

On The Health Front

By Kay McGuire, DVM, MS

Again our Newsletter is running a little behind, this time due to COVID-19. I don't believe any of us would have predicted a Spring like this as our country and world has been sat on its ear. Many of us are considered essential so luckily we have been able to continue working, although with patterns we would never have thought. Those that have been relegated to their homes for the last 6 weeks know that our Westies have been a huge part of our existence. God bless them!

We are excited and proud of how our Health Committee has chosen projects that show we are on the forefront in our Research efforts:

The Westie Foundation of America's (WFA) research dollars have been important to the COVID-19 crisis. Last fall the WFA learned of research being conducted at Yale University by Dr. Naftali Kaminski. Dr. Kaminski was using Sobiterome, a thyroid mimetic hormone on bleomycin-induced pulmonary fibrosis in mice. The findings on this model were that the fibrosis did not worsen and even improved with the use of Sobiterome. The WFA introduced Dr. Kaminski to Dr. Elizabeth Rozanski at Tufts University to collaborate and start a study of Sobiterome on Westies with pulmonary fibrosis. The patrons

of the Facebook page "Westie Lung Disease" were instrumental in helping raise funds for the WFA to support this work. This study is currently underway, delayed of course by universities closing due to the pandemic.

From *Yale News taken from the Canine Health Information website*: "Sobeterome



is at the top of a list of over 20 Yale compounds and devices in various stages of development that could be useful in treating the devastating impacts of COVID-19 and are being explored both by the Advanced Therapies Group and experts at the Yale Office of Cooperative Research (OCR), which manages and promotes university discoveries for commercial development. All involved are racing against the clock to get new treatments to patients in need."

The WFA has also agreed to support several Grants through the Canine Health Foundation for 2020. The topics include atopic dermatitis, treatment modalities on methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus intermedius* and lymphosarcoma.

We are also in the process of finalizing a grant through the University of Edinburg in Scotland for Dr. Brendon Corcoran on a pulmonary fibrosis project. Again, all of this is at a standstill until schools and Universities return to session.

As Atopy continues to be the number one health concern for our dogs, we also have a grant proposal we are working to finalize with the University of Florida and Dr. Dominic Santoro. He is interested in the use of a plant extract as a safer and more cost effective treatment to atopic dermatitis.

As the pandemic continues, there are questions concerning our pets and COVID-19. Obviously there is much to learn about this virus but evidence that this virus can cause a reverse zoonosis and

spread the virus from the dog or cat to a human has not been founded. It seems that cats might be more susceptible and will show a mild respiratory response. So far, the few dogs that have tested positive for COVID-19 are not showing clinical signs.

Please, everyone stay safe and take precautions. This virus will be around a long while and life as we knew it a few months ago will be a long time returning.