Bone Marrow Transplantation Offers Novel Treatment for Canine Lymphoma

A new therapy for canine lymphoma that was first used in human medicine offers promise in treating the one in four Boxers affected by the cancer. The therapy, bone marrow transplantation, uses a dog’s own stem cells to stimulate bone marrow function and immune system recovery following radiation to kill cancer cells.

The first bone marrow transplantation (BMT) performed in an academic setting in a dog took place in late 2008 at North Carolina State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Though it is too soon to assess the survival rate, 45 dogs have received BMTs at the hospital, the first veterinary academic institution in the world to offer the procedure.

“It will take another few years to really know the cure rate,” says Steven Suter, V.M.D., Ph.D., DACVIM, assistant professor of oncology at North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine. “A dog most likely will have to be cancer-free two years following treatment to be considered cured. We currently are seeing a survival rate of 45 to 50 percent, but we need more time to determine definitely.”

Performed for many years in humans diagnosed with lymphoma, leukemia and other life-threatening blood diseases, bone marrow transplantation has boosted survival rates to 85 percent for some cancers. The procedure used in humans is based on protocol developed in dogs.

“In dogs, we first filter stem cells out of the blood,” Suter explains. “Then, we currently are seeing a survival rate of 45 to 50 percent, but we need more time to determine definitely.”

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Booster Charitable Foundation plans to open the survey to all owners and breeders of Boxers registered with the American Kennel Club.

“The online format allows us to reach as many people as possible, which will help provide an accurate sample of current Boxer health concerns,” Voran says.

Meanwhile, the ABC Health and Research Committee is producing a health and research brochure that will include the latest information about breed health issues, such as ARVC, degenerative myelopothy, subaortic stenosis and other diseases. It will provide information about the new genetic test for ARVC that is available through Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

“We published our last health and research brochure in 2001,” Voran says. “This update will help Boxer breeders and owners better understand health issues facing our dogs.”

For more information about the online breed health survey or the health and research brochure, please contact Dr. Joyce Campbell, chairwoman of the ABC Health and Research Committee and a trustee of the American Boxer Charitable Foundation, at boxrun@cox.net.
Bone Marrow Transplantation continued from page 1

65 percent or higher. “Dogs with T-cell lymphoma, the type common in Boxers, don’t seem to relapse as commonly as dogs with B-cell lymphoma,” he says. Though BMT is a costly procedure for owners to consider, averaging from $13,000 to $16,000, it may not be more than chemotherapy considering that dogs often receive multiple rounds of chemotherapy, which could run from $3,000 to $6,000 based on the number of treatments, Suter says. “BMT certainly carries a great likelihood of survival,” he adds.

A Common Tumor in Dogs

Lymphoma is one of the five most common tumors in dogs, accounting for up to 24 percent of all canine tumors. The lifetime risk for Boxers is one in four compared to one in 15 for all dogs. Other breeds at risk are Airedale Terriers, Bulldogs, Bullmastiffs, Golden Retrievers, Saint Bernards and Scottish Terriers. Though the cancer most commonly occurs in middle-aged and older dogs, even puppies can be affected. A tumor that grows in lymph nodes and arises from lymphocytes, or white blood cells that fight disease, lymphoma may interfere with the production of normal blood cells if the tumor infiltrates bone marrow. Though it may be restricted to certain organs, it is more commonly found in most of the body’s lymph nodes. Affected lymph nodes are felt as enlarged masses under the neck, in front of the shoulders or behind the knees. A definitive diagnosis usually involves getting a sample from an affected node. Veterinarians conduct a physical examination and take a tissue biopsy. If lymphoma is diagnosed, it is important to learn how widespread the cancer is through radiographs and/or ultrasounds. Other testing includes blood samples for owners to consider, averaging from $3,000 to $6,000 based on the number of treatments, Suter says. “BMT certainly carries a great likelihood of survival,” he adds.

When a biopsy revealed Eva had an advanced stage of cutaneous lymphoma, the Leavitts opted for treatment with high doses of prednisone to help keep Eva comfortable. The therapy offers a short-term reprieve at an economical cost. They realized that once they began treatment, it would negate the effectiveness of chemotherapy if they later decided to try it. In essence, there would be no turning back.

The prednisone put the cancer into remission for about six weeks. “Eva started acting like a puppy and it seemed to feel good,” recalls Sydney Leavitt. “When the tumor returned, it was very aggressive. It got to the point that just walking outside made her feet bleed. Still, she was happy. When a tumor on her toe became necrotic, we had to have it put down.”

Predicting Treatment Response

As many as 100,000 to 200,000 new cases of lymphoma are diagnosed each year in dogs, yet only about 9,000 dogs receive treatment. Owners say they would choose treatment if they knew their dogs would respond. Predicting the reliability of treatment for lymphoma has been elusive.

Determining how well a dog will respond to treatment traditions have been based on the clinical staging of the cancer. The number and location of affected lymph nodes as well as whether the cancer involves the spleen, bone marrow or other organ systems are important. Whether a dog shows signs of illness, including lethargy, anorexia or weakness, is considered as well.

Dogs with significant bone marrow involvement and those that are sick tend to respond poorly. The challenges of determining the likelihood of dogs to experience cancer remission, which is often followed by tumor recurrences, may partly be due to the diversity of canine lymphomas, says Daisuke Ito, D.V.M., Ph.D., research associate at the University of Minnesota Masonic Cancer Center at the College of Veterinary Medicine. “Cancer stem cells, which are more accurately called tumor-initiating cells (TICs), tend to be resistant to commonly used cancer drugs,” Ito says. “These TICs are thought to be responsible not only for the formation of tumors but also for maintaining and spreading them, and thus for their recurrence after treatment. Even when we successfully eliminate the bulk of tumor cells, causing tumors to shrink and patients to achieve remission, a minority of TICs survives and might eventually fuel tumor regrowth or recurrence.”

New treatments to target and eliminate TICs might lead to longer remissions and eventually cures for canine lymphoma. “We have identified a population of cells called lymphoid progenitor cells, or LPCs, that resemble TICs,” Ito says. “Our collective findings show that these LPCs atypically expand in the lymph nodes of dogs with lymphoma compared to those of healthy, unaffected dogs. These LPCs are genetically and possibly functionally related to the bulk of tumor cells. Potentially, these LPCs can be used as a novel target for the treatment of lymphoma.”

Similar to lymphoma in humans, canine lymphoma may be more than one disease. Thirty subtypes of lymphoma have been identified in people, and each responds differently to treatment protocols. Suter and his colleagues at North Carolina State University are investigating techniques to discern lymphoma subtypes in dogs.

One way may be using microRNA (miRNA) signatures to target cancer genes. miRNAs can regulate target genes by binding and inhibiting their RNA coding, and thus encouraging or discouraging the development of disease. “Different types of lymphoma appear to have distinct miRNA signatures, raising the possibility that miRNA could be used more precisely to diagnose the type of lymphoma,” Suter explains. “Our preliminary studies show that many of the same miRNAs associated with lymphoma in humans also are associated with lymphoma in dogs.”

Canine lymphoma is a difficult cancer to face with a beloved dog. Treatments that offer quality of life and increased longevity are welcomed. For the Leavitts, when their Boxer, Eva, approached her last days, they chose to take the dog on leisurely walks and invited friends to take part in a party in her honor.

Hearn, whose Boxer, Patton, suffered from lymphoma, says, “It’s how you spend your life with your dog that matters. The everyday life you shared until he became sick. I am thankful to have had many good days with Patton.”
**Pro Plan Introduces New Shredded Blend Puppy Formula**

*Purina Pro Plan* brand dog food is introducing Pro Plan Shredded Blend Chicken & Rice Puppy Formula in June. The puppy formula is the newest addition to the Shredded Blend portfolio, which includes foods for adult dogs, seniors dogs, and weight management.

“The Shredded Blend line now offers foods for all life stages and even a weight management formula,” says Brand Manager Tracey Johnson. “The puppy food enables breeders and owners of new puppies to start out with a food specifically made for growing puppies and then go on to one of the adult formulas.”

Made with real chicken as the No. 1 ingredient, Pro Plan Shredded Blend Chicken & Rice Puppy Formula builds on the success of the Shredded Blend adult dog formulas with its mixture of hard kibble and tender, shredded pieces. The puppy formula contains OptiStart®, with easy-to-digest milk proteins to help nourish puppies’ developing immune systems, and provides complete and balanced nutrition for puppies.

Introduced in 2008, the Pro Plan Shredded Blend line provides optimal nutrition and outstanding palatability. In addition to the new puppy formula, the line includes these adult dog foods:

- Chicken & Rice Formula, with real chicken as the No. 1 ingredient
- Beef & Rice Formula, with real beef as the No. 1 ingredient
- Lamb & Rice Formula, with real Australian or New Zealand lamb as the No. 1 ingredient
- Chicken & Rice Large Breed Formula, with glucosamine and EPA, an omega-3 fatty acid for joint health and mobility
- Chicken & Rice Formula Adult 7+, a highly digestible food for dogs 7 years and older
- Chicken & Rice Weight Management Formula, with an optimal protein-to-fat ratio to help maintain muscle mass during weight loss.

**Pro Plan Adds Four Wet Formulas to Canned Entrée Portfolio**

Four new Purina Pro Plan Canned Entrées are being introduced to dog owners and breeders in June. Made with high-quality ingredients, the new wet dog foods are blended with highly palatable complement ingredients. More than 20 assorted flavors and forms are available in the Canned Entrée line.

Two of the new Pro Plan Entrées contain seared beef or chicken, which is a new form for the wet dog food line. They are:

- Seared Beef, Green Beans & Brown Rice Entrée in Gravy
- Seared Chicken, Julienne Carrots & Barley Entrée in Gravy.

The other two new Canned Entrées are:

- Chicken & Barley Mini-Morsels Entrée in Gravy
- Shredded Beef & Lamb Entrée in Gravy.

**Purina-Sponsored Sporting Events**

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*This table lists some, but not all, upcoming sporting events sponsored by Purina.

**Pro Club Policy on Blocked Calls**

*Purina Pro Club* member service representatives will not be able to reach you if your phone does not accept blocked calls. If you have called Pro Club on an issue expecting a telephone response, the issue resolution will be entered in your account. When you call again, a representative will be able to share the information.

**Want to Reach the Editor?**

Have comments about *Purina Pro Club Update*? Send them to us at: *Purina Pro Club Update*, c/o Editor, Nestlé Purina PetCare, 2T Checkerboard Square, St. Louis, MO 63164 or via e-mail at today’sbreeder@purina.com.
The No. 1 dog in the country, a Black Cocker Spaniel named "Beckham," is leading the standings in this year’s Pro Plan Champions Cup award program, based on points earned through April 30.

The 3-year-old, GCH Casablanca’s Thrilling Seduction, is owned by Bruce Van Deman, Carollee Douglas, Mary Walker and breeder Linda Moore. Professional handlers Mike and Linda Pitts campaign Beckham.

The yearlong Pro Plan Champions Cup award program includes more than 200 Purina-sponsored all-breed dog shows. The winner will be announced in early 2012 based on points tabulated from Bests in Show and Group placements earned in 2011.

The Pro Plan Champions Cup winner will receive a $10,000 cash prize, original oil painting by dog portrait artist Linda Draper and a keepsake Pro Plan Champions Cup trophy. A permanent Pro Plan Champions Cup is displayed at the Purina Event Center in Gray Summit, Mo., along with a plaque engraved with the winners’ names.

Cash prizes also will be awarded to the top-placing dogs as follows:
- Second place, $5000
- Third place, $2,500
- Fourth place, $1,250.

To view a tabulation of individual dogs’ points and a complete list of qualifying shows, visit the Purina Pro Club website at www.purinaproclub.com. The Pro Plan Champions is sponsored by Purina Pro Plan brand dog food.

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