

Biopsy of a dog's tumor helps lead to vaccine *How animal research is saving animal lives!*

"Jake" Ludwikow's story could not be a better example of the importance of animal research for improving human and animal health. A canine survivor of cancer, Jake exemplifies the strong bond between man and dog and highlights the benefits of animal-based research.

Jake was diagnosed with malignant melanoma and had a toe removed in October 2000. After his surgery, he was referred to Philip Bergman, DVM, MS, PhD, head of the Donaldson-Atwood Cancer Clinic and the Flaherty Comparative Oncology Laboratory at the Animal Medical Center in New York City, for evaluation of his suitability for inclusion in a clinical trial for the development of an experimental vaccine for reoccurring recurring melanoma.



The study used xenogeneic DNA (i.e., DNA from another species, in this case human) to stimulate dogs' immune systems into fighting the cancer. Over 100 dogs have received various DNA vaccines for their melanoma as a result of the study. The initial results were so promising that the Animal Medical Center plans to start the process of obtaining a license for commercial use of the DNA vaccine by veterinarians. Even more significant, clinical trials are being run at several independent centers and the vaccines are available for certain human melanoma patients.

Jake has survived over four years since his diagnosis. Typically, a dog with his type of cancer lives 60-90 days with traditional treatments. For his contribution to medical progress, Jake received the first annual Pet of the Year award from the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) in February 2005. At the award ceremony, Dr. Bergman explained that Jake's participation in his study "[could] not be overestimated." He continued: "Our abilities to help pets and their owners while also helping humans afflicted with the scourge of cancer is one of the best win-win situations I can think of."

Jake's veterinarian, Dr. Arnold Goldman, who nominated Jake for the award, remarked that Jake's contribution "exemplifies the affection, loyalty, security and value embodied in the human-companion animal bond."

Jake and his owner, Kristen Ludwikow (pictured above), reside in Canton, Connecticut.

★ **How has your pet been helped by advances in medicine? Contact us to share the story of how you or a loved one conquered a health challenge thanks to biomedical research. We'll put it on our website to inspire others!** ★