

Advances in Pain Management

Pain management is a significant part of a Veterinarian's working week. Increased awareness of the types of pain that our patients experience, and the symptoms indicative of pain, have led to the development of more refined pain management strategies and more effective, safer pain-relieving medications.

The modern trend in the management of acute (often surgically-induced) pain is a concept known as “**pre-emptive analgesia**”. Broadly speaking, pre-emptive analgesia is an attempt to prevent the physiological pain response. By blocking the pain response, the overall pain that a patient may experience (e.g. on recovery from surgery), is reduced dramatically. Pre-emptive analgesia may involve the use of opioids (eg. Morphine), or the use of epidural anaesthesia.

Chronic (long-term) pain is, in my experience, more difficult to manage. By far the most common source of chronic pain that we are called-on to manage in Veterinary Practice is **osteoarthritis**. Osteoarthritis is often a debilitating disease for our pets, both dogs and cats. Relieving the pain of osteoarthritis often necessitates the use of an anti-inflammatory medication. Until recently, this would involve the use of drugs with the potential for side-effects. Veterinary and human pharmaceutical companies have devoted much time and effort in developing anti-inflammatory medications that target pain and minimise the risk of side-effects.

A welcome introduction to our fight against chronic pain is the recent release of a new non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug designed specifically for use in dogs *and* cats. This drug has an excellent safety and efficacy profile. Research shows the drug can be used to good effect in some very old and debilitated patients where ordinarily we would be nervous about the introduction of an anti-inflammatory. This medication has been produced as a once daily flavoured tablet, which even cats will accept in most cases.

This type of technological advance is exciting for Veterinarians who are faced with the task of effectively relieving chronic pain, without causing harm.

Kind Regards,

Scott and Chris