

ABCF MESSENGER

Official Newsletter of the American Boxer Charitable Foundation

Judy Voran, Editor -- September 2011



2011 ABCF President's Report

Welcome to the ABCF 2011 annual Trustees meeting.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank ABCF auction/dinner chair, Carol Herman, for her hard work in coordinating and organizing last year's and this year's benefit. Carol is counting on you again this year – please help her team in any way you can.

I would also like to thank Mr. Phillip Koenig for his expertise and his time and hard work in preparing what should be a most definitely delicious meal.

To the committee chairs, thank you for a job well done in 2010. Each and every one is a dedicated individual who has tirelessly given of his or her time and expertise to ensure that the foundation is successful in its endeavors. Bobbi Compton, Dr. Joyce Campbell, Virginia Zurflied, Sharon Fosseen, Sharon Steckler, Judy Voran, and Cal Gruver – the Foundation thanks you for your ongoing support.

The research community is still at work on a number of cutting edge studies. To date there are 12 active grants sponsored by the ABCF. These include stem cell therapy, two lymphoma studies, two specific osteosarcoma studies, and three genetics oriented studies on cancer in general. There are also two reproductive studies. One involves a sequencing of the “y” chromosome to determine the function of this poorly understood chromosome; the other is a validation of the genetics of cryptorchidism.

We are also funding a study on inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), specifically of the Boxer, and one on granulomatous colitis of the Boxer and its response to antibiotic therapy. Lastly, the ABCF is funding Dr. Joan Coates' study on additional genes responsible for degenerative myelopathy (DM).

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As of January 1, 2011, the ABCF's financial commitment for these active grants is \$176,700.00

As a foundation, we still remain the number one contributor to the AKC's canine health foundation, with a present donor advised fund of \$269,182.46.

As of March 31, 2011, the ABCF has contributed over \$588,000 to the CHF. With matching funds from the AKC/CHF, this equals approximately one million dollars. We have sponsored a grand total of 46 scientific studies. That is more than any breed club world wide! We should all be very proud of our accomplishments for such a worthy cause.

I have made contact with many researchers, and have actively pursued our commitment to research. The following are their reports on progress, and future work ahead:

Dr Joan Coates has found 16 breeds that are showing the "SOD1" mutation responsible for the disease known as DM (degenerative myelopathy). Dr. Coates has also made it very clear that there have been canines in other breeds that histologically show clinical signs of DM, yet are not positive for the gene. This has not been the case in the Boxer breed yet. Therefore, she very astutely is changing the wording on the DM test to read, "negative for SOD1, therefore not likely to show signs of DM. "

Dr. Coates is very interested in getting samples from very old dogs that have dm; also samples from dogs that are very young, but develop clinical signs of dm. This is to determine any genomic differences that would help to locate a modifier gene.

Dr. Coates is also working closely with the ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) society. She is applying for grants with the NIH, and wants us to know that the NIH is eager to support research that will lead to a greater understanding of ALS, but they are slow to fund projects. Therefore, she wants us to understand her reasons for continuing to apply to the ABCF for further grant money, since there are still DM studies that need to be done for the benefit of the Boxer breed. Lastly, Dr. Coates' work on a treatment for DM on a biomolecular level is moving forward. Imagine, a treatment for DM... wouldn't this be a remarkable accomplishment for our breed and mankind!?!?

Again we should be proud of what we have done, and are continuing to do, for this project.

I spoke with Dr. Tonomura at the Broad Institute – she has been on maternity leave, but is now back at work. Juvenile renal dysplasia (JRD) has been in limbo, because the Broad hasn't been able to collect a significant number of DNA samples. However, I recently learned that a new genetic array has been employed, and instead

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of 50 markers, its sensitivity has increased to 170 markers, allowing for more pinpoint accuracy. With JRD, this will amplify the accuracy of limited sample numbers. Results are pending.

Unfortunately, limited staffing has drastically slowed the progress of the JRD project. A human nephrology group is stepping in to help Dr Tonomura with her work on JRD.

I also spoke with Dr. Kerstin Lindblad-Toh of the Broad institute. Dr. Lindblad-Toh again elaborated on the new array and how much more accurate it is. Dr. Lindblad-Toh said that genetic studies are being repeated with the new array and that there will be updates forthcoming.

Dr. Lindblad-Toh was most excited about the cancer genomics studies coming forward with the Golden Retriever study. She is going to put a Boxer grant together on each of the common cancers in our breed, with an attempt to find markers for each, using the new illumina array. Dr Lindblad-Toh reminded me that we need 100 samples of affected and non-affected dogs as well. Sounds very exciting indeed!

I also spoke with Kate Meurs. Kate is moving to North Carolina Veterinary School, as this institution is bigger and has more research tools to work with. Also there will be a bigger Boxer case load to draw from.

As for the ARVC topic, Kate said that she stands by her scientific findings, and that the ARVC-1 gene she discovered is the major cause of ARVC. Kate is certain there may be other genes responsible, perhaps as many as 2 or 3, but with far less frequency. She also believes her test is about 75-80 percent specific. Kate said researchers may not identify the other spikes for some time, due to the low numbers and expense of the genetic scans.

Dr Meurs and the British cardiology/genetics researchers do not see eye to eye on the DNA tests she performed on British Boxers, and the resulting controversy over her findings have re-routed her work to other areas of canine cardiology for now. Kate is currently collaborating on a study with a cardiologist at Oregon State. The work pertains to the age of onset of cardiomyopathy. The study will soon be published. Perhaps after her current project has been completed, she may pick up her ARVC study again.

Kate said that an independent study was performed at Duke University with her DNA samples, and the so-called second spike turned out not to as significant as stated by the Broad institute. The Broad used far fewer samples.

At the March 13, 2011 AKC/CHF annual meeting, a new president was elected – Mr. Lee Arnold. Lee has been an active board member for the past 12 years, and vice president for the past 6 years. Erica Werne, grants director, is no longer with the

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CHF. Her duties have been assumed by the existing staff until a new grants director is employed. Dr. Terry Warren remains as CEO and legal council to the AKC/CHF. I will continue on as a director of the AKC/CHF, and member of the grants committee.

The AKC/CHF has a new partner in the Pfizer Pharmaceutical Company. Pfizer is donating \$500,000 annually to the canine health foundation. We are hopeful that their donation will increase to one million dollars in the near future.

Respectfully,

William C. Truesdale, DVM – President ABCF

For information on the new addresses for requesting cheek swabs and holter monitors from the North Carolina State University Cardiac Care Center of the North Carolina State University School of Veterinary Medicine click on the following link:

http://abcfoundation.org/ARVC_Testing_in_Boxers.html

Washington State University has reloaded the Webinar -- the online seminar presented by Dr. Meurs at Washington State University on October 19 of 2011. The web address is <http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/pets/classes.aspx>