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Dear Dr. DiBartola,

My co-authors and I are surprised that a manuscript published seven years ago has garnered such attention (yet another letter to the editor) without appropriate scientific discourse. We welcome and encourage researchers in the field to perform their own studies of this serious condition in Dalmatians. The discussion section of a peer-reviewed paper is the appropriate location to ponder differing results if they are obtained.

In addition to the obvious lack of appropriate scientific discourse by Dr. Speth, his allegations of research misconduct are completely and totally unfounded. The IRB stands for the Institutional Review Board, which is charged with overseeing research on *human* subjects at each University. We have spoken with the University of California at Davis IRB Director and received assurance that there was *no* federal requirement for this research to be reviewed by the University's IRB.

This manuscript was published 7 years ago and the work was performed 8 years ago. There are no *published* estimates of the lifelong morbidity of urate urolithiasis in the Dalmatian dog to compare to the survey data obtained in the manuscript.

The goal of the work published in this manuscript was to determine the heritability and a possible model for the mode of inheritance of the clinical signs of urinary calculi in the Dalmatian. The survey was a tool to obtain pedigree data from dogs with known affected and unaffected status in order to perform the heritability analysis. The reported prevalence was for dogs "in the survey" as stated very clearly in the abstract of the paper; at no time was the population of dogs surveyed intended to be or represented as a probabilistic sample of the owned population of Dalmatians in the United States. It was compared to a prevalence estimate from the UC Davis Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital (VMTH) database, which was also determined by evaluating the medical history of patients as well as their presenting complaints. This too is not a population representative of the owned population of Dalmatians. Neither of these values can be compared to the values obtained in the Albanian manuscript (1). Albanian et al. used data that they obtained from the VMB database to compare the sex of Dalmatians with uroliths. They made no attempt to use it to determine the number of male Dalmatians that are affected with clinical signs of hyperuricosuria, and likely for good reason. There is no indication in the materials and methods of how the determination was made that dogs were affected with uroliths but presumably it was based on the diagnoses made for a particular visit. Dr. Speth is making assumptions and interpretations about the data that I suspect the authors did not intend to make, and attempting to contrast numbers that are neither equivalent nor comparable. Nonetheless, approximately 10% of the male Dalmatian dogs had uroliths during a visit, not 5% as claimed by Dr. Speth. This percentage still cannot be compared to what we obtained either within the VMTH or the survey because we limited ours

to dogs over 6 years of age and included new cases as well as those with a history of urolith disease.

Dr. Speth seems confused about the publication date of this article. Nothing has been broadcast to the owners of Dalmatians. The survey has been offline for over 8 years. This research was performed in order to begin to understand if there was a heritable component to urate urolithiasis *within* the Dalmatian breed. In order to identify the genetic component segregating within the breed, we performed abdominal ultrasound examinations on male Dalmatians to collect samples from affected and unaffected animals (segregation being the hallmark of genetic analysis). Unfortunately, all male Dalmatians that were ultrasounded had uroliths or echogenic debris, making it impossible to perform a genetic analysis.

Dr. Speth claims that urate urolithiasis is an “easily remedied matter.” Nothing could be further from the truth. The review that Dr. Speth references (2) is a thorough review of the vast amount of literature on the subject of Dalmatian urolithiasis. The solution is not, as Dr. Speth speciously claims, necessarily a simple matter of a diet change. The uroliths first must be surgically removed, with subsequent numerous treatment options, none which are entirely effective. In fact, the recurrence rate in **treated** animals is 30-50%, indicating that this disease is far from simple or “easily remedied” (reviewed in 2).

1. Albasan H, Lulich JP, Osborne CA, Lekcharoensuk C. Evaluation of the association between sex and risk of forming urate uroliths in Dalmatians. J.Am.Vet.Med.Assoc., 2005, 227: 565-569.
2. Sorenson JL, Ling GV. Diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of urate urolithiasis in Dalmatians. J.Am.Vet.Med.Assoc., 1993, 203: 863-869.

Sincerely,

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