

*This book is dedicated to Bullet,
the love of my life, the dog of my dreams,
my brave little boy,
and to all of the Brave Spirits who fight
for another shining moment
in the loving arms of their special person.*



The Magic Bullet

March 15, 1991 ~ November 20, 2004

Preface

About half of our dogs will have cancer in their lifetimes, yet most dog owners know little or nothing about caring for a dog with cancer. Not long ago, admittedly, there wasn't much to know. Today, however, treatment for canine cancer is nearly on par with treatment for human cancer, and there is a great deal to know.

If your dog has cancer, you're undoubtedly asking, "*What can I do?*" First, you will decide on a medical plan and put it into action. There are many considerations to take into account when choosing a plan, such as which diagnostic tests to allow, which veterinarian(s) to enlist, and which treatment you want your dog to have. There are almost always several treatments available, even when a veterinarian presents only one. This book will help you obtain information you were not given, and help you make the important decisions.

After you decide on a medical plan, you'll ask, "*What else can I do?*" The answer is, *Lots!* Regardless of what type of medical treatment you decide your dog should have (chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, an alternative therapy, or no treatment at all), there is a great deal more that you can do. You'll manage symptoms and side effects, and revise the treatment plan if necessary. You'll strengthen your dog's organs, and bolster his immune system. You'll help your dog better fight the disease and better tolerate the treatment, to improve his odds for survival.

When Bullet was diagnosed with lymphoma, I wanted to know what typically happens before, during, and after canine cancer treatment, and what else might happen that is not typical. I wanted to know what I should, shouldn't, could, and might do to help my dog survive. I wanted to know all of this right away, in plain English and without any. I wanted what you are reading right now. I wanted this book!

My experience as an animal writer and medical editor enabled me to delve into volumes of medical literature undaunted by medical lingo. My

mission was to become the best advocate I could for Bullet. I also consulted with general practice veterinarians, veterinary oncologists, holistic vets, oncologists in human medicine, and other owners of dogs with cancer. I researched treatment options, pharmaceuticals, supplements, nutraceuticals, diets, alternative treatments, and clinical trials. To find Bullet's home care regimen, I experimented extensively to find out what worked best.

What I discovered was that the more information I gathered and the more I understood about Bullet's condition, the more capable I felt of caring for him properly, and the more my anxiety diminished. This was my path to becoming the best advocate for my best friend. Now, I will help you become the best advocate for your dog. As you read, and your knowledge about canine cancer grows, your anxiety will wane. You will become a confident and competent advocate for your dog.

Paolo Porzio, DVM, who administered Bullet's chemotherapy, urged me repeatedly to write a book that would help other owners of dogs with cancer become knowledgeable and confident advocates. After a year, I resigned my position as editor of *Catnip*, a publication of Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, and set about writing the first edition of this book.

The information in this book was culled from reliable sources, including peer-reviewed veterinary publications and journals, veterinary oncologists, and veterinary school web sites, or is based on my own experiences helping Bullet and more than 400 Magic Bullet Fund dogs fight cancer. Through the Fund and in private consultations, I have helped hundreds of owners begin the bittersweet journey of living with and caring for a dog with cancer.

I launched the Magic Bullet Fund in conjunction with the publication of the first edition of this book, in 2004. I founded the Fund to offer financial assistance to people who have a dog with cancer but cannot afford treatment fees. As of October 2015, the Fund has helped more than 400 families provide cancer treatment for their dogs.

For many families, treatment is available but the costs are prohibitive. How terrible it must be to know that your dog would have a chance to survive if only you could afford treatment. Cancer survival

may be a miracle, but for the families in the Magic Bullet Fund, just being able to see their dogs receive treatment is the real miracle. You can see the dogs and their families at www.themagicbulletfund.org.

All owners are initially overwhelmed, as was I, by the shocking news that their dog has cancer and by the prospect of losing their best friend. There are numerous ways to care for a dog with cancer. Each owner must choose the options that work best for the dog and the family.

This book will provide you with a solid foundation for your battle against canine cancer. You will come away from *Help Your Dog Fight Cancer* with confidence, prepared to begin the journey and to make informed decisions as your best friend's best advocate.

Cancer is a fierce enemy. To fight the good fight, we need all the ammunition we can get. Armed with information and love, you will discover the best possible way to care for your dog through the battle against cancer.