

# Study finds risk factors for cat cancer, could have human implications

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A recent, large-scale study on cat intestinal cancer has provided new insight into a common pet disease and its causes; the findings could ultimately benefit humans.

"We are looking for patterns of [cancer development](#) in animals, so we can find common risk factors," said Kim Selting, associate teaching professor of oncology at the MU College of Veterinary Medicine. "I mentored a former resident, Kerry Rissetto, as she examined intestinal tumors in cats on a very large scale, and we believe we can use this information to eventually identify [cancer risk factors](#) and treatments for humans."

Using a database, the researchers examined 1,129 cases covering 47 years of intestinal cancer in cats. The researchers found that most feline intestinal cancers were lymphoma, or cancer of the immune system, and most cancers were found in the [small intestines](#). The researchers also determined that the Siamese breed, particularly males seven years old or older, had an increased risk of developing intestinal cancer.

"This is important because there are very few population-based studies that allow us to evaluate cancer and risk factors on such a large scale," Selting said. "Pet owners should be on the lookout for unexplained weight loss, vomiting and diarrhea, because these issues can be associated with intestinal cancer."

Selting says that tracking animal cancer is important because animals

share the environment with humans. By noting patterns of cancer development, doctors and veterinarians may become aware of [environmental factors](#) that could be causing [tumor progression](#) in different species, including humans.

"Animal health care may predict what could be coming for human health care," Selting said. "For example, dogs are really the only species, other than humans, that develop the toughest type of prostate cancers. If a treatment develops that can help with [prostate cancer](#), we can test it on dogs and find results faster because cancer in dogs progresses faster than cancer in humans."

**More information:** The study "Recent Trends in Feline Intestinal Neoplasia: An Epidemiologic Study of 1,129 Cases in the Veterinary Medical Database from 1964 to 2004," won an award for the best research generated from the Veterinary Medical Database (VMDB). The study was published in the Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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