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*as of January 25, 2008



Washington Branch American Association Laboratory Animal Science

January 2008

District 8 Meeting in Seattle

It's 2008 already. Can you believe it? 2008 is a big year for the Washington Branch of AALAS. The District 8 (D8) Meeting is being at the Washington State Convention & Trade Center in downtown Seattle. Information about District 8 and the meeting starts on Page 2, including answers to some questions you might have about District 8.

Information also in this issue:

- [Ron Orta Humanitarian Award](#)
- [IACUC Conference-Seattle](#)
- Abstract submission for D8
- [Speaker profile](#)
- [Be a judge for NWABR student events](#)
- [Charles River Seminar](#)
- Advertisers Pages

Upcoming Events

February 15, 2008
Deadline for Ron Orta
Humanitarian Award
See article below.

and
Deadline for D8 Abstract
Submission
See [page 4](#) or online at
[Abstract Submission](#)

March 5, 2008
IACUC Regional Education
Conference-Seattle
See [page 6](#) or online at
[IACUC Conference](#)

April 23-24, 2008
District 8 Meeting – in Seattle
Vendor registration now
available online.
[Vendor Registration](#)



Attendee registration for the
District 8 Meeting will be
available soon.

Summer 2008
WBAALAS Picnic

November 9-13, 2008
59th AALAS National
Meeting-Indianapolis

Ron Orta Humanitarian Award

Allentown, Inc. has established an award honoring Ron. The award is "in memory of a compassionate man who devoted his life to the furtherance of laboratory animal science." It will be awarded to an individual who exhibits extraordinary compassion towards their peers, displays a spirit of cooperation and involvement in the activities of their local community, participates in continuing education; either as an educator or student in the field of laboratory animal science.

Read more about the award on page 2

The award will be presented every year at the District 8 Meeting. This year, the first year of what will be an annual event, the award will be presented at the opening ceremonies of the meeting, after a presentation honoring Ron.

Deadline for applications is February 15th, 2008

District 8 FAQs

What is it?

AALAS is divided into Districts, currently 1 through 8. District 8 includes the western most states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington.

What branches are in District 8?

Arizona AALAS
Northern California Branch AALAS
Northern Rocky Mountain Branch AALAS
Orange County AALAS
Oregon AALAS
Palms to Pines AALAS
Sacramento Valley AALAS
San Diego AALAS
Sierra Nevada AALAS
Southern California AALAS
Utah AALAS
Washington Branch AALAS

What is the District 8 Meeting?

It is an annual educational meeting. Location of the meeting is rotated between branches to allow for greater participation by the local branch members.

Who is organizing the 2008 D8 meeting?

Washington, Northern Rocky Mountain and Oregon Branches of AALAS are working together to put on the 2008 meeting.

Do we need volunteers?

Yes! Contact

d8volunteer@wbaalas.org



Join AALAS in recognizing all technicians as "Heroes Behind the Science" during International Laboratory Animal Technician Week (January 27-February 2). Visit the website linked below for ideas on how to recognize technicians (downloadable Word document), as well as for gift ideas from AALAS.

Certain 2008 Tech Week Items are temporarily out of stock (calendar strip, stress mouse, stopwatch, and pocket jotter). These items are expected back in stock on January 22. Orders for these items may be faxed to 901-334-5157, and shipment will be rushed for delivery by Jan 28.

2008 Tech Week Materials

Given each year at the District 8 meeting, the award will consist of \$1,000 and a commemorative plaque provided by Allentown, Inc.

Ron Orta Humanitarian Award

Established in memory of a compassionate man who devoted his life to the furtherance of laboratory animal science, the Ron Orta Humanitarian Award will be awarded each year to the professional who:

- exhibits extraordinary compassion towards their peers.
- displays a spirit of cooperation and involvement in the activities of their local community.
- participates in continuing education; either as an educator or student in the field of laboratory animal science.

Selection Process:

A council appointed by District 8 Council will review nominations and select a final recipient.

Nomination Process

All members of District 8 are eligible. Nominations will be in letter form describing in detail the nominee's participation in local events, their compassion towards their peers and their pursuit of continuing education. Special consideration will be given to instances where the nominee has gone above and beyond the scope of their regular duties to help their peers. Reference letters are encouraged but are not mandatory.

Submissions

Ron Orta Humanitarian Award
8414 West Farm Road #180-225
Las Vegas NV 89131-8170.

Deadline:

Postmarked by February 15th, 2008.

Award

Given each year at the District 8 meeting, the award will consist of \$1,000 and a commemorative plaque provided by Allentown, Inc.



D8 Meeting in Seattle April 23-24, 2008

Vickie Riojas (2008 D8 Publicity Chair)

The Holidays are behind us and now we are beginning a new year. It's time to start focusing on new goals and opportunities. The D8 Planning Committee has been working very hard to create an informative and fun meeting for us in April and it's time now to give back to those hard working technicians who give so much, and to reward them with an educational opportunity to experience laboratory animal science outside of their own facility. Start making plans to attend. This is the time for you to go to your managers and ask for the chance of continuing education and possibly creating new friendships outside of your area with other technicians. If you are interested, don't be afraid to ask!

We have an incredible line-up of speakers that Cindy Pekow and her crew have been working on for awhile now, that I know you won't want to miss out on! Have you ever wondered what it was like at the very beginnings of animal research before there were regulations, PPE requirements, or when a mouse was a mouse and a rat was a rat without a million nomenclatures? Well, you are in luck, because Helen Diggs from the University of California will be our keynote speaker and will be giving us a very informative and interesting talk on our humble beginnings in animal research.

We will be offering several workshops which include: Rodent Necropsy, Humane Handling and Blood Draw Techniques in Rodents, (which includes a rat tickling session!), Anesthesia, It's a Gas, Xenopus Frog Handling and Techniques, Rodent Imaging, and Lab Animal Management. I also heard we will have a talk on spiders from a speaker who actually works in a spider vivarium! Some

other topics include: Humor in the Workplace, a Gecko talk and many more interesting talks. We will also feature the Technician Fun Fair, and a tour of the Washington Regional Primate Research Center.

If you are interesting in submitting an abstract see below.

Again, please consider going or sending someone from your facility to the District 8 meeting this year. You will have a great time meeting people who do what you do and at the same time learn something new to bring back to your co-workers!



D8 Meeting Abstract Submission

Deadline is February 15, 2008

District 8 AALAS encourages you to consider preparing an abstract for submission to the District 8 AALAS Meeting in Seattle, Washington, April 23-24, 2008. Abstracts are designated for either poster or 15-minute platform sessions. Awards are presented to the best presentation! Members and nonmembers are eligible to submit abstracts. No abstract submission fee required.

Platform Sessions

Platform sessions are succinct presentations of worthwhile new information. Each speaker is assigned an exact amount of time (typically 10–12 minutes) for delivery. Time begins with the first moment of introduction by the moderator and ends exactly at the moment the speaker finishes or is requested to leave the podium. The time period immediately following the presentation can only be used to answer questions posed by members of the audience or the moderator. During the same time period, some persons will be moving to and from other concurrently running sessions. Speakers may wish to distribute reproduced tables, graphs, and/or other illustrative materials pertinent to their presentation. Time used in handing out material will be included in the speaker's allotted period of time. Facilitators are available for handing out materials.

Poster Sessions

The presentation of a poster provides an alternative opportunity for presenting scientific or technical information at the District 8 meetings. Posters must be 3 feet in height by 4 feet in length, mounted on poster board or foam board for mounting on easels. Each participant is provided with an easel for mounting their poster; all material must be prepared before the set-up time. There will be a limited quantity of mounting material available for those traveling in to town and absolutely needing it. It is suggested to provide handouts (placed in large envelope) representing poster contents, for distribution.

Abstract Preparation and Submission

The purpose of an abstract is to provide a clear and concise summary of the information to be presented in greater detail in a paper, oral presentation, or poster session. The abstract should be no more than 150 words in length. The acceptance of the abstract ...cont Page 7.

D8 Meeting Speaker Profile

Vickie Riojas (2008 D8 Publicity Chair)

The speaker I'm profiling today is Gail Wolz. This one caught my attention because of her certification. Gail is a Certified Laughter Leader! Yes, you read it correctly. What a cool job that would be, yes? She is certified through World Laughter Leader, Inc. Gail's first career, however, was as a licensed veterinary technician. She worked at the University of Washington for many years and started the hands-on animal use training program there. While at the UW, she also worked as the IACUC Coordinator. (Which, in my opinion, is probably why she decided the CLL, (Certified Laughter Leader) was the way to go! Our IACUC Coordinators have no easy job, for sure). Either way, she is very familiar with our field and can relate to many situations presented to us on a daily basis. Gail will be presenting us with her "Laugh Your Way to Health" seminar at the end of the first day of meetings.

Gail Wolz background info:

"Gail is a Certified Laughter Leader through World Laughter Tour, Inc. (www.worldlaughter.com) and a member of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (www.aath.org). Before entering the humor/laughter field, she held instructional and administrative positions in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University for 10 years. Also, for approximately 9 years, Gail was on staff in the Department of Comparative Medicine, School of Medicine, at the University of Washington. While at the UW, her administrative and instructional positions included IACUC Coordinator, Animal Use Training Sessions Coordinator and Instructor, and DCM Administrator. During Gail's tenure at MSU and the UW, she was also a speaker at conferences and other universities across the country. More recently, during the past 4+ years, through her Mobile Mirth Club, she has presented seminars on humor & laughter and conducted therapeutic laughter sessions to thousands of people in a wide variety of settings. Using very unique care-clown personas, Gail also provides weekly humor therapy/mirth sessions to patients, visitors and staff at Overlake Hospital Medical Center."

This is only one of many incredible presentations we have in store for all you who attend the District 8 meeting in Seattle, Washington. Register early! You may register on line at: www.wbaalas.org

See you in Seattle!

Soak up the Knowledge!

AALAS District 8 Meeting
Seattle
April 23-24, 2008

Topics to Absorb:
 Geckos
 Humor in the Workplace
 Murine Norovirus
 Rodent Colony Management
 Humane DNA Sampling
 "Lean" Management

Guest Sprinklers:
 Kathy Laber— AALAC Council Pres.
 Helen Diggs - UC Berkley Veterinarian
 Chris Newcomer— 2008 AALAS President
 Ann Turner— AALAS Executive Director

Get Wet Workshops:
 Xenopus Frogs • Rodent Handling
 Blood Draw Techniques
 Rodent Necropsy • Gas Anesthesia
 Rodent Imaging Technology

Also Featuring:
 Technician Fun Fair
 AALAS Certification Exams

More still to come!

AALAS

2008 AALAS Meeting Seal

2008 IACUC Regional Education Conference

Wednesday – **March 5, 2008** – 8 am to 4:30 pm
at the **Bell Harbor Conference Center** on the Seattle waterfront

Online registration for NWABR's ninth annual IACUC Conference is available at: <http://2008iacucconference.kintera.org/>

The conference schedule, fees and highlights can be found at www.nwabr.org

Join colleagues from around the Northwest for a day of stimulating presentations, interactive discussions, and productive networking.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS:

Expert Speakers

Patricia V. Turner, DVM, Professor, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

Dr. Turner's expertise and research involves studies on the effects of environmental enrichment and social networks on the perception of pain.

Erik Liebegott, President, TransporTech LLC, with operation centers in California and Mass.

With 15 years of experience in animal transport, Mr. Liebegott can speak to common problems encountered by researchers and to regulations that IACUCs should be aware of.

Kathryn Bayne, DVM, Senior Director, AAALAC International

Dr. Bayne will take you on an interactive virtual tour and facility review.

Problem-solving Sessions

Representatives from USDA, NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare and AAALAC International

Receive answers to your questions and learn about new policies and agency concerns.

A mock IACUC protocol review

Attendees will be given multiple scenarios involving common but complex issues that IACUCs face. After small group discussions, the solutions will be shared for the benefit of and discussion by all.

Panel discussion of humane end-points in cancer, infectious disease and toxicology studies.

Local experts will address the ethical and regulatory aspects of humane end-points in various animal models in three types of studies.

Special sessions covering IACUC "Basics"

These sessions are designed for new IACUC members or those who would like a refresher on regulations and conducting protocol, facility and program reviews.

VALUE TO YOU!

Review core concepts and learn how other IACUCs address and resolve complex issues. In the company of expert speakers, regulatory officials, and your peers, you will have an opportunity to explore solutions and consider "best practices" that can make your job easier. In an enjoyable and energizing environment, your day will be time well spent!

We wish to thank our sponsors: Purina LabDiet, Edstrom Industries, Harlan, Leewens, Taconic and World Courier.

For more information, contact Reitha Weeks at rweeks@nwabr.org.

Volunteer to be a Judge

Pass on your love of science! The Northwest Association for Biomedical Research (NWABR) could use your help in two ways.

1. Volunteer to judge middle school essays featuring biomedical research as part of NWABR's "Biomedical Breakthroughs and My Life" essay contest. Seventh and eighth grade students write about the development of medications they are taking or the development of medical devices used by relatives. For most

students, it is their first exposure to research and the drug development process, including the responsible use of animals..

You receive the short essays electronically and can read and comment on them at your convenience. Judges will be needed March 14 through April 4th. For more information and to sign up online, visit <http://www.nwabr.org/education/contest.html>.

2. Be a judge for the 2008 Student Biotech Expo. Over 300 high school students will develop projects focused on a biomedical or biotechnology topic. This science fair is unique because the projects can be in categories such as music, drama, website design, creative writing, as well as the more traditional research and molecular modeling. Select the category of your choice!

All judges are requested to attend an afternoon prejudging event on May 15th and be available at the Expo event on May 28th, 2007 at Meydenbauer Center. For more information and to sign up online as a judge, visit <http://www.nwabr.org/studentbiotech/default.html>.

NWABR's "Biomedical Breakthroughs and My Life" essay contest

provides a real-world context for middle school students to become acquainted with the process, and promise, of biomedical research. Its impact has far exceeded our original expectations.

A middle school teacher whose students have entered the contest in past years provided the following examples of how participation in this essay contest has positively influenced students – and their families.

A student who never told anyone she had diabetes and never had any friends because she felt she was a "freak" until she read previous winner essays. Her life totally opened to new friends and others who were like her.

The mom of a student had breast cancer and her daughter was beside herself; couldn't sleep, eat or pay attention in class. As a direct result of the essay, this student found out there is lots of hope for stage 4 breast cancer and she finally understood what physiologically her mom was going through. This family is Asian and the mom didn't want to worry her daughter and wouldn't even admit it WAS breast cancer until the girl saw the return address of the breast cancer imaging center and confronted mom's sister!

A student from Eritrea who had contracted malaria as a child and had been told she would never be "normal" because of this disease. Through her research she found out factual information to take back to educate her entire family.

A student whose entire family for at least three generations had heart disease and the men began in their 30's to experience their first heart attack. Most died around the age of 40 and this young man really didn't see much need to hope for a bright future, until his research brought new insight to the disease and treatments available.

One ELL student had a niece born with Down's Syndrome and the family was understandably distraught. Through research she found that children with this syndrome may have a compromised immune system and are more susceptible to respiratory infections. At her urging, her aunt started going to the clinic more often and the baby seems to be much healthier. Also the family was told about the longer life span and fuller life that children with Down's can now enjoy. Bottom line was, hope was found where despair had been.

Mom of a student had heart disease, went over seas and had a massive stroke on the plane. Mom ended up in a hospital for three months and this student felt confident enough to research more about the disease even after the contest was over. Heart disease had been her topic and she found it "pretty scary", since mom and dad both have it. Through her urging, dad is not smoking anymore and seeing the doctor on a more regular basis.

A student with social phobias, finally had the courage to tell classmates, "this is why I seem weird, but be patient with me 'cause I'm working on it".

A whole range of students with Aspergers or ADHD. Mostly their reflections range from: Now I know why I feel this way, since doing research the doctor actually listens to me, my parents trust me to medicate myself as needed for anxiety, etc.

The young man born with a hole in his heart who said now he knows what happened to him and why. After years of having kids/adults stare at the scar on his chest, and "feeling kind of weird", he feels better knowing why it is there and what really happened.

Job Opening

The University of California, Riverside (UCR), a campus of the preeminent University of California is a 1,112 acre, park-like campus and located in the heart of inland Southern California. The campus seeks an Animal Facility Manager within the Office of Research.

The Animal Resources Manager (ARM) is responsible for the independent overall management and operation of an animal care facility, including management of all facility personnel. The incumbent performs the full complement of managerial functions; oversees and coordinates the acquisition and disposition of all animals, supplies and equipment for the facility; serves as the department liaison between faculty and research technicians and the animal care service department; develops and delivers mandated training; ensures compliance with all applicable federal and state regulatory agencies; has primary responsibility for developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for animal husbandry methods; provides input into the formation of departmental policies, operations and safety guidelines; oversees facility expenditures, costs and budget reporting; implements long- and short-range facility and personnel management strategies and problem-solving techniques; manages quality assurance programs and general maintenance of the animal facility; ensures United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspection-readiness and Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, International (AAALAC) accreditation inspection-readiness levels at all times. The Animal Resources Manager (ARM) reports to the Campus Veterinarian. The incumbent makes technical judgments and recommendations to the Veterinarian that may have programmatic impact. Suggested novel and innovative solutions comply with federal and state rules and regulations governing the care and use of laboratory animals in research, instruction, and testing.

In general the incumbent plans, coordinates, organizes and evaluates staff, finances, and other resources in the achievement of organizational goals. The incumbent develops, implements, monitors, and revises procedures and processes necessary to attain unit goals. For this level, in addition to meeting supervisory criteria, the incumbent must identify objectives, direct programs, manage human and financial (and often physical) resources, and function with a high degree of autonomy.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

College degree in an area of biological science, or high school graduation plus completion of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) Laboratory Animal Technologist (LATg) certification (preferred level); minimum 5 years of related laboratory animal facility management with supervisory experience, or an equivalent combination of education and experience; and knowledge and abilities essential to the successful performance of the duties assigned to the position. Computer competency required.

Please submit a cover letter and Curriculum Vitae with three references to Dr. Akiko Sato, Campus Veterinarian, University Office Building 215, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521 or email same to akiko.sato@ucr.edu. To apply on-line, please visit our web site at <http://humanresources.ucr.edu/jobs/> and reference position # 07-06-017.

UCR offers an excellent benefits package considered among the finest in higher education, as well as other employers.

UCR is an equal opportunity employer with a commitment to workforce diversity.

Abstract Submission, cont.

Continued from page 3

...for presentation is dependent upon the novelty of the work and the clarity of the message it conveys, as well as its relevance to laboratory animal medicine. The title should convey as concisely as possible the subject to be discussed. The title should not exceed 20 words and should not be overly general, nor provide such excessive detail that it becomes unwieldy or confusing. The body of the abstract is made up of three or four components addressing specific points, depending on whether the subject is a traditional scientific investigation or on whether it addresses a clinical, technical, or management problem. The text of the abstract should be a single paragraph. Tables of data are not permitted in the abstract. Do not use trade names, technical jargon, names of ...continued on products, companies, or institutions, or abbreviations other than units of measurement. Reports of trends or data must be brief. Group sizes should be stated and p-values or other statistical results should be summarized if available. Each sentence in the abstract should be examined out of context for clarity and economy of words. The abstract should be unified, coherent, and logical in its progression from one section to the next. Authors should familiarize themselves with AALAS journal style, as described in the "Information for Authors" found at <http://www.aalas.org/publications/index.asp>. Review abstracts from past National Meetings to get a feel for style and format. Abstracts from select meetings are available from http://nationalmeeting.aalas.org/past_meeting_abstracts.asp. Have grammar, punctuation, and spelling checked by more than one reviewer before final submission. A person unfamiliar with the work may be helpful in pinpointing problems in content.

Scientific Abstracts

Scientific abstracts should contain the following elements: hypothesis or objective, methods, results, and conclusions.



Announcements

Culex Workshop/Symposium

BASi is looking for space to host a demonstration of the Culex Automated Pharmacology System. The purpose of the workshop is to inform researchers and technicians in the lab animal industry about automated sampling.

The workshop will provide not only a live animal demonstration (rats and mice) of the Culex and how it works, but will also include actual surgical demos. For the workshop three representatives from BASi will come and give a morning didactic session along with the Culex demonstration. And in the afternoon the surgical session will take place. This workshop will also allow people to earn CEU's.

If you are interested in hosting this workshop or have any questions please contact:

Christina Miles
BASi (Bioanalytical Systems, Inc.)
Northwest Business Development Manager
Mobile: 925.699.6600
Email: cmiles@bioanalytical.com

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Interested parties please contact:
Winston Wicomb, Ph.D., LATG
Phone: 206-330-2558
E-mail: wwicomb@idri.org

Membership Dues are Due!

If you are renewing your membership in the Washington Branch of AALAS, it's time to do so. If you haven't renewed, there is an application on the last page of this newsletter. Fill it out and send it in today! Encourage your company to be an Institutional Members. This is a great way for organizations to show their support our branch of AALAS.

Not a member? Join today!





February 11-12, 2008
San Francisco, CA
February 13-14, 2008
La Jolla, CA

CHARLES RIVER FOCUS
DIAGNOSTIC TESTING AND
RESEARCH MODELS SEMINAR
CHARLES RIVER LABORATORIES

The objective of this seminar is to provide a better understanding of disease management, biosecurity, and practical considerations for research models and surgical services processes.

This for-fee program has been approved for CEU credit by AAVSB RACE.

SAN FRANCISCO

February 11-12, 8am - 5pm

[San Francisco Registration](#)

LA JOLLA

February 13-14, 8am - 5pm

[La Jolla Registration](#)

Day One Agenda:

7:45 – 8:50 AM

Breakfast & Registration

8:50 – 9:00 AM

Welcome

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Animal Facility Biosecurity

Guy Mulder, DVM, DACLAM, Director of Professional Services

10:00 – 10:15 AM

Break

10:15 – 11:15 AM

Barrier Room Operations

Don Moody, Senior Plant Manager

11:15 – 12:15 AM

Microbiological Quality Control of Laboratory Animals:

Why and How?

William Shek, DVM, PhD, Senior Scientific Director of Diagnostic Services

12:15 – 1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 – 2:30 PM

Rodent Surgery Models and Surgical Suite Operations

Aimee Schwartz, Product Manager of Surgical Services

2:30 – 2:45 PM

Break

2:45 – 3:45 PM

Common Diseases of Laboratory Rats and Mice

Charles Clifford, DVM, PhD, DACVP, Director of Pathology and Technical Services

3:45 – 4:45 PM

Rodent Infections: Why Should I Care?

Joe Simmons, DVM, PhD, DACLAM, Director of Laboratory Diagnostics

5:30 – 7:00 PM

Reception

Day Two Agenda:

7:30 – 8:15 AM

Breakfast

8:30 – 9:30 AM

Rodent Models of Immunodeficiency Disease and

Rodent Models of Metabolic Disorders

Dwight Owens, Senior Technical Product Manager of Disease Models

9:30 – 9:50 AM

Break

9:50 – 10:50 AM

Current Investigations and Observations that Impact Testing

Strategies for MPV, MNV, RTV and Other Selected Agents

Ken Henderson, PhD, Director of Molecular Diagnostics

10:50 – 11:05 AM

Break

11:05 – 12:05 PM

Monitoring Beyond the Animal: A Hazard Analysis Critical

Control Point (HACCP) Approach to Animal-Related Process

Control

Charles Clifford, DVM, PhD, DACVP, Director Pathology and

Technical Services

Deadline to register

February 1, 2008.

For more information, visit

<http://www.criver.com/info/crlfocus08>

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In The News

Oscar, raised in a nursing home, seems to have a sixth sense

Cat keeps vigil for those on brink of death

BY RAY HENRY
The Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Oscar the cat seems to have an uncanny knack for predicting when nursing-home patients are going to die, by curling up next to them during their final hours.

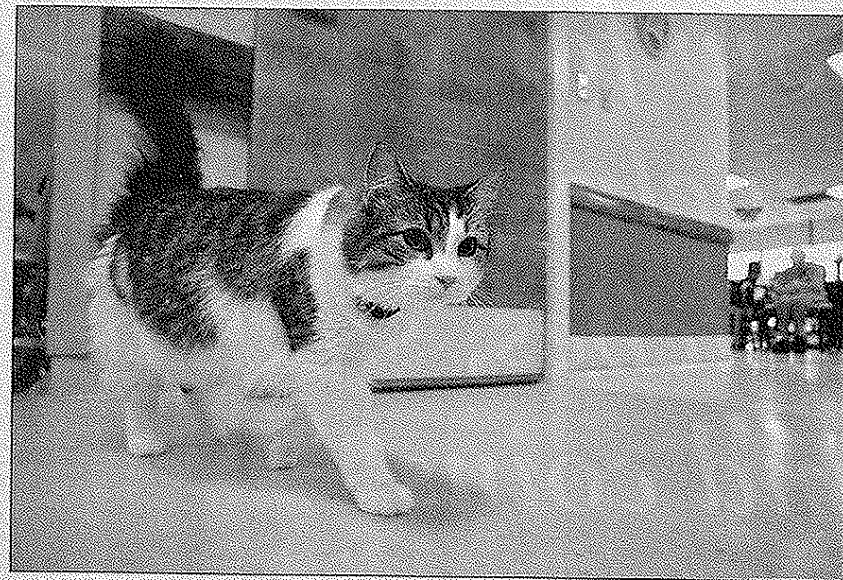
His accuracy, observed in 25 cases, has led the staff to call family members once he has chosen someone. It usually means the patient has less than four hours to live.

"He doesn't make too many mistakes. He seems to understand when patients are about to die," Dr. David Dosa said. He describes the phenomenon in a poignant essay in today's issue of the New England Journal of Medicine.

"Many family members take some solace from it. They appreciate the companionship that the cat provides for their dying loved one," said Dosa, a geriatrician and assistant professor of medicine at Brown University.

The 2-year-old feline was adopted as a kitten and grew up in a dementia unit at the Steere House Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. The facility treats people with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease and other illnesses.

After about six months, the staff noticed Oscar would make his own rounds, just like the doctors and nurses. He'd sniff and observe patients, then sit beside people who



STEW MILNE / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oscar, the cat at the Steere House Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Providence, R.I., is believed by the center's staff to have the ability to sense patients' deaths just hours before they happen.

then would die within a few hours.

Dosa said Oscar is generally aloof. "This is not a cat that's friendly to people," he said.

Oscar is better at predicting death than the people who work there, said Dr. Joan Teno of Brown University, who treats patients at the nursing home and is an expert on care for the terminally ill.

She was convinced of Oscar's talent when he made his 13th correct call. While observing one patient, Teno said she noticed the woman wasn't eating, was breathing with difficulty and that her legs had a bluish tinge, signs that often mean death is near.

Oscar wouldn't stay inside

the room though, so Teno thought his streak was broken. Instead, it turned out the doctor's prediction was roughly 10 hours too early. Sure enough, during the patient's final two hours, nurses told Teno that Oscar joined the woman at her bedside.

Doctors say most of the people who get a visit from the sweet-faced, gray-and-white cat are so ill they probably don't know he's there, so patients aren't aware he's a harbinger of death. Most families are grateful for the warning, although one wanted Oscar out of the room while a family member died. When Oscar is put outside, he paces and meows.

No one is certain if Oscar's behavior is scientifically significant or points to a cause.

Nicholas Dodman, who directs an animal behavioral clinic at the Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine and has read Dosa's article, said the only way to know is to carefully document how Oscar divides his time between the living and dying.

It's possible Oscar's behavior could be driven by self-centered pleasures such as a heated blanket placed on a dying person, Dodman said.

Oscar recently received a wall plaque publicly commending his "compassionate hospice care."



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