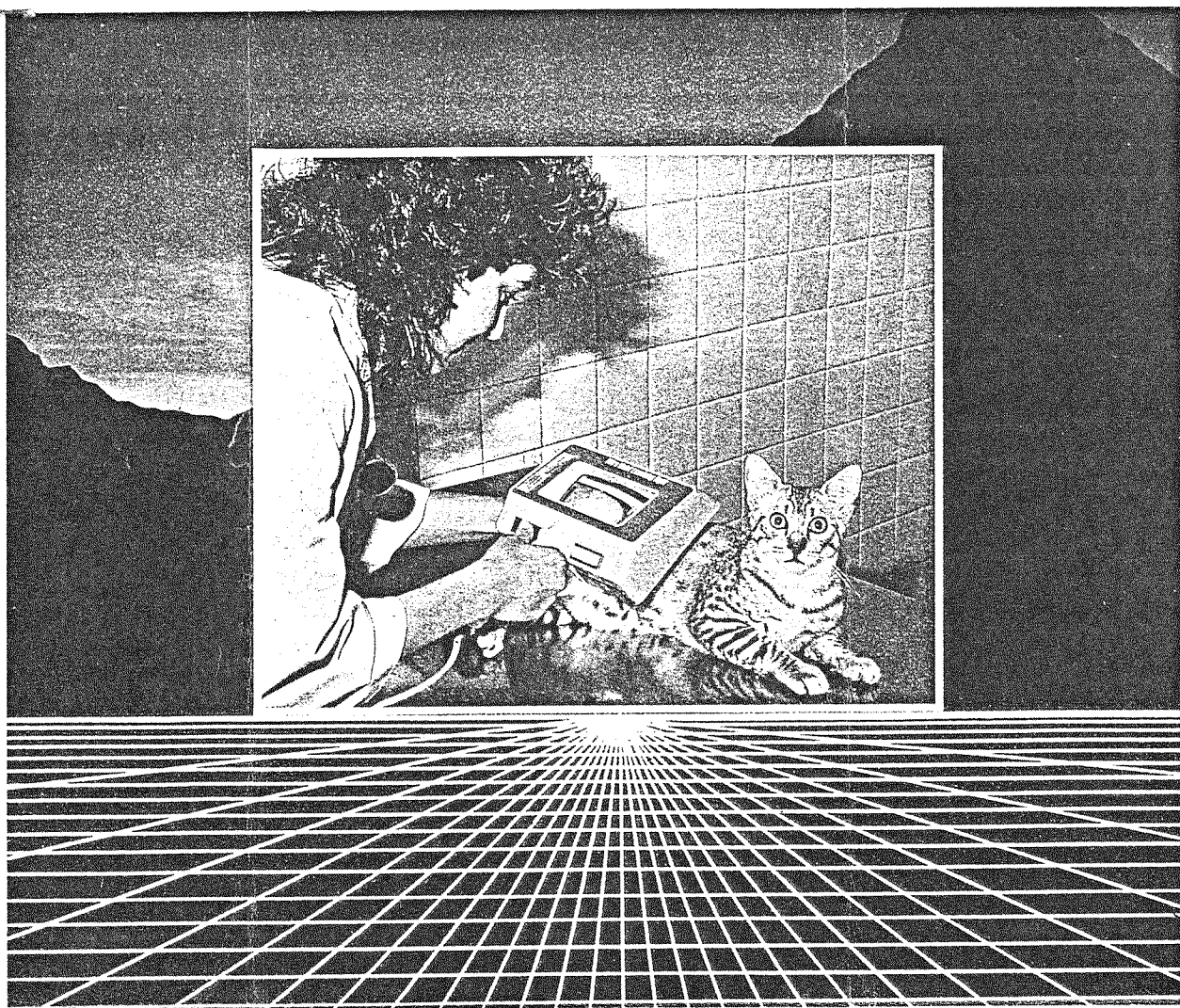




Photographed by Mary Bloom

NOW! HIGH-TECH HELP FOR SICK PETS

Treatments we associate with human patients—pacemakers, radiation therapy to treat brain tumors, ultrasound probes to detect heart disease—are now being used to help animals. A veterinarian at a leading animal medical center talks about the latest amazing advances. **By Michael S. Garvey, D.V.M.**

The patient was elderly, but until recently she had been active. Then, one night, she couldn't see. Her family rushed her to the hospital.

There, dozens of blood and urine tests were performed. An ophthalmologist and a neurologist were called in to perform examinations. None of the many procedures tried revealed a problem. A computed tomography (CT) scan of the brain was ordered.

As the patient was wheeled to the CT room, a radiologist, sensing her confusion, placed a hand on her forehead and spoke in a calm, reassuring voice. The patient was strapped to a table that slowly moved her into the CT tunnel, and within moments the scan was completed. It showed the source of the sudden blindness—a tumor.

Treatment options were discussed by the neurologist, radiologist, ophthalmologist, neurosurgeon, and on-

cologist. They decided to treat the tumor with cobalt radiation. Using a computer and a telephone-computer link to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, a radiation therapist deter-

Once, the only option for some pets was euthanasia

mined the proper delivery of radiation so the tumor would receive almost all of the lethal rays and the normal surrounding brain would be spared.

Eighteen times during the next six weeks, the patient lay on a table while invisible cobalt rays were directed into her tumor. By the end of the treatments, the patient had regained her sight.

This medical success story is not

unusual. And yet the hospital was not the Mayo Clinic or Massachusetts General; it was The Animal Medical Center in New York City. And the patient is a 13-year-old, mixed-breed pointer dog named Echo.

Ten years ago, Echo's story would probably have ended in the examination room. She would have been put to sleep or sent home. Today, the adaptation of human hospital technology has dramatically increased the options veterinarians have.

One force behind the recent changes in treatment is increasing specialization among veterinarians. Taking the lead from our physician colleagues, we have developed areas of expertise based on organ systems or technology.

Today there are close to 2,000 veterinarians who are recognized specialists in fields such as internal medicine,

continued on page 106