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Interbreed variation in serum serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine) concentration in healthy dogs*

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2 K. Höglund et al.

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KEYWORDS

Breed difference; Biomarker; Canine; Heart valve; 5-HT **Abstract** *Introduction:* Serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine [5-HT]) has several biological functions. In different species, excessive 5-HT has been linked to valvular lesions, similar to those seen in dogs with myxomatous mitral valve disease. Previous studies suggest higher 5-HT in healthy Cavalier King Charles Spaniels (CKCSs), a breed highly affected by myxomatous mitral valve disease, compared to other breeds.

Objective: To investigate potential interbreed variation in serum 5-HT in healthy dogs.

Animals: 483 healthy dogs of nine breeds aged 1-7 years.

Methods: Dogs were examined at five European centers. Absence of cardiovascular, organ-related, or systemic diseases was ensured by thorough clinical investigations including echocardiography. Serum was frozen and later analyzed by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA).

Results: Median 5-HT concentration was 252.5 (interquartile range = 145.5–390.6) ng/mL. Overall breed difference was found (p<0.0001), and 42% of pairwise breed comparisons were significant. Univariate regression analysis showed association between serum 5-HT concentration and breed, center of examination, storage time, and sex, with higher 5-HT in females. In multiple regression analysis, the final model had an adjusted R^2 of 0.27 with breed (p<0.0001), center (p<0.0001), and storage time (p=0.014) remaining significant. Within centers, overall breed differences were found at 3/5 centers (p<0.028), and pairwise comparisons within those centers showed breed differences in 42% of comparisons. Among the included breeds, Newfoundlands, Belgian Shepherds and CKCSs had highest 5-HT concentrations.

Conclusions: Interbreed variation in serum 5-HT concentration was found in healthy dogs aged 1–7 years. These differences should be taken into account when designing clinical studies.

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Abbreviations

CKCS Cavalier King Charles Spaniel
CV coefficient of variation

IQR interquartile range

MMVD myxomatous mitral valve disease

5-HT 5-hydroxytryptamine

Introduction

The neurotransmitter serotonin (5-hydroxy-tryptamine, 5-HT) has several important biological functions, including regulation of mood, sleep, energy homeostasis, platelet function, and cardiovascular tone [1-5], thus controlling diverse functions in the central as well as peripheral

nervous system [2]. The 5-HT system is also important in cardiac valvular development and in maintaining normal valvular and myocardial function [6–9]. Altered 5-HT signaling has been suggested to be involved in the pathogenesis of myxomatous mitral valve disease (MMVD) in dogs [10–14] and might be especially important in the early development of the disease [15,16].

In the blood, 5-HT is mainly stored in dense platelet granules, and in healthy dogs and people, plasma concentrations are low [13,17,18]. In people receiving oral serotonergic medication, cardiac valvulopathy has been observed [19,20], and in animal models, rats injected with 5-HT developed myxomatous-like valvular changes [21,22]. In dogs with naturally occurring MMVD, 5-HT concentrations in mitral valve leaflets and left ventricular myocardium have been shown to be higher than in healthy

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