



**GULF COAST  
VETERINARY  
SPECIALISTS**

**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- **TCC** comprises 85% of malignant bladder tumors in dogs and 30% in cats
- Conventional therapy may involve surgery, chemotherapy or palliative therapy with non-steroidal medications
- **UGELAB** may offer patients an alternative therapy to rapidly alleviate clinical signs and improve quality of life in veterinary patients

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# TGCVS Times

ADVANCING COMPASSIONATE VETERINARY CARE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

MAY 2010

## Transitional Cell Carcinoma

Ultrasound image showing a large urinary bladder mass later confirmed to be TCC.

The latter two images show a urethral mass before UGELAB and after UGELAB. Note the increased urethral diameter post UGELAB resulting in improved ability to urinate.



**Transitional cell carcinoma is the leading diagnosis when faced with a bladder cancer in pets. Treatment options are limited due to the tumor location. Often these patients are euthanized due to a poor quality of life from their inability to urinate. Recent advances combining the use of ultrasound, laser therapy and radiation therapy are now offering our clients more options in the management of transitional cell carcinoma and improving quality of life in affected patients.**

### Clinical Signs and Diagnosis of Transitional Cell Carcinoma (TCC)

Transitional cell carcinoma (TCC) is a malignant cancer originating from the lining of the urinary tract system and can be found throughout the urinary bladder, urethra and distal urinary tract. Clinical signs may include straining to urinate, frequent urination or even blood in the urine. Often these patients present with a history of having been treated for a urinary tract infection with little response to antibiotic therapy.

Once a TCC is suspected, testing must be done to confirm the diagnosis. Your veterinarian may recommend a complete blood count, chemistry profile, urinalysis and urine cytology. X-rays of the chest and an abdominal ultrasound are also obtained to help stage the disease. An aspirate of the mass or traumatic catheterization can be used to obtain cells for definitive diagnosis. In some cases a biopsy of the mass may be necessary for a definitive diagnosis.

### Conventional Treatment Options for TCC

If the tumor is isolated at the very tip of the urinary bladder, surgical options may be considered. Because this tumor generally involves the trigone (base of the bladder), this is generally not an operable cancer so therapies revolve around chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy. The goal with treatment is to minimize inflammation, improve clinical signs, and provide good quality of life for as long as possible though making sure these pets can urinate.

Chemotherapy administered by an Oncologist (cancer specialist) is considered the gold standard in management of bladder tumors. Piroxicam (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory) can also be used to minimize inflammation within the tumor as well as for its possible anti-tumor properties. Average survival time with piroxicam alone is 180 days. The addition of chemotherapy improves the average survival time to approximately 1 year.

**What else can be done for TCC?**

When conventional surgery cannot remove a bladder tumor there are other alternatives. Ultrasound Guided Endoscopic Laser Ablation (UGELAB) involves a small fiber optic camera being passed into the lower urinary tract allowing us to identify all normal and abnormal tissue. Using color flow technology, a radiologist utilizes ultrasound to guide the person with the cystoscope in identifying any large vessels supplying the tumor. A laser is then used through the cystoscope to remove as much of the tumor as safely possible and destroy vessels, causing additional tumor cell death. Although UGELAB is not curative, it can provide a rapid and safe method to quickly reduce the amount of tumor present providing rapid relief of urinary symptoms.

Following the UGELAB, radiation therapy can be used to minimize and slow the rate of local recurrence. Hypofractionated Stereotactic Radiotherapy (H-SRT) is an experimental protocol used as a palliative (not curative) treatment option. It involves a pre-treatment planning CT scan followed by 3 high-dose radiation treatments delivered within 1 week with regular follow-up visits scheduled afterwards.

**Which pets are considered candidates for UGELAB?**

UGELAB is currently only performed in dogs over 10lb. UGELAB can be done at any time after diagnosis—as a first line treatment option, in combination with chemotherapy or as a rescue therapy. UGELAB can be repeated more than once should clinical signs occur again.

**What can I expect if my pet is selected for UGELAB?**

The cost will vary somewhat depending on the particular aspects of the pet's case. After one of our doctors has evaluated your pet, our staff will be happy to provide an estimate to you which will reflect your pet's specific needs. Typically patients admitted for UGELAB can expect to be in the hospital for 1-2 days.

**How do I know if UGELAB is right for my pet?**

If you have questions about transitional cell carcinoma or treatment options concerning this condition—please don't hesitate to speak to your veterinarian. GCVS is a referral only practice and we look forward to working with your veterinarian as a team to help your pet in any way possible.

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