Owner Information Sheet

Study comparing two surgical closure methods in dogs with Congenital Portosystemic Shunts

Background information
In dogs (and humans) blood normally passes from the gut via the ‘portal vein’ to the liver, before passing to the rest of the body. This allows the liver to receive important nutrients directly from the gut and allows the liver to clean the blood of any toxins, which are derived from food and bacteria in the gut. ‘Congenital portosystemic shunts’ are abnormal blood vessels, which some dogs are born with. They allow blood to pass directly from the gut to the heart. This leads to failure of normal liver growth and the accumulation of gut toxins in the blood, which can result in large variety of clinical signs, including for example, seizures, depression, abnormal behaviour, stunted growth, anorexia, vomiting, diarrhoea, excessive drinking, and bladder stones.

Surgical closure of congenital portosystemic shunts aims to redirect blood from the gut into the liver. At the RVC we treat many dogs with congenital portosystemic shunts with surgery. Surgery is successful in over 85% of dogs, allowing them to lead normal lives. Currently, at least half of all dogs that we treat cannot tolerate full shunt closure at surgery. This means that many dogs need to come back for a second surgery to fully close down the shunt.

Surgical closure of the shunt at the RVC has traditionally been performed using surgical thread (suture material). Various other veterinary institutions use different materials to close down the shunt and achieve similar results to ours. Currently no-one knows which the best method to use is.

At the RVC, we are continually endeavouring to improve the success of surgery for the treatment of dogs with congenital portosystemic shunts. We are currently conducting a study to compare surgical closure of the shunt with surgical thread (suture material) to another commonly used material (cellophane band). We hope that this study will allow us to decide whether one technique is better than another.

Type of material used to perform surgical shunt closure
The surgical closure of your dog’s shunt will be performed with either suture material or cellophane band (allocated randomly to produce an unbiased project). Both techniques are commonly performed in the UK.

Monitoring improvement in liver function
Blood samples are routinely collected from dogs with portosystemic shunts before, during and after surgery, to monitor the progress of each dog. This study will use blood taken for routine blood samples to measure chemicals that are likely to be involved in the liver’s response to surgery and help us to monitor the recovery of dogs after surgery.
Recruitment of your dog to this study
Your dog has been diagnosed with a congenital portosystemic shunt or he/she has test results which are strongly suggestive of a congenital portosystemic shunt. If we confirm that an extrahepatic shunt is present and that this shunt cannot tolerate full closure at surgery then we would like to include him/her in our study.

The treatment of dogs included in this study will be no different from the treatment of other dogs with congenital portosystemic shunts at the RVC, apart from using one of two choices of material for shunt closure.

Inclusion of dogs in this study is entirely voluntary and if your dog is not included in this study, it will not in any way affect the care your dog receives at the RVC.

If you are happy for your dog to be included in this study, please sign the attached consent form.

Further information can be obtained from Ms Vicky Lipscomb, who can be contacted via the small animal hospital reception on 01707666366
I give permission for my dog to participate in the ‘Study comparing two surgical closure methods in dogs with Congenital Portosystemic Shunts’ study.

I have been given the opportunity to read and understand the Client Information Sheet regarding this study.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and satisfactory answers have been given to me.

I understand that this permission is entirely voluntary and may be withdrawn by me at any time.

I understand that refusal to participate in this study will not affect my pet’s care in any way.

Signature of owner

Name (block capitals)

Date

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