# Case Study:
# Accurate Advertising – "24/7" Available Services

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### The Story

"Mummy, Sylvester just peed on the floor!" Tiffany was distraught. "Mummy! He's acting weird!"

Tiffany lived with her parents, Sarah and Eric in a small Vancouver rental apartment. Sylvester had slept on her right shoulder every night since his first day home twelve years ago, always there to comfort her and her family through tough times.

"Sylvester!" Sarah was horrified by what she saw.

Sylvester threw his head back, streams of saliva flying, and started scrabbling uncontrollably with all four paws. After what felt like hours he eventually came to a twitching stop.

Tiffany was crying. Sarah frantically grabbed a towel and the shopping bag they used to smuggle Sylvester in and out of the building, her only thought was to get him to the vet. There was one nearby, she remembered the sign: **"Open 24/7"**.

She got Sylvester and Tiffany down the elevator to the car without incident. Tiffany was strapped into her car seat, Sylvester next to her in his bag. He seemed unconscious, but breathing.

The vet clinic was in a small strip mall. Sarah parked, grabbed Sylvester, leaving Tiffany strapped in, and ran to the door. There was a light on and someone at the front desk but when she tried the door, it was locked. The girl looked up and stared.

In a panic, Sylvester seizing in her arms, Sarah yelled for the girl to open the door.

Finally, Sarah dashed in.

"Emergency! Please help" she said.

"There's no vet here! I just was closing. You need to go to the emergency clinic!" The girl said.

"It says 24/7 on your sign!" Sarah was holding Sylvester to her chest, towels slipping.

Sylvester launched into another seizure.

"Get the vet!" Sarah cried.

"There's no vet here. You have to take him to emergency!" They stared at each other. Through Sarah's distraught confusion the message was beginning to sink in. **Despite the brightly lit sign outside, advertising "24/7", nobody here could help Sylvester. She'd wasted precious time that could have made all the difference in saving her beloved pet.**

It was a terrifying twenty-minute drive across the city to the emergency clinic. Tiffany was crying again as Sylvester launched into another seizure, but Sarah was driving and could not do

anything for the two passengers in the back. Sylvester came to rest behind the driver's seat, crammed with his head at an odd angle, and lay there unmoving for the rest of the trip.

Ten minutes later in the emergency clinic waiting room, Sarah held Tiffany on her lap as she rested her head against the cold stiffening body of her best friend. **The thought that he might still be alive if she had not been misled by that "24/7" sign was a spark that would ignite anger and blame for years to come.**


## Caution to the Profession

The CVBC Bylaws and Advertising Standards require veterinarians and veterinary businesses to ensure that every aspect of their marketing be true and objective; accurate and verifiable; not be self-laudatory; not otherwise be contrary to the honour and dignity of the profession; and not be reasonably capable of misleading the public or any other person (CVBC Bylaw s. 240 and 241).

When advertising is misleading, the consequences to people, families and pets can be tragic. Please be aware that if a veterinarian's advertising misleads anyone, intentionally or not, the whole profession is brought into disrepute. The public may negatively target the veterinarian on social media, file a complaint with the CVBC, sue civilly, or all of the above.

**The story above is based on a complaint received by the CVBC. It would apply equally to clinics with the name "emergency" which do not have a vet promptly available at all times.**

Please familiarize yourself with the documents below in order to avoid such misunderstandings.

CVBC Advertising Standard: http://cvbc.ca/Files/Bylaws-Policies/Advertising/Standard.pdf
CVBC Advertising Guidelines: http://cvbc.ca/Files/Bylaws-Policies/Advertising/Guidelines.pdf