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Peri-articular histiocytic sarcoma in Bernese Mountain Dogs: a multi-centre retrospective investigation of the prevalence of this tumour and possible association with previously diseased joints.

The histiocytic sarcoma complex of diseases, which encompasses a number of distinctive clinical entities, is most commonly found in Bernese Mountain Dogs (BMD), and a genetic association has been unravelled in this breed. Histiocytic sarcoma can present as a disseminated tumour but also can arise at a single site. As a solitary tumour histiocytic sarcoma can occur at peri-articular sites where the lameness observed can be indistinguishable from other joint pathologies. This form is often encountered on the extremities and has its best prognosis if treated early by surgical excision or amputation of the affected limb. Radiotherapy and anticancer drugs can also have important roles in its management. Later in the course of the disease, histiocytic sarcoma can spread to distant sites beyond the local lymph node structures; it is then not possible to treat this advanced metastatic state which is always fatal.

We hypothesize that histiocytic sarcoma is more frequently encountered around previously diseased joints compared to normal joints. Rupture of the anterior cruciate ligament in the stifle and elbow dysplasia are frequently seen in BMD. This study will examine the prevalence of peri-articular histiocytic sarcoma in BMD and investigate the possible association between previous joint pathology and tumour development.

This will be a European multi-centre retrospective study. The length of this study will be one year. The centres included will be companion animal university clinics and referral orthopaedic and/or oncology centres. The first selection of these centres will originate from the database of the European Society of Veterinary Oncology. Additional data will be obtained by questionnaires submitted to the national Bernese Mountain Dog breed societies. Results of the study will statistically analysed. To our knowledge no such study has been conducted before.

If our hypothesis is proven to be correct, future studies focussed on the underlying mechanisms of carcinogenesis in this group of patients can be conducted. It may also be possible to develop early-detection programs for peri-articular histiocytic sarcoma in Bernese Mountain Dogs with known joint pathology. The ultimate goal is improved treatment of peri-articular histiocytic sarcoma in this breed.

Investigators:

Dr Johan de Vos, Prof Dr Janos Butinar and Dr Malcolm Brearley

Candidate 1:

Dr Johan de Vos DVM

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Drs. Johan de Vos studied veterinary medicine from 1972–1978 at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands. In 1978 he founded a small animal practice in Terneuzen, The Netherlands, which developed into “De Ottenhorst” Clinic for Companion Animal Medicine and Veterinary Oncology Referral Centre. In this clinic 4 veterinarians and 7 technicians are employed. Within the clinic also a veterinary physiotherapist and a specialist veterinary ultrasound are practicing.

Dr de Vos is mainly treating dogs and cats with cancer. His work varies from diagnostic oncology to surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy for animals with cancer. He has presented oncology lectures on national and international conferences, is on a regular base tutor on (inter)national veterinary oncology courses, invited lecturer at the Ghent university in Belgium and (co)authored several publications in national and international veterinary oncology journals. He is also especially interested in “compassionate care”.

He is:

- founder and chairman of the Dutch Cancer Foundation for Animals (NKFD)
- founder and chairman of the Collaborating Veterinary Cancer Centres in The Netherlands and Belgium (SDK)
- Treasurer and Membership Secretary of the European Society of Veterinary Oncology (ESVONC)
- member of the British Veterinary Oncology Study Group (BVOSG)
- member of the British Veterinary Oncology Research Cooperative (VORC)
- member of the Veterinary Cancer Society of USA (VCS)
- member of the Veterinary Wound Management Society
- advisor for practitioners of the Dutch institute “Gezonde Dieren” concerning the clinical implications of the results of histo-pathologic and cytologic examinations of tumours

Candidate 2:

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Professor Dr Janos Butinar graduated from the University of Ljubljana in 1980. He spent a post-graduate year at the Queen’s Veterinary Hospital, University of Cambridge in 1992 specialising in soft tissue and reconstructive surgery with Dr Dick White DipACVS, DipECVS. After that period Dr Butinar was a Lecturer of Surgery, Anaesthesia and Intensive Care in the Veterinary Faculty of the University of Ljubljana focussing on surgical oncology and reconstructive surgery. He has written several scientific and practical papers as well as textbooks of surgery and intensive care. He has also given many talks in surgical oncology and reconstructive surgery around Europe. He is a member of European Society of Veterinary Oncology. He is a founder of the new Animal Hospital in Postojna which is opening on 30th June 2007. The hospital will be focussed on oncology having a CT scanner and a Linear Accelerator for radiotherapy – the only one in that part of Europe.

Candidate 3:

Dr Malcolm J Brearley MA VetMB MSc DipECVIM-CA(Oncology) FRCVS

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Dr Brearley qualified from University of Cambridge Veterinary School in 1981. He has specialised in the management of cancer in dogs and cats since 1990; for 10 years as Head of Oncology at the Animal Health Trust in Newmarket, England and then at a private specialist practice in Hertfordshire, England. Whilst at the Animal Health Trust he worked closely with Dr Matthew Breen investigating chromosome abnormalities in canine lymphoma. Dr Brearley was the first RCVS Recognised Specialist in Veterinary Oncology in England, he gained a distinction in the Master of Science degree in Clinical Oncology from Institute of Cancer Research, Birmingham. He was recently awarded de facto status of the new Diploma of the European College of Veterinary Internal Medicine in Oncology. He is a member of the Veterinary Cancer Society (USA) and a member of the Executive Committee of the European Society of Veterinary Oncology. He is also Chairman and a Founding Trustee of the Animal Cancer Trust.