New Tests Allow Holistic Veterinarians Early Diagnosis of Cancer and Inflammatory Diseases

As holistic veterinarians, one of our most important goals is early diagnosis of potentially serious and even fatal conditions. Holistic doctors, focusing on the whole pet and the health of the pet, are in a prime position to screen pets for various medical disorders.

Veterinary Diagnostics Institute (VDI) has developed several unique tests that allow the holistic practitioner to expand the practice and offer additional services to their patients.

For the healthy pet, I utilize their tests for Vitamin D, C-reactive protein (CRP,) and thymidine kinase (TK,) The CRP and TK tests can be ordered as a set profile called INCaSe. INCaSe employs a dual-biomarker design. Thymidine Kinase (TK) is a measure of dysregulated proliferation. C-reactive protein (CRP) is a measure of systemic inflammation. Both conditions are hallmarks of cancer. Because chronic inflammation is both associated with, and the root-cause of, many diseases, INCaSe provides the ability to screen for serious disease, cancer being just one, even in the apparently health dog. These are the findings of the clinical study performed by the University of Missouri and Tufts.1

For the pet with diagnosed or suspected cancer, I utilize the Vitamin D test and the VDI-TK canine+ profile. This profile utilizes the Neoplasia Index (NI), a patent-pending, dual-biomarker algorithm that employs cancer specific TK and general inflammatory marker CRP. The integration of these two biomarkers into a “neoplasia index” brings two unrelated processes together (namely dysregulated cell division and systemic inflammation, for which cancer is one possible cause of that inflammation) and effectively amplifies the situation whereby the two may be elevated in concert (i.e. neoplasia). The NI assists the veterinarian in test interpretation so that the best recommendation for further testing/treatment can begin. Since most of the pets referred to me for integrative cancer therapy have not had any of these important tests done by the prior veterinarian, incorporating them into my initial visit is easily accepted by the pet owner.

In addition to using these tests for early diagnosis of diseases, holistic veterinarians can also use them to promote maximum health and fine tune their recommended supplements. In my own practice, whenever I perform the tests and get normal results, I can assure my client that she is doing a great job to keep her dog healthy. If a pet tests positive on the INCaSe or CRP test, I can prescribe supplements to boost the immune system or reduce inflammation, using ongoing testing to match the right supplements and adjust the dosages of the supplements to my individual patient. If the Vitamin D test is low, supplementing with vitamin D is easy and inexpensive. Ongoing testing allows me to make sure the recommended dosage is adequate to raise the vitamin D levels to what I feel is an acceptable amount to reduce the chances of the pet developing cancer or infectious diseases.
Marketing the test profile to owners of “healthy pets” is easy. First, our clients are very receptive to early diagnosis and disease prevention. Second, when owners understand that the testing gives results specific to their pets, and that these results are needed to allow you to prescribe the correct amount of supplement to their pets (rather than simply making a generic recommendation,) acceptance of the testing by the owners increases. Third, owners appreciate and understand that early disease diagnosis allows early treatment intervention. This early treatment is typically less expensive than treating a disease once it has become established/advanced and is causing clinical signs. Early treatment also can mean the difference between life and death; treating cancer when detected early before metastasis may be life-saving. Finally, VDI’s pricing structure makes all 3 tests affordable for most owners (in our practice the price of all 3 tests, when done during another service such as a pets annual visit when we are already drawing blood, is less than $200.)

In addition to using the testing for early disease diagnosis, the blood panel is also helpful for monitoring the pet who has previously been diagnosed with cancer. Maintaining optimum levels of vitamin D, a supplement I consider a “natural chemotherapy,” is critical for the cancer patient. Monitoring TK and CRP levels may provide an early clue that the pet is out of remission and will begin showing clinical signs of the cancer soon, allowing early intervention with additional natural therapies and rescue chemotherapy if the owner desires. Again ongoing testing allows the holistic veterinarian to fine-tune and individualize treatment recommendations for each patient.

I am excited to be able to use and recommend these tools for my patients. For the cancer patient, I now can use objective data to guide my therapy and assist in developing an accurate prognosis. For my healthy patients, I can now say Yes when I am asked if there is a simple, inexpensive way to diagnosis cancer before the pet becomes ill.


Dr. Messonnier, a 1987 graduate of Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine, opened Paws & Claws Animal Hospital in 1991. His special interests include exotic pets, dermatology, cancer, and internal medicine. Dr. Messonnier is a well-known speaker and author. In addition to serving clients, he has written for numerous veterinary and pet publications including Animal Wellness, Body + Soul, Veterinary Forum, Dog Fancy, Cat Fancy, Dog World, Fido Friendly, Whole Dog Journal, Whole Cat Journal, Whole Living, Total Health and Wellness.

He is the author of several books, including The Natural Health Bible for Dogs & Cats, The Allergy Solution for Dogs, The Arthritis Solution for Dogs & Cats, The Natural Vet’s Guide to Preventing and Treating Cancer in Dogs, 8 Weeks to a Healthy Dog and Unexpected Miracles: Hope and Holistic Healing for Pets.

Dr. Messonnier is a member of several health care organizations, including the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, and Texas Veterinary Medical Association. He is a past member of the Oncology Association of Naturopathic Physicians.