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Optimal nutrition for healthy brain aging: What we have learned from our pets

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Aging has adverse effects on all tissues and organs in humans and animals including dogs and cats. Just like in humans, some of the senior dogs and cats eventually develop cognitive impairment and dementia called cognitive dysfunction syndrome (CDS). Since CDS is not a curable disease, our research has been focused on nutritional solutions that promote healthy brain aging in dogs and cats for the past 15 years. We have developed two solutions to enhance cognitive functions in dogs and cats. The first approach is to address the reduced ability of brain cells to utilize glucose as energy by providing medium chain triglycerides (MCTs) and we have confirmed that MCTs do enhance cognition in aging dogs. The second solution is to minimize known risk factors associated with brain aging. Since there are multiple risk factors, we have developed a nutrient blend and demonstrated its cognition-enhancing benefits in middle-aged and aging cats. In summary, our research shows that optimal nutrition can enhance cognitive functions in healthy aging dogs and cats. What we have learned from pets may be able to facilitate the development of nutritional and therapeutic solutions for people.

Biography

Yuan-long Pan completed his BVM from Gansu Agricultural University, PR China. He received his PhD in Animal Nutrition from Virginia Tech, USA and PhD in Human Nutrition from UNC-Greensboro, USA. He conducted research in the area of menopause and cognition at Wake Forest University School of Medicine from 1996 to 2000. In 2000, he joined Nestle Purina Research. He has published more than 18 papers, filed 41 patent applications and obtained 10 patents. Recently, he won the Academy of Science-St. Louis 2016 George Engelmann Interdisciplinary Award for his outstanding achievement in science through collaboration.

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