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[Dr. Carter]: How do we discern on the phone when somebody calls and thinks it's an emergency? Well, we don't really know. So we never turn anybody down. If somebody calls and thinks that the dog needs to be seen, there's an emergency kinda thing, we tell them to come on in because maybe it is and maybe it's not. Perception is truth. So if a person perceives this as being an emergency, well then we need to treat it as an emergency because they're the owners to the dog. And to them, this is something that's really bad.

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From WHJE, this is First Responders 411, getting you the inside scoop on first responders in and around Carmel.

[SFX TWO]

I'm Tatum Prati.

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[Tatum]: At Carter Veterinary Medical Center, they see a lot of different animals with all sorts of medical problems. Some of these problems are minor while others are a big deal. An example of something they've seen is when a dog (or cat) breaks a bone or dislocates a leg. Doctor David Carter explains the process he goes through when this happens.

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[Dr. Carter]: We had a lady that called. And her complaint was, "My dog just got hit by a car, and he can't use his back legs. He can't walk with his back legs." So we told her to come right on in. So she comes in.

[Tatum]: What they do is apply the SOAP (S-O-A-P) Procedure. First is S, subjective.

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[Dr. Carter]: So subjectively, what is the person telling us subjectively? She's telling us that her dog got hit by a car, and he can't walk with his back legs.

[Tatum]: Next is O, objective.

[Dr. Carter]: What do I see on physical exam? What do I see objectively? Well, I see that the dog can actually walk on three legs. He couldn't walk on his right rear leg. And he was holding that up. So overall on physical exam, everything looked normal with the exception of he couldn't walk on his right rear leg. On physical exam, I couldn't determine the exact reason why he couldn't walk on the right rear leg. So we took an x-ray, and we found that the right hip was dislocated.

[Tatum]: That leads right into A, assessment.

[Dr. Carter]: The assessment's like your diagnosis. It's a right hip dislocation due to blunt trauma.

[Tatum]: That is quickly followed by P, plan and procedure.

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[Dr. Carter]: We need to put the hip back into place. We need to put the leg bone back into the socket of the pelvis. How do we do that? I need to have muscle relaxation. And we get that by using injectable pain medication, sedation. So in this case, I did some IV narcotic for pain, an IV sedative.

[Tatum]: In this case, there wasn't enough muscle relaxation, so he had to use a gas anesthetic. He put a mask on the dog and had him breathe in the gas.

[Dr. Carter]: Once I got the muscle relaxation, then I had one of my assistants hold the body 'cause I need to manipulate the leg, but I need the body to be stationary. Then what I do is - and

I'm right handed - so I take my left hand, and I put it on the pelvis. And I take my right hand, and I grasp his right rear leg.

[Tatum]: During this procedure, the dog is in left lateral recumbency. This means the left side of the dog's body is down on the table, and his right leg is up.

[Dr. Carter]: I want to raise the leg away from the body - that's called abduction. I'm gonna take the leg and just rotate it up just a little bit. And then I want to take the knee and rotate it outward. Then I put my hand on the knee. And I want to hyperextend the knee. I then can use my left hand to slowly put the leg bone back into the socket of the pelvis.

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[Tatum]: Basically, he manipulates the leg and guides it back into the socket. Sometimes the hip pops back in place, but sometimes it doesn't. In this case, it did. To keep the leg in place, he had to use an ehmer sling. They wrap the leg a certain way to keep the hip together. After the dog wakes up, they send him home with orders for bed rest.

[Dr. Carter]: We leave this sling on for maybe a week to ten days to two weeks. Kinda depends on the case. In this case we left it on for a full two weeks. And we had that restricted activity in a cage or on a leash. Two weeks, we came back, and we did another x-ray. Sure enough, the hip is still in place. So now we have to take the ehmer sling off. The hip cannot be stationary. We don't want to have it to freeze up on us. And then, continue the pain medication, the continued with the restricted activity at home in the crate and on the leash. And then they came back in eight weeks, repeated the x-ray. The hip is still in place. The dog's doing fine. So he was all healed up, and we're done.

[Tatum]: While they deal with emergencies like this and more extreme, there are times when people come in with false alarms. These owners think that something is seriously wrong with

their pet - they believe there's some sort of emergency. From a medical standpoint, the animal is just fine. This happens a lot when dogs eat chocolate.

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[Dr. Carter]: Chocolate is not necessarily an emergency. How many dogs eat enough chocolate for it to really be toxic in their body? Very few. Usually it's the milk chocolates and the dark chocolates that people are eating themselves. And they usually don't have enough for the dog really to be toxic. So for me the doctor, my standpoint, it's not really an emergency. But the people are all upset because they read on the internet, this is gonna kill their dog. Okay. Well, yes it can, in fact, kill your dog. And it's the caffeine that really does the damage because it's a neurostimulant. So if they get too much chocolate, too much caffeine, then they do have neurotoxicity. And that does become an emergency. But most of the dogs don't eat enough chocolate to get that kind of neurotoxicity. The thing is - people don't know that. All they know is he ate chocolate, and he's gonna die. That's what their perception is, that's what's gonna be. So that's what we go on.

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[Tatum]: In fact, this actually happened to my dog, Rambo. He ended up getting into my mom's little snack of semi-sweet chocolate chips.

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[Marcy]: Probably had about half a cup of them, and I set them on my nightstand and walked away. And then I heard something like maybe a minute later crash to the floor. And I realized that Rambo had eaten all of the chocolate chips. For a six pound dog, I thought that was quite a bit of chocolate. I started to wonder whether I should do anything with him or not. I didn't immediately call the vet. There were a few chocolate chips on the floor, so I was trying to figure

out, did he eat all of them, or are there a bunch more scattered on the floor? I did not find many on the floor, so I'm pretty sure he ate about a whole half a cup of semi-sweet chocolate chips.

[Tatum]: My mom kept an eye on Rambo for a little bit to see if he really did need to go to the vet. He was walking kinda funny, and he threw up a little.

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[Marcy]: So I decided to call the vet. They basically told me what we could do, and I could bring him over there, and they could give him some charcoal to counteract the chocolate. So we decided that probably that would be the best bet to take him over there.

[Tatum]: I actually went with my mom to the vet. Once we got there, they were quick to address our concerns. And although it wasn't technically a medical emergency, it was an emergency to my mom and I. So the doctors treated it like it was a real emergency. They took a look at Rambo and searched for signs of neurotoxicity.

[Dr. Carter]: Is he shaking? Do I see seizures? Do I see quivering of muscles? Do I see where he can't stand up? He's not moving his legs properly? I mean, all of these are neurologic signs that we're looking for. And most of the time, I don't see any neuro signs 'cause like I say, most of the dogs don't eat enough chocolate to really have it be toxic to them. But to relieve the people's anxiety, sometimes it's enough just to have the physical exam and to know that my dog is gonna be okay.

[Tatum]: For some people, a physical exam is not enough. They want something to be done, so the doctor induces vomiting.

[Dr. Carter]: And there's a couple of ways we can do that. Sometimes we feed them hydrogen peroxide. So they drink the hydrogen peroxide, it bubbles in the stomach, and they throw up. And that gets the chocolate out of the stomach. There's another type of medication that we can

use that, it's injectable. And we can give them that medication, and that will make them vomit as well. So now people have a degree of satisfaction and comfort knowing that we got all the chocolate out of there.

[Tatum]: My mom and I wanted something done. But instead of inducing vomiting, the doctors gave Rambo activated charcoal which is liquid charcoal.

[Marcy]: They got a big syringe - no needle on the end - but I mean, they just had this big syringe. They filled it with the charcoal. And then they basically shot it into the back of his mouth.

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[Dr. Carter]: And that will help to absorb some of the caffeine. That will help to absorb some of the chemicals, so that they don't get absorbed into the body. They get absorbed into the charcoal.

[Marcy]: The vet said he's gonna be very, very probably hyper like he'd had a bunch of coffee. So it would not be unusual for his heart to be beating really fast and for him maybe to be a little bit more hyper. I said, "Well, can we take him for a walk?" And they're like, "He can do anything, you know, that he's feeling up to doing." So we decided we'd take him for a little walk and see how he did on that. And when we took him for his walk, then everything came up. All the chocolate came up. It was quite a sight.

[Tatum]: I'm happy to report that my dog was perfectly fine thanks to Carter Vet. They treated our concern immediately just like they do with all of their clients. This has been Tatum Prati for WHJE. More stories like this can be found at whje.com.

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