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Another stem cell option for pets

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Cynthia Smoot
FOX 13 News

TAMPA - Stem cell therapy for dogs, cats, and horses has been around for a few years. But as companies compete, the technology keeps improving. And today, a Hillsborough County vet clinic became only the second in the Bay Area to offer same-day procedures.

Taya, a 7-year-old purebred doberman, has painful arthritis in both hips and her left elbow. But she's about to begin a procedure that promises to help her move and feel better.

It starts with harvesting some of her belly fat, which is rich with stem cells

"They're laying dormant in the fat, so once we retrieve them and they're activated, then they can help repair the tissues and reduce the inflammation," explained Dr. Harold Langbehn.

Dr. Langbehn and the other vets at Ehrlich Animal Hospital are the first in Hillsborough County to offer the MediVet stem cell procedure.

After harvesting the cells, they isolate and activate them with a special light -- a procedure that takes about three hours.

MediVet says that's what makes their procedure unique -- everything's done in-house, same-day, with technology they say produces millions more stem cells.

"I think it has tremendous potential for not only arthritic dogs," Dr. Langbehn continued, "but maybe other diseases in the future, both animal and people."

The MediVet rep I spoke with says dogs usually feel better almost right away, even though it takes nearly a month for the stem cells to start regenerating.

The costs of the treatment varies, but it's not inexpensive. Ehrlich Animal Hospital is offering the procedure for \$2,500 through the end of the year, then the price will rise to \$3,000.

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You need to be very careful. These are not clinical trials being done, these are being done by local Vets who are in it to make money. There is no systematic followup to ensure the treatments work or worse yet don't cause death, disability or cancer in the pets. They are given the treatment and the owner takes the pet home and whatever happens, happens. These veterinarians are charging top dollar for very little work. The temptation to over promise is great, especially since neither the FDA or anyone else is tracking the results. Let the buyer beware.



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