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Stem cells for dogs? New pain management therapy works for pets



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SAN ANTONIO -- The healing power of stem cells is now helping dogs in pain. Vets are excited about this new therapy that's making a big difference for South Texans' beloved pets.

Oscar is an 11-year-old Australian Terrier, an agility competitor that suffered from osteoarthritis, impacting his usual exuberant nature.

"He was starting to really slow down and he was starting to suffer," said Oscar's owner, Judy Larson of San Antonio.

Instead of medications that provide only marginal relief and create side effects, Larson turned to the Perrin/410 Animal Hospital for help. Doctors performed a new procedure called Adipose Stem Cell Therapy.

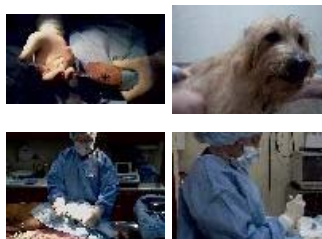
"We treat the fat, process it, activate it, and then inject it back into the animal the same day," explained veterinarian Dr. Bryan Stuckey.

The procedure takes about four hours. Doctors first harvest fat tissue from the abdomen. Then, they process it and activate the stem cells. Injections back into the joint promote regeneration of the damaged areas in the bone, cartilage, ligaments and tendons.

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“And with this, there is no side effect,” Stuckey said. “There’s no harmful side effect. It’s from the animal itself. It’s injected back in so there is no donor involved.”

Pets start to show improvement in two weeks, and continue to get better over the next two to three months.

“It was time going backwards,” Larson stated. “You know, his eyes cleared up. He started to grow hair again. His energy level went back up. His appetite. It was like getting my dog back.”

The cost is about \$2,000. Vets say the procedure pays for itself in about two years, since dogs no longer need expensive medications and tests.

Stuckey has treated 16 dogs this way so far. He calls it a huge advancement in pain management.

“We can’t cure a bad joint, but we can fix it so it does not hurt as much,” he commented.

Stem cell therapy won’t necessarily extend a dog’s life. But vets say their quality of life will improve. And that can make all the difference for an animal in pain.



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