

Canine cancer found transmissible

August 11 2006

Scientists in England have discovered that when it comes to man's best friend, the age-old wisdom that you can't catch cancer isn't true.

A canine cancer known as Sticker's sarcoma is spread by tumor cells getting passed from dog to dog through sex or from licking or biting, the Washington Post reports.

Robin Weiss of University College London led a study that found Sticker's tumor cells behave like a parasite, leaping from one victim to the next.

Because the cancer is generally not fatal, the study concludes that today's worldwide distribution of Sticker's tumors represents a single colony of cancer cells that may be the longest in the world.

In establishing their findings, Weiss and his colleagues did genetic studies on tumor cells from 40 dogs residing on five different continents.

In each case, the tumor cells were not genetically related to the dogs they came from, proving that they did not originate from the dogs' own cells as cancer normally does.

In Tasmania, experts say a different transmissible cancer is threatening Tasmanian devils with extinction.

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Citation: Canine cancer found transmissible (2006, August 11) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2006-08-canine-cancer-transmissible.html>

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