

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

PRICE: 75 CENTS

MONDAY, MAY 28, 2012

OCREGISTER.COM

Lasers can help treat pain in cats

Treating pain in cats is challenging for several reasons. Most cats are not very demonstrative of their pain, and it often takes knowing about postures, behaviors



ELAINE WEXLER-MITCHELL FOR THE REGISTER

and expressions to determine that a cat is uncomfortable. Cats are also very sensitive to a variety of medications, so finding effective and safe treatments for

pain and inflammation and finding ones that owners can easily administer also can be difficult. I am always searching for new ways to deal with these problems.

While attending North American Veterinary Conference, the largest veterinary conference in the country, I visited several booths and learned about laser therapy. I knew about cutting lasers that are used in surgery, but I didn't know about the cold, therapeutic lasers now used to treat pain and inflammation. The newest lasers, called Class 4, use specific light wavelengths to affect cell metabolism through a process called photomodulation.

I learned that laser light is able to reduce pain, reduce inflammation and accelerate healing. There is a lot of physics and biochemistry that explains how this works, but the basic explanation is that the laser light activates many beneficial metabolisms in cells

through chemicals called chromophores, which absorb the electromagnetic energy.

During the laser demonstrations at the conference, I had treatment on my own finger with tendinitis and definitely felt some pain relief. Many chiropractors, sports medicine doctors, and even professional sports team trainers use laser therapy to treat human pain and inflammation. When used properly, the laser, which does not damage tissues, has enormous potential benefits. The laser also has anti-microbial effects

and treat infections.

Laser therapy may involve single or multiple treatments and this is determined by the severity of the condition and the length of time that the problem has existed. The treatments typically take 3 to 6 minutes in cats. Lasers can be used on a wide variety of conditions including wounds, fractures, abscesses, anal gland inflammation, ear infections, soft tissue injuries, cystitis, stomatitis, arthritis, spinal pain and numerous skin conditions including chronic acne. Because they improve healing, lasers are effective after surgeries and dental procedures.

I bought a K-Laser and have been using it in my practice since the end of February. I've been extremely happy with the results I've seen. It doesn't have miraculous effects in every patient, but I have been able to treat some conditions for which I had few

previous options. The laser treatments work similarly to acupuncture when used with arthritis, joint and spinal problems.

Lasers cannot be used on cancerous tissues and they shouldn't be used on pregnant animals. These two conditions are really the only exclusions for therapy. During a laser treatment, animals feel a warming sensation and typically are very relaxed.

Arthritis and back pain are two conditions on which I am most excited to use the laser. The laser cannot cure these problems, but it can improve the pet's mobility and comfort. These chronic conditions need 6 to 8 treatments initially and then some booster treatments every 2 to 3 months. The laser can be used alone or in combination with other pain-relieving and anti-inflammatory medications to keep animals moving better. I have gotten great client feedback on the cats with these conditions that I have treated so far. My own cat, Keiki, is getting treatments for her arthritic knees.

Lasers are safe and effective for a wide range of conditions and there are thousands of peer-reviewed articles and case studies (mostly in human literature) supporting usage. Laser therapy can accelerate tissue repair and cell growth, trigger faster wound healing, reduce fibrous tissue formation, reduce inflammation, provide analgesia, improve vascular activity and improve nerve function.

If a veterinarian suggests laser therapy, definitely consider it.

Dr. Wexler-Mitchell owns the Cat Care Clinic in Orange, catcare.com or 714-282-2287.