

Natural Health Solutions

Jack's Story: Alternative options for treating epilepsy.

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Jack is a 3-year-old, neutered, black Labrador Retriever. His owners, Sandy and Bob, brought Jack to my veterinary office in Plano, Texas, looking for an alternative approach to treating the dog's epilepsy.

Epilepsy is the most common cause of seizures in dogs, and usually affects younger dogs like Jack. Diagnostic testing – which can include blood and urine testing, and even MRIs and CT scans when indicated – is necessary to rule out other causes of seizures in dogs, including poisoning, brain tumors, infectious and non-infectious encephalitis or meningitis, and granulomatous meningoencephalitis (GME).

Once epilepsy has been diagnosed as a cause of the seizures, conventional treatment involves the administration of one or more medications, including phenobarbital, diazepam (Valium) and potassium bromide. Conventional veterinarians usually prescribe these drugs for the life of the pet.

Although usually safe, these medications can cause side effects, including weight gain, lethargy, liver damage and pancreatitis. As a result, integrative medical doctors (those who integrate both conventional and alternative therapies), search for other alternatives so pets don't need to take these medications for the rest of their lives.

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