

From the Desk of Dr. Linda Tintle, DVM – Project Shumi

Project Shumi is a study initially funded by devoted Shar-Pei owner Sonia Breslow at Colorado State University. I am one of the principal investigators in the study and was recently appointed as Affiliate Faculty there to further integrate our research team.

The study is designed to identify biomarkers and mediators that represent the underlying immune system abnormalities in dogs with Shar-Pei Autoinflammatory Disease (SPAID). This will be the first step toward developing new immunotherapy strategies for disease treatment and management. We will categorize affected dogs using specific genetic markers and specifically define the inflammatory and molecular mediators of the disease. With this information, treatment strategies can be better tailored to relevant therapeutic goals. The eventual goal is the discovery and development of effective relief for dogs with SPAID. To accomplish this, we will first gain greater understanding of the important underlying processes in this inflammatory disease.

I will be enrolling 25 dogs with SPAID who meet study requirements through my hospital, the Wurtsboro Veterinary Clinic. We will try to arrange to collect samples from dogs in batches as many of the samples have to be shipped on dry ice to Colorado quickly.

The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at Colorado State University will be accepting cheek swab samples from the public later this year. We were unable to start the Project Shumi study until the diagnostic laboratory was set up to do this and unfortunately this coincided with a complete overhaul of the laboratory software and website at the facility. The director of the veterinary diagnostic laboratory is a big fan of Shar-Pei and is now helping to accelerate the offering of these tests to Shar-Pei breeders and owners.

Testing will be available for the mutations reported to be associated with SPAID: their CNV and the MTBP missense status will be determined by ddPCR, as well as a Shar-Pei Panel including those mutations and PLL/POAG (glaucoma/lens luxation mutation).

The study is expected to last 2-3 years. The Chinese Shar-Pei Charitable Trust will be supporting this study, and several other benefactors have also indicated their interest in providing financial support.

As I have told many people, first we need a better understanding of what is going wrong because of their genetic abnormalities so that we can determine how to provide the best options for treatment and prevention. This study should provide that first step.

Linda JM Tintle DVM

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