

World's first HDR brachytherapy center for pets targets tumors

Veterinarian, human radiation oncologist establish high dose rate brachytherapy center in Utah

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[1]A veterinarian and a medical doctor in Utah are delivering high dose rate (HDR) brachytherapy to canine and feline cancer patients.

Clayton Watkins, DVM, owner of VetMed Consultants[2] and human radiation oncologist and brachytherapy specialist John K. Hayes, MD, recently received state approval for a radiation facility where animals can be treated on site at their Holladay location, the first dedicated radiation facility for pets in Utah and the first facility in the world dedicated to HDR brachytherapy for pets.

HDR brachytherapy administers radiation via a robotically controlled radioactive seed that delivers a pinpointed burst of radiation directly into the tumor, applied via catheter.

Originally designed to target certain forms of human cancer, human radiation oncologists have used it with success on cancers of the prostate, breast, cervix, uterus, and in the head and neck, and others.

“Our clients love the results we can get for their family pet,” said Dr. Watkins. “Brachytherapy is not painful and does not result in systemic side effects. Compared to other types of radiation, brachytherapy provides a higher dose of radiation and less exposure to normal tissues, it’s less expensive, and is it better shaped to the tumor we are targeting.”

The VetMed team treats nasal, oral, paw and limb, mast cell, and urethra and bladder/prostate tumors.

When a pet comes in for radiation treatment, both doctors are present for each procedure. Board-certified medical physicist Joshua Bryant, MSDABR, who ensures the safe use of the radiation and assists with the technical planning for the use of radiation, also is present. Pets receiving treatment are also attended to before, during, and after radiation by three highly trained veterinary technicians.

“Our patients are getting technologically advanced care, equal in every way to that which we give in humans, and that translates into some amazing results,” said Dr. Hayes.

This level of technology comes at a cost, but the team says it is intent on keeping the cost as low as possible. Pet insurance companies often cover the expense, according to Drs. Hayes and Watkins.

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“We’ve seen outstanding results using brachytherapy to target and defeat tumors in humans,” said Hayes. “We are happy to see the same good results

happening for pets.”

Endnotes:

1. [Image]: <https://www.veterinarypracticenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/brachytherapy-e1537936615591.jpg>
2. VetMed Consultants: <http://vetmedutah.com>

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