

# **Combining Traditional and Alternative Modalities to Provide the Best Veterinary Care**

## **A Special Interview With Dr. Ryn Marlowe**

**By Dr. Karen Shaw Becker**

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

I'm Dr. Karen Becker, and Gladys has nominated Dr. Ryn Marlowe for a Game Changer award. And we're so excited that Dr. Marlowe is joining us live and in person to tell us a little bit more about the amazing work she's doing with animals. So, Dr. Marlowe, congratulations on your Game Changer award, and welcome.

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

We're so excited that you are here live and in person. If you will back up and tell our listeners and readers a little bit about what the inspiration was for you to become a veterinarian, and then how you decided to keep wanting to learn and grow your toolbox to provide a variety of different modalities, that is a fantastic place to start to get to know you better.

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

Thank you. So, I was one of those veterinarians who I've known I've wanted to be a vet since I was a little kid. My mom remembers me bringing shoeboxes home of injured birds when I was 5 years old. So, it's just, honestly, it's felt like a calling to me. I've never considered doing anything else.

I've been in the industry about 20 years in total, 20 years old is when I started working in veterinary hospitals, and then I went to veterinary school and graduated vet school in 2011. And after about three years of practicing, I ran out of ways to fix things. The perfect example would be your 12-year-old arthritic, old, gorgeous, bighearted pit bull coming in that can barely walk, and I'm looking at the owners and I'm like, "I have him on every single drug that exists that could help him, and there's nothing else I can do for you."

So, decided to go back to school, to the Chi Institute in Florida, where I learned under Dr. [Huisheng] Xie. I'm very, very blessed that I was able to be in the generation that got to learn from him acupuncture, and then after that, went back for herbal knowledge, and then, man, once you take a bite of holistic medicine and open your mind, you just get trapped in the vortex and you keep learning, and you keep learning, and you never stop.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

So, it's been amazing. I've been able to make more of a difference, for sure.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

For sure, and Ryn, when you make this metamorphosis from conventional medicine, which we're so thankful for, if you're hit by a bus or you have an infectious disease, yay – yay for what we learned in vet school, but then there's this entire, like 90% of what we see in the exam room isn't trauma or infectious disease, it's degenerative lifestyle disease-related stuff that we didn't necessarily have any training for. How has your colleagues around you responded to you expanding your toolbox? Have you felt supported professionally, or do you feel like you have a lot of confused colleagues around you that think, "What is she doing"?

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

Honestly, a bit of both. I'm a little bit different than a lot of holistic practitioners in that I consider myself to be integrative. I love blending conventional medicine and holistic medicine. So, I still really believe in evidence-based medicine, but my goal is to stay as open-minded as possible and learn as much as I can about alternative therapies so that I can use different modalities. I think that's helped colleagues accept me, in that if an animal comes in and has a horrible case of pneumonia, I'm going to put them on antibiotics. I'm still going to do a little bit of both. So, that has helped, but I do still have colleagues who probably think I'm nuts.

And a lot of it comes down to, for example, diet. I really try to get all my patients off of kibble if I can. Not everybody can do that. We have a whole survey that we do about lifestyle and if it's possible, and some people think that's crazy. And so we still have a little bit of a ways to go in our profession to allow – I think veterinarians need to, as a whole, become a little bit more open-minded, open to new evidence and thinking outside the box. So, part of the beauties of opening a startup is you can do what you want. I don't have to have a boss that's like, "Okay, Ryn, you need to tone it down. Quit pushing the home-cooked diets, or maybe stop giving out so many herbs." I can really practice exactly how I want and blend my goals with my clients' goals.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

You know?

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah, it's beautiful, and also quite an amazing resource for your community, because you're able to offer all of that, which is just wonderful. When you get up in the morning and head to work, what do you love most about what you do?

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

I'll be honest, it's the contact with the animals to this day still. I will never get tired of a dog or a cat walking in the room, and I'm like the crazy vet that's like, "Oh my God, you're just so [inaudible 00:05:12]." I thoroughly enjoy animals, and that has yet to fade in me. Every day, I look forward to just handling them, working with them. I also love developing the culture that I

have been able to create in a startup, where I can have a relationship with the pet owners based on empathy and mutual understanding and trust.

So, I can talk to them in a way, allow myself the amount of time that I need to take with them and have open conversations and work together. And that's something that has made my job so much more enjoyable than when it was more about get in, get out, get things going, money, money, money. When you're able to actually stop and listen and think and work together as a team, it just makes everything go so much smoother.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

So wonderful. If people wanted to learn more, now's a good time to talk about – people say, "Oh my gosh, this really resonates with me," – if people wanted to learn more about what you do or where you do it, what's your website, or how would people get ahold of you?

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

It's called Carolina Integrative Veterinary Hospital, and we're a small practice. We've been a startup for about three years, [www.CarolinaIntegrativeVet.com](http://www.CarolinaIntegrativeVet.com). You can find us there and we have a pretty good team. If you call and tell us what's going on, we'll set you up with the right team, the right team member to work because every doctor has their strong point, every tech has their strong point, and really work together and see what your goals are. Because we like to work with the client too, and we have some clients that come in who do not want any pharmaceuticals ever put in their dogs, and we will work with that. And then we have people come in who are just learning, and we'll work with that too. Our team is very good at deciding when and where to put you in the schedule and how much time to give you. So, giving us a ring would be the first step.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

That's beautiful. It's also wonderful that you will meet people where they're at, and that if people are like, "Hey, this is really different, but I'm desperate, and I kind of want to take one cautious step at a time," sounds like, which is so beautiful, you and your team are willing to meet them where they're at and walk through the journey of recovering health with them. And that also is, for someone who has apprehensions about the process, it's really beautiful that you have equipped your team to walk alongside clients who are brand new into the concept of integrative or wellness medicine. It's beautiful.

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

When you think about all that you have done and where you're going, and your awesome new animal hospital that you have created from the ground up, it's exciting. If you could share one thing with the world that you know right now, what would it be?

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

I guess as it pertains to veterinary medicine, I think the best advice that I could give to colleagues is to never be afraid of changing and adapting. Keep your mind open to new evidence and just

listen and be empathetic, because if you get stuck in your ways, you stop growing. So, just never stop adapting because this world is changing every second, and we have to, as a profession, grow together.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Really wise advice. And also, so at a time when veterinary burnout has never been higher, veterinary suicide has never been higher, and veterinarians being depleted, us supporting each other, and especially if you're at the bottom of the barrel with your energy, if you are at the end of your rope, integrative medicine offers a literal breath of fresh air for you and your clients in a way that we were not taught in vet school.

So, I agree with that, that if we can recharge ourselves by learning additional paths that nurture our patients and our clients, but also ourselves, it's an opportunity to take another step and keep going where otherwise we may not have been able to. So, that's really good, excellent advice.

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah. I am so thankful that Gladys, one of your beautiful clients, nominated you for a Game Changer award. I'm also very thankful that you took this time right now to help explain more in-depth about some of the amazing things that you're doing. So, we wish you all the best. We are so thankful that you are a vital member of our integrative community, doing all you can to support the animals and people in your community, and congratulations on your Game Changer award.

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

Thank you.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah.

**Dr. Ryn Marlowe:**

Thank you.