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## Pearls for the Practitioner

### Topic: Spontaneous Feline Hemoperitoneum

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Spontaneous hemoperitoneum is defined as a hemorrhagic effusion of the abdominal cavity occurring in the absence of recent surgery or other trauma. A recent manuscript in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* (Spontaneous hemoperitoneum in cats: 65 cases (1994-2006). Culp WTN, Weisse C, Kellogg ME, et al. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2010;236:978-982) describes the clinical signs, examination findings, laboratory abnormalities, etiology and outcome in 65 cats gathered retrospectively at seven different institutions over 13 years, suggesting this remains a fairly uncommon condition in comparison to dogs.

The nonspecific clinical signs including lethargy, anorexia and vomiting commonly result in delayed diagnosis. Subsequently, many of these feline patients present critically ill. In addition, 17% of the cats were not anemic on presentation but all had elevated total protein concentrations implying that dehydration may have been artificially increasing the actually low PCV.

While neoplasia accounts for approximately 80% of spontaneous hemoperitoneum in dogs, this study identified approximately equal neoplastic (46%) and non-neoplastic (56%) causes in cats; an important difference between the two species. Perhaps not surprisingly, the cats with neoplastic causes of hemoperitoneum were older and had lower PCVs. Hepatic necrosis and coagulopathy were the most common causes of non-neoplastic hemoperitoneum. Similarities among cats and dogs include the spleen being the most common organ to develop cancer and rupture, and hemangiosarcoma being the most common tumor to result in rupture (60% in cats but 88% in dogs). The most common cause of spontaneous hemoperitoneum in these cats was neoplastic or non-neoplastic liver disease (40%) in comparison to dogs in which approximately 15% is due to liver disease and 75% due to splenic disease.

While the prognosis was determined to be poor, the decisions to pursue euthanasia were unclear due to the retrospective nature of the study. In light of the relatively high percentage of non-neoplastic causes of spontaneous hemoperitoneum in cats, Dr. Chick Weisse, of The Animal Medical Center's Interventional Radiology Service and one of the studies co-authors suggests veterinarians pursue additional diagnostic testing before giving poor prognoses to clients in cases of feline hemoperitoneum.

The Interventional Radiology and Interventional Endoscopy Service at The Animal Medical Center is available by calling 212.838.8100. For referrals, please call 212-329-8758/8890.

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