

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

Morgan Yordy and Stuart Pope
Auburn University School of Nursing

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 outcomes¹
- Clinical nurse specialist role
 - Patient sphere to improve patient outcomes and quality²
 - Organization wide changes focus on geriatric needs²



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 nursing⁴
 - High rate of depression in later life
 - Need for appropriate, effective, and timely care
- Meaningful activities⁵
 - 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 memory⁶
- Provides comfort and support for patients
- Animals stimulate sensory perception and mental wellbeing without polypharmacy and high co-morbidity treatment⁷



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



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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



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