original sender



skeptvet says:

April 27, 2012 at 4:31 pm

NO, I haven't seen his one yet. Part of what is deceitful about these sorts of complainys is that annual vaccination is NOT a widely accepted standard among conventional veterinarians. The controversy has largely passed, and few vets in my area, certainly none who've been out of school 10 years or fewer, vaccinate according to any rigid and indiscriminate timetable, annual or otherwise. It's a straw man argument.



Rita says:

April 28, 2012 at 3:07 am

"much-reported decline in veterinary office visits." My vet, like most people here, simply assumes this is because there's an economic recession in progress – but this would be a reason not to waste money on CAVM.....



Art says:

April 28, 2012 at 6:40 am

The debate about pet vaccination within the veterinary profession in the last 40 years always has been whether we should be vaccinating based on sound immunological principles or just when it suits us. I am skeptical of anyone in the profession forty years ago that now says we thought vaccines were immunological needed every 1-3 years to maintain immunity. To look back in history now and say vets started to practice astrology because we thought it was best that re vaccination should be based on how long it takes the earth to go around the sun, I think harms the profession more than to fess up and tell the public we started re vaccinating every 1-3 years forty years ago because the laws got changed forty years ago that allow us to do it. If vets and pet owners do not understand why we started to vaccinate every 1-3 years forty years ago they will not understand laws are needed to force us to stop it now. You do not get revaccinated every 1-3years with the same vaccine and neither should your pet.

Art Malernee dvm
Fla lic 1820
Art Malernee dvm



v.t. says:

April 28, 2012 at 11:45 pm

Oh, it's "proactive" now, is it? And wellness is different than preventative care...how?

I suppose pet owners just gobble up this recycled spin on b.s. Becker is a disgrace to the veterinary profession, as is any vet who denigrates another simply because they've gone woo and can't stand on their own merits.



[anarchic teapot](#) says:

April 29, 2012 at 6:55 am

You do not get revaccinated every 1-3years with the same vaccine

The flu vaccine doesn't count, then?

I'm confused by your statements Art. It seems to me that your argument is badly constructed and unsupported. While there may well be a good argument against revaccinating pets yearly, or even every 3 years, depending on the vaccine, you don't actually advance any – to the extent that your entire point is nullified by:

- the fact that there is a human vaccine which must be renewed annually
 - the knowledge that different species have different metabolisms
-



Aleja says:

April 29, 2012 at 12:11 pm

@Art

Did you bother to contact the sender to see if it was a legitimate email? I just looked up the alldogboots.com site and there is indeed an owner by the name of Karen.

Also Dr. W. Jean Dodds (not Jean Dodd) is far from a quack. She has over 100 published works and has collaborated with Dr. Ronald Schultz on DOI research studies, not to mention founded Hemopet/Henolife.

<http://www.itsfortheanimals.com/DODDS-CHG-VACC-PROTOCOLS.HTM>



[skeptvet](#) says:

April 29, 2012 at 2:22 pm

I don't have any knowledge about or opinion on the alldogboots site or the issue of the email Art wrote about.

As far as Dr. Dodds is concerned, she has certainly made many significant and valuable contributions to veterinary medicine. She is also dedicated to a number of ideas that are absolutely pseudoscientific. She was awarded the honor of Holistic Veterinarian of the Year in 1994, she promotes an unvalidated salivary test for food allergies, and she has been quoted as saying such things as (<http://www.itsfortheanimals.com/DODDS-NUTRITION-THYROID.HTM>):

“Holistic alternatives and homeopathic remedies can be used in place of standard allopathic treatments for immunologic disorders”

“Bolstering detoxification pathways mediated through the cytochrome P450 system and via conjugation with protective amino acids (glutathiones, cysteine, taurine) is important. Antioxidants including vitamins A, C, D and E, selenium, bioflavonoids and homeopathics are used as biosupport to strengthen the patient’s metabolism and immune system before implementing harsh detoxification regimens (once offending toxicants have been identified by such methods as applied kinesiology, intero- and electrodiagnostics). This author supplements all patients on a weight basis with extra vitamin E (100-400 IU/day), vitamin C in the ester C form (500-1500mg/day), Echinacea with Golden Seal, and garlic, although many other herbal and supportive nutrients also can be used. Animal experiencing adverse vaccine reactions are given Thuja, Lyssin (rabies vaccine) or sulphur. Specific Bach flower remedies are also helpful.”

Dr. Dodds is a perfect example of a smart, educated, well-intentioned person who can both make important contributions to scientific medicine and be completely unscientific about alternative therapies. Her position on vaccines is extreme and in many aspects not at all evidence-based. She claims, for example, that vaccination for parvovirus is “optional” after 14 weeks, when it is well-established that maternal antibodies can interfere with vaccination and leave animals vulnerable up to 16-20 weeks, and she promotes fears about “vaccinosis” and other supposed vaccine adverse effects that were not supported by real science. While many of her recommendations are reasonable, some are not, and she undoubtedly supports some kinds of pseudoscientific nonsense like homeopathy and Bach flower therapy, so I think that has to be considered in any evaluation of her contributions to the profession, along with the unquestionably valuable work she has done.



Aleja says:

April 29, 2012 at 3:57 pm

You made some good points re some of Dodds’ holistic theories, but on the whole I feel the work she’s done/is doing re canine breed-specific endocrine disorders as well as furthering research into vaccine DOI (not to mention Hemopet/Hemolife) is contributing to our knowledge base in a positive way. I tend to agree with Schultz in the areas where he and Dodds’ do differ. For Schultz’ vacc recommendations see:

http://www.beaconforhealth.org/Schultz_CHF_article_website.doc



Aleja says:

April 29, 2012 at 4:14 pm

Also forgot to add this link re Schultz’ 2012 recommendations:

http://www.healthdogproject.org/Site/2012_Dr._Schultz_Notes.html



Art says:

April 29, 2012 at 6:41 pm

The flu vaccine doesn’t count, then?>>>>>

We started vaccinating every year with the same vaccine when we saw the human doctors vaccinating for flu every year. Our annual pet vaccine sales pitch was to remind clients humans get vaccinated every year for flu. What we never told the client was we were giving the same vaccine year after year after year. Human flu vaccines are reformulated yearly so it’s a new vaccine not the old vaccine promoted as a booster to the one given last year. If Human flu vaccines did not need reformulated every year vets would never have been allowed by the government to use annual vaccination as a carrot or when required by law a stick to get clients into the office. The three year alternative is part of keeping annual revaccination legal. Vets who get paid to give vaccine CE make the claim that the government is going to change the laws so that vaccine company’s will not be allowed to promote revaccination every year or three years but it’s been a few years that the CE vets have said that and I have seen nothing from the USDA about it.

I can remember when i was a kid working for vets the final puppy vaccine was called the final adult shot. That was fifty years

ago.
Art Malernee dvm
Fla lic 1820
Art Malernee dvm



Art says:

April 29, 2012 at 7:55 pm

@Art

Did you bother to contact the sender to see if it was a legitimate email?>>>

The claim that the writer has been to my office and spoke to a receptionist about vaccinations has been fabricated. Once you know that it looks a lot like a form letter sent to more than one office.

Art Malernee dvm



Aleja says:

April 30, 2012 at 12:31 am

@Art I actually contacted Karen and she was legit. She was searching for a vet. Do you have a receptionist or female employee that could have been mistaken for one?



Art says:

April 30, 2012 at 3:53 am

Do you have a receptionist or female employee that could have been mistaken for one?>>>

No.

Art Malernee dvm
Fla lic 1820



Janet Camp says:

May 20, 2012 at 7:11 pm

I am totally confused by Art's comments—the writing is simply not concise or clear. I have been getting annual vax reminders since getting my dog two years ago. Is this proper practice or not?

I really would like to know as it is an expense I don't need if it is not necessary.

Thank you and no insult intended, Art—I just can't sort out the various comments and replies.



skeptvet says:

May 21, 2012 at 6:59 am

As always, there is the balance of potential risks and potential benefits. Currently, vaccines are divided into core (effective vaccines for important disease which most pets should be protected from) and non-core (vaccines that are not very effective or have some increased risk, diseases that are only a risk in specific limited circumstances, etc). Core vaccines should be given as a series to puppies and kittens between 8-16 weeks and then boosted at 1 year. After that, there is some controversy. Most core vaccines induce immunity lasting 5-7 years, and some may be lifelong. There is no simple way to test for immunity

in individuals since titers will often show a pet is protected if they are high but the pet may still be protected if the titer measured is low. And Rabies is a core vaccine that is often required at certain intervals as mandated by public health officials,

So generally, most core vaccines (DAPP and RV for dogs; FVRCP for cats and possibly FeLV and RV if they are outdoors regularly unsupervised) are boosted every 3-5 years, and there is an argument for not giving the DAPP or FVRCP to older animals (over say 8-10 years of age), though rabies is still required. And there are a couple of newer vaccines for rabies and FeLV for cats which might be safer than the older vaccines but which are less immunogenic and so have to be given annually. Other vaccines are given and boosted only if indicated by the individual animal's circumstances (the diseases they are likely to be exposed to given their location and lifestyle). And generally after the 1 year boosters, no vaccines at all are recommended for indoor-only cats not exposed to outdoor cats. Of course, there is no absolute rule that can be laid down since the circumstances are different for every individual, and the data is not perfect or complete. As the data improves, our practices change, so annual vaccination is rarely recommended anymore and is probably not justified scientifically for most pets.

That said, the flip side is what are the risks of vaccination. Allergic reactions are rare and usually easily treated and not life-threatening. Vaccine-associated tumors are rare but very serious in cats but have been seen only with specific vaccines not often used anymore and have not been reported in dogs. Lots of claims are made about immune system diseases associated with vaccines, but there is no sound evidence for these, so this is just a conjecture, and most of these are extremely rare. So while annual vaccination is probably not necessary for most pets, the sky-is-falling claims about vaccine risks often heard are generally not justified.

Here are some links to some general guidelines for vaccination. As I said, the data are complex and individual circumstances matter, so anyone who gives you an absolute rule for or against a certain vaccine practice is not basing that on science. But I do tend to follow these guidelines generally, and I do not recommend annual vaccinations except for the newer purevax FeLV and RV feline vaccines, and then only in unsupervised outdoor cats with likely exposure to these diseases.

[AAHA Canine Guidelines](#)

[AVMA Canine Guidelines](#)

[AAFP Feline Guidelines](#)



Shana says:

June 25, 2015 at 11:40 am

How is species appropriate nutrition alternative whether you feed raw or cooked meat and a small amount of vegetables and nutritional supplements to pets this just makes sense. Humans are encouraged to eat more whole food in their diets. Commercial dog and cat has only come about in the last 100 or so years so there is no way they have evolved to only eat this in such a short amount of time. Feeding corn, wheat, soy and animal products so rendered they have almost no nutrition left some from animals that are dead, dying, disabled or diseased and synthetic vitamins that have to be added cannot be good for any being dogs would not even eat it if it were not sprayed with flavor enhancers (fats). If humans become healthier eating a better diet why does it not make sense that our pets eating whole foods would help as well. The only reason I can think that vets would be against this is because of the proceeds made from selling so called veterinary diets made up of cheap ingredients for high prices. I am not myself a vet but I do know that when I switched my dog to a species appropriate diet not made out of overcooked byproducts and many of Dr. Becker's products his entire life changed at 10 years old. He went from a dog with multiple issues from grey tinged eyes to no energy. To a happy healthy dog that smells better has cleaner teeth a softer coat and better behavior. As far as preventive medicine how can it hurt for your pet to be checked over for easily cured or preventive strategies to help ease existing problems.



skeptvet says:

June 26, 2015 at 5:18 pm

“Species appropriate” sounds great, until you realize that the definition used to justify raw and such is made up without evidence to go with it. Claims are made that raw is more nutritious or easier to digest or less allergenic, none of which have any basis in fact. And a handful of vegetables and a “nutritional supplement (whatever that means, since there are hundreds of different cocktails out there) is hardly a rational or sensible way to choose what to feed. As for extrapolating from human nutritional guidelines, that’s hardly “species appropriate” either since we’re very different from dogs and cats.

I’ll ignore all of the nonsense about what you think of commercial diets since it’s not true and I have a detailed post coming up in a bit that deals with a lot of these myths. And I’ll ignore the bit where you imply that the only reason anyone with a degree in veterinary medicine could possibly disagree with what you think about animal nutrition is because they are worried about their income, since it is silly and arrogant and a cheap way of avoiding the details and the evidence and just dismissing ideas you disagree with by smearing the people who hold them.

And then, as always, there’s the anecdote, which is meant to prove your point without the trouble of providing actual evidence. Here are a few reasons such anecdotes shouldn’t be taken very seriously:

[Don’t Believe your Eyes \(or Your Brain\)](#)

[Medical Miracles: Should We Believe?](#)

[Testimonials Lie](#)

[Alternative medicine and placebo effects in pets](#)

[Placebo effects in epileptic dogs](#)

[Medical Practices Once Widely Accepted that Proved Ineffective or Harmful when Studied Scientifically](#)

[Why We’re Often Wrong](#)



Russell says:

October 19, 2015 at 10:05 pm

>“Species appropriate” sounds great, until you realize that the definition used to justify raw and such is made up without evidence to go with it.

i’m not sure what your definition of “evidence” is. everyone i have spoken to that has switched their dog from kibble to one of the 2 main raw diets (PMR or BARF) have noted significant health benefits, which always seem to include benefits to the teeth and coat. it does seem surprising to me that you haven’t noticed the same thing in your experiences with dogs as a vet.

>As for extrapolating from human nutritional guidelines, that’s hardly “species appropriate” either since we’re very different from dogs and cats.

if you investigate nutrition for humans then it becomes obvious very quickly that a whole foods diet is more beneficial than a diet composed of processed foods. i don’t see any reason why the same logic wouldn’t hold true for dogs as well, do you?



skeptvet says:

October 20, 2015 at 8:39 am

My definition of “evidence” is controlled scientific research. Anecdotes don’t count as evidence because they are unreliable. Sure, lots of people think their dogs do better on raw diets. Lots of people also believed in the health benefits of bloodletting

for thousands of years, and science quite easily and definitively showed those beliefs to be wrong. Opinion is just opinion, not evidence.

As I've said in a number of my posts on this issue, I do think there is some reason to believe fresh food diets might have some benefits over kibble based on extrapolation from epidemiologic studies in humans. However, there is only very weak and vague evidence to support this, and it has nothing to do with the arguments for raw foods since there is no evidence for humans or any other species that raw is better than cooked. It also is a mistake to equate what we call "processed foods" in human nutrition, with commercial pet diets. Pet diets are formulated and researched very carefully for nutritional adequacy, whereas most human foods are formulated and researched to be appealing to consumers, not nutritionally complete or balanced. The fact that both come in packages doesn't make them the same thing.

Here's a bit more information about why the argument from anecdotes doesn't hold water:

[Why We're Often Wrong](#)

[The Role of Anecdotes in Science-Based Medicine](#)

[Why We Need Science: "I saw it with my own eyes" Is Not Enough](#)

[Don't Believe your Eyes \(or Your Brain\)](#)

[Medical Miracles: Should We Believe?](#)

[Testimonials Lie](#)



Russell says:

October 20, 2015 at 2:27 pm

>My definition of "evidence" is controlled scientific research

dr rhonda patrick had the following to say recently regarding the challenge of studying nutrition in general: The "gold standard" for clinical trials (randomized double-blind placebo controlled) often don't include measuring blood levels for specific micronutrients before and after the clinical trial. This is fine when looking at the effects of a pharmaceutical because at the beginning of the trial everyone has exactly the same levels of the drug in their bloodstream, which is to say... zero. The effects are due to introducing drug X. Nutrition is different because we all have different diets, and that means our baseline is going to be highly variable from person to person. On top of that, gene variation that allow us to absorb/metabolize various nutrients is also more diverse on a population-wide basis than genes that affect drug metabolism because we've evolved with varying levels of these nutrients. Everyone has varying levels of micronutrients ranging from deficiency to optimal (for their genotype).

so yeah... i expect there's a lot of data for manufactured foods and very little for raw natural diets.



Danny says:

January 27, 2016 at 3:47 pm

I am not a vet. I am a lifelong dog owner of german shepherds and pitbulls. I do not have a degree in vet medicine. I only have about 35 years of experience raising my own dogs. This post is purely my opinion, and nothing more. I am only posting to begin with, to possibly help everyone on both sides of the coin to get the viewpoint of a dog owner and vet visitor. Maybe that will help vets of all kinds to see what their customers think.

After reading this post and the comments to follow, i can see why people like me are beginning to search for non traditional vets. There is so much disagreement and contradictory opinions, pet owners dont know which way is up. And thats just from this post and replies.

..Article says there is little or no evidence to support claims like a decline in vet visits, the Rita replies and says they do see a decline but not sure why.

...Some say there is no evidence or need for a certain vaccination or revaccination schedule. Art gives a response that os nullified by Anarchic. Some disagree. I have had 3 vets over the last 15 yrs, all of which have differing opinions, and some have regimens they stick to.

...Article and some responses say it is wrong that Becker denigrates other vets and methods, then article and responses go on to denigrate Becker and other methods. Hypocrisy

....Opinions and publishings have changed their opinions on vaccinations over last 50 years, for and against, and people here still have differing opinions.

...Skeptvet says that the definition of raw diets are not based in fact, but isnt the results of improvements by actual dogs from actual dog owners fact? Im not saying it is better or worse than any other diet, but isnt it possible? To dismiss it altogether seems very one sided and closed minded.

...Skeptvet says evidence is controlled research, and that pet diets are formulated and researched very carefully for nutritional adequacy – have you never witnessed glycol or other proven harmful additives as an ingredient in any dog food? That is a blanket statement which i find to be the exact type of statements that you are criticizing of others. To say something in that way, comes off to me as you doing the exact thing you are against.

My point – from a pet owners perspective, these are these exact type of discussions and “all over the map” type responses that make pet owners uneasy. When you have multiple dvm, all with differing thoughts, opinions, and following all different facts, it makes us feel that there is no real answer, and that whatever each feels is their opinion is right, and nobody else can be right. Which is exactly what this article does. Makes me feel that because someone has a different viewpoint than yours, they arent a real vet or are a quack.

But i will tell you this. From your customers point of view, there isnt much difference in the mainstream vet approach.

Multiple vets, differing opinions, differing practices. How are any of us supposed to know who to trust? How are any of is know who knows better?

What i will say, and this is my personal experience, and as far as im concerned this is as good evidence as it gets. My 2 yr old pitbull developed a rather bad skin condition, losing hair, scratching, bald spots, scabs. After 3 different vets, allergy tests, multitude of other tests, certain shampoos, and a ton of other things they tried, my final total was in the neighborhood of \$2500 in vet bills and the problem wasnt any better. I had enough and switched him to a raw food diet. Within 3 weeks he looked as if nothing ever happened. Could it be the food? Maybe. Could it be the kibble? Maybe. All i know is if you had an ailment and went to 3 different doctors and all tried different things to no avail, you would be at least willing to listen and evaluate an opinion from anyone that may be able to help you.

Maybe once the vast array of differing dvm’s opinions, practices, etc starts to get their act together, it will make a difference in the amount of vet care sought out by people. Because – and this is only my opinion with no evidence – people like me are about done with traditional vets altogether, and that decline you are talking about will get worse in years to come. If i cant get what im paying for, especially when it comes to the health and well being of my pets, my family members, i will continue to seek out alternative options, as will most pet owners, until something changes.



skeptvet says:

January 28, 2016 at 9:19 am

Well, I don’t have the experience that people are “done with traditional vets.” Though spending on vet med, like most things, declined with the economic downturn and has since rebounded, the vast majority of pet owners who seek medical care seek it from traditional, licensed vets. Alternative medicine practitioners would like to suggest that people are fleeing to them in droves, but that simply isn’t reality.

The bottom line is that everyone, science-based vets, alternative vets, and pet owners want safe and effective healthcare for our patients and pets. The differences come from philosophical differences about how one decides what that is. I think the evidence is clear that science works better at informing care decisions than anything else. But often the frustrating reality is

that there is no clear and perfect right answer. If any uncertainty at all drives you to abandon science-based medicine, I think your standards may be unrealistic. And in any case, all I can do is offer the perspective and information I have available for you to do with as you will. Most of my clients seem to recognize that some uncertainty is inevitable and that honest and well-informed vets may disagree when the evidence isn't perfect. Such is life.



Danny says:

January 28, 2016 at 3:28 pm

I dont know the actual numbers, stats or percentages of customers any kind of vet has gained or lost. And all im tryin to do is give the perspective of a long time dog owner and vet customer, and what i hear from the network of dog owners i am a part of. By no means do i think that anyone, including dvm should be perfect. But there should be some sort of consistency. In my own experience i cant get consistency from one vet to another, and over the course of 3 vets, get differing answers from all 3. How can an average pet owner have any idea of what is right or wrong or whats best for their pet when they get multiple opinions from mutiple vets? "Some uncertainty" i could understand, but these are multiple opposing statements from multiple vets. I cant say that people are or arent searching for alternative means of pet care, but what i can say from my own experience is that of the 400 + people that i network with throughout chicago, the surrounding suburbs, and nw indiana, there is a large portion that are searching out either alternative options, new ideas on pet care, or "holistic" type approaches. I dont know much myself about holistic or herbal type treatments. What i do know is that i have witnessed with my own eyes, the transformation and improvement in my own dogs and dogs of people close to me, due to a non commercial diet, mostly consisting of raw, prey model, barf, etc. This is fact, there is no opposing view. So why is it then, that an overwhelming majority of dvm immediately dismiss this type of diet?

I know it doesnt work for every dog – neither does commercial food, neither does certain scientific treatment. Theres no blanket answer. But if this type diet is effective in treating certain ailments or allergies, or is effective for some dogs or breeds in improving thier health, why is it not at least being discussed like normal adult professionals? A majority of postings i read from dvm's immediately dismiss the idea, and for the most part, denigrate the vet or person promoting the idea, rather than initiating a discussion about it.

I am not a vet, and do not have the schooling and training of a vet. But what i do know is what i experience with my own pets. And i am results driven. I do not give in to any hype or sensationalism. And the results i have experienced first hand with my dogs may not work for all dogs, just as certain medications or procedures dont work for all dogs, but if its a solution for some dogs, why not discuss it? Obviously there are things that were thought to be effective 50 yrs ago that are looked at as ineffective now. So, it would stand to reason that methods or ideas thatbare believed to be the best now, may be looked back at in 50 yrs and thought to be ineffective. Just food for thought



Brandon says:

September 8, 2016 at 7:16 am

Specifically to the article saying it is better not proactively test for things like lime disease, yearly testing for lime disease is a good idea. Many ticks are never seen on animals and at least in my area lime disease in ticks is epidemic. Many animals (including my own) have been found to be lime positive on these yearly check and although they may not need to be treated if they are asymptomatic the information can be useful in the future (in my case ruling out lime disease as a cause of heart issues)

Re: chiro and other types of therapies not having been prove. To work. Chiro, message and acupuncture have all been proven to work in human medicine and western medicine practicing doctors will often refer their patients to these practitioners and well as these treatments are regularly used in physiotherapy. I have also seen first hand the incredible difference this can make in our sport dogs being injured. Many able to come back to sport sooner and still able to run the times they had before the injury.



skeptvet says:

September 8, 2016 at 6:23 pm

Sorry, but you're just making claims without evidence. In terms of screening for infectious diseases, testing may or may not be beneficial, and the determination depends on the nature of the disease, the population, the test, the available treatments, and many other things, so generalizations are pretty meaningless. Screening asymptomatic dogs for Lyme disease may make sense in some situations but not in others. There is no consensus among experts about this, but here is what they say regarding the potential pros and cons:

Whether healthy dogs should be screened for antibodies against Bb proved controversial, and a consensus could not be reached. The points that follow are those raised in the literature and in our ACVIM diplomate survey that we think should be considered when clinicians are making a decision about whether to screen healthy dogs for evidence of Bb exposure. Similar discussion was presented for screening healthy dogs for Ehrlichia canis antibodies in a previous ACVIM Consensus Statement.

Potential benefits cited most frequently for serologically screening healthy dogs include:

1. We might detect a potentially dangerous disease (Lyme-associated nephropathy) before clinical illness develops by screening and monitoring seropositive dogs for proteinuria. Although checking for proteinuria is part of an annual wellness examination, if a dog is known to be seropositive, one might want to check for proteinuria more frequently than annually, especially in retrievers and Shelties. (see Fig 3).
2. We can track seroprevalence data in the practice area in both healthy and sick dogs.
3. Our vaccination protocol can be individualized because there is no evidence that vaccine is helpful for seropositive dogs.
4. We can provide information about the environment because dogs are sentinels.
5. We can inform owners about landscaping changes and the importance of checking daily for ticks on themselves as well as their pets, and we can emphasize the importance of using tick control.
6. We can inform owners that if they remove an engorged Ixodes tick from a person, they should call a physician who could prescribe 1 dose of doxycycline (200 mg) to be taken within 72 hours, which has been shown to prevent Lyme disease in people. Owners are very thankful for this public health information. No such study has been done on dogs.

Arguments against serologically screening healthy dogs (or treating them) that were mentioned most frequently include:

1. Routine testing often results in overdiagnosis and overtreatment of dogs on the basis of a test that does not diagnose Lyme disease nor predict whether Lyme disease will ever occur; most seropositive dogs will never become ill with Lyme disease and do not need to be treated.
2. Overtreatment with incomplete clearance of the organisms potentially can induce resistant strains.
3. Overuse of antibiotics generally increases other microbial resistance in the environment.
4. Not all dogs are cleared of infection even after 1 month of antibiotics.
5. Immunity is not permanent, and treated dogs could be reinfected.
6. Subclinically infected seropositive dogs might be in a premunitive state that could be protective.
7. Drugs used for treatment of Lyme disease have potential adverse effects.
8. Detection of positive test results could cause unnecessary owner distress.
9. False positive test results involve expense for the owner, unnecessary owner distress, and potential induction of drug reactions in animals that do not need to be treated.
10. Lyme endemic areas are already well-known, and tick control and public health information should be recommended in all Lyme endemic areas regardless of results of blood tests.
11. Screening for proteinuria should be part of a routine wellness examination and not done merely because of a seropositive test result.

As for your comments about acupuncture, massage, and chiropractic, you are simply mistaken. I have written dozens of detailed articles on these subjects here, but the bottom line is that most uses of these therapies have not been proven effective. A couple of uses are reasonable for each therapy, but they are often promoted for problems there is no reason to believe they actually help.

**Sally says:**

February 21, 2017 at 10:46 am

Do you know if there's scientific evidence that all these prescription diets to control bladder stones work? BECAUSE, they haven't worked with my dog AND they ARE filled with crappy ingredients. I'm starting to think vets push these prescription canned diets because they have no other cure. Since they aren't working with my dog I'm going to try Dr. Becker's method.

**Ron says:**

February 21, 2017 at 12:50 pm

Sally, did you check the alkaline/acid levels?

Be careful with a few of these prescription diets, they are notoriously high in fat %, which can lead to pancreatitis if your dog is susceptible:

Check the Consumers Affairs site and search for Vet, prescription diets.

**Winnie Boehnke says:**

January 13, 2018 at 5:03 pm

I agree 100% with you

**Abby says:**

January 26, 2018 at 4:41 pm

I agree 100% with your view of Dr. Becker. She is a great Vet and credible. This article is nonsense . Glad your dog is on a better diet and thriving !! I am going to do the same for my dog ! Commercial dog food is making my dog ill !

**Abby says:**

January 26, 2018 at 4:49 pm

When you say controlled scientific research I hope you mean not sponsored by pet food companies ?

**[skeptvet](#) says:**

January 28, 2018 at 2:39 pm

If you understand what "controlled" means, you recognize that the value of such research is that it reduces the risk of bias from many sources, including ideological and financial bias. It does not perfectly eliminate bias, but it does improve the reliability of the data. If we do not allow any evidence paid for or conducted by someone with a pre-existing bias or stake in the outcome, we will have no research. We have to consider the impact of all kinds of bias, including financial bias, but we can't just ignore any trial conducted or paid for by someone we happen to disagree with without looking at the study methods and the balance of the evidence as a whole.

**[Karen V. Stefanini](#) says:**

June 23, 2018 at 2:59 pm

Dr. Becker is excellent for the most part as is Dr. Mercola. He warned people early on that taking viox was high risk and to avoid it. He sure doesn't sound like a quack to me.



[skeptvet](#) says:

June 23, 2018 at 8:55 pm

I f the things Dr. Becker says don't worry you (e.g. [1](#), [2](#)), then I can't imagine what would. Perhaps the fact that [Dr. Mercola has been the focus of numerous FDA warnings for illegal and untrue medical claims?](#)

The SkeptVet

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