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**Canine Cancer Campaign**  
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## Wisconsin's Cancer Vaccine Program

It wasn't publicized, other than word of mouth, and still the [UW-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine](#) was overwhelmed with requests. Since 1998, the school's oncology department has been producing an anti-cancer vaccine for [dogs diagnosed with melanoma](#).

After promising results from work done in collaboration with cancer specialists from Arizona, California, and Michigan, the school has hired a full-time technician to produce the existing vaccine. The vaccine being used now has undergone a few modifications designed to increase its anti-cancer activity.

"Not all dogs with melanoma respond to this treatment," cautions Dr. Ilene Kurzman, a researcher in the veterinary medical school's oncology section. "But those that do seem to do quite well."

Dr. Kurzman would like to continue working on the vaccine in the hope that this innovative anti-cancer strategy will translate into similar novel treatments in people with cancer.

Melanoma, the equivalent of one form of skin cancer in humans, is very aggressive in dogs. It usually manifests in or around the mouth or toes. Despite conventional treatment, 75 percent of dogs with oral melanoma will die within one year.

But about 40 percent of dogs with a melanoma tumor present responded to a vaccine created from actual melanoma tumor cells. In about 12.5 percent of the treated dogs, the tumor completely disappeared.

According to Dr. Kurzman, the vaccine is created from dog melanoma cells that are grown in the laboratory. The cells are treated so they can no longer divide and cause a tumor. DNA is then inserted into these cells, which directs the cells to secrete an immune stimulant. This combination of cells and immune stimulant, when administered as an injection into the patient's skin, has been shown to stimulate the immune system to specifically fight against the melanoma cells.

[To read the full article from author Tania Banak, click here.](#)

Visit the [Morris Animal Foundation \(MAF\)](#), which launched the CCC's effort to cure canine cancer.