Improving diagnosis and treatment of spontaneous canine neuropathic pain

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Neuropathic pain (NeP) is pain resulting from damage or disease, which affects the sensory part of the nervous system. Neuropathic pain is usually chronic, affecting daily activity and quality of life. It is more severe than other pain types and resistant to conventional analgesics.

Cavalier King Charles Spaniels (CKCS) suffer from Chiari-like malformation and Syringomyelia (CM/SM). This disease causes NeP and is thought to be poorly assessed in these dogs. Since current treatment available is rather inefficient more efficacious drug therapy is needed. New treatment options need to be evaluated for responsiveness.

The Royal Veterinary College Multidisciplinary Team (Neurology, Welfare and Pain Management) is conducting a study on CM/SM in CKCS. With this study, we are aiming to find out clinical signs and behaviour that best predict presence or severity of neuropathic pain. The use of threshold (thermal and pressure) sensory testing has been found to improve clinical assessment of human neuropathic pain. In this study, we propose to identify if the same is true for dogs. This project will have impact on the reliability of the clinical assessment for a more accurate and earlier recognition and treatment of NeP in the individual dog, and therefore improving patients’ and owners’ welfare.

We are recruiting healthy CKCS, dogs affected by CM/SM and their owners to participate in the development of an owner questionnaire and the validation of a sensory testing protocol to be used to evaluate severity of NeP and response to treatment. This is a non-invasive and interactive study for both pets and their owners.

The RVC Ethics Review Panel and appropriate government regulatory bodies have approved this study. It will be carried out appropriately to ensure the welfare of your pet while on the study.

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Please do pass the details of the study onto friends, family and colleagues who are local, and may be interested in participating!