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## Giving and Receiving

# Blood Bank Helps Bleeding Puppy

**B**inni, a 10-month-old Chihuahua, was referred for treatment to the pediatric and genetic service at VHUP by Trooper Veterinary Hospital in Norristown, Pa. The dog had developed a large, painful hematoma over his back caused by hemophilia, a common, severe, hereditary bleeding disorder that affects males. Transfusion of clotting factors can stop the bleeding and be life-saving.

The **Penn Animal Blood Bank (PABB)** collects and prepares thousands of units of blood products each year for VHUP's patients. The blood and blood products are typed and carefully screened for known and emerging infectious diseases to prevent transmission of such diseases to patients.

Blood consists of two portions: a liquid portion, called plasma, and a cellular portion, consisting of red blood cells, white blood cells

and platelets. Each cellular component has its own function within the body: red blood cells are responsible for carrying oxygen from the lungs to all vital tissues and organs, white blood cells help the body fight infection, and platelets are a necessary part of the body's clotting mechanism. Plasma acts as a carri-



Binni with a huge hematoma.

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er system for these cells, as well as many important proteins, vitamins and nutrients.

When a unit of blood is collected from a donor, all of these components are represented, and the blood is referred to as whole blood. In most cases, a seriously ill animal does not need whole blood but just one or two components. Therefore, the PABB nursing staff, after returning from volunteer canine blood drives in the Delaware Valley, separates the blood into its components with the help of technologically advanced equipment. "One unit of collected blood benefits more than one patient," says Donna Oakley, director of PABB and VHUP nursing. "A patient can be treated specifically with only the component needed. This reduces the risk of adverse reactions." Some of the blood components can be stored for a month and others for one year and are immediately available in an emergency. Because of the large size difference between dog breeds, blood units of different sizes are needed. "Although we are applying blood banking standards from human medicine, we had to develop comparable methods for our small patients, such as toy breeds and cats," says Wendy Hatchett, another PABB nurse.

Binni needed to be transfused with a small unit of plasma twice daily for a couple of days to achieve resolution of the hematoma and further healing. Because hemophilia is a hereditary disorder, it is likely that Binni will have recurrences. Specific small units have been prepared and are readily available for his treatment in the future.