

Study Underway on Idiopathic Epilepsy in Dogs

Free medical care available for qualifying dogs in seizure clinical trial.

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A clinical trial is underway to evaluate a new medication for the treatment of canine idiopathic epilepsy. It's expected to run through the end of 2009.

Qualifying patients will receive free medical evaluations, as well as diagnostic tests such as a CAT scan or MRI. If enrolled in the treatment phase of the study, dogs will also receive free medication and monthly exams.

Criteria includes that patients must be at least 4 months of age; have not been previously treated with anti-seizure medication; weigh at least 11 lbs; have no previous history of seizure clusters or status epilepticus; and not be pregnant or suspected to be pregnant. In addition, candidates must be seen by the clinical investigator within seven days of the most recent seizure.

The blinded study is evaluating dogs at multiple investigator sites across the United States, including Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

The trial, which is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, is said to be the largest known clinical trial of its kind, according to Visionaire Research & Education, a Raleigh, N.C.-based company that supports veterinary pharmaceutical manufacturers in their recruitment efforts for clinical trials.

"Hundreds of dogs have already been referred and evaluated," said a spokeswoman for Visionaire Research & Education.

However, because of confidentiality agreements, the exact number of dogs to date can't be revealed, she added. The name of the pharmaceutical company that is sponsoring the trial is also considered confidential.

Idiopathic epilepsy, which is estimated to affect about 4 million dogs in the United States, is a chronic condition characterized by recurring seizures for which an underlying cause has not been identified, according to Visionaire Research & Education.

Genetic predisposition is present in the following breeds: Beagles, Belgian Tervurens, Bernese Mountain Dogs, Boxers, British Alsatians, Collies, Dachshunds, Dalmatians, German Shepherds, Golden Retrievers, Irish Setters, Keeshonden, Labrador Retrievers, Portuguese Water Dogs and Vizslas.

Veterinarians interested in referring dogs to the trial can call 888-598-7125. Veterinarians get financial rewards for referring qualified dogs for screening, and additional rewards if the dogs are enrolled into treatment.

A consumer website has been launched at Helpfordogswithseizures.com.