

# What's New On The Health Front

By Kay McGuire, DVM, MS

The Westie Foundation of America (WFA) was honored to be recognized by the AKC Canine Health Foundation's "Distinguished Research Partnership Award". This award was presented to WFA President Bebe Pinter and me at the AKC CHF *K9 and Cocktails Gala* held in conjunction with the AKC National Dog Show in Orlando, Florida on December 14, 2017. Our research interests remain focused on those conditions that most often affect our breed.

We are proud of our book, *The Westie Health Book*; available for purchase through our website, [www.westiefoundation.org](http://www.westiefoundation.org). This soft bound publication provides up to date information on major issues affecting Westie Health. It is the perfect health reference book for Westie owners, puppy buyers, and veterinarians.

On the main front, the WFA is negotiating the terms of a Biobank with a major university. We will be seeking blood samples in conjunction with a 4 generation pedigree (if available) on any and all Westies. Owners will be asked to submit a short health questionnaire with each of their samples. The WFA feels that the DNA extracted from these samples will be the forefront of our future research efforts. There will be complete anonymity with regard to the samples and they will be available to researchers associated with the banking university as well as those researchers the WFA approves.

Our Grant funding cycle is underway and we are again putting the majority of this year's research dollars towards Atopic Dermatitis. We are all aware that Atopy affects as many as 23% of our breed. The Health Committee has recommended that we support a grant with Cornell University and Dr. Elia Wojno, who will be collecting samples from normal and Atopic Westies

and running full sequence genomes. After the first phase of her research she will be doing a prospective longitudinal study following 3 families of dogs over 3 years looking for a change in their immunologic profile. These findings could go a long way towards early prediction of affected dogs as well as allowing for development of better therapies.

Another research target this year is several studies concerning canine lymphoma. Cancer is not only on the rise in humans, but also in our Westies. We are aware that this breed has a predilection for Transitional Cell Carcinoma (TCC) or Urethral Carcinoma (UC) but also lymphosarcoma and hemangiosarcoma. AKC offers the CADET<sup>SM</sup> BRAF early detection test for early and routine screening of TCC. Dr. Matthew Breen developed this test and is working in conjunction with the National Institute of Health to provide early detection methods of other cancer types.



The WFA will host a seminar in conjunction with our National Specialty week in Exton, PA on Thursday, October 4, 2018. The seminar will feature Dr. Carol Margolis, lecturer in Canine Pediatrics, Medical Genetics and Immunology from the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. We were pleased with our attendance at last year's seminar presented by theriogenologist Dr. Margret Casal. We feel that Dr.

Margolis's talk will be just as informative to all Westie owners and breeders.

Our future this year is exciting, and as always; if you have a question regarding any health topic, I will be happy to help you by providing information. I can be reached at [kmcsdash@aol.com](mailto:kmcsdash@aol.com).