

What's With All the News About Dogs and Cancer?

America's most popular pets have lately been the stars of cancer research.

July 19, 2019 By [Casey Halter](#)

When most people envision the future of cancer research, they think of lab mice, test tubes and petri dishes full of complex chemicals and tissue samples. But they don't usually think of dogs. However, as [a recent article in Wired](#) reports, canines may be key to the future of human cancer research.

This development is largely the result of the Obama-era Cancer Moonshot Initiative—launched in 2016 to help supercharge cancer research, encourage innovation and get scientists to work toward the organization's mission to end cancer as we know it. Specifically, the program boosted collaborative work between animal and human medicine. Since dogs develop some cancers that are very similar to those found in humans, it's no wonder that canines are making cancer headlines.

For example, five Moonshot-related canine studies are using immunotherapy to test how we can leverage our own immune systems to kill off tumors. The program is also funding studies devoted to the genomic sequencing of dogs, which researchers say will lead to a better understanding of how cancer mutations behave in both canine and human bodies. The biggest trial on canine cancer (although it's not funded by Moonshot, it has similar aims) is testing a potential cancer vaccine in 800 dogs. That trial launched in June.

The cancer research community says the potential for mutual benefit is huge. Over the past 10 years, at least 10 cancer drugs have been developed with input from canine studies. This month the Food and Drug Administration even approved a cancer drug, selinexor (Xpovio) for people with multiple myeloma that is also being developed to treat lymphoma in dogs.

Why are dogs good for cancer research? For one thing, cancer occurs naturally in canines in similar rates to those seen in humans. In fact, studies show about half of dogs over age 10 will get cancer. The cancer connection between dogs and humans extends beyond biology to our shared environment.

According to veterinarian Diane Brown, CEO of the AKC Canine Health Foundation, who was interviewed for the article, “[Dogs] drink the same water. They're on our same carpets; they're on

our same grass. Of all pets, they are the ones who share our lives most fully.”

To learn more about ongoing research involving dogs and cancer, [click here](#).

Editor’s Note: The Cancer Moonshot Initiative/Biden Cancer Initiative has [ceased its operations](#) as of July 2019.

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