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Lucky dog

Chester mutt gets stem cell treatment to relieve arthritis pain, By Vicki Botta

Chester — Smith should really be renamed "Lucky."

This 90-pound mutt is lucky that his owner, Vaia McGinnity of Chester, didn't get the chihuahua she really wanted five years ago, when she was looking for a dog to adopt. He's lucky to have lived to age 10, a ripe old age for a dog his size. And he's lucky to have had a new, drug-free treatment that promises to relieve the arthritis pain in his knees and hips.



Dr. Rao injects stem cells into one of Smith's arthritic joints.

Smith received stem cell treatment, which has been in the news because of its potential to dramatically change the treatment of human disease. But animals can also benefit from this minimally invasive treatment, which has become accessible at more and more veterinarians' offices throughout the country. McGinnity paid \$1,900 in the hope that this procedure will relieve her beloved pet's suffering.

On Wednesday, Dr. Malathy Rao treated Smith at Park View Animal Hospital in Boonton, N.J., thanks to a company called Medi-Vet America. It was the fifth time since March that Dr. Rao has performed the procedure, which introduces new cells into damaged tissue.

"The research I found on the success MediVet-America's stem cell technology was very encouraging,"

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McGinnity said.

Bob DeWitt, a spokesman for Medi-Vet, said the company developed a way to process stem cells at the same location where the extraction takes place. In prior procedures, stem cells from fat cells, which are extracted through an incision made in the area needing treatment, were hermetically sealed and sent to a lab in San Diego, Calif. There, the fat cells were spun through a centrifuge in the same way blood is spun to separate platelets.



Fat drawn from Smith's body was put through a centrifuge, then a platelet-rich plasma bath, and finally an LED frequency. The plasma and light activated the stem cells, which were then injected into the dog's arthritic knees, hips, and elbows. The top two layers in the vial pictured are fat. The layer below is the plasma. The stem cells are on the bottom.

The stem cells were separated from the fat cells and "activated" through a patented L.E.D. frequency, then sent back to the veterinarian's office to be injected back into the animal. The technology uses the body's own regenerative healing power to help cure the animal's condition, according to a release issued by the company.

"Through Medi-Vet's main offices in Australia, they were able to eliminate the need to send the cells away to be processed," DeWitt said. "Everything

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can be done on the same day in the same veterinary office."

The procedure takes about three hours. The technology is only a year and a half old, but so far, repeat procedures have not been necessary, DeWitt said. Still, he said, people are banking their pet's tissue cryogenically, just in case.

The procedure has relieved arthritis, hip dysplasia, tendon and ligament damage and other injuries. In three years, Medi-Vet expects to have developed a procedure to cure other areas of the body, such as the liver, heart and kidneys. Using the animal's own cells is a big plus because long-term drug treatments can harm the liver and kidneys. One drawback is that, if an animal already has cancer, stem cell treatment will increase the growth rate of cancer cells just as it enhances the growth of healthy tissue.

Medi-Vet trains veterinarians to perform the steps, and provides a kit with all the materials needed to extract, process, activate and re-inject the cells into the animal. The procedure has proven highly successful not only in dogs, but cats and horses too, DeWitt said.

"One prized thoroughbred racehorse was in such pain, they could no longer use him as a stud," he said. "But after the procedure, he was once again able to earn his owner \$200,000 stud fees. Within two or three weeks, a dog who was no longer able to climb the stairs or climb into his owner's car was not only climbing the stairs, but playing Frisbee."

DeWitt said it's especially important for younger animals to remain active. Inactivity because of pain leads to even more serious conditions, such as obesity, heart and kidney problems, and lung disease. "When dogs suffer, other problems develop," he said.

McGinnity said that while she doesn't expect Smith to be a puppy again, "I'm hoping he won't need to be on anti-inflammatory medicine anymore, and that this will help take the pain away."

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Rita Giuliano wrote on Aug 23, 2011 1:01 PM:

" Great news for Mr. Smith!! Looking forward to seeing him run along the beaches of Delaware! "

Rick Bossley wrote on Aug 20, 2011 5:24 PM:

" Vaia, you go girl! May God bless you & Jim for loving your dog so much!! You guys are incredible, Sue & I hope Smith has many more happy years. "

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