

## Daphne's Story

My parents own an 8 year old Miniature Schnauzer named Daphne. Despite a past diagnosis of hypothyroidism, Daphne was an otherwise healthy and very active companion. One afternoon, my father came home from work and was greeted, as always, by Daphne jumping off of the couch. Only this time, Daphne jumped down from the couch and was left in an immediate state of paralysis. She did not appear to be in pain but was unable to move her legs and was visibly frightened. My father rushed Daphne to our family Vet, who without a positive diagnosis, immediately administered a shot of cortisone and offered possible causes for the paralysis including a tumor, a herniated disc or a stroke. He cautioned my parents that the outcome of any of these diagnoses would not be good. X-rays were taken but came back negative for a fracture and none of the remaining possible diagnoses could be ruled out that evening. Our family Vet recommended that my father take Daphne to the local referral hospital that employed the only Veterinary Neurologist in our area.

The next morning Daphne, still fully paralyzed, was taken to the referral hospital where she was admitted and put on the schedule for the next day to be examined by the Neurologist. Based on physical exam, the Neurologist suspected a diagnosis of FCE (Fibrocartilaginous Embolism), a stroke-like event in the spinal cord caused by a clot of foreign material. He told my father that this condition is seen in Miniature Schnauzers more often than other breeds and Daphne was displaying a number of symptoms that would support this diagnosis. The doctor told my father that the only way to definitively diagnose FCE is through MRI. He went on to explain that a diagnosis of FCE has a 75%+ recovery rate when treated with the proper regime of physical therapy. Later that night, after hours of internet reading I discovered that there is, in fact, one other way to diagnose FCE... an autopsy. Although, my parents had come to terms that Daphne may need to be humanely euthanized, needless to say, they were delighted that the MRI, although costly, was the Neurologist's suggested means for diagnosis. With the sudden good news that there was a chance to save Daphne, my parents were willing to do, and spend, whatever was needed in order to give Daphne a chance to walk again and, most importantly, live out the second half of her life. Daphne was cleared for the MRI and, as suspected, FCE was the diagnosis. With the diagnosis established, the correct physical therapy plan of treatment was put in place.

My parents were amazed that after only a couple of weeks of physical therapy Daphne was on her feet and walking. Today, Daphne has made a full recovery and is back to running and enjoying life. My Mom recently shared Daphne's story with her cousin who is now convinced that she prematurely euthanized her Miniature Schnauzer in the late 1970's when something very similar happened. At the time, she was told there was nothing they could do for her dog. Thankfully, veterinary medicine has advanced to the point where conditions such as FCE are no longer diagnosed through autopsy alone. Daphne's MRI results were just the miracle that my parents had hoped for and Daphne is living proof that MRI saves lives.

*Written by: D. Burley*