



The experience of a pet therapy visit on patients in an acute care setting

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Greetings from Massachusetts General Hospital



Pet Therapy Program



- Collaborative program between the department of nursing and the volunteer department
- Established at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in February of 2003
- 82,284 recorded visits with patients and countless visits with visitors and staff

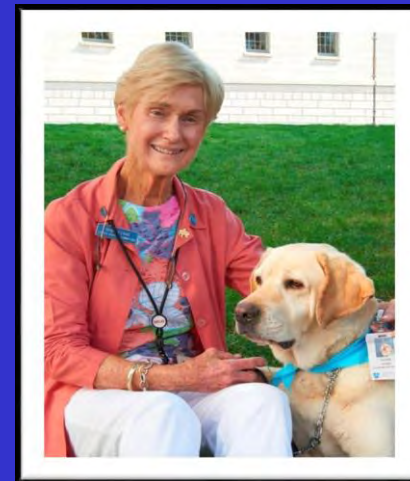
MGH Pet Therapy Volunteers



Pet Therapy Program



- MGH Volunteers
- Professionally Screened Dogs and Handlers
- Inclusion and Exclusion criteria
- Nurse driven intervention and evaluation
- Voluntary patient participation



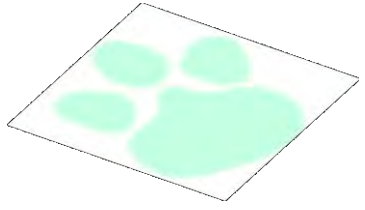
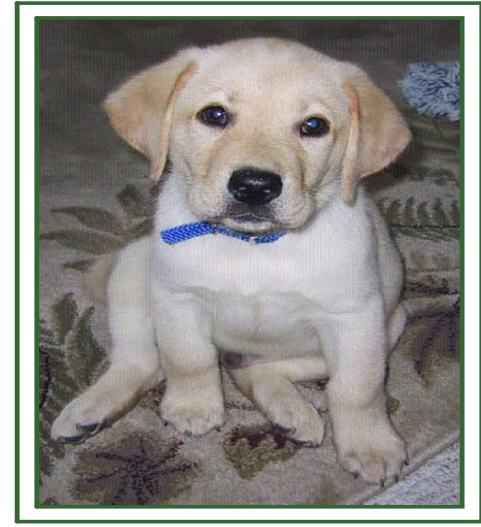
Pet Therapy Program



- Therapy dogs visit nine inpatient units, one intensive care unit and radiation oncology unit each week on Tuesdays and Thursdays
- Currently have 12 therapy dogs
 - The smallest dog is a Yorkie named Maggie
 - Majority of the other dogs are medium breeds such as Golden Retrievers and Labradors



This Floor Participates in The Pet Therapy Program



Visits with Dogs:
Tuesday & Thursday
afternoons

Ask your nurse if you are interested in participating in
this program.

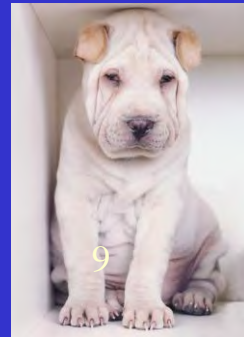
Therapeutic Effect of Pet Therapy



Pet Therapy Literature



- Florence Nightingale recognized the therapeutic value of pets. “A pet bird in a cage is sometimes the only pleasure of an invalid” (1860)
- Patient responses to this intervention include feeling happy, more calm and less lonely after a pet visit (Cole & Gawlinski, 1995)
- Patients reported feeling happy, comforted, satisfied, relaxed, attached and peaceful after a dog visit (Coakley & Somerville, 2003)
- Overall, pet therapy programs continue to flourish, but there is a lack of evidence, particularly well controlled clinical trials supporting its use.



Pet Therapy Research



Limited research indicates that people benefit from visits with animals:

- Increased interaction with others (Brickel, 1979, Friedman, et al, 1983, Madder, et al, 1989)
- Reduced anxiety, depression and loneliness (Martin, 1993, Motitz, 2002)
- Decreased blood pressure & may decrease cardiovascular risk factors (Anderson, et al, 1992, Friedman, et al, 1980, Riddick, 1985)
- Decreased pain level, increased level of energy and improved overall mood (POMS) (Coakley & Mahoney, 2009)



MGH Research

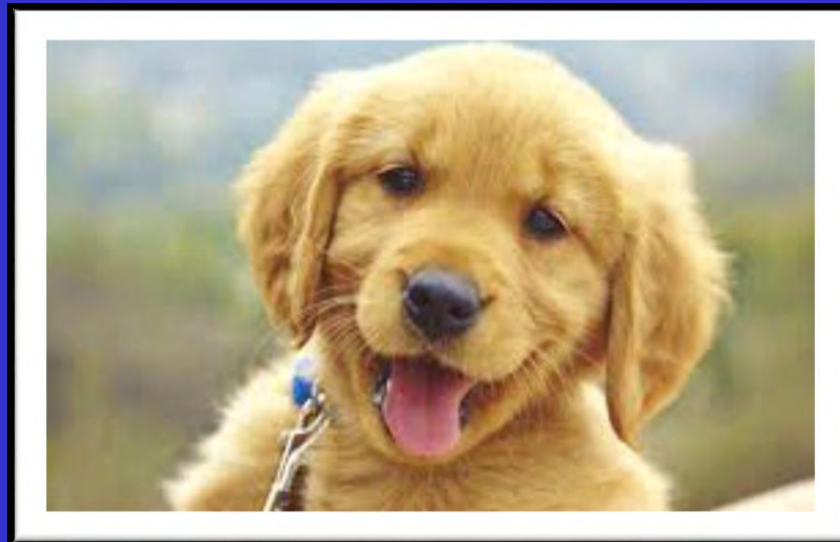
- The purpose of this study was to explore the outcomes related to well-being, stress and comfort in patients who participate in the dog pet therapy program at MGH
- Study supported by the Magellan fund established in honor of “Magellan”, a beloved pet therapy dog after his death in 2015



MGH Research Study



- Study approved by the MGH Institutional Review Board
- Fifty-five patients were recruited and consented to participate in the study, which was done on three inpatient units



MGH Research Study



Methodology

- This study employed a descriptive, non-experimental design and a convenience sample to explore the experience of a dog pet therapy program
- Measures included: vital signs, visual analog scale (VAS) of comfort and well-being, the Spielberger state anxiety index and salivary cortisol levels
- Demographic variables related to the sample were captured and statistics were applied to the demographic variables

Analysis

- Data analyzed using SPSS with a series of paired t-tests

MGH Research Study



Results

- Sample included 55 adult subjects with 25 males and 30 females, who were predominately Caucasian, 52 were pet owners and their ages ranged from 21-80 years of age.
- Significant reduction in pulse, blood pressure and respiratory rate $p < .05$
- Improved level of comfort and well being $p < .05$
- Improved levels of anxiety $p < .000$
- Non-significant results salivary cortisol $p = .769$

Conclusion & Implications



- A dog pet therapy program in an acute care hospital setting is beneficial to patients in regards to their level of comfort and well-being
- While biomarkers related to blood pressure and pulse were useful measures, the use of salivary cortisol was challenging in the clinical environment
- The findings from this research provide the foundation for and underscore the need for randomized control clinical trial research supporting this type of program



Acknowledgement



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Thank You

