

Meet the Cardiac Education Group

The Cardiac Education Group (CEG) is a group of board-certified veterinary cardiologists from both academia and private practice that offers independent recommendations for the evaluation and treatment of heart disease in veterinary patients. Formed in 2009, the non-profit CEG is committed to providing educational resources and information on the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease and heart failure in dogs and cats. In addition, the CEG strives to promote early detection with greater efficiency and confidence.

The members of the CEG meet regularly to discuss common cardiac concerns and misconceptions faced by veterinarians. The group's primary work products are educational tools, including an interactive Web site, a Canine Cardiac Diagnostic Scheme and other materials designed to help veterinarians more accurately diagnose and treat heart failure in pets.

Dr. Rebecca Stepien, DVM, MS, Diplomate ACVIM, Clinical Professor at the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, says the CEG is the only group of its kind devoted to helping veterinarians better diagnose and treat pet heart disease.

"The members of the Cardiac Education Group bring

a tremendous amount of specialized cardiology and practical experience concerning canine heart disease and failure. Approximately 30% of aged dogs are at risk for developing congestive heart failure, and one in six cats are at risk for heart disease, which makes this an important condition to address." ■

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CEG Launches New Online Resource

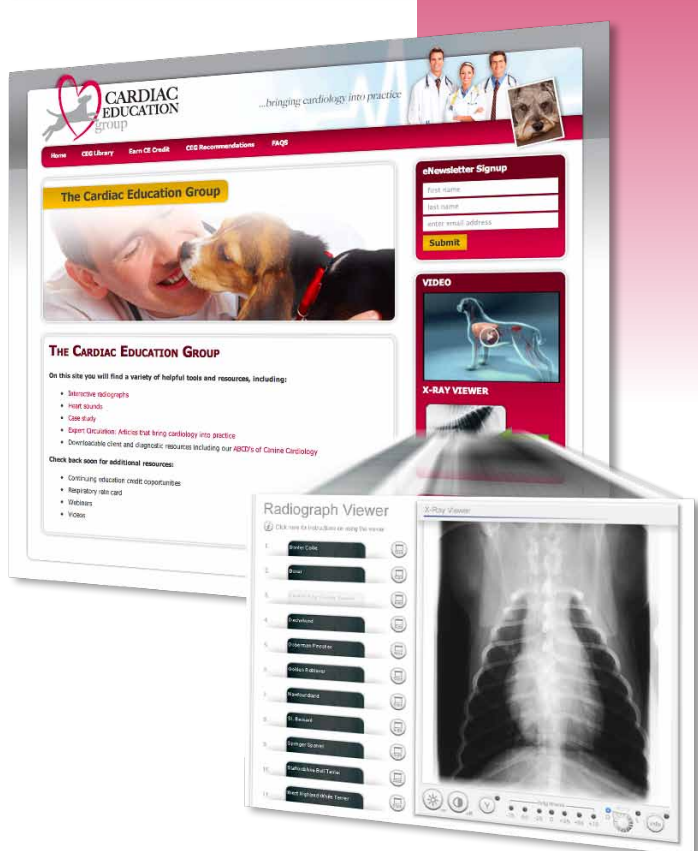
The CEG has created a Web site (www.cardiaceducationgroup.org) featuring extensive interactive learning tools that allow users to see, hear and review critical diagnostic cases and information. Audio and video resources, including heart sounds and an interactive radiographic viewer, provide hands-on learning resources on the Web site. The site also provides veterinarians the opportunity to earn RACE-approved CE coursework credit by completing online cardiac cases.

John Bonagura, DVM, Diplomate ACVIM, Professor of Veterinary Clinical Sciences at The Ohio State University, says the CEG Web site will literally bring "cardiology into practice" by providing educational materials and other tools that help veterinarians more efficiently and accurately diagnosis and treat CHF in dogs and cats.

"Because so many aged pets and certain breeds of dogs and cats are at an increased risk for developing congestive heart failure, this an important condition for practitioners to effectively address," Bonagura explains. "We look forward to creating a medical resource that can provide best practices in meeting the health needs of dogs and cats with heart failure."

The Web site was launched in January of 2011, with phased updates to be implemented throughout the year.

The Web site can be found by visiting www.cardiaceducationgroup.org. ■



Cardiac Corner

- **Myxomatous Mytral Valve Disease (MMVD) affects 10% of dogs between 5 and 8 years of age. The risk for disease increases as dogs age.**
- **Cats of any age can be susceptible to heart disease.**
- **Some breeds are more likely to develop heart disease. For a complete list of affected breeds, visit www.yourdogsheart.com or www.yourcatsheart.com**
- **Currently there is no cure for dogs and cats affected by Congestive Heart Failure (CHF). However, early detection and diagnosis can help pets live a happier, healthier life.**
- **Visit www.cardiaceducationgroup.org today to subscribe to upcoming issues of *The Beat* and register to win one of three iPads.**
- **Visit www.yourdogsheart.com and www.yourcatsheart.com for references.**

Common Misconceptions about Congestive Heart Failure Series

Myth #1

If the veterinarian suspects heart failure, a confirmation from a cardiologist is needed before beginning therapy.

If you think the dog has left-sided heart failure, but are not completely confident in the diagnosis, administering furosemide and an angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor is a reasonable approach until the diagnosis can be confirmed. This provides initial stabilization and may be life-saving even if you are referring the patient to a cardiologist for confirmation. If you are confident in your diagnosis of left-sided congestive heart failure, "triple therapy" with furosemide, an angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor and pimobendan is indicated for therapy of congestive heart failure due to valvular disease or dilated cardiomyopathy. Check back in our next issue of *The Beat* to learn more about other common misconceptions and CHF. ■

The Mobile Heart Health Tour

The Mobile Heart Health Tour began in 2009 to educate pet owners about the prevalence of heart disease in dogs by bringing free heart health screenings to pet owners across the nation.

Canine cardiologists on the Mobile Heart Health Tour donate their services, offering auscultations free of charge to pet owners. The free heart health screenings are performed from a sound-proof exam room inside the custom-built Mobile Heart Health Unit.

In total, cardiologists on the tour have performed more than 10,000 free heart health screenings for dogs.

Dr. Whit Church, a cardiologist participating in the tours, explains, "Based on a national survey, more than half of dog owners are unaware that their dog may be at risk of heart failure. The Mobile Heart Health Tour is a great way to identify and improve the health of dogs with congestive heart failure – helping them lead longer, happier and healthier lives."



The Mobile Heart Health Unit travels to dog-friendly locations throughout the U.S. offering free heart health screenings.

This year, the Mobile Heart Health Unit will tour cities in North Carolina, Maryland, Maine, Connecticut and more. Visit www.yourdogsheart.com for more information about upcoming events in your area. ■



Dr. Rebecca Stepien performs a free auscultation for this canine patient at a recent Mobile Heart Health event in Chicago.