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Clinical trials of dogs with cancer could lead to better treatments for humans

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Dogs get cancer, too. And they have even fewer treatment options than their human owners do. But an article in *Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN)*, the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, offers a glimmer of hope. It explores how clinical trials on man's best friend could be a win-win for both dogs and people.

Judith Lavelle, an intern at *C&EN*, notes that only a small percentage of potential human cancer drugs get approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Many of them fail when tested in people in clinical trials. A major reason for this late failure is that animal models—typically mice with tumors grafted onto them—don't adequately reflect what happens when humans develop tumors spontaneously. Research with pet dogs that develop cancer out of the blue, however, could lead to better treatments. Such studies also could provide more relevant information about cancer's genetic basis since canines are more closely related to humans than mice are.

Because of these potential benefits, the Comparative Oncology Trials Consortium (COTC) was formed. COTC is a collaboration between the National Institutes of Health and 22 veterinary hospitals in the U.S., and it is currently testing promising drug candidates in dogs that have naturally developed cancer. The notion of "animal testing" still raises red flags for some people, but veterinarians and researchers see this new field of comparative oncology as a way to humanely treat sick animals while gaining valuable insight into new treatments for people with cancer.

More information: Could Fido Fetch a Cure?
cen.acs.org/articles/93/i33/Fido-Fetch-Cure.html

Provided by American Chemical Society