

Australian National Kennel Council

Media Release

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Dogs ‘Smell Out’ Cancer

Dogs are normally loyal companions and much-loved family members but, according to research, they may have the ability to detect certain types of cancer by smell. Specially trained dogs can detect certain proteins occurring in cancer patients’ breath. The **Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC)** believes that this research further exemplifies the value of properly trained dogs in society both as companions and as working dogs and looks forward to future research being undertaken in this area.

“Breast and lung cancer have been confirmed in people who are already diagnosed by conventional testing methods by trained dogs using their highly sensitive nose in research studies. Our canine companions are still not officially used in clinical detection but with further positive research this would be a likelihood.”, says veterinarian and **ANKC** spokesman **Dr Peter Higgins**.

Studies undertaken in the United Kingdom, the USA, and Canada took a large group of people, half with a certain type of cancer, and half without to conduct the tests. Dogs were trained to signal by sitting or lying down when they smell a person’s breath who they suspect has cancer. Success rates were extremely high, with up to 97 percent of cases being successfully reconfirmed by the dogs.

“Dogs not only have a hardworking and loyal temperament, but an incredibly strong sense of smell. Many breeds, such as Beagles, are able to be of great assistance to the police, customs officials at airports, and farmers, among others. It’s astonishing to know that their assistance in the world of science could potentially help to save the lives of cancer patients.”, states **Dr Higgins**.

Anecdotal evidence of dogs having this ability has been rumoured by dog owners for decades. In the past, people have sought medical advice because their pet dog has taken an unusual interest in a particular mole on their skin, or provided signs to compel owners to visit the doctor to check. Current conventional screening tests vary between types of cancers and include biopsies, physical examinations, and blood tests.

“This represents a less invasive form of detection, and a quick and efficient way of helping to confirm early detection of cancer. Conventional tests aren’t always 100 per cent accurate, so this provides another means of confirming test results to allow greater scope for early intervention.”, believes **Dr Higgins**.

“I hope to see this research develop in the future, and if this success continues, look to integrate it with current cancer testing methods. What is even more exciting is the possibility that dogs could detect some cancers that conventional methods cannot detect.”, exclaims **Dr Higgins**.

*****ENDS*****

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