

On The Healthfront

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP RESEARCH SUCCESS?

By Kay McGuire, DVM, MS

The Westie Foundation of America (WFA) was formed to improve the health of our precious dogs, not only through funding research but also through programs and education. Although research takes time, we have had some success. One of the hardest things to accomplish in grant participation has always been finding and coordinating the research samples required.

In 2016 the WFA began to investigate the feasibility of investing in a biobanking facility to store blood samples and tissues from Westies suffering from various health issues. We have spoken to key representatives at Michigan State University which houses a tissue bank for the Bernese Mountain Dogs, funded through their “BernierGard” Health trust. There are several other Universities such as Cornell University and the University of Pennsylvania that have partnered with breed clubs on certain research topics.

The WFA is a sponsor of a meeting being convened at Texas A&M School of Veterinary Medicine to develop guidelines and techniques for successful biobanking. Many of our country’s top geneticists will gather in April, 2017, in College Station, Texas, to determine the best means to catalog, store and lend blood and tissue samples for future research. A repository will be a costly venture for the WFA but one that will ensure research samples will be available for years to come.

The Health Committee has made its recommendations to the WFA Board on the 2017 Canine Health Foundation grant schedule. The WFA will provide funding grants to the following research projects:

- Immunotherapy for the Treatment of Canine Atopy - 02176-A (continuing)
- Is Defective Secretion of Antimicrobial Peptides Associated with Reduced Microbicidal Effects In Atopic Keratinocytes? - 02182-A (continuing)
- Defining the Genetic Basis of Inflammatory Bowel Disease - 02002 (continuing)
- Targeting the Cancer Epigenome: The Effect of Specific Histone Lysine Methyltransferase Inhibition in Canine B-Cell Lymphoma - 02309 (new)

- The Role of Complex Translocations Associated with TP53 Somatic Mutations for Aiding Prognosis of Canine Diffuse Large B-cell Lymphoma - 023717 (new)

Our committee works to recommend grant support to those studies that most pertain to health conditions affecting Westies; your continued donations are necessary for this work to continue.



Lastly, the WFA Health Committee is pleased to announce that Dr. Margaret Casal of the University of Pennsylvania will be the speaker for the annual WFA Health Seminar held during National Specialty week.

Dr. Casal will speak on neo-natal care and the fading puppy syndrome. She will also provide information on the latest genetic research associated with the West Highland White Terrier. Dr. Casal has an outstanding biography as follows:

- 1984: Veterinary degree from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Zurich in Switzerland
- 1985: Fellowship in Veterinary Pathology, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- 1986-1988: Master’s degree from the University of Bern, Switzerland. Topic: Efficacy and Safety of Distemper Vaccines in Dogs
- 1988-1991: Lecturer in Small Animal Reproduction, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- 1991-1994: Residency in Medical Genetics (Pediatrics and Reproduction), School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania
- 1994-1999: PhD studies in Gene Therapy and Genetics with degree conferred in 1999 from School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania
- 2000: Diplomate European College of Animal Reproduction
- 1999-2009: Assistant Professor in Medical Genetics, Pediatrics, and Reproduction, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania
- 2009-present: Associate Professor in Medical Genetics, Pediatrics, and Reproduction, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Chief of Service and of the residency program.