

TABLE 6.1
Referral Considerations for Oncology Cases

Referral Considerations	Example
Determine whether the desired oncological services are provided by the oncologist.	A patient who needs radiation therapy is referred to a facility that provides it.
Outline the costs of the referral consultation and the anticipated recommendations for the patient, which helps inform client expectations and clarify the purpose of the referral.	A client desires a referral oncologist consultation to discuss their pet's palliative treatment options because financial limitations preclude them from pursuing an ideal intervention of re-excision surgery followed by chemotherapy.
Balance the urgency of the referral with the oncologist's availability to accept that referral within the appropriate timeline.	A lymphoma patient who requires immediate chemotherapeutic induction because of upper airway obstruction from submandibular lymphadenopathy is referred to an oncologist who can accept the patient that same day.
Transfer the medical documents for the referral before the referral appointment.	Blood work, radiographs, and cytology results are provided (e.g., via email, online portal, other online platform) to the oncologist before the referral appointment, including specialist interpretations (e.g., radiologist, pathologist) where applicable.
Collaborate to ensure proper and timely postreferral care.	Per the oncologist's recommendation, the client approves adding immunohistochemistry to the biopsy sample that the referring veterinarian submitted. The laboratory requires the practice that submitted the sample to approve the test and receive the results. The oncologist must inform the referring veterinarian of the added test, and the referring veterinarian must approve the test in a timely manner and share the results with the oncologist upon receipt.
Provide complete oncologist medical records and availability for follow-up questions to the referring veterinarian in a timely manner.	Timely receipt of referral letters can avoid issues if chemotherapy-induced complications arise.

The 2026 AAHA Oncology Guidelines for Dogs and Cats are available at aaha.org/oncology-guidelines.

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