

Dogs being used to sniff out cancer diagnoses

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Man's best friend may have just graduated to oncologist's best colleague.

A group of Arkansas medical researchers have revealed a new study finding that scent-trained dogs can be used to detect thyroid [cancer](#) - with about 90 percent accuracy.

The study, spearheaded by Arny Ferrando, Ph.D. and Dr. Andrew Hinson, both of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, presented their results to the Endocrine Society recently in San Diego. The doctors claim that while similar research has been done into the medicinal uses of a dog's powerful sense of smell, their study was the first to go this deep.

"What we have done, no one has attempted to do," Ferrando said in a statement. "We have taken the next step by asking the dog to tell us whether or not cancer exists before the medical diagnostic system does."

He explained the point of the study was to discover whether doctors can use dogs to help diagnose cancer, specifically in areas where expensive medical testing and technologies aren't readily available.

The trial saw several dogs presented with urine samples from [thyroid cancer](#) patients - a mix of benign and malignant cases - then asked them to indicate whether each still had cancer or not. Based on a series of trained actions, the dogs would indicate their findings to the researchers.

The dogs used in the study were strays who had been trained in scent

detection methods.

The pooches were accurate in 30 of 34 cases, or about 88 percent of the time. According to BBC News, the dogs gave two false positives and two erroneous clearances.

"We've all looked at it from a skeptical, scientific standpoint, but the data just keeps leading us to the fact that this has remarkable clinical potential," Ferrando said of the results.

According to BBC News, British cancer researchers said using dogs to detect cancer would be "impractical."

For Ferrando and Hinson, the research will continue. Ferrando said the method could be used to diagnose other cancers like ovarian, breast and prostate. His team's next plan is to work with researchers at Auburn University's Canine Performance Sciences program to test [dogs](#) that were bred specifically for scent detection.

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