



# Teaching and learning communication skills at Vetmeduni Vienna

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# Why?

- core skill for vets and physicians
- lack of communication skills increases
  - medical malpractice (Chen et al. 2008)
  - complaints to physicians (Tamblyn et al. 2007)
  - conflicts between clients and vets (Martin 2006)
  - stress and burn-out in vets (van Egmont 2006)



# Why?

- patient-centered communication enhances
  - satisfaction of patients, health behaviour and health status (e.g: Venetis et al. 2009, Kerse et al. 2004, del Canale et al. 2012)
- experience alone is a poor instructor (Maguire et al. 1986, Kurtz 2006)
- communication can be learned (Aspegreen 1999, Dwamena et. al 2012 Cochrane report)



# How to teach?

- practising, interactive,
- frequently,
- highly structured,
- small groups
- constructive feedback



(Kurtz et al. 2009)



# communicative needs in vetmed

- in > 95% of contact situations the animal's owner is present
- client communicates the animal's problem / needs to the veterinarian as he feels responsible for communication





# ‘interactive (mis-)communication’



# ,interactive (mis-)communication‘



**clinical examination**



veterinary examination of the animal  
and correlation to the owners'  
information



communication to the client:  
I guess your animal is/has.....



**communicating  
clinical results**



Google

**non-clinical  
examination**

client interpretation of  
veterinary information



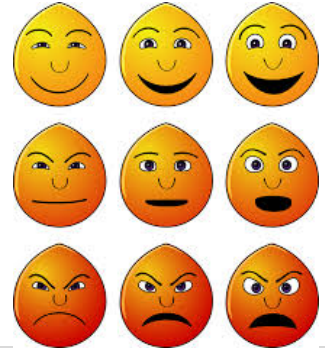
# ‘interactive (mis-)communication’

veterinary recommendation for  
diagnostic work up and therapy



**communicating expenses,  
therapy and prognosis**

client decision process  
including: e.g.  
emotions  
financial aspects





### ■ introduction lecture on

- communication and feedback

### ■ practical exercise:

- 5 times for 2 hours - 10 students / group
- role playing: one veterinarian - one client
- checklists and case reports are provided
- feedback: self-reflection, ,client', peer group, supervisor
- mini-portfolio for personal learning progress



# communication

## curriculum vetmed 3. term

### ■ learning outcome:

- establish a stable communicative relationship to the client
- take an animals history by interviewing the client
- be empathic and sensitive to the clients feelings and deal with introverted and extroverted behaviour
- self-reflect your own behaviour
- give a constructive and relevant feedback



- Objective Structured Practical Examination (OSPE)
- 1 station: taking a clients animal history (5 minutes)
- checklist for the examiner
- client is performed by a trained student (8-10 term)



# communication

## curriculum vetmed 6. term

### ■ practical exercise:

- 5 times for 2 hours - 10 students / group
- role playing: one veterinarian
- one client performed by an **professional actor / actress**
- **video recorded**
- checklists and case reports are provided
- feedback: **self reflection by video analysis**, ‚client‘, peer group, supervisor
- mini-portfolio for personal learning progress

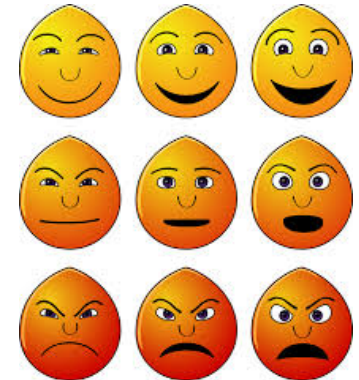


# communication

## curriculum vetmed 6. term

### ■ learning outcome:

- establish a stable communicative relationship to the client
- **communicate clinical results, expenses, therapy and prognosis**  
**= bad news !**
- be empathic and sensitive to the clients feelings and  
**deal with emotions**
- self-reflect your own behaviour
- give a constructive and relevant feedback





# Evaluation

of the training course in the third term



# evaluation design

## ■ paper-pencil questionnaire

### ■ rating items

- 5 categories
- labeled 1-5
- endpoints labeled `don't agree at all` and `totally agree`

### ■ open questions

### ■ two surveys in winter semester 2015/16

- before first unit (A)
- after last unit (B)



# evaluation sample

## ■ 161 students

- 18 courses (7-11 students in each course)
- 98.0% in 3<sup>rd</sup> term

## ■ age

- 19-37 yrs; mean=21.9; SD=3.1

## ■ gender

- 127 (78.9%) female (mean age 21.8 yrs)
- 34 (21.1%) male (mean age 22.5 yrs)



# questionnaires

## ■ questionnaire A (before first unit)

- items 1-15: self-assessment of communicative competences concerning learning goals

## ■ questionnaire B (after last unit)

- items 1-15 analog to questionnaire A
- items 16-21/24- 27 evaluation of teacher's competencies and global evaluation
- items 22-23/29-30 open questions relating to course/teacher



# results I: self-assessment of communicative competences (i1-15)

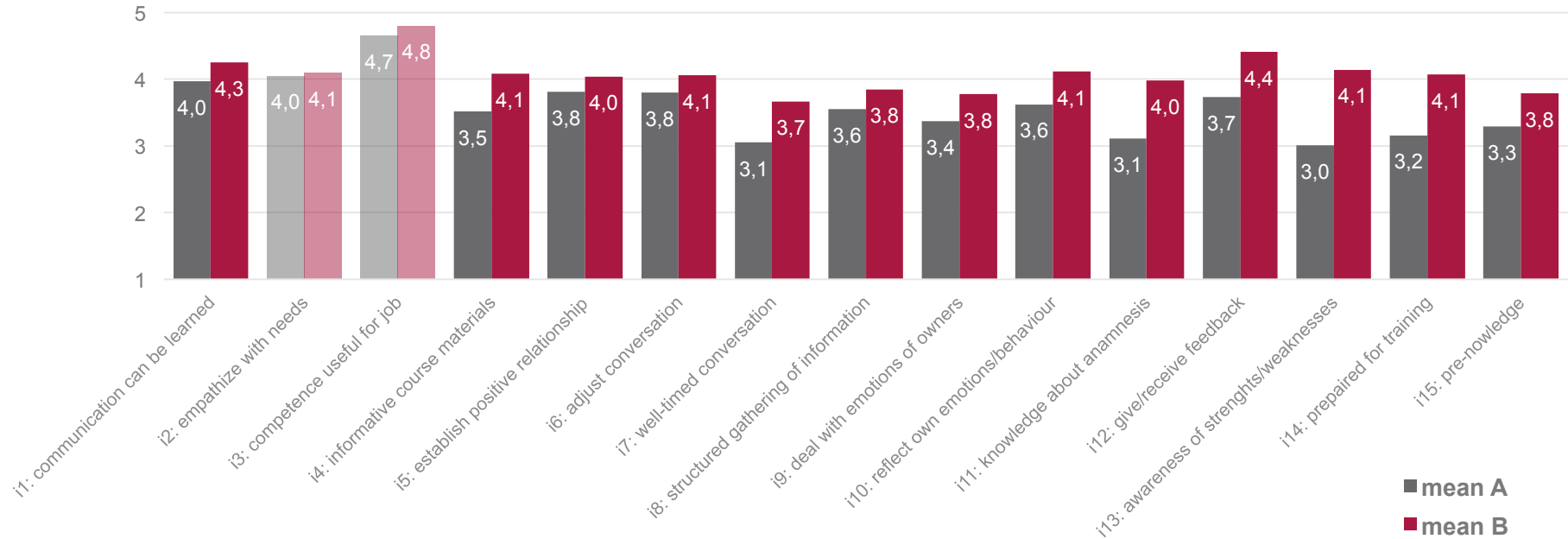
- Wilcoxon signed rank tests to check mean differences (A-B,  $\alpha=0.05$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{corr1♣}}=0.003$ )
- significant higher means for B: i1, i4-15
  - self-assessment more positive after course
- no significant mean differences: i2, i3

♣ Bonferroni-Holm adjustment

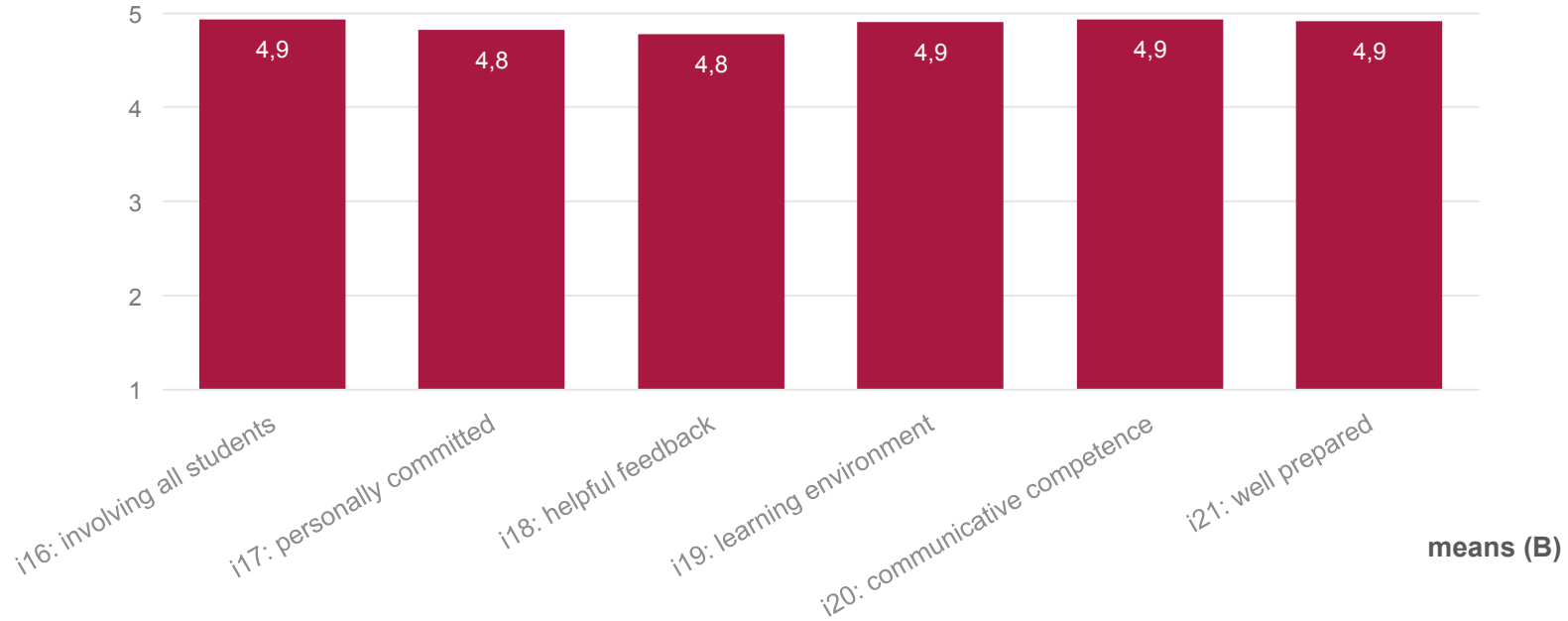




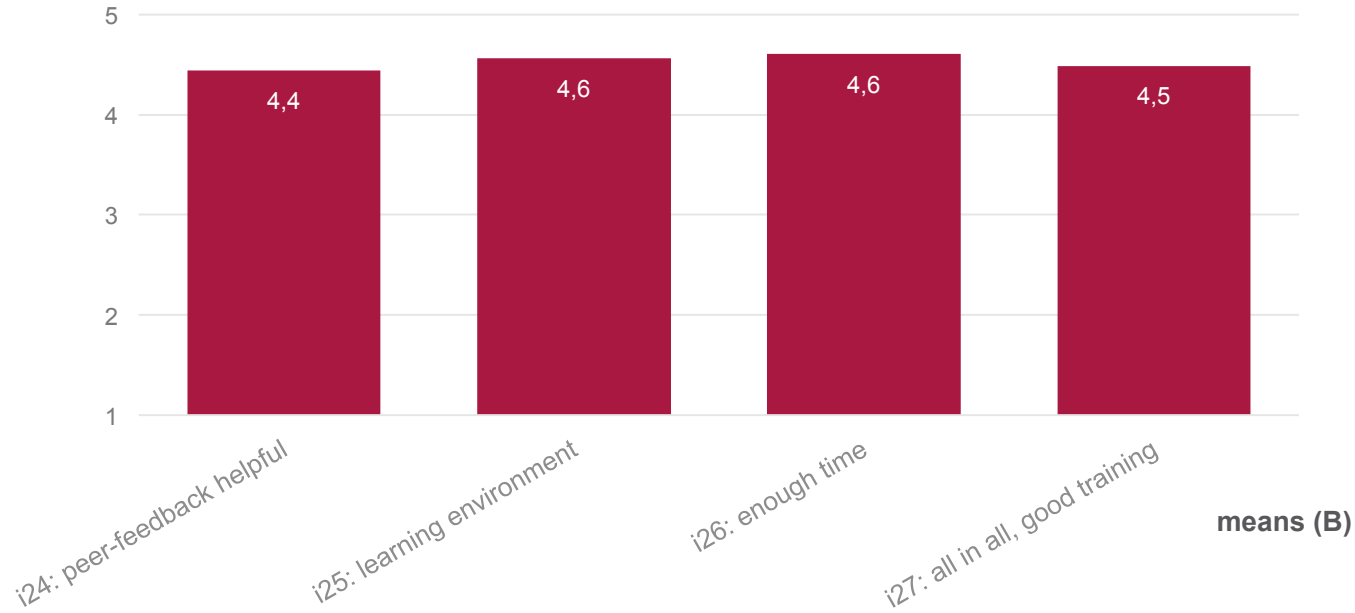
# results I: self-assessment of communicative competences (i1-15)



# results II: evaluation of teachers' competencies (B i16-21)



# results III: global evaluation (B i24-27)



# results IV: open questions

- numerous positive feedbacks on teachers effective behaviour
- few critical comments
- statements generally support extremely positive quantitative results (rating items)



# Qualitative Evaluation


## Supporting quantitative data

- this specific behaviour of the teacher made the course effective for me:
  - personal experience (24), kindness (22), openness (5)
  - constructive feedback (36), supportive environment (14),
  - practice (14), competence (14)
  - personal support (9)





# outlook:

- include actors in exams (OSPE)
- train students (8-10 term) by having them in real clinical settings with animals (patients) and clients under (,hidden‘) supervision of a veterinarian
-  **Join Us:** the workshop starts in 30 minutes

