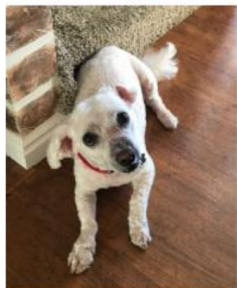


CANCER TREATMENT

Utah HDR Brachytherapy Radiation Facility Brings Hope for Dogs and Cats with Cancer

By Clayton Watkins, DVM

As a veterinarian with 30 years of experience specializing in ultrasound and endoscopic procedures for cats and dogs, I know first-hand how heart breaking it is for pet owners to be told by their veterinarian that their pet has cancer.



Until recently, veterinarians like myself had no options but to recommend a long drive with a sick animal to Colorado State University for radiation treatment. All that changed a few years ago when I met human radiation oncologist Dr. John Hayes. He told me how successful High Dose Radiation (HDR) brachytherapy treatment has been for his human clients. Dr. Hayes was the pioneering radiation oncologist for HDR brachytherapy in Utah and is one of the world's leading experts in brachytherapy.

Turn the clock three years forward and Dr. Hayes and I have recently opened the first and only HDR brachytherapy radiation facility for pets in the world. We have combined our human and animal experience of 60 years to offer state-of-the-art radiation treatment to animals. We recently received state approval for a radiation facility where animals can be treated on-site at our Holladay location (VetMed Holladay clinic, 6221 Highland Drive, Holladay, UT 84121, www.vetmedutah.com).

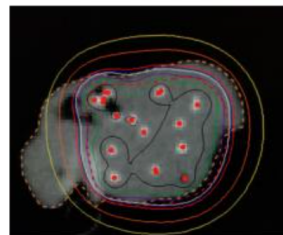
I'd like to tell you about how brachytherapy works. Brachytherapy delivers radiation by an agile, robotically-controlled radioactive seed



that delivers a pinpointed burst of radiation directly into the tumor. It was originally designed to target certain forms of human cancer. Human radiation oncologists have used it with tremendous success on cancers of the prostate, breast, cervix, uterus, and in the head and neck, to mention a few.

The prefix "brachy" is from Greek meaning "from a short distance." Studies too numerous to count have demonstrated its efficacy in treating human cancers. Brachytherapy is applied inside the tumor through tiny hollow catheters via needles to the anesthetized animal.

We are seeing life-enhancing and life-extending results for our animal patients. Dr. Hayes and I have been using brachytherapy and, when needed, external beam radiation, to fight cancer in pets for three years. Many of our patients are still going strong 30 months after treatment. Previously, veterinary cancer treatment in Utah was limited to surgery and chemotherapy. Brachytherapy is not painful and does not result in systemic side effects. Compared to other types of radiation, brachytherapy provides a higher dose of radiation and less exposure to normal tissues, it's less expensive, and is better shaped to the tumor we are targeting.



When a pet comes in to VetMed Consultants for radiation treatment, both Dr. Hayes and myself are present for each procedure. Together we create a highly detailed radiation treatment for each pet. Also in attendance is board certified medical physicist Joshua Bryant, MSDABR, founding partner of Mountain States Medical Physics. Bryant ensures the safe use of the radiation and he assists with the technical planning for the use of radiation. The pets receiving treatment are also attended to before, during and after radiation by three highly trained veterinary technicians.

Dr. Hayes says, "Our patients are getting technologically advanced care, equal in every way to that which we give in humans, and that translates into some amazing results."

Dr. Hayes attended BYU, then the University of Utah for medical school and specialty training in radiation oncology, and has been performing brachytherapy procedures for his human patients since 1988.

Photos by Dr. Clayton Watkins

Dr. Watkins attended BYU then earned his doctorate of Veterinary Medicine Degree from Colorado State University in 1988. In addition to brachytherapy, he is applying cutting-edge interventional technology in the treatment of such diseases as nasal and bladder tumors, urinary stones, intestinal polyps, and upper airway disorders.

