Access to Emergency Services

The following is an email letter recently received by our office.

“As part of the effects of the pandemic, we know that Americans expanded the "owned" pet population by at least 20%. Combine that with the primary care practice's reduction in their ability to see cases and now wading through a backlog of wellness care visits has resulted in an explosion of the caseload at emergency and referral hospitals who, prior to the pandemic, were already experiencing unprecedented growth and a struggle to keep appropriately staffed to meet the demands.

Add to this, the primary care practices actively recruiting from our already exhausted staff with promises of comparable salaries but no nights, overnights, weekends or holidays. Now we find ourselves struggling to handle a fraction of the cases who present at our doors and having to turn away cases with real emergencies so we can provide adequate care for those within our doors with a skeleton staff. When referring call to transfer cases, we cannot always take them, so they now tell their clients not to call ahead and just show up in our parking lot. We have referring contact us directly, angry and upset that we won't see their patients. The same referring who are poaching our staff out of our hospital, ironically.

We are overwhelmed and we now face a real threat of long term closures for parts of days or full days of the week just to try to preserve what staff we have left.

I don't know what you can do to help but I am asking that you remind your members that as primary care veterinarians, they are required by their ethics to be responsible to ensure that their patients have access to emergency services and to facilitate their access whenever necessary. If we cannot provide that service, then THEY MUST. They cannot abandon their patients to have to travel across the state seeking care on their own.”