

## **Cancer Care That's Unmatched—Anywhere**

By Herb Whiteley

Dean, University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine

The oncology group at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Urbana offers an unbeatable combination: client-centered, compassionate care, outstanding diagnostic capabilities, and cutting-edge treatments that are, literally, unavailable elsewhere.

Dr. Tim Fan has headed the group since 2003, focusing his research on treatments to lessen pain and improve quality of life for dogs with osteosarcoma. Dr. Laura Garrett joined the Department of Veterinary Clinical Medicine in 2006, and the addition of Dr. Jackie Wypij this summer brings to three the number of full-time residency-trained medical oncologists.

In addition, Dr. Sarah Charney, who is double-boarded in oncology and in radiation oncology, consults once a week on radiation therapy and planning.

Two novel cancer treatments for dogs, developed in collaboration with researchers in other units at the University of Illinois, are currently available only through our group.

Dogs with lymphoma are candidates for treatment with a promising new anticancer agent developed by a chemistry professor on campus. Funding for a clinical trial is expected, but treatment is available now.

Dogs with osteosarcoma are eligible for treatment involving a novel delivery system: nanoparticles that deliver chemotherapy agents specifically to bone tumors, increasing the therapeutic concentration at the tumor site and reducing systemic toxicity. This delivery technology has been shown to be safe in dogs, and it holds tremendous long-term potential for application in human medicine.

Our hospital is one of 17 U.S. academic sites selected by the National Cancer Institute to evaluate novel therapies in canine patients.

“This is truly translational medicine, using dogs as a comparative model for human cancer,” Dr. Tim Fan said recently. “It’s a plus/plus situation: the therapies help our patients, while the information gained advances cancer treatment for people.”

Our site participates in osteosarcoma trials involving “pipeline drugs”—phase I and phase II—in dogs with metastatic cancer.

We also have complete clinical staging and diagnosis of common tumor types affecting dogs and cats, using advanced imaging modalities such as spiral computed tomography and ultrasonography.

Research, diagnostics, and thorough and compassionate client education regarding treatment choices—which range from surgical resection to chemotherapy to immunotherapy (melanoma vaccine) to radiation therapy—make a winning combination for pets with cancer and their owners.

To consult with our faculty or to make an appointment for a client, please contact Nancy George, LVT, chief clinical case coordinator, at 217-244-7789.

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