Promoting Emotional Well-Being through Animal Assisted Therapy in Older Adults

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Emotional Well-Being

- State of mind inclusive of happiness, contentment, and satisfaction with the condition of one’s life
- Change in emotion during adulthood is a topic of interest—theoretical and clinical
- Emotional well-being and emotional complexity greater
- Well being is linked to physical and mental health outcomes\(^1\)
- Clinical nurse specialist role
  - Patient sphere to improve patient outcomes and quality\(^2\)
  - Organization wide changes focus on geriatric needs\(^2\)
Older Adults

- According to the Administration on Aging (AoA)\(^3\):
  - In 2014, # persons >65:
    - 14.5% of the U.S. Population
    - 46.2 Million people
  - By 2060 the # will double
- Assessment of mood is important part of geriatric nursing\(^4\)
  - High rate of depression in later life
  - Need for appropriate, effective, and timely care
- Meaningful activities\(^5\)
  - Paramount for health aging
  - Leads to less boredom, depression, and loneliness
Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)

- The use of animals integrated in patient/client care
- Complementary therapy
- Provides emotional and social benefits to older adults in both clinical and community settings
- Enhances communication between patient and caregiver
- Improves short term memory and triggers long term memory\(^6\)
- Provides comfort and support for patients
- Animals stimulate sensory perception and mental wellbeing without polypharmacy and high co-morbidity treatment\(^7\)
CAREing Paws at Auburn University

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AAT at a Skilled Nursing Facility

- Review of literature:
  - Nursing staff felt canines promoted a homelike unit atmosphere⁶
  - Canines improved engagement⁶
  - Canines increase social behaviors and decreased agitated behaviors⁶
AAT at a Skilled Nursing Facility

- 6 dogs used to engage participants
- 44 participants in the study
- Engagement and behavior did demonstrate positive differences in animal therapy over human
  - Increased social interactions
  - Increase in demonstration of pleasure
  - Decrease in anxiety

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Emotional Well-being - Cognitive Disorders in Community Setting

- **REACH**
  - Respite program for the cognitively impaired
    - Older adult
    - Early to moderate memory issues
    - Majority of the volunteers are >65 years of age
  - Measuring engagement in communication when AAT is in place at a community center
  - Educating caregivers on meaningful activities to engage their loved ones
  - Evaluation Summer 2017
Assisting BSN Students
References