

WELCOME TO THE UTCVM

Oncology Service

During your visit, you will meet a variety of the members of the UTCVM Oncology Service team. The Oncology service is staffed by a group of faculty, residents, interns, fourth-year students, veterinary technicians, and veterinary assistants. You will meet at least one student and doctor, and a team of individuals will work to provide your pet with the best care during your visit.

FACULTY



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UTCVM ONCOLOGY SERVICE

Chemotherapy for dogs & cats

What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy drugs are medications that kill cancer cells. These drugs are usually given intravenously (into the vein) on an outpatient basis, but some are available as a daily pill that can be given at home. The goal of chemotherapy is to control your pet's cancer and to prolong survival while maintaining a good quality of life at home.

When is chemotherapy used?

Chemotherapy is typically used in the following circumstances in cats and dogs:

- For pets with cancers in which chemotherapy is the treatment of choice (i.e. lymphoma)
- After surgical removal of a primary tumor which has a high likelihood of spreading to other areas of the body (i.e. bone cancer)
- For pets with large tumors that cannot be surgically removed in which the goal is to delay growth and control clinical signs (i.e. large and/or metastatic mast cell tumors)
- To enhance the effects of radiation therapy on tumor tissues (i.e. several types of sarcoma)

What side effects can chemotherapy cause in dogs and cats?

Because our priority is to maintain good quality of life, we use doses and schedules of chemotherapy with the goal of avoiding side effects. Most chemotherapy agents work by affecting rapidly dividing cells, so the cells of the GI tract and the bone marrow can be affected. 80-85% of our patients have minimal to no side effects from chemotherapy, while about 15-20% of patients may have side effects that require treatment. However the incidence of requiring hospitalization from side effects is less than 5%. We typically send home medications to treat nausea and diarrhea for use as needed. We also monitor our patient's blood cell counts on a routine basis; if the white blood cell count drops too low, we prescribe antibiotics to help protect against potential infection.

While most dogs and cats do not have any hair loss secondary to chemotherapy, clipped fur may regrow slowly. Some breeds that require grooming, such as poodles, schnauzers, and Bichon frise, can develop hair loss or skin pigment change to varying degrees. Additionally, cats may lose their whiskers. Lost hair will usually regrow after discontinuation of chemotherapy, although it may differ in color and texture.

Overall, most veterinary patients tolerate chemotherapy very well. Today your doctor may discuss potential chemotherapy options for your pet, and we will answer any questions you have regarding chemotherapy use in your pet.

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Radiation therapy for dogs & cats

What is radiation therapy?

Radiation therapy is a form of localized treatment with the goal of killing cancer cells. In some cases, radiation prevents tumor regrowth. In other cases, the result of radiation is that the tumor shrinks or its growth is slowed for a period of time. Radiation is not typically used on the whole body; instead, it is focused on the area where the tumor is located.

When is radiation therapy used?

Radiation therapy is typically used in the following circumstances in cats and dogs:

- For pets with tumors that have been incompletely removed at surgery to reduce the risk of regrowth (i.e. incompletely excised soft tissue sarcomas, brain tumors)
- For pets with non-surgical tumors in which the goal is to delay growth and control clinical signs (i.e. nasal tumors)
- To provide pain relief (i.e. bone cancers)

How is radiation therapy performed in veterinary patients?

For some tumor types, advanced imaging (a CT scan or MRI) is necessary to plan the radiation treatments. Typically set-up and treatment times are approximately 20-30 minutes. Because pets must lay perfectly still for each treatment, this requires general anesthesia. With anesthesia time, the radiation treatment, and recovery time, most patients are in the hospital for approximately 3-4 hours per treatment. For pets receiving daily treatments, boarding at UTCVM is also available. Different radiation protocols exist depending on the tumor type and goal of therapy; these range from daily treatments Monday through Friday for 3-4 weeks (*definitive radiation therapy*) to treatments given once weekly for 4 weeks (*palliative radiation therapy*).

What side effects can radiation therapy cause in dogs and cats?

Radiation therapy is performed very precisely to target the tumor cells and avoid the normal surrounding tissues, but it is not possible to protect all of the normal tissues around the tumor site. Therefore, side effects can be seen. Acute side effects occur during and shortly after the radiation therapy protocol. Depending on the area being treated, these may include skin redness and peeling, hair loss, inflammation of the mouth, and/or dry eye. These side effects are temporary and can typically be managed with topical and oral medications. Late side effects can occur six months or later after a radiation protocol is completed. These may include cataract formation, muscle fibrosis, and/or neurologic changes. Radiation therapy is planned very carefully for each patient to keep the risk of all complications extremely low.

Overall, most veterinary patients tolerate radiation therapy very well. Today your doctor may discuss potential radiation options for your pet, and we will answer any questions you have regarding radiation therapy in your pet.

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Surgical oncology for dogs & cats

What is surgical oncology?

Surgical oncology is an important component in the treatment of many cancers in dogs and cats. Surgery often plays a critical role in diagnosing and treating a pet's cancer. Surgical planning will involve a thorough physical examination and palpation of your pet's tumor. In some cases, pre-operative imaging such as x-rays, ultrasound, a CT scan, or an MRI is necessary to adequately plan the procedure and evaluate for spread of the tumor.

When is surgery used in cancer treatment?

Surgery is typically used in the following circumstances in cats and dogs:

- To obtain a biopsy of your pet's tumor to determine or confirm a diagnosis and prognosis for that particular cancer type (i.e. to identify the grade of the tumor; how aggressive it is)
- To remove a tumor completely
 - For some tumor types, this may be a curative procedure
 - For other tumor types, chemotherapy or radiation therapy may be recommended following surgery to prevent local regrowth or slow down the spread of cancer to other areas of the body
- To remove the bulk of a tumor to improve a pet's quality of life and minimize clinical signs associated with the cancer

What surgical complications can occur in dogs and cats?

Almost every surgical procedure will require your pet to be placed under general anesthesia. Your pet will be thoroughly assessed pre-operatively to ensure that they are a good candidate for anesthesia, and we will take precautions to keep anesthetic risks as low as possible. General risk of surgery include the potential for infection, bleeding, and delayed or compromised wound healing. In most circumstances, the occurrence of these complications is low. Prior to your pet's surgery, risks and possible complications specific to the procedure will be discussed, as some of these can significantly impact recovery.

If surgery is an option in the treatment of your pet's cancer, we will work with our Soft Tissue or Orthopedic Surgery Department to make a plan specific to your pet's needs. Some procedures can be performed by your pet's regular veterinarian. Your doctor may discuss surgical options today, and we will answer any questions you have regarding surgery for your pet.

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Nutrition consultations

When a pet is undergoing chemotherapy some of the main goals of nutrition are to maintain an ideal body condition and prevent gastrointestinal side effects like diarrhea and vomiting. Some theoretical benefits of diet on cancer growth and survival are to feed diets low in carbohydrates and simple sugars and high in omega 3 fatty acids. However, there is little research on the benefit of feeding certain diets to a pet that has been diagnosed with cancer.

If you are interested today or during future visits, the University of Tennessee Veterinary Nutrition Service can provide consultations for pet owners whose pet has been diagnosed with cancer to help determine if their current diet is safe and balanced. While we do not typically recommend herbal supplements through our service, we can give recommendations about which herbs and supplements may interfere with chemotherapy or potentially cause gastrointestinal upset. Do NOT give your pet any herbal supplements without talking to your doctor as some can interfere with chemotherapy medications.

Please let your doctor know if you are interested in a Nutrition consultation for your pet during your visit to UTCVM.

Simple Consultation

We will schedule a 30 minute appointment to meet with the nutritionist in person and go over any nutritional questions and make a written diet plan. If we think the patient's current diet is appropriate, we may not recommend changes.

Complicated Consultation

Consult for patients that have diseases other than cancer requiring nutritional management (e.g. kidney disease, inflammatory bowel disease, etc.). We will schedule an appointment to meet with the nutritionist in person and go over any nutritional questions and make a written diet plan to manage multiple diseases.

Homemade Diet Formulation

Pet owners who wish to feed a homemade diet can receive a custom, balanced formulation by a veterinary nutritionist. The formulation fee includes an initial appointment with the nutritionist and a follow-up appointment one month later. You can also contact the nutrition service as needed in the first month to answer questions regarding the nutrition plan.

You can also visit our nutrition service blog at www.smartpetnutrition.com

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Notes & Questions
