

Dogs and Cancer

"Evidence suggests that animal-assisted therapy (AAT) can have a positive effect on a patient's psychosocial, emotional and physical well being," said Julia Havey, RN, study presenter and senior systems analyst, Department of Medical Center Information Systems, Loyola University Health System (LUHS). "These data further support these benefits and build the case for expanding the use of pet therapy in recovery." ([Pet Therapy: Recovering With Four-Legged Friends Requires Less Pain Medication](#))

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Studies around the world are proving that dogs can be extremely accurate in smelling and identifying cancer. This could be a huge benefit in the early detection of cancer, possibly saving countless lives. Researchers hope to incorporate dogs and their talented noses (literally the best odor detectors known to man) into physical exams in doctor's offices, alerting doctors to possible cancer concerns. (reference [The Dog's Nose Knows: Cancer-Detecting Canines](#)
By: *Rena Hamrick, RVT*)

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Dogs do as well as state-of-the-art screening tests at sniffing out people with lung or breast cancer. (reference <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn8549-dogs-as-good-as-screening-for-cancer-detection.html>)

Citizens FOR Pets in Condos
www.petsincondos.org is a non-profit public advocacy and educational organization dedicated to increasing acceptance of companion animals in condos and other types of association-run housing. We educate the public about the health benefits of having animal companions and also advocate for responsible pet ownership/guardianship. Our motto: "creating a win-win situation for both people & pets."

We provide resources for a pet-friendly America/Florida



more details at

<http://www.petsincondos.org>

Dr. Jon at www.petplace.com says, "Think of all the things our best friend does for us – provide therapy, guide the blind, protect and serve those in law enforcement and the military, search for our missing loved ones, alert us to bombs, guard our homes, detect our cancer... provide unconditional love. Such an incredible creature."

Are dogs the future of cancer screening?

Findings of [a new study published online](#) show a specially trained black Labrador retriever was just as accurate at detecting colon cancer on human breath as a conventional [colonoscopy](#) screening test.



The 8-year-old female canine sniffed out [colon cancer](#) in breath samples 91 percent of the time. When it came to stool samples, she was 97 percent accurate.

The report in [GUT](#), an international journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, said the dog's scent detection was even higher for early-stage cancers and not affected by smoking. Japanese researchers concluded that a specific cancer scent does indeed exist, meaning cancer-specific chemicals may circulate in the body and could in the future be used for early detection.

This news came as no surprise to [Dr. Wendy Swift](#), veterinary medical director and interim director at the [Humane Society of West Michigan](#).

Swift informed me that [multiples studies have already proved](#) that dogs can be trained to accurately detect breast, lung, ovarian, and bladder cancers in humans. And, they also can smell when someone is about to have a heart attack or seizure.

“They've been training dogs to do this for quite a long time now, it's just not well known,” Swift said. “Most people assume dogs can only be used as assistance dogs when in fact (trained) dogs are now placed in homes with people predisposed to cancer.”

Why are dogs so good at this?

“They [can smell about 100,000 times better](#) than we can,” Swift said. “Cells in the human body change when we have heart attack...the actual way we smell to them changes so that's what they're picking up on.”

Swift said dogs ideally suited this for this are [Labradors](#), [German shepherds](#), [bloodhounds](#), and dogs made for tracking and sniffing.

“A lot of times we assume dogs are just used for (disability) assistance and law enforcement, but you can actually train them to do a lot things,” she said.

Of course, it takes a special kind of dog to be trained to sniff out cancer because while most have the ability, they don't necessarily want to use it, she said.

If you know of a dog that might have special tracking abilities if properly trained, please contact Dr. Swift (wswift@hswestmi.org) or (616) 791-8218 or the Humane Society of West Michigan at 616.453.8900.

“We may have a special dog in our midst and would never know if they aren't given the opportunity,” she said.

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"The therapeutic use of pets as companions has gained increasing attention in recent years for a wide variety of patients -people with AIDS or cancer, the elderly, and the mentally ill. Unlike people, with whom our interactions may be quite complex and unpredictable, animals provide a constant source of comfort and focus for attention. Animals bring out our nurturing instinct. They also make us feel safe and unconditionally accepted. We can just be ourselves around our pets." (source - http://www.holistic-online.com/stress/stress_pet-therapy.htm)