

Late Summer and Fall 2009 Newsletter

Welcome to my newsletter. It's been a long time since I last wrote something, but I have not been wasting away doing nothing.

You can hear what I am up to by listening to my radio show on Kauai FM radio KKCR on 91.9 FM or online at www.kkcr.org every Saturday 9 to 10 AM Hawaii Standard Time.

I will have soon available on my website, past radio shows for you to download and listen to at your leisure. Stay tuned for this.

The following News Letter has been a compiled from articles I have researched and read in the past 6 months and from my experiences and observations.



News From Around the World

Tainted Dog Food In the News Again!

There is not a month that goes by that I don't read something about the latest E. coli or Salmonella outbreak in pet food, or contamination with chemicals, pesticides or Biosphenol A (BPA). Yet, pet owners continue to feed commercially mass produced dog and cat food.

Commercial Dog Food Contaminated with Levels of Fluoride Above EPA's Legal Limit for Humans: *Fluoride has been linked to hormone disruption, thyroid disease, and most recently....Bone Cancer! For more information, please see this link: <http://www.ewg.org/node/28070>*

Topic of the Season

Cancer: is it the End of Life, or the Beginning of a Process of Healing that is part of Living?

I have been seeing so many more cases of cancer in animals (and people) that have been referred to me this year than I can ever remember. In past newsletters and on my radio show, I have discussed the causes of cancer, and how best prevent the disease. Here in this newsletter, I want to talk about "that which is not talked about much" by veterinarians.

The word "cancer" used in any sentence changes the tone of the conversation to fear and dread followed by silence. If the term is used by your veterinarian about your beloved pet, it could "rock your world".

The first Stage of the Process: Realization: Discovery

What goes through your mind when you see or feel a "lump" on your beloved pet? The lump can make you feel like you have a lump in your throat.

The emotional challenges of either having a pet with cancer, a loved one, or oneself are rarely discussed by the medical people who are in the process of treating you, your family member or your pet. (HMO's do not pay physicians to counsel people)

People... the caregivers of their pets....You...will go through many feelings, thoughts and emotions that need to be acknowledged and talked about with someone. Some of these feelings are: fear, denial, anger, frustration, depression and hopelessness.

What most people feel when they see or feel a tumor on their pet is FEAR.

When you think about going to the veterinarian to check it out, many will feel "DREAD". You also may flip into HOPE...that maybe, this will be "nothing serious". This may lead some people to procrastination and rationalization ending with a "mindful" justification that leads to DENIAL.

"It's just a lump". "I will watch it for awhile."

You talk it over with someone who understands about pets, and convinces you to get validation by having the lump checked by the veterinarian.

With HOPE, FEAR and trepidation, you take your pet to the vet.

At the Vet's

The veterinarian examines your pet and tells you the lump looks serious and is most likely cancer, but needs to be sure and recommends a battery of blood tests, x-rays, ultrasounds, and biopsies to confirm if the tumor is malignant and what treatment plan would be best to follow.

With the words "it's most likely cancer" ringing in your head, time has stopped for you and the ground feels shaky. You cannot hear another word because you are in SHOCK. Hopefully, you have a dear friend or spouse with you to help "ground" you and bring you back.

At this point in time and state of emotions, you cannot make decisions on what is best for your pet, nor should you feel pressured to do so.

Your Mind may take over and you begin to WORRY...thinking of the worst outcomes about the future. Your fears may alternate with GUILT, and your "I shoulda's" slap you in the face. "I could of done that!" and, "I should of done this" begin to haunt you. Your upset mind may have you go to BLAMING yourself... or others.

The more thinking you do...the more you worry. "How long do we have for life expectancy?" "How much will all this cost?" "How will I pay for it?" "Will my pet suffer?" Finally, you may tail spin into feeling DISPAIR and HOPELESSNESS.

From here, you cannot decide what to do. You must seek some support from friends, loved ones, family and spiritual counselors (sometimes) to help you discover, express and share the deeper feelings you have that are difficult to live with such as Fear, Hopelessness, Guilt, Despair, etc.

Under these conditions, you cannot make decisions about what will be the best way to go yet.

You may just want to trust your veterinarian on what to do, but a conversation about "the why's and how much" needs to occur before you sign away your control.

Animals do not undergo mental anguish and worry because contrary to us humans, they are not shackled by concepts of "what might happen" to them in the future. They are not run by fear of what will happen to them in the future.

Animals live in the NOW. Unfortunately, we humans tend to live in our mind which can revert to the past (bad experiences) or the future's "what ifs".

Emotionally, the owners and caretakers of animals with cancer and other debilitating diseases suffer more than their pet.

The best ways of getting "clear" on what decision to make is to first calm down and get more oxygen into your brain. Calming down and getting "present" is the first step back towards clarity and reality.

You can start by taking a deep breath and holding it for 4 or 5 seconds, then releasing and holding your breath for another 4 or 5 seconds before you take another breath. Repeat over and over, sitting down. Please refer to these websites for more explanation on breathing tips to calm you down:

<http://www.findingyourmarbles.com/anxiety/how-to-survive-a-panic-attack-part-1/>

<http://www.findingyourmarbles.com/anxiety/how-to-relax-using-deep-breathing-techniques/>

NOTE: *If you have asthma, COPD, or other lung ailment, check with your family physician first.*

Although this sounds simple, this works very well to calm the body, and clear the mind. It kept me from drowning in big waves. It saved my life when my mind and fear drove me crazy!

Instead of making hasty decisions while you are in "shock and awe", you may want to take your pet home and think about the options, the costs, and recommendations your veterinarian had discussed with you.

Go home and get some "emotional support". All these feelings, emotions, responsibilities, and decisions can be a heavy burden to bare alone. Call a close and dear friend or relative.

If you don't have someone handy to talk to, walking (with focus on your breathing) is an easy exercise to perform. It will help relieve stress in your body.



Better yet, go for a long walk with your dog if you can. Walking your dog will make you both feel better.

When I have been “dog less” and “down”, taking a long walk in a forest or field helped me to clear the mind and relax my body.

If you have a sick kitty, lay down with it and begin your breathing exercises and just “hang out”.

Many people forget this important step: Be With... your dog. . your cat, your pet.

After getting your head clear and heart open, spend more time sitting, walking, playing, petting, sharing food with your ailing pet. You want to connect up with your ailing pet’s condition: the degree of pain or discomfort, state of health and state of attitude. The best way to do this is with the Breath.

One thing I learned from watching animals is how they use breathing to control pain, stress, and discomfort. You can “feel” what they are feeling by matching their breathing rate and depth with yours. “Is it fast, shallow, irregular...?” “What’s normal look like?” I do this with my dog, cat, and horse patients. I get to feel what they are feeling.

Many times my clients fall asleep while I am performing an acupuncture treatment on their pet, because by touching their pet they have unconsciously began breathing with along their pet’s relaxed rhythm and rate.

While gently touching your pet, breathe as fast and as deep as they are. Following your loved ones breathing pattern, your gentle touching, looking in their eyes, hand feeding, and being calm will get you connected.



"Connection Begins With Breathing Along with Your Pet...."

Appreciate their contribution to your life. Don't stop loving them nor enjoying them because they are sick.

Forgiving Yourself

Looking at Cancer or any serious illness "holistically".... it's not just the patient that needs to get well; in the "process", everyone can get well...the caretaker, the ailing pet, the family and the vet. This is group healing that is taking place. "What do I need to be healed for...?" you may say, "It's my pet that has the cancer!"

This is a process of "letting go" your physical, mental, and emotional reactions to a difficult situation that causes instability and disharmony within you, the caregiver.

It is my experience of over 35 years of being a veterinarian, the caretakers....owners; SUFFER more than their ailing pets. Where does the suffering come from? It comes from "not forgiving yourself", for your limitations and shortcomings as a responsible pet owner.

Suffering comes from feeling "guilty" for not doing enough; not having enough money to pay for all the treatments; or, feeling "bad" because you are blaming yourself or others(including spouses and veterinarians) for "not doing enough" to keep your pet healthy and cancer free. Veterinarians have their own version of suffering as cancer is not an easy disease to treat and cure. Blaming is a way of not taking responsibility for the circumstances you find yourself in.

Forgiveness starts with You.

You forgive yourself and others for their “short comings”. In Hawaiian there is a process called Ho opono pono, making peace with your Self and others. Please watch this video of a Hawaiian Healer Dr. Ihaleakala Hew Len who states: “Love is the only thing that can Transform illness.”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xCmvZZFQIO>



Forgive Yourself

From this “state of Being”, you can now begin to look at what options you have and how fast you need to make a decision



The Second Stage of the Process: Adaptation to the Truth of the Situation.

“Get a Second Opinion when undecided.”

Many times pet owners are forced to make a decision they do not like or feel good about. If the decision is euthanasia, I would highly recommend waiting and looking at getting a second opinion.

A second opinion, although can be more costly, will help you to get clear on a decision that you do not feel good about, or help evaluate other options to what your current veterinarian recommended.

Case in Point.

I once was presented with a cat diagnosed with lung and bone cancer. A wonderful couple came to me for a second opinion. They were considering euthanasia to prevent suffering for their cat who was coughing and limping a lot.

“Boy!” I said, “In all my 35 years as a veterinarian, I can’t remember seeing lung and bone cancer simultaneously in a cat!”. After more tests and a thorough history of this cat’s environment, we found that the cat had a fungal disease in the lungs and bones due to exposure to pigeon droppings. After many months of herbs, vitamins and antifungal drugs, this cat was cured of the problem and continues to enjoy a happy life today.



Western Medical Approach

With cancer treated by Western Medical Science, you have the following options: surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, vaccination, and cryotherapy.



Surgery and chemotherapy are the most common forms of treatment currently popular in Western Medicine. Chemotherapy can last for many months in some cases. Gene therapy is just around the corner and could prove a viable method of treatment in the future although a costly one initially.

A second opinion from another western trained veterinarian may be indicated if your veterinarian does not have good success rates with treatment and you are leaning towards this type of treatment.

Ask your veterinarians their success rates and expected length of time for the treatments to get a realistic view of long term costs.

Questions to Ask Your Veterinarians

- *How many cancers have you seen like this?*
- *How many cancers have you treated?*
- *What kind of outcomes have you seen with your treatment plan?*
- *What can I expect the quality of life will be like after treatment?*
- *Do you modify your treatments for geriatric animals?*

Western Diagnostic Testing

To make an accurate assessment of how serious a lump, tumor or blood cancer is, and how far it has progressed, your veterinarian will want to perform some tests to identify the problem. Some may be more important to do than others depending upon the type of cancer that is suspected.

Ask your veterinarian: “How much will all this cost?” “Which are the best tests to do first?” “Can we do this in stages instead of all at once?” Discuss the choices with your veterinarians until you feel satisfied. Below is a list of Western Diagnostic Tests used to identify cancer and its severity:

- I. **Xrays:**
 - *Boney tumors, bone cysts, hard lumps of connective tissue, internal tumors (not that accurate)*
 - *Need to send to a radiologist to confirm*
- II. **Ultrasound**
 - *Internal organ tumors: kidney, heart, liver, intestines*
 - *Should be evaluated and done by someone with experience*
- III. **Xrays and Ultrasound**
 - *Prevents exploratory surgeries*
 - *Should be evaluated and done by someone with experience*
- IV. **Blood Panel**
 - *Check for anemia and organ damage, organ function*
 - *Look for abnormal cells / Blood cancers and Leukemia*
- V. **Bone Marrow biopsy**
 - *Leukemia diagnosis and prognosis*
- VI. **Tumor Biopsy**
 - *If malignant, increases chances of spreading*
 - *IF bone cancer ,increases chances of metastasis and more pain*
 - *Better done after the tumor is removed*
- VII. **MRI and CAT scans**
 - *Spinal and brain tumors*
 - *Not available in all parts of the country*
- VIII. **Genetic Testing**
 - *Tests for specific cancer causing genes*
 - *Not yet available*

I usually recommend I, II, or III plus IV. If surgery is imminent, the tumors removed should be biopsied to determine cancer type.

Deciding which Western treatment will work best for your pet is another “hurdle to jump”. Knowing all your options is “key” to making decisions. Treatments should focus on preventing metastasis, removing the threat of tumors growing larger, prolonging life without suffering, and making the animal comfortable... enjoying a functional life.

Western/Conventional Medicine Choices

VTGCVO GPV''	RTQU''	EQPU''
Surgery	Removes growth, or body part such as a leg Possible cure	Requires anesthesia, recuperation, may cause re-growth of tumor or promote metastasis
Radiation	Arrests tumor growth When surgery is not possible	Creates burns, affects taste and smell=appetite problems May damage other organs
Chemotherapy Oral and Injectable Drugs	Arrests tumor growth May decrease metastasis	May have to retreat again Side effects: bone marrow and immune system depression Liver, Kidney, and Heart Toxicity Loss of Appetite, vomiting
Pain medications; Narcotics / Tramadol or Fentanyl patch Piroxicam Anti-inflammatory drugs like Rimadyl Steroids	60% pain reduction Reduces tumor size (in some cases) NSAID Reduce pain and swelling, and reduce tumor size in some cases Decrease abnormal blood cells	Depression, lethargy, dizziness, looking and acting "stoned" Stomach ulcerations Liver toxicity, gastric irritation Depresses the immune system and adrenal gland function.
Blood Transfusion	Life Saver in some cases	Need to find appropriate donor or 2 nd time may cause anaphylaxis Expensive
Bone Marrow Transplant	Life Saver in some cases	Expensive
Biopsies	Define what kind of tumor and sheds light on what kind of drug and treatment will work the best	May increase the chances of metastasis if done prior to removing tumor. May cause more pain

Holistic Medicine Approach

Traditional Eastern Asian Medicine spawned Holistic Medicine in the West and provides many more options for prevention and treatment because this approach is broader based in philosophy than just “kill the cancer”. It will provide treatments that are less invasive, but will require a lot more participation from pet owners caring for their pets at home.

For some types of cancer, Holistic Medicine will include Western medicine treatments such as surgery and chemotherapy.

Eastern Medicine wants to “attack the cause” of the cancer and eliminate more DNA (genetic) damage to cells which causes them to mutate into cancers.



Before focusing on killing or dissipating the cancer, the patients well being is evaluated and “weaknesses” such as anemia, kidney disease, liver dysfunction are supported with dietary changes and herbal tonics.

If the pet has had a history of exposure to heavy metals, chemicals and pesticides (which increases susceptibility to cancer), medicinal herbs and antioxidant supplements are given to the pets to help “detox” the body and improve liver function and elimination of these substances from the animal.

“Killing the cancer” is addressed through enhancing the immune system function and production of cancer killing cells such as NK cells, T lymphocytes, and other macrophages. Herbs are used to address metastasis and prevent the spread of the cancerous cells. Many holistic veterinarians such as me use many antioxidants that help suppress cancer cells in the body and prevent further DNA damage.

Your holistic vet would still want to use Blood tests, X-rays, ultrasound, and possibly biopsies to get an accurate diagnosis.

Special attention would be considered to the Interaction and Condition of the Internal Environment of your pet such as:

- *Condition of the digestion, assimilation, and absorption of nutrients*
- *Dietary deficiencies: minerals, vitamins, essential oils and antioxidants*
- *Dietary excesses: chemicals in the food, carbohydrates, obesity*
- *Condition of the Blood and Immune System*
- *Energy and Stamina / Vital Energy/ Qi*
- *Genetic Predisposition (many pure breeds have inherited cancer genes. The most common breeds of dogs are: Dobermans, Rottweilers, Golden Retrievers, Boxers, Bernese Mountain Dogs, Great Danes, Alaskan Malamutes, Irish Setters, and German Shepherd dogs.)*
- *Potential susceptibility to cancer from above information*



Other considerations for a wholistic minded veterinarian would involve examining the Interaction and Condition of the External Environment which may be the cause of the cancer such as:

- *Stress: moving, owner gone a lot, noise pollution, family disharmony*
- *Use of chemicals: overuse of flea and tick products, drugs, antibiotics, vaccinations and pesticides*
- *Radiation from the sun or computers, electromagnetic radiation from high power lines*
- *Pollution of food, water, soil, and air*
- *Parasites*
- *Mold toxins / environment/ food*

As you can see, this is more than just looking at the tumor and deciding how to get rid of it with surgery, chemo, or radiation.

It takes take time, observation, and communication to get a clear picture of what has happened and why. Then we can set up a plan of action that can help not only stop the cancer growth, but prevent new cancers from developing.

So What Does A Wholistic Treatment Plan Look Like?

Not all wholistic veterinarians will use the same methods for curing your pet. What a veterinarian will recommend will be based upon their extensive experience, education, training, and observation; find a veterinarian experienced with treating cancer.



Most Veterinarians will follow a similar format of Treatment and Prevention as listed below:

- I. Eliminate Obvious Causes / Internal Environment**
 - *Pesticides, top spots, chemical use*
 - *commercial pet food and treats*
 - *Stress*
- II. Detoxification: Blood and Liver Cleanse**
 - *Antioxidants: (coenzyme Q10, NAC, Alpha Lipoic acid, milk thistle and melatonin)*
 - *Chlorella (Sun Chlorella)*
 - *Feed vegetables High in Antioxidants (kale, broccoli, red, yellow, and orange colored)*
 - *Herbs: red clover, wheat grass, alfalfa, yellow dock, red raspberry*
 - *Herbal formulas (Essiac, Hoxey, Chinese)*
 - *Increase Fluid Intake: vegetable juices, coconut water, meat broth, shiitake mushroom soup*
 - [Antioxidant Support by Genesis Resources](#)
 - [Blood and Energy Endurance Formula by Genesis Resources](#)
www.genesispets.com / 1-877-P-E-T-S-4-L-F-E

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- III. Enhance and Tonify Immune System**
 - *Acupuncture*
 - *Medicinal mushrooms (Reishi, Maitake, Shiitake, Cordyceps, A. blasei, Coriolus)*
 - *Vitamins C, E, A, D3*
 - *Anti Cancer Minerals: zinc, selenium*
 - *Omega -3/ DHA oil from fish or krill*
 - **CAS Options by Genesis Resources** www.genesispets.com / 1-877-P-E-T-S-4-L-F-E
- IV. Kill Tumor Cells / Apoptosis / Stimulate NK cells, T-lymphocytes, and macrophagic activity**
 - *Coenzyme Q10*
 - *Noni*
 - *Medicinal mushrooms*
 - *Polyphenols*
 - *Astragalus, turmeric, garlic*
 - *Specific Traditional Chinese herbal formulas for different kinds of Cancers.*
 - *Topical: blood root, zinc chloride, noni, frankincense oil, antioxidant creams and lotions*
 - **CAS Options** (www.genesispets.com) contains medicinal mushrooms and anti-cancer antioxidants
- V. Prevent Spread of Cancer Cells**
 - *Avoid doing biopsies before removing tumor*
 - *Low carb diet, high veggie diet with high omega -3 content*
 - *Avoid stress*
- VI. Enhance and Tonify Blood**
 - *Blood tonic herbs and foods (organ meats)*
 - **Blood and Energy Endurance Formula** by Genesis Resources www.genesispets.com / 1-877-P-E-T-S-4-L-F-E
- VII. Improve Deficient Organs and Dysfunctions**
 - *Weak Digestion / probiotics / herbs (ginseng) / improve Liver function (milk thistle)*
 - *Home cooked food / Low carb / high veggi and protein*
- VIII Correct or Mollify the Disharmonies in the Environment**
 - *Increase exercise and fun*
 - *Increase Love and Attention*
 - *Decrease chemical pollution of the Environment*
 - *Decrease exposure to color TV's, cell phones, radiation from the sun*

Do Not Be Alarmed. *This is a list of all the possibilities that relates to cancer in general, and does not mean all these actions, treatments, supplements and*

herbs will all be given at the same time. This list represents a way of organizing the issues and using some healing modality to address the problem.

Holistic treatments alone, will improve appetite, attitude, decrease pain, will prolong life expectancy and most importantly, buy you some quality time with your beloved pet. With progressive serious cancers a “cure” may not be possible..

Treatment Plan: Summary

- **DETOXIFICATION** (antioxidants)
- **IMPROVE IMMUNE SYSTEM FUNCTION**
(mushrooms, Vit E & C, Se, Astragalus)
- **KILL CANCER CELLS**
 - Chemotherapy?
 - Debulking / Surgery
 - Injectables: Lentin (shiitake), mistletoe
 - Medicinal Mushrooms
- **SUPPORTIVE CARE**
 - nutrition, exercise, pain support, acupuncture



Time to make a decision

In general, research shows that men make decisions coming from practicality and finances, although some emotions (fear, guilt, anger) will influence making a commitment to the treatment.

Women tend to go by their emotions and feelings about the problem, and like to ask more questions and talk to their friends. This is healthy!

Intuition is a gift to some who have the ability to make decisions on their “gut feeling”. Do not discount this for it may lead you in the appropriate direction.

First Decision will be which Diagnostic Methods are totally necessary, which ones can be temporarily postponed, and which ones can you afford?

Making Decisions on Treatment Options

After all the tests, results and opinions are in its time to “digest” all the information. Don’t make any decisions on what to do next, until you can go home, calm down, and feel this out first. You do not want to make decisions before you can come back to BALANCE in emotions, and in thought. Use your friends.

Here are some Tips

Make decisions and judgments about TREATMENT CHOICES based upon:

- *What you “see” in your pet: discomfort, pain, seriousness, etc.*
- *What you “hear” about the condition from your veterinarian(s) and his/her recommendations*
- *Input from another veterinarian’s (second) opinion, if you are indecisive and stay confused*
- *What people who had pets with similar cancers told you about their experiences*
- *Research on the internet, books, articles, veterinary medical websites, and veterinary college websites*
- *How much money you can spend. Can you make special financial arrangements with your veterinarian?*
- *How old your pet is and its life expectancy*
- *On whether other debilitating conditions are affecting your pet’s health.*
- *Meditation: be of calm mind: What realizations, “feelings” arise about the treatment you chose.*
- *Your Intuition or “gut feeling”*

Exploring your treatment choices (conventional Western medical vs Holistic medicine) can be difficult and frustrating.

With so many choices of treatment available.....which ones are realistic, and which ones can you afford? How much time do you have to devote to

treatments at home and in the hospital? These are questions to ask yourself with any serious medical problem not just cancer.

Although some tumors can be treated and cured, with serious cancers most treatments are “palliative” (Western or Eastern) i.e., they buy you some time with your beloved pet until you have to euthanize.

Using acupuncture, massage, topical liniments, special diets, medicinal mushrooms and herbs, vitamins and antioxidants, your pet can be free of pain, the tumor suppressed, and the quality of life improved for quite awhile.

Ask yourself, “What does my pet need at this time?”

When a lump is growing faster and causing pain, sometimes, surgery is necessary. If the tumor is not far along invading deeper into the body and can be cleanly removed, then this procedure will prolong the life of your pet even if the tumor is cancerous.

If the tumor is invasive into muscle or bone, deep within the abdominal cavity, removing the tumor may just debilitate your pet further and spread the cancer faster...and cause more pain.

Amputation may be the only alternative to prevent the spread of the cancer, but age and condition of your pet should play a big part in making this decision.

Many old dogs with “bad backs” or “weak” rear legs who have had one of the front legs amputated because of bone cancer, could not support themselves in walking after the surgery.

Ask yourself “What would my pet want? Surgery that involves amputation?” and “How long can my pet be happy after the surgery or chemotherapy?”



Make a decision on which direction of treatment you want to pursue:

- 1.) *Western and Conventional*
- 2.) *Eastern/ Asian and Holistic Medicine*
- 3.) *Integrative Therapy combining both Western and Holistic Medicine*

Follow through will all the recommendations of your veterinarian who is guiding you.

Western/Conventional Medicine Choices: designed to treat the “disease” and not the individual. Protocols will be the same or very similar based upon what kind of cancer it is.....no matter if a young or old cat or do

As I reported earlier, Western + Eastern Medicine = Holistic approach is the ultimate best way to treat a serious cancer such as Lymphoma or Mast Cell Tumors.

If you need help deciding, please contact me for a phone consultation. Check my website or this link:

<http://www.drasko.com/consultations.htm>

I would be happy to work with you and your veterinarian. I can help guide you through the difficult challenge cancer in a pet is to face.