Steroid Epidural: A Non-Surgical Option for Herniated Disk

Epidural steroid injections are common procedures in human medicine, but their use in veterinary medicine also offers opportunities for companion animals to avoid unnecessary surgery and for owners to see improved outcomes.

One case in point involves Rex, a now 12-year-old Border Collie that was suffering from lower back pain, lameness and muscle atrophy. At the time, owner Dr. Linda Gray noticed that Rex, a family member and champion sheep-herding dog, was limping on one of his hind legs.

“He was slowing down and not able to work around the sheep,” she said. 

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From the Director

I hope your summer is going well. Here at the Veterinary Medical Center (VMC), we’ve been working hard on several fronts to improve service to meet your clients’ needs.

In this issue of Update for Veterinarians, we thank the members of our large and small animal practitioner boards for their time and talent in evaluating the VMC customer experience. These individuals’ contributions help significantly to ensure that the VMC is providing the best service to you as referring veterinarians and your clients.

We’re also excited to share that the VMC Enhancement & Expansion project continues to make progress. Phase Two renovations include new companion animal and farm animal reception and lobby areas, new companion animal exam rooms, a new emergency room and radiology reading area. These new developments are scheduled to be complete at the end of October. See page 3 for photos of the construction progress.

Finally, you’ll read how one VMC specialist, Dr. Sarah Moore, associate professor, neurology and neurosurgery, is improving care for small animals with a non-surgical alternative. This is just one of the many techniques our specialists are using to advance and improve care in veterinary medicine.

As always, I welcome your comments and questions.
Thanks to Our Practitioner Boards

We appreciate the members of our practitioner boards who contribute their time and talents to the VMC’s ongoing evaluation of all aspects of the customer experience. Their frank assessments help us provide the best service to referring veterinarians and your clients.

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Dr. Gray, associate professor in the Department of Internal Medicine at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, knew something serious was happening. “Rex was starting to favor his right rear leg and started to shake it,” she said. “It made me think about sciatica, as though [he felt like] his leg was burning.” She took him to her local veterinarian for x-rays. The referring DVM recommended an MRI to determine if Rex’s condition had anything to do with a disk.

After an MRI at The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center (VMC), Dr. Sarah Moore, associate professor, neurology and neurosurgery in the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, diagnosed Rex with a chronic lumbosacral disk herniation, a common ailment among canine athletes. She spoke with Dr. Gray about treatment options, including surgery for disk herniation. “We also talked about administering an epidural injection of a long-acting steroid, a procedure done regularly in people with lower back pain,” Dr. Moore said. The treatment is much less invasive than surgery with a quicker recovery time.

Rex received his first injection in 2013 and did not need another shot until almost a year later. Following a period of determining the right frequency for the injections, Dr. Moore now gives Rex a steroid epidural injection approximately every six months. The treatment allows him to keep active. “After the initial injection he was walking better, was able to keep active, and was even winning competitions,” she said. “It’s been about two years now and Rex has done great with the treatment.”

He has also been active on the golf course that Dr. Gray’s husband operates. “Rex is the official herder that keeps the Canadian geese away,” Dr. Gray said.

Dr. Moore notes that steroid epidural treatment is important for referring veterinarians to consider when talking with their clients about treating lower back issues. “We don’t always have to think about surgery,” she said.
Welcome New Faculty

Eric Travis Hostnik, DVM, MS
Assistant Professor - Radiology

Dr. Eric Travis Hostnik, a 2012 graduate of the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, joins the Diagnostic Imaging and Radiation Oncology Service after completing his residency in diagnostic imaging/radiology at Ohio State and his graduate degree in Veterinary Clinical Sciences in July, 2016. His research interests include computed tomography for zoological medicine, as well as computed tomographic cardiac angiography and airway resistance in English Bulldogs.

Amy E. Schkeeper, DVM, MS
Assistant Professor - Diagnostic Imaging

Dr. Amy E. Schkeeper, a 2011 graduate of the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine, joins the Diagnostic Imaging Service after completing her residency in diagnostic imaging at Auburn University. Prior to her residency, Dr. Schkeeper completed a small animal rotating internship at the Pet Emergency and Specialty Center of San Diego, as well as a diagnostic imaging internship at the Veterinary Imaging Center of San Diego. Dr. Schkeeper’s research interests include ultrasound of the bovine penile tract, MRI of oligodendrogliomas and 3D printing.

Welcome New Staff

Lora Montgomery
Assistant Director-Client Services

Lora brings to the Veterinary Medical Center 16 years of experience in customer-oriented administration in acute and ambulatory settings. She has overseen consumer experience improvement efforts at all OhioHealth facilities, including its hospitals, medical practices, home health services and outpatient care sites. She received her Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Management in 2012 from Franklin University and was the 2012 recipient of the Franklin University Leadership Award. In her new role, she will oversee client services and medical records administration for the VMC.

Clinical Trials

We always have a need for participants in veterinary clinical trials. If you have a patient that might be eligible, please contact the Ohio State Veterinary Clinical Trials Office at cvm-clinicaltrials@osu.edu or 614-292-4559. For a list of current trials, please visit: vet.osu.edu/vmc/clinical-trials.

Transitions and Departures

Dr. Chen Gilor, small animal internal medicine, has left the VMC to join the faculty at the University of California-Davis. Dr. Tyler Jordan, small animal emergency, VMC–Dublin, has left to do a Dermatology residency at UC Davis. Dr. Anusha Balakrishnan, small animal emergency and critical care, left the VMC to serve as a criticalist at Cornell University Veterinary Specialists in Stamford, CT.

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