



ELDERLY POLAR BEAR BLIZZARD DIAGNOSED WITH LIVER CANCER
*25-year-old bear at Point Defiance Zoo to receive chemotherapy treatment
and other supportive care to slow progression of disease*

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TACOMA, Wash. – Blizzard, a 25-year-old polar bear at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, has been diagnosed with liver cancer and will receive chemotherapy treatment and other supportive care to slow progression of the disease.

The zoo's head veterinarian, Dr. Karen Wolf, said Blizzard had elevated liver enzymes on his recent bloodwork and was showing signs of nausea. An abdominal ultrasound and biopsies at a recent physical exam confirmed the presence of a malignant tumor in his liver.

"The good news is that we were able to detect Blizzard's cancer early," Dr. Wolf said. "With treatment, we hope to slow the disease progression, help Blizzard feel better, and prolong his life."

Dr. Wolf is working with veterinary oncologists and Blizzard's care team to develop and implement a treatment plan, including chemotherapy, pain medication and other supportive care as needed.

The elderly bear is trained to participate in his medical care, putting a paw through a specially built sleeve in his den so his care team can take voluntary blood samples that are critical to assessing his health.

"Our keepers and veterinarians know Blizzard well and closely monitor him every day for subtle changes in his behavior," said Malia Somerville, the zoo's curator of marine mammals and birds. "These strong relationships helped us identify the disease early and will help us continue to provide the best possible care for him throughout his treatment."

Blizzard arrived at Point Defiance Zoo in 1997 as a 15-month-old orphaned cub after he was separated from his mother near Churchill, Manitoba.

"Blizzard is such an extraordinary bear and a beloved member of our zoo family," Dr. Wolf said. "We have cared for him since he arrived as a cub and will continue to do everything we can to treat him for this disease and keep him comfortable."

The elderly bear continues to have access to both the viewable and behind-the-scenes areas of his Arctic Tundra habitat as he chooses and as his condition permits.

The polar bear is designated as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, and the World Conservation Union's Species Survival Commission has designated the species as facing a high risk of global extinction. As global climate change reduces Arctic sea ice, polar bears struggle to locate and catch seals, making it more difficult for them to survive.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources. A member of the [Metro Parks Tacoma](#) family, the zoo creates a legacy of sustainability for future generations through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities; it also embodies Metro Parks' mission of creating healthy opportunities to play, learn and grow. The zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).

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