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Oncology Tips: Canine Mast Cell Tumors (MCTR)

THE NEWEST TIPS AND TIDBITS FROM ONCOLOGIST DR. MANTOVANI!

Mast cell tumors in dogs have a wide range of biological behavior, from tumors that are low grade and slow growing and are cured with surgery, to locally aggressive and highly metastatic cancers.

Mast cells exfoliate well with fine needle aspirate, and cytology is diagnostic in most cases. MCTs can present as coetaneous, dermal or subcutaneous masses, and sometimes enlarged metastatic lymph nodes are initially noted by the owners.

Identifying MCTs that require aggressive treatment can be challenging, for both general practitioners and oncologists! Certain factors are associated with an aggressive behavior of MCTs. Here is a list of the most important ones:



- Fast growing mass, associated peri-tumor redness, swelling and/or bruising
- Recurrent tumor
- Lymph node metastasis: it is important to palpate and consider fine needle aspirate and cytology of the draining lymph node, as it is commonly the first site of MCT metastasis
- Presence of systemic signs, such as anorexia, vomiting and melena
- High histological grade
- High mitotic index (> 5 in 10 high power field)
- Location: oral/muzzle, subungual, mucous membrane sites (prepuclial, vulvar, scrotal)

Non-resectable or metastatic MCTs can be treated medically. There is a wide range of medications available for treatment of the primary tumor and secondary effects of mast cell degranulation, such as redness, swelling, bruising.

- Diphenhydramine and famotidine can improve local swelling and redness, and can be prescribed prior to referring patients with MCT to an oncologist or surgeon without interfering with the treatment plan.
- Prednisone is very effective in treating MCT related edema and redness, and can provide modest local control. This can interfere with diagnostic and treatment plan prior to referral.
- Chemotherapy and targeted therapy options (such as Palladia) can provide tumor control in a gross and/or metastatic MCT setting for up to several months, and sometimes longer.

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