

Improving quality of life for *canine cancer patients*

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When large organizations plan to sponsor studies in human cancer, they have a number of distinguished cancer centers to approach for their clinical trials. In the field of veterinary oncology, Angel Care Cancer Center's main hospital in Carlsbad, California offers diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities that are comparable to, and in many ways superior to, those at the finest human cancer centers in the world.

A client education booklet published by the center notes there is much evidence to support supplementation with omega-3 (n-3 series) fatty acids, specifically docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), a long chain fatty acid that has been shown to have a number of benefits for the veterinary cancer patient. Most notably, DHA:

- Can inhibit tumor growth and development.

- Appears to be important in reducing radiation and chemotherapy induced

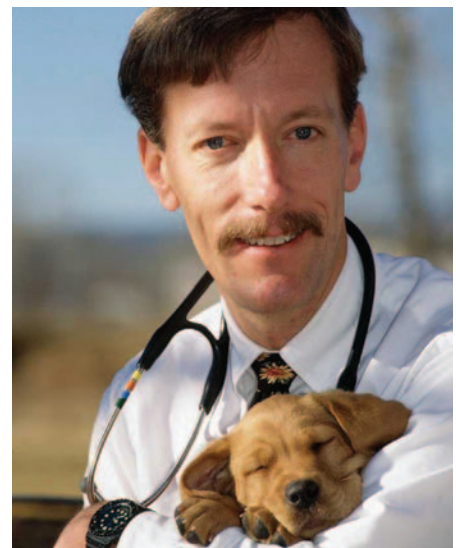
toxicity while increasing the efficacy of these therapies.

The booklet goes on to say that DHA from algae may be preferred, since fish sources can be contaminated with heavy metals and organophosphates (chemicals used in pesticides).

Algae-based DHA is available in gel caps at natural health pharmacies. Small dogs and cats should receive 200 mg once daily; medium sized dogs 200 mg twice daily; large breed dogs 200 mg three times daily; and giant breeds 200 mg four times daily.

With the support of the Special Care Foundation for Companion Animals, Angel Care Cancer Center has also used and studied Poly-MVA, a liquid dietary supplement, as an adjunct to cancer therapy. Invented by Dr. Merrill Garnett in 1991, Poly-MVA (MVA = a proprietary mixture of minerals, vitamins and amino acids) was introduced in 1995. While

Dr. Garnett's formulation is designed to increase cellular energy and enhance an animal's quality of life during this difficult period of cancer treatment, it also takes advantage of cancer cell dysfunction to facilitate the animal's recovery.



Angel Care Cancer Center director Dr. Gregory Ogilvie has been studying the potential of nutrients to treat cancer since 1984.



Among the nearly 800 patients involved in the Poly-MVA study over the past three years, the ones with the most delighted owners are those who enjoy a good quality of life with stable disease (cancer that does not progress). While virtually all these animals have been receiving DHA in addition to Poly-MVA, as well as specific therapies including surgery, chemotherapy and radiation where appropriate, there appears to be a subjective difference among some who had Poly-MVA added to their supplementation regimen compared to those who did not. Randomized, placebo controlled clinical trials have been proposed to confirm these observations.

“We see our best results among those patients that are treated long term with osteosarcoma, anal sac adenocarcinoma (cancer that originates in the anal sacs below the tail), hemangiosarcoma (a cancer of blood vessels)

and many others,” says Angel Care’s director Dr. Gregory Ogilvie, who has been exploring the therapeutic potential of nutrients to treat veterinary cancer patients since 1984 and has published over 100 scientific articles on the subject. Dr. Ogilvie does not believe that every patient with every tumor will experience an observable benefit with Poly-MVA. (Lymphoma cases, for example, generally do not seem to improve.)

When asked if he would recommend Poly-MVA for veterinary cancer patients, Dr. Ogilvie says, “I would not be involved in Poly-MVA research if I did not believe it would help the majority of my patients experience an improved quality of life. “More formalized studies are needed before any definitive statements can be made regarding a statistically significant difference in survival.”

Enhancing QOL

Quality of life (QOL) is the centerpiece gem of any study designed to evaluate the effectiveness of adjunctive modalities for cancer patients. It can be measured with a set of parameters (appetite, energy, behavior patterns, etc.) that are recorded and documented over time. For the Poly-MVA study, a significant number of people who have animals with cancer completed QOL surveys and returned them to Angel Care Cancer Center. Although many survey responses are based on clients’ subjective impressions, an impressive 86% of respondents felt that Poly-MVA improved their animal’s quality of life. The patients most likely to benefit included dogs or cats that had a diminished quality of life prior to treatment.

Patients receiving Poly-MVA along with standard treatments for their cancers also tended to improve when it came to objective parameters such as weight, anemia, liver and kidney function, all of which have been monitored by the professional staff at Angel Care. Dr. Ogilvie, a scientific purist of the highest caliber, cautions that some patients will always respond much better than others in any study, but even he seems impressed by the overall trend that has been observed so far.