

## Experimental Vaccine for Canine Melanoma Creates Optimism

**University of Wisconsin-Madison hires full-time technician to produce treatment for melanoma.**

The University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine has hired a full-time technician to produce an anti-cancer vaccine for dogs diagnosed with melanoma. The school's oncology department has been working on it since 1998.

The vaccine is created from dog melanoma cells that are grown in the laboratory, said Ilene Kurzman, a researcher in the veterinary medical school's oncology section. The cells are treated so they can no longer divide and cause a tumor. DNA is then inserted into these cells, which directs the cells to secrete an immune stimulant. This combination of cells and immune stimulant, when administered as an injection into the patient's skin, has been shown to stimulate the immune system to specifically fight against the melanoma cells, according to Kurzman.

Not all dogs with melanoma respond to this treatment, said Kurzman, but those that do seem to do quite well.

About 40 percent of dogs with a melanoma tumor responded to a vaccine created from melanoma tumor cells, according to the school. In about 12.5 percent of the treated dogs, the tumor completely disappeared. However, Kurzman said that funding limitations reduce the program's ability to take the next step in improving the vaccine and increasing the percentage of animals that respond.

In addition, the school said that dogs that first had surgery for their melanoma, and then received the vaccine, lived cancer-free for about twice as long as dogs in previous studies that had not received the vaccine.

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