

## Medical & Radiation Oncology – What to Expect

Welcome to Veterinary Specialty Center. Thank you for trusting us with the care of your pet by making an appointment with our Oncology Department. Our doctors manage the treatment of cancer patients by providing evaluation and consultation, diagnostics and treatment planning with a wide variety of therapies. These therapies may include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, immunotherapy, and supportive or palliative care. Treatment plans are specific to each patient and range from definitive cancer treatment to those focusing on pain relief. This degree of individualized, comprehensive patient care is made possible utilizing the expertise of specialists, veterinary nurses and assistants working alongside our oncology doctors on a daily basis.

**Initial consultation** - Your oncologic experience will start with a consultation, which includes a physical examination of your pet and review of all information sent by your primary care veterinarian as well as discussion of the pertinent history. Our doctors will discuss your pet's condition, all treatment options, recommended diagnostics, and prognosis. During this time you will have an opportunity to ask questions about the benefits and risks of the treatment option(s), follow-up, and expected outcome.

**Patient care plan** - Once you consent to a course of treatment, you will be presented with a patient care plan that includes an approximate range for the cost of diagnostics and care. You are required to leave 100% of the low end of the plan when your pet is admitted to the hospital or at the time of service.

**The heart of patient care: Oncology veterinary technicians** - After your initial consultation with the doctor, much of your subsequent communication will be with our dedicated team of veterinary oncology technicians. They will educate and encourage you, while holding and comforting your pet during treatment. For owners of a pet with cancer, these technicians are there for you during your most difficult moments. They will also provide communication from the doctor about your pet's care.

### **The veterinary oncology nurse will assist you and your pet in:**

- ❖ Reviewing your pet's health history
- ❖ Assessing and monitoring his/her physical status
- ❖ Keeping track of and communicating laboratory, pathology and imaging studies
- ❖ Safely administering medications, fluids, and cancer treatments (e.g., chemotherapy) as directed by the doctors
- ❖ Helping you understand the disease, the treatment plan, and any possible side effects
- ❖ Translating complex medical terminology and answering questions
- ❖ Helping you plan for and managing your pet's symptoms throughout treatment

**Chemotherapy and Radiation Therapy** - Prior to every treatment, the doctor will examine your pet and review any lab work or diagnostics to determine if treatment is appropriate. Please share any concerns and/or questions with the veterinary nurse at the beginning of your appointment.

**Recheck appointments** - If you want to speak with a doctor directly, please let the team know when you schedule your recheck appointment since these appointment slots are limited. Please know that if the doctor has any concerns with the course of treatment, they will speak with you directly to discuss options.

**Assigning a primary communication contact** – Diagnostic testing and treatment plans can be complicated and time sensitive and talking to multiple family members can slow down this process. To help expedite communication, please designate one family member as a primary contact person to receive patient updates and authorize treatments and diagnostics for your pet. This individual should be in charge of communicating updates to the rest of your family. Please leave all necessary phone numbers for your designated family member with our client service representatives.

**Questions or concerns** - For any non-urgent questions, you will be asked to leave a message for the oncology team or you can email medical oncology directly at: [oncology@vetspecialty.com](mailto:oncology@vetspecialty.com); and radiation oncology directly at: [rt@vetspecialty.com](mailto:rt@vetspecialty.com). If you have any urgent medical concerns outside the Oncology Department's normal business hours, please call our Emergency and Critical Care Department 24 hours a day **(847.459.7535)**.

**Prescription refills** - To allow our staff to provide the in-depth care necessary for our hospitalized patients, we require 24 hours' notice for prescription refills. There is a \$25 fee for refills requested outside of the regular Oncology Department hours Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. Per FDA regulations, dispensed medications may not be returned to VSC (CPG sec. 460.300).

**Payment options** - Accepted payment options include: cash, check, and credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express). Financing options are available through CareCredit for qualifying individuals. If you are interested in applying for CareCredit, please let a member of our team know or apply online at [www.carecredit.com](http://www.carecredit.com).

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*Veterinary Specialty Center is guided by the belief that companion animals deserve state-of-the-art medical care in a kind and comforting environment. The courage of our patients, the loyalty of their human families, and the devotion of our referral veterinarians inspire our vision. It is sustained by the contributions of our compassionate, knowledgeable and dedicated staff and built upon a tradition of providing unsurpassed healthcare for animals.*

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