Experimental methods and feedback are most effective to improve communication skills in medicine. Having a time limited talk to an emotional (exciting, agitated, uncertain or anxious) animal owner is a challenging situation even for experienced veterinary practitioners.

Training and teaching communication skills at the Veterinary University Vienna has now reached an advanced level including professional actors supporting the training students. The training is highly structured, learning outcomes and tasks for five different communication situations are defined.

Students are prepared by documents describing the set up situation (location, history and test results of the animal) but do not know anything about the personal characteristics of the referred client.

The actors are specifically trained by a professional. So they can interact with the students according to their learning goals. Instruction courses for teachers were implemented.

Each training session is clearly structured. Consultations between students and actors are videotaped.

After the interaction with the actor, the student who played the role of the veterinarian reflects his performance, while watching the video. In the meanwhile the actor and the group prepare their feedback.

Feedback, as a main didactic element is given in a standardized way. First the student, who held the conversation reflects his performance according to the learning goals. Than the actor gives his feedback from the view of the owner of the ill animal. In conclusion the group feedback is given.

This workshop will focus on professional, empathic, and structured communication in an emotional situation and on the possible ways to give a structured and value-free but constructive feedback to improve the trainees performance.

Workshop held in German language