

Learning Objectives

- 1 Define spectrum of care without framing it as lesser care
- 2 Identify the factors shaping appropriate options
- 3 Design transparent, sustainable treatment pathways

- 4 Utilize the veterinary team consistently
- 5 Apply the framework to Tango's urgent case

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Spectrum of Care

From Clinical Options to Collaborative Care Designing Care That Fits Through Family-Centered Care

Power of Ten KyVMA
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Tango

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What do we mean? Spectrum of Care?

Working definition: Spectrum of care is a range of evidence-informed, medically appropriate care options developed through clinical judgment and shared decision-making, considering the unique needs and circumstances of the patient, client, veterinary team, practice, and community.

SOC is not "anything goes," permission to lower the professional standard of care, or a reason to give services away. It requires transparent discussion of benefits, costs, risks, limitations, uncertainties, caregiving responsibilities, and follow-up needs.

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Rebecca Rose, RVT Certified Career Coach

- 35+ years within the veterinary community
- 13 years in Mixed Animal Practice
- Leadership
- Management
- Awards
- RVT Member Colorado State Board of Veterinary Medicine
- Nana Rosie



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ACCESS TO CARE IS ABOUT MORE THAN COST.

5 practical ways veterinary practices can reduce barriers.

- 1 **ASSESS ACCESSIBILITY**
Review parking, entrances, seating, walkways, and exam rooms.
- 2 **REMOVE SAFETY HAZARDS**
Look for uneven flooring, tight pathways, and trip risks.
- 3 **MAKE MATERIALS EASIER TO READ**
Use larger type, plain language, and accessible forms.
- 4 **OFFER FLEXIBLE SERVICE OPTIONS**
Consider curbside pickup, drop-offs, or adapted appointments.
- 5 **EXPAND HOW CARE IS DELIVERED**
Use telehealth or house calls when appropriate.



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What Spectrum of Care Is

A range of evidence-informed, medically appropriate care options developed through:

CLINICAL JUDGMENT
+
SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Care is tailored to the patient, client, veterinary team, practice, and community.

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The Central Challenge

Move beyond:
"Can the client afford Plan A?"

What medically responsible pathways can move this patient and family forward?



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What Spectrum of Care Is NOT

- ✗ Lesser or inferior care
- ✗ Anything goes — no standards
- ✗ Automatic discounting
- ✗ Abandonment of professional standards

Spectrum of Care is not a single idealized endpoint, nor is it a compromise of clinical integrity. Every pathway must remain evidence-informed, medically appropriate, and grounded in shared decision-making.

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What Spectrum of Care Is Not

NOT lesser care

NOT "anything goes" medicine

NOT automatic discounting

NOT abandonment of professional standards

NOT one idealized endpoint for every family

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Practice Identity: Who Do You Serve?

- Rural and geographically isolated communities
- Financially constrained or resource-limited communities
- Shelter, rescue, and community-medicine populations

- General companion-animal communities
- Affluent or boutique-care clientele

Which options can your practice sustainably deliver?

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Six Lenses Shape Every Care Plan

PATIENT
CLIENT + FAMILY
VETERINARIAN
VETERINARIAN TEAM
COMMUNITY



No single lens tells the whole story.

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MEET TANGO

Orange tabby male cat. Urgent presentation consistent with urethral obstruction. Frightened client with significant financial limitations. Spectrum of Care does not make an emergency less urgent. Tango needs help now — the question is which medically responsible pathway can move this patient and family forward.



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Begin With the Non-Negotiables

- Recognize and communicate urgency
- Stabilize as clinically indicated
- Relieve suffering
- Define welfare and safety boundaries

Identify the stop points that require escalation—or a revised plan.

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Design the Treatment Plan

Every pathway makes visible:

- Purpose and expected benefit
- Risks, limitations, and uncertainty
- Cost and time
- Client caregiving responsibilities
- Warning signs
- Follow-up plan
- When the plan must change



Clarity turns an estimate into a care plan.

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Tango - urgent care plan

Treatment plan & cost—three medically appropriate paths.

Urinary obstruction, painful bladder, life-threatening. Pet parent has \$100 today. Numbers are illustrative - clinical specifics & costs are patient-, practice-, and veterinarian-specific.

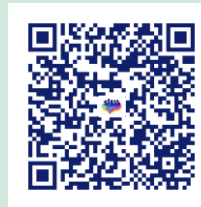
Pathway A Comprehensive hospital	Pathway B Modified medically appropriate	Pathway C Referral-community
Estimated cost range \$2,400–\$3,600	Estimated cost range \$1,200–\$1,800	Estimated cost range \$400–\$900
Includes: Diagnosis & triage - full diagnostics Hospitalization & continuous monitoring Catheterization, sedation, IV fluids Reassessment daily, analgesia/antibiotics Discharge planning & follow-up	Includes: Diagnosis - rapid response Sedation, analgesia, catheterization Painful diagnostics, shorter monitoring Outpatient transfer where safe Medication, support, education, return	Includes: Diagnosis Sedation, analgesia Transfer to community clinic Records & equipment forwarded Availability - verified, not assumed
Support for an admission - stop points trigger escalation	Same-day referral back - informed consent documented	Referral only helps when the family can actually reach it

A spectrum, not a single line. Three viable paths — each is medically defensible, each changes the cost, the duration, the monitoring intensity.

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CE Resources



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Tango Pathway A

COMPREHENSIVE HOSPITAL PATHWAY

- Examination and triage
 - Diagnostics and stabilization
 - Sedation or anesthesia as clinically indicated
 - Urinary catheterization / procedure
- Hospitalization and monitoring
- Medications
- Reassessment
- Discharge and follow-up
- Clinical specifics and costs are patient-, practice-, and veterinarian-specific.



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Tango Pathway B

MODIFIED MEDICALLY APPROPRIATE PATHWAY

What may change?

- Diagnostic sequence
- Level or duration of monitoring
- Hospitalization approach
- Follow-up structure

What cannot disappear?

- Welfare and safety boundaries
 - Informed consent
 - Clear limitations
 - Escalation triggers

Modify the pathway—not the obligation to practice responsibly.

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Tango Pathway C

REFERRAL • TRANSFER • COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Emergency or specialty referral
- Teaching or community clinics
- Nonprofit and charitable resources

- Clear continuity handoff
- Records and expectations transferred
- Availability verified—not assumed

A referral is only a pathway when the family can realistically reach it.

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Financial Care Pathways

- ✓ CareCredit / Third-Party Financing
- ✓ Nonprofit & Charitable Assistance
- ✓ Phased Care (When Medically Appropriate)
- ✓ Relinquishment: Last Resort Only

Community resources, internal hardship funds, and insurance or reimbursement options expand access to care. Transparent financial pathways preserve the client relationship and support patient welfare — relinquishment is never the first or only option offered.



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Informed Consent Is the Bridge

Discuss and document:

- Benefits and likely outcomes
- Risks and uncertainty
- Costs and alternatives
- Limitations of each pathway

- Declined recommendations
- The client's informed decision
- Follow-up and warning signs

Informed consent is essential to care that meets professional standards and reflects client understanding and choice.

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The Team Turns the Plan Into Care

VETERINARIAN

Diagnosis • clinical judgment • acceptable options • escalation

CREDENTIALLED TECHNICIAN
Education • estimate review
within policy • home-care
teaching • teach-back • follow-up

CLIENT SERVICE
REPRESENTATIVE
Resources • logistics • continuity

Role clarity supports consistency without blurring clinical accountability.

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Relationship-Centered Communication

"Here is what we are concerned about.

Here is what we recommend—and why."

"Here are the medically appropriate pathways available.

Let's talk about what is possible for you and safe for Tango."

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Teach-Back Without Testing

"To be sure I explained everything clearly, would you walk me through what you understand about Tango's care options?"

"Which pathway feels most manageable—and what can I help clarify before we move forward?"

The team owns the clarity of the explanation.

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How Spectrum of Care Supports Well-Being

- Reduces moral distress
 - Creates role clarity and shared accountability
 - Builds confidence during difficult conversations
- Reduces conflict and emotional exhaustion
 - Replaces assumptions and ultimatums with transparent options, informed consent, and partnership

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Your Monday Commitment

- 1 Choose one common condition
- 2 Convene everyone who touches the case
- 3 Revise one treatment plan
- 4 Add financial pathways and teach-back
- 5 Test the process for 30 days
- 6 Review patient outcomes, client understanding, team experience, and sustainability

Create medically appropriate pathways and choose care **WITH** the client—not **FOR** the client.

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