

Acupuncture is not just for humans






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Dr. Stephanie Torlone, DVM, performs acupuncture treatment on Kenai, a 10-year-old Keeshond, with the help of Kenai's owner, Kathy Kienle of Montville, on Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2016, in her Niantic office. (Sean D. Elliot/The Day)

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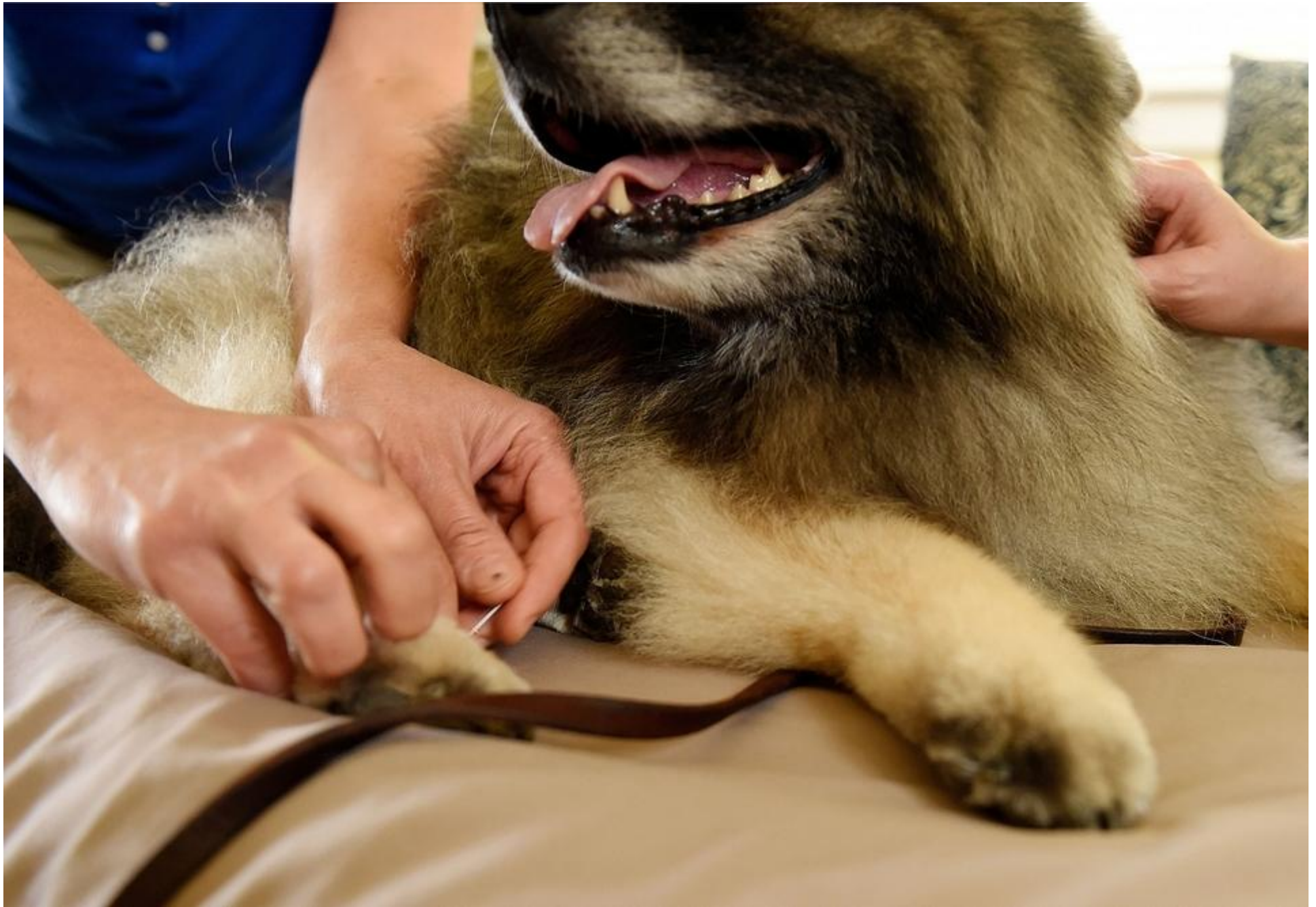
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East Lyme — Most patients don't fall asleep while at the doctor's office, but Kathy Kienle's dog Kenai was so calm during his visit with Dr. Stephanie Torlone (<http://acupuncturedog.com/>) that he started to doze off on the patient bed during treatment.

Kenai, a 10-year-old Keeshond, visits Torlone's office in East Lyme every month for cold laser treatments and acupuncture to treat mobility issues related to his epilepsy and arthritis. Kienle had tried acupuncture for her migraines, and while it didn't help her symptoms, she thought it might help her dog.

Three years later, she has noticed significant improvement for him.

"We notice that if we miss a treatment, there's a difference," Kienle, a chemist who lives in Oakdale, said. "My husband was not a believer at first ... and we missed an appointment, and he looked over and he said, 'That was helping'"



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As a veterinarian who specializes in Chinese medicine, Torlone incorporates both traditional veterinary practices and Chinese medicine treatments such as acupuncture, herbs and cold laser therapy to treat her furry patients.

Around 2000, Torlone started looking into incorporating acupuncture into her veterinarian practice after she went through acupuncture herself to treat an illness.

“I felt such a dramatic improvement after one treatment that I was really excited about it and intrigued,” she said. “I knew there was training so I could do it for animals, and that just launched me.”





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She earned her certification in veterinary acupuncture from the Chi Institute in Florida (<https://www.tcvn.com/>), which has graduated more than 5,500 veterinarians worldwide. Vets also can be certified through the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society (<https://www.ivas.org/>) and the American Academy for Veterinary Acupuncture (<http://www.aava.org/>).

While a traditional vet may focus on a patient's disease and its symptoms, Chinese medicine focuses on underlying patterns that cause symptoms. Torlone said each approach requires a different physical exam and a different set of questions for the medical history.

"You can wind up using, say, one of the herbal formulas to treat two very different diseases," she said. "It can be confusing for people, like 'Why did you give me something that's labeled for diabetes when my dog has thyroid disease?' Because the pattern is the same."





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Kenai starts his visits with a 20-minute cold laser therapy session, in which low-level lasers are used to stimulate soft tissue and loosen muscles, before the acupuncture session, which increases circulation and releases endorphins.

Kienle said she brings him in after he gets groomed because he's usually stiff and sore the next day, and he often gets up and walks around after Torlone sets the needles, sniffing around for the water dish and giving kisses to everyone in the room.



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"We got him started before he got quite to the point where he couldn't walk at all," she said. "That's the key, to not wait until it's too late."

She also has brought in Raven, her 6-month-old Keeshond, for treatment for kennel cough.

Torlone said most of her patients see her as a supplement to their regular veterinarian, but more local vets have started to refer their patients to her. On average, a visit to a vet for acupuncture can range from \$50 to \$150. Like acupuncture for humans, some pet health insurance plans will cover some of the cost of treatment.



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Torlone speaks at an annual class for students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst to introduce her practice, and she said she enjoys being able to spend more time with her patients and utilize both sides of her training.

"I like that I can use my western medical training as well as my eastern medical training and combine the two because it gives me a lot of different tools," she said. "It's really gratifying to have some different approaches to be able to do that."

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