

Can dogs teach doctors new tricks?

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(HealthDay)—Can your canine companion help you fight off a troubling skin condition?

Possibly. Well, maybe not *your* dog, per se, but [dogs](#) in general. A human [skin](#) specialist said that dogs can offer valuable insight into human skin conditions such as eczema.

"Dermatologists, veterinarians and scientists can learn a lot from one another," said Dr. Jennifer Gardner, an assistant professor of dermatology at University of Washington in Seattle.

"When we work together and share our expertise, it can improve the health of humans and animals alike, as well as the health of the environment they share," she explained in an American Academy of Dermatology news release.

For example, Gardner said, there has been significant research into developing systemic and immune-based treatments for eczema in dogs, due to the fact that the use of skin-applied treatments is limited when a patient has fur.

The results of this line of research could eventually influence how eczema is treated in people, according to Gardner.

"Humans don't exist in a bubble. We're all interconnected with our environment and the other species that share that environment, so it just makes sense that we can learn from them," she said.

Microscopic mites are another skin problem shared by dogs and people, so studying mites in animals could help improve treatment of mite-related conditions in humans, such as rosacea and hair loss, Gardner suggested.

Research into skin [conditions](#) that can and cannot be transferred from animals to humans, and the other way around, is also important.

"If your dog has a skin condition, you may unnecessarily avoid her because you're afraid you could catch what she has, and this can interfere with the mutually beneficial [human](#)-animal bond," Gardner said.

"By collaborating with our veterinary colleagues, however, dermatologists can help you understand what's going on with your pet, whether it can affect you and how you can ensure the health of everyone in your household, both people and [animals](#)," she concluded.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more on [skin conditions](#).

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