**Cushing’s Disease in Dogs**

Cushing’s disease is caused by the over-production of adrenal corticosteroids, or stress hormones. In 85% of dogs, it is the result of a benign tumor in the brain’s pituitary gland. A small percentage of dogs develop Cushing’s from a primary tumor in the adrenal glands.

Some canines act as if they have Cushing’s when they are on steroids for allergies or autoimmune diseases. Also, if a dog has too many endogenous stress hormones drifting through its circulation from anxiety of pain, it can often begin to display Cushing’s-like symptoms yet test negative on the diagnostics.

Symptoms include excessive panting, increased thirst or appetite, and increased urination. Stomach and other muscles often weaken and the pet will appear bloated. Many Cushing’s patients blow knee ligaments easier or develop musculoskeletal injuries due to this muscle weakness. They also tend to tire easily, although they seem to be in “overdrive.”

Standard treatment options include suppressing the adrenal function by drugs that act almost like chemotherapeutics. A newer drug on the market seems to be more promising as far as quality of life is concerned. Acupuncture, herbs, and food therapy are extremely useful for moderating the cortisol levels, helping the pet to relax more, be more mobile, have better musculoskeletal strength, pant less, have less pain, have better eating and drinking habits, and overall have a better quality of life.

This is a condition that will require life-long therapy. Diagnostics are involved and it can be extensive to get a biomedical diagnosis. However, with traditional Chinese veterinary medicine, the diagnosis is made by examining the animal. Symptomatic assessment as well as distinguished patterns are used to guide treatment, often with more satisfying results than those gained with standard medicine.