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Progress in Small Animal Imaging

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The growing field of molecular imaging has accelerated the introduction of novel technologies and the development of new methodologies to investigate biologic processes in living animals that can be used as models of human diseases. Because of their unrivalled sensitivity, radiotracer-based imaging modalities such as Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT) and Positron Emission Tomography (PET) enable the noninvasive investigation of biochemical and physiological processes in vivo at the cellular and molecular levels without pharmacological side effects. However, the importance of obtaining the anatomical context alongside with the radioisotopic images is highlighted as new molecular probes capable of targeting receptors and gene expression with high specificity in selected cells and tissues are developed. In this overview, we will briefly review the most recent developments in SPECT and PET imaging, as well as survey the new multi-modality imaging methodologies being explored to provide more complete anatomical, physiological and molecular information concurrently in small animals.

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