# **When Roles Are Reversed**

by [Hillside Animal Hospital](https://www.hillsideanimalhospital.net/author/squidgital/) | Feb 11, 2022 | [Blog](https://www.hillsideanimalhospital.net/category/blog/)



Have you ever found yourself in a vet clinic in pure shock? That’s exactly where I found myself one afternoon. I brought my dog, Woodrow, in for an examination because he got into the trash can and was experiencing vomiting and diarrhea. I fully expected him to have what we refer to in the veterinary world as “garbage gut”. I already had in my mind that we would probably do some fluid therapy, medications to help his gut, and a bland diet. Boy was I ever wrong. Upon palpation, Dr. Betsy felt “something” in his abdomen and told me we needed to obtain radiographs for further evaluation of his abdominal cavity. I immediately thought, “Great, I sure hope he does not have a foreign body!”. The first radiograph flashed upon the screen. Having been in this field for quite some time, I knew what I saw was not good. His spleen was very large, and there was also a mass. Often, these masses we find on the spleen are usually not good news, they are aggressive tumors, and many times they rupture and the patient bleeds internally. On the inside, I was devastated and on the verge of tears.

I pushed through and completed his radiographs. We radiographed his abdominal cavity and his thoracic (chest) cavity. Thoracic radiographs were needed in this situation because of the likeliness that the tumor was malignant. These radiographs allow us to verify if there is any evidence of metastasis (malignant growth secondary to the primary source). Happily, there was no evidence of growth in his chest.

We then switched gears and prepared Woodrow for an abdominal ultrasound. Due to the highly vascular nature of these tumors on the spleen, we needed to check for any bleeding coming from the tumor. We scanned his abdomen, and there was not any evidence of active bleeding- which was great news! You see, if there was active bleeding, and the tumor turned out to be malignant, all those cancer cells were now spread all over his abdominal cavity. This would make his prognosis very grim, and would also make it an emergent situation for Woodrow’s life.

Still, in a state of shock, we collected all the necessary blood work to prepare him for surgery the next morning. Woodrow needed a splenectomy. I was still processing all of this. I thought I would just be giving my dog some medications, a bland diet, and fluids. Instead, I was preparing my senior dog, my best friend, for major surgery the next morning.
Surgery morning came fast. I was still in shock that morning and was in tears. I was not in any position to monitor anesthesia for him or have anything medically to do with Woodrow’s surgery. That morning, I was just his mom.

Dr. Betsy took him into surgery while Matt monitored his anesthesia. As a nervous mom, in between patients, I would go to our surgery window and check on things. Each time, Dr. Betsy and Matt delivered good news and kept me calm. They knew exactly what I needed to hear at all the right times. Matt gave me all his vitals at each window visit and made sure my Woodrow stayed warm, his blood pressure, heart rate, and respiratory rate all remained normal. The spleen and tumor were so large, Dr. Betsy needed a surgical assistant to help her retract and hold the spleen up. Luckily, Melissa was available to scrub in and assist Dr. Betsy. Woodrow’s surgery was two hours long, and finally, the tumor was out! Dr. Betsy dissected a few samples to send off for pathology to confirm what type of tumor it was. Now the waiting began for the pathology report.





After the surgery was over, his care did not end there. My teammates made sure Woodrow had nice thick blankets, warming elements, made sure his IV catheter and fluids were still flowing appropriately, all the right post-operative pain medications, and monitored his vitals while in recovery every five minutes until he could sit up on his own and able to maintain a normal body temperature. They all made sure that he was kept comfortable and clean while in hospital that day.

​I am so blessed and thankful to work at such a place as Hillside. All my teammates and doctors took such amazing care of my old man. The even more amazing thing is, is that Woodrow did not receive special treatment, or “extra” care because he is my pet. This is the level of care we provide for all our patients. We take such great pride in our profession, and that day I could feel and appreciate it on a different level- as a dog mom. I always knew what excellent care we provide, and how hard all of us work to give everything we have to our patients- which is why I love working at Hillside. Since that day though, I have an even greater and deeper appreciation for what we do each day. I love that we can offer our clients and patients lab work, ultrasounds, radiographs, blood pressure measurements, medications, fluid therapy, etc all in the same day, and often have the results within minutes to hours. There’s nothing worse than being caught off guard by the veterinarian giving you all the possibilities about what could be wrong with your fur kid, but I am so thankful that we have all the needed diagnostic tools that we used in Woodrow’s case to get him diagnosed. Thank you all my co-workers for keeping me calm that day, and for providing Woodrow with the best care possible!







To our clients, from all of us at Hillside, we thank you for trusting us and allowing us to care for your fur kids. It is an honor and privilege to provide medical care for the furry members of your family.

OH! Woodrow’s pathology report came back, and I am happy to report that his tumor was benign! He is still enjoying life, and living it to the fullest…… on the comfy bed!

–Jayme, Hillside Veterinary Technician