

Van Andel Research Institute Launches New Canine Cancer Studies!

The Van Andel Research Institute, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is pleased to share that we have received a “Grand Opportunities” (GO grant) from the National Institutes of Health. This is enabling the Institute to expand its canine cancer studies, which started with a project investigating hemangiosarcoma in Clumber spaniels 18 months ago, into a much broader research program. We are launching a new center of excellence in canine genetics and genomics. The first and most important program is the Canine Hereditary Cancer Consortium (CHCC), which is headed by Drs. Jeff Trent (TGen), Nick Duesbery (Van Andel Research Institute), and Paul Meltzer (National Cancer Institute/NIH). The program is an unprecedented alliance of scientists, veterinarians and physicians. Drs. Duesbery and Froman are intensely focused on recruiting canine cancer patients for the study through a variety of clinical outreach programs. Samples from canine patients will not only allow the researchers to identify genes responsible for breed-specific susceptibilities (such as hemangiosarcoma in Clumber spaniels and osteosarcoma in Greyhounds), but also to translate these discoveries into new and more precise diagnostics and therapeutics for both canine and human cancer patients. The ultimate goal is to take personalized medicine for dogs to unscaled heights!

The CHCC has been developed to investigate five initial cancers in dogs, which also affect people. The first five cancers we’ll be researching are:

- Hemangiosarcoma
- Osteosarcoma
- Lymphoma
- Malignant histiocytosis
- Melanoma (oral and digital)

In order to move forward, we need your help. The Institute will be studying only naturally occurring tumors, so we need the assistance of owners with dogs who develop any of the above types of cancer. We are requesting fresh (NOT in formalin) tumor samples when the dog has surgery, a biopsy or is euthanized. We also need 3 mls of blood in an EDTA (purple top) tube. If a tumor sample is not immediately available, (a dog who has had surgery, for example), a blood sample is still useful.

If your dog is scheduled for surgery, please contact VARI ahead of time so we can FedEx a tumor collection kit to your veterinarian. You can contact the CHCC at 616.234.5569. You may also email Dr. Froman at roe.froman@vai.org. Consent forms and more information for veterinarians can be accessed and downloaded from our website, www.vai.org/helpingdogs. In addition, we are collecting DNA samples from a wide variety of healthy, purebred dogs, for use as controls. Your help is greatly appreciated.