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Resource Guide: Save Your Cat's Life

Fri, 2012-04-20 10:44 — Robin Olson

*In this follow-up to my post, "Save Your Cat's Life with a Question" ⁽¹⁾, I wanted to share with you some resources you can use to help guide you in making proper choices for your cat's care. **Please note: there are certain situations where you do NOT have time to do research. Please use common sense to determine what is most appropriate. The information below is a partial list of what you can find on the internet. When in doubt, keep looking, the answers are out there.***

One of our friends wrote a comment yesterday about her cat who was mis-diagnosed with liver failure: "On day 7 I heard my cat screaming in my bedroom & ran in to see him in the cat box. He pooped out a poop that was rock solid about 8 or 9 inches long AND it contained a blue wal-mart bag. **MY CAT ATE A PLASTIC BAG! OMG!!!** I scooped it up into a plastic baggie & Monday morning I took it to the vet office & gave it to the vet & said - here is your liver failure!"

The vet did not do any bloodwork on my cat, even though his belly was rock hard & solid, **they never offered an xray or ultrasound. Had they done an xray or an ultrasound they would have seen the obstruction. I did not know enough to ask for it or even question the hard belly. The Vet did not offer an opinion on it after the physical exam so I assumed it was caused by his being jaundiced. My opinion, the vet never looked past the jaundice & just assumed cuz he was a big cat, he was in liver failure even though he had never had any issues like this ever before.** "

This is why you must exercise due diligence and do the research: ask questions, make phone calls, email friends and colleagues. This poor person thought her cat was going to die of liver failure at any moment, but the symptoms didn't add up. Now she knows better to ASK more questions and be a better *cat-vocate!*



©2010 Bobby Stanford. MacGruber getting checked out. (He was adopted with non-sibling kitten, Polly Picklepuss)

There are support groups online available for just about any disease or disorder you can think of where you can dig deeper and get even more information. Your Vet can't sit with you for hours and go over every detail. It's up to you to do the leg work so you can understand what your Vet believes is going on and so you can compare those findings with other cats who suffer from the same issues and/or test results. **MANY of these groups have a presence on Facebook, so look there, too.**



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. the DOOD waiting for Dr. Larry (he can't fit into that cat carrier he got from his Aunt Elke any more!)

SPECIALTY RESOURCES & SUPPORT GROUPS

(This is NOT a complete list, but it will get you started):

[FELINE LEUKEMIA](#) ^[2]

[Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, FIV+](#) ^[3]

[FELINE DIABETES](#) ^[4]

[FELINE LYMPHOMA](#) ^[5]

[FELINE CANCER](#) ^[6]

[FELINE CHRONIC RENAL FAILURE](#) ^[7] (also heart problems included)

[FURTHER KIDNEY DISEASE & RENAL FAILURE LINKS](#) ^[8]

[FELINE LIVER DISEASE](#) ^[9]

[FELINE HYPERTHYROID](#) ^[10]

[VACCINE ASSOCIATED SARCCOMA](#) ^[11] (VAS)

[FELINE HEART DISEASE](#) ^[12]

[FELINE ASTHMA](#) ^[13]

MORE LINKS FOR [FELINE ASTHMA](#) ^[14]

[FELINE IBD, Hepatic Lipidosis, Pancreatitis](#) ^[15]

GENERAL REFERENCE

The [MERCK Veterinary Manual](#) ^[16]

Cornell University [Feline Health Center](#) ^[17]

[Dr. Louis J. Camuti Memorial Consultation Service](#) ^[18] via Cornell University. This is a fee-based phone consultation service that can provide you with a second opinion. I've used the service and found it to be very helpful and the Vets on staff are very caring and compassionate.

[WebMD®](#) ^[19]

[WINN FELINE FOUNDATION](#) ^[20]-currently working on Anti-immune evasive therapy for FIP, as well as decontamination of textiles exposed to ringworm (*man, do I need that info!*).

[Doctors Foster & Smith Information Center](#). ^[21] This is not a shameless plug for a retail operation, but I include them because their reference area is very good. I've used it specifically to get information on how to read my cat's blood work. I found the information very easy to understand and well written. Just try not to buy something while you're doing research because you'll certainly be tempted.

RESEARCH

A key factor in getting your cat the care she needs is to make sure your Vet is on top of the latest information regarding your cat's issues. All major Universities have research programs, as well as many take on cats as clients just as a "regular" Vet would do. Spending some time looking up what the Universities are researching may lead you to being able to have your cat be part of a study or you may get valuable information that will make a difference in your cat's future.

Here's a short list of Universities with research programs. If you want to see a longer list, you can visit the [Ranking of the Top Vet Schools of 2011](#) ^[22]

UC Davis Veterinary Medicine [Research](#) ^[23] -they are currently researching FIP.

Tufts University, [Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine](#) ^[24]

[Penn Veterinary Medicine](#) ^[25] at the University of Pennsylvania (*they have been doing kidney transplants here for over 10 years*)

Colorado State University [College of Veterinary Medicine](#) ^[26]

North Carolina State University [College of Veterinary Medicine](#) ^[27]

University of Minnesota [College of Veterinary Medicine](#) ^[28]

University of Georgia, [College of Veterinary Medicine](#) ^[29]

NUTRITION INFORMATION

I will say this until I'm blue in the face-avoid MANY of your cat's health issues by feeding a species appropriate diet!

[Feline Nutrition Education Society](#) ^[30] (**MUST READ!** Great reference material and insightful articles on many different health issues that are effected by diet)

[Cat Info](#) ^[31] by Dr Lisa Pierson, DVM (*she was my inspiration for changing my cat's diet and FNES helped refine my understanding.*)



©2011 Bobby Stanford. Vet with Phil (who was later adopted & nicknamed, Poppy).

“ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE”

Pardon my use of the word “alternative,” because here in the USA we are so very “western-medicine-centric,” but I'm not sure what would describe these therapies better. There are certain medical issues that benefit greatly from these additional therapies and I encourage you to look into it. I've had great results with homeopathy and kittens with upper respiratory, as well as with reducing anxiety in my cats and I know a few people who swear that acupuncture helps ease their pet's discomfort with joint issues.

That said, as with anything else, do the research, understand the limitations of the type of medicine you're investigating. The thing that's really great about many of these therapies is that they work with the natural order of how the body works. They don't utilize antibiotics, do surgery and, in theory, make your cat feel worse. It doesn't treat all maladies and often times you still need to work with your “Western Vet” depending on the issue. **These types of Vets include: Homeopathic Veterinarians, Holistic Veterinarians, Acupuncturists, Vets who specialize in Traditional Chinese & Western Herbal Medicine & Chiropractors. I believe most of these Vets have a “traditional” Veterinary background before they specialize.**

Homeopathic Vets can be found via the [Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy](#) [32] or by looking up Homeopathic Vets in you area.

[American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association](#) [33] has a search form that includes the following modalities: Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Homeopathy, Chinese herbs and Western herbs.

Additional [LINKS](#) [34] for finding Holistic Vets

[Jackson Galaxy](#) [35] said something to me when we were at dinner a few weeks ago. He spoke passionately about the importance of sharing information, whether it be how to give SubQ fluids to a fractious cat or how to medicate a kitten. He has a great deal of respect for people who have been "in the trenches" for years. What they've learned about working with cats needs to be shared. To paraphrase what he meant; "It hurts everyone if there's only one person who really knows every single way to trap a feral cat. We have to share our knowledge. No one should be a *gate-keeper*."

So with that in mind, I hope this information helps you and your kitty have a much better, safer, happier and healthier life together.

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Comments

Fri, 2012-04-20 11:38 — [Lisa Richman \(not verified\)](#) [47]

Fantastic Resource List! [48]

Robin, thanks!!! I'll use - and share!

Fri, 2012-04-20 15:18 — [Sally \(not verified\)](#) [49]

My 2 cents [50]

Experience has told me that most vets are trained to do "ordinary" things -- spay/neuter, vaccines, bloodwork. But when your cat presents a set of complicated symptoms (especially allergies or FLUTD), it's up to the guardian to do the legwork. There are SO many ways to treat FLUTD or just peeing outta box -- it's not a matter of feeding a crappy Rx food, but rather looking at supplements that can help and/or eliminating stressors and/or behavior issues.

Cancer is a biggie. Diet and supplements are vital here, but few vets are aware of the options. They're not in the position where they can do a lot of research for a single patient.

In many cases, that's where alternative/holistic modalities are important, as well as the suggestions and support of the illness-specific groups you list above.

I have folders stuffed full of information acquired from the illnesses of my cats over the years...

We really have to be our cats' advocate, especially when the going gets rough.

Tue, 2012-05-01 15:45 — [JA macT \(not verified\)](#)

Homeopathy Limitations [51]

I just have to add here that pursuing natural remedies can be effective, but, **do not let your cat suffer or die for your ideology.**

I have known people to refuse to do any treatment but homeopathy and nutritional supplements when it was clear that their cats needed medical intervention. I heard things about "allowing nature to take its course" and other excuses while their cats got sicker, and in one case, died (of hyperthyroidism, which is so easy and cheap to treat conventionally.)

Be honest in your evaluation as to whether the homeopathy or other alternative medication is REALLY working - don't tell yourself it is when it isn't. Don't feel like, because you are going broke and stressing out feeding a raw food diet to your cat, that your cat "should" respond. You are the one wholly in charge, and you should try all the **avenues** of treatment available if your cat is ill (although not necessarily all treatments.)

Thanks, Robin, for this guide. I completely agree that we need to share our experiences, because, between all of us, surely we have seen it all!

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- [6] <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/feline-cancer/>
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- [11] http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/Feline_VAS_Support/
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- [13] <http://www.fritzthebrave.com/>
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- [17] <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/>
- [18] <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/camuti.cfm>
- [19] <http://pets.webmd.com/>
- [20] <http://www.winnfelinehealth.org/index.html>
- [21] http://www.drsofostersmith.com/pic/category_home.cfm?acatid=156&c=3261
- [22] <http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-health-schools/veterinarian-rankings>
- [23] <http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/CCAH/research/index.cfm>
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- [26] <http://www.cvmb.colostate.edu/cvmb/prse.htm>
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- [28] <http://www.cvm.umn.edu/animalowners/home.html>
- [29] <http://www.vet.uga.edu/owners/index.php>
- [30] <http://feline-nutrition.org/>
- [31] <http://www.catinfo.org/>
- [32] <http://www.theavh.org/>
- [33] <http://www.holisticvetlist.com/>
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