**"CURING CANCER, FOUR PAWS AT A TIME"**

**Northwest Notes / LABRADOR QUARTERLY - Spring 2010**

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We can do SOMETHING! Please take interest in **COMET'S TALE**, comets-tale.org., a non-profit formed to propel a diagnostic and treatment care center for animals with life threatening health issues. This is the second only facility in the United States to work with stem cell and bone marrow transplants in treating cancers and disease in our dogs.

My interest began as I brought my chocolate female into one of my favorite veterinarians for her 30 day gestational ultrasound. Dr. comes into our exam room and jumps up to sit on the counter ! He and I had talked before about his work with cancer therapies through the use of stem cell; many of the treatments used on humans for cancer and other diseases were developed through research on dogs. Well, he asked if I would be wiling to collect cord blood for these upcoming babies. He began to tell me with so much excitement his work with the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, well known in the Seattle area.

This incredible veterinarian is the first to perform a successful, non-experimental stem cell transplant on a Golden Retriever named “Comet”.

A SUCCESS and the beginning of COMET'S TALE ! Being active in your dog community and clubs, you hear more and more about cancer becoming a major cause of our dog's death. I just spoke at length with a long-time breeder-friend who is very successful in golden retrievers. He said 20% of their dogs are dying of cancer early and there are new genetic associations being made with early iris cysts.

“The stem cell transplantation procedures that we are developing for dogs are logical – they are routinely used for people and DOGS are the research model. It is repeatable and the only novel treatment option for lymphoma made available to dogs in over 30 years”, Dr. pat Gavin, Diplomat Radiation Oncology. (We all know someone who had to struggle with chemotherapy after surgeries and, radiation and we hear about those blessed to have had stem cell or bone marrow transplant and then beautiful recovery followed and often, full remissions ! )

About three days before my litter was due, I drove into town to meet with the veterinarian's assistant about what I could do to help. She gave me 10 tubes with small amounts of anticoagulant in each. I reviewed the simple procedure to 'milk' pout the cord blood and said I would do my best.

The first puppy born was a miss as mom is so fast and has the puppy cleaned spotless and the cord cut faster than you can see a puppy's been born ! I was much more ready the second puppy and she allowed me to tie the cord an inch plus from the belly and while she had the baby to fondle, I took the placenta and attached cord to my table. I tied the cord at the placenta end also so that when I cut the cord away from the placenta, I would have the contents intact. As I went to milk the cord contents into the vial, I realized that in that much time, the cord had clotted up at the end cut from the puppy and I just trimmed back further to access the contents inside the cord. I draped that cut end in the vial and gently used my gloved thumb and forefinger to 'milk' out the cord blood. I marked the vial sex and birth order and refrigerated the vial. Throughout the night and next morning, I did manage to collect and save five nice vials of umbilical cord blood from puppies. I drove that vials into the hospital where they would be slowly frozen, first gradually in dry ice to a specific temperature and then stored in liquid nitrogen.

Only one other facility in the United States, North Carolina University, is doing this type of cancer research and treatment in dogs. Dr's Sullivan and Westfall have already performed many of these procedures with success and Dr. Gavin has made a commitment to radiation oncology with strong interest in following these transplant patients. Having a center on the West Coast will offer patients options and is conveniently located between Vancouver, B.C. And Seattle, Washington.

If you know of dogs who have achieved championships and great training accomplishments but haven't yet begun a legacy of progeny or like me, an elderly neighbor who can't lose his best friend yet and is willing to look at what can actually be offered today. I would ask that you look into how a small donation can lead to new discoveries for the potential to lead to the development for new cancer treatments for humans as well, increase what is available to us. Streamlining bone marrow and stem cell therapies for treating disease in our beloved dogs will bring costs down as treatments are improved. Be a part of bringing back LIFE to one sickened way too young.

I ask for you to write to cathy@comets-tale.org and find out more about their work and how you can help.