Animal Assisted Therapy (Pet Therapy)

Christi Williams PT, DPT, OCS, Cert. MDT
“The human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that positively influences the health and well-being of both.

While many of us intuitively understand the benefits of positive interactions with animals in our lives, an emerging body of research is recognizing the impact the human-animal bond can have on individual and community health.”

(Pet Partners, 2016a)
My background

- Physical Therapist
  - DPT – Belmont 2005
- Clinical Experience
- Adjunct Professor -> Assistant Professor
- Service/Research/Teaching
Meet Layla
Certified Therapy Team

- Certified Therapy Team in 2015
  - Pet Partners

- Layla’s background

- Goals of today’s session:
  - Introduction to Pet Therapy
  - Therapy animal vs. service animal vs emotional support animal
  - Benefits of Pet Therapy / Research
  - Facilities Served
  - How to become a Certified Team
  - How to get Certified Teams to visit your facility
Animals & Your Health
The Power of Pets to Heal Our Pain, Help Us Cope, and Improve Our Well-Being
Therapy Animal vs. Service Animal vs. Emotional Support Animal
Therapy Animal

- “Partner with their human companions to bring comfort and healing to those in need” (Certified Therapy Team)

- Provide affection and comfort to various members of the public, typically in facilities such as hospitals, retirement homes and schools

- No special rights of access, except in facilities where they are welcomed

(Pet Partners, 2014)
Service Animal

- Defined by the ADA as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities
- Assist people who have:
  - Visual deficits
  - Hearing deficits
  - Mobility deficits
  - Seizure disorders
  - Mental illnesses
  - PTSD
  *Not a complete list*

- They are working animals and not pets
- Are permitted anywhere general public is permitted
- Life changing partners
  - Enabling people with disabilities to live more freely and independently

(Pet Partners, 2014)
Emotional Support Animal (ESA)

- Also referred to as a “comfort animal”
- Pet that provides therapeutic support to a person with a mental illness
- Must be prescribed by a licensed mental health professional

- Do not have the same rights as a service animal
- Must have permission to be in public areas
- Do have special allowance to ride on airplanes and live with owner regardless of “no pets” policy
  - Covered by Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA)

(Pet Partners, 2014)
### COMPARISON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SERVICE DOGS</th>
<th>THERAPY DOGS</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL SUPPORT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADA covered: Rights to bring animal into public establishments</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs to tolerate a wide variety of experiences, environments, people</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✗</td>
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<tr>
<td>May live with their Disabled owners, even if “No Pets” policy in place</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary function is to provide emotional support, through companionship</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specifically trained to assist just one person</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide emotional support and comfort to many people</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✗</td>
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</table>
Today’s Topic

PET THERAPY
## 2 Types of Therapy That Therapy Animals can Provide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)</th>
<th>Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>Used in conjunction with a health professional (Physician, PT, nurse, mental health professional, teacher, etc.) for patients who have specific needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>Session has specific treatment <strong>goals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
<td>Specific treatment activities – based on patient’s needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documentation</strong></td>
<td>Required – sessions are documented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visits</strong></td>
<td>Appointments are scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example</strong></td>
<td>Goal: Increase ambulation skills with a physical therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity: Child walks the dog short distance around facility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from Pet Partners, 2015
What are the benefits of therapy dog/animal visits?

- Decreased heart rate $^{1,2,3}$
- Decreased anxiety $^{4,2,5,6,7}$
- Decreased stress $^8$
- Decreased fear $^9$
- Decreased depression $^{2,5}$
- Improved cardiovascular benefits $^4$
- Increased physical activity $^{15}$

Courtesy of Vanderbilt University Medical Center
What are the benefits of therapy dog/animal visits?

- Decreased pain \(^{10,2}\)
- Decreased use of medications \(^1\)
- Increased motivation\(^9\)
- Increased compliance & participation\(^{11}\)
- Decreased cost of health care?\(^{11}\)
What are the benefits of therapy dog/animal visits?

- Improved social interactions \(^{13,14}\)
- Improved communication\(^{9}\)
- Improved staff moods \(^{9}\)

“Findings also suggest stress reduction in healthcare professionals may occur after as little as 5 min. of interaction with a therapy dog.”

(Barker, Knisely, McCain, & Best, 2005)
What are the benefits of therapy dog/animal visits?

- Improved reading\(^\text{12}\)

R.E.A.D Programs

Reading Education Assistance Dogs

www.READingPaws.org
Facilities

- Skilled Nursing Facilities
- Assisted Living
- Retirement Homes
- Rehabilitation Centers
- Hospitals
- Schools
- Libraries – R.E.A.D
- Homeless Shelters
- Hospice Care
- In-Home Visits
- Funeral Homes
- Disaster Relief
- Correctional Facilities
- VA Facilities
Regulations / Infection Control

- Regular bathing/grooming
- *Hand sanitizer before & after petting
- Sheet/towel on floor or bed
- Cleared by veterinarian
  - Healthy
  - Up to date on vaccinations
- Regular flea/tick preventative
- No visits when handler or pet are sick
- Recertification every 2 years
  - Includes testing & registration process
- 2 hour visits
- Non-threatening, well-behaved
- No raw protein diet

https://petpartners.org/volunteer/our-therapy-animal-program/volunteer-policies-procedures/
Contraindications / Considerations

- Pet therapy is not appropriate for everyone
  - Fearful
  - Allergic
  - Cultural Beliefs
  - Infection control issues (those who are sick)
  - High risk populations (severely immunocompromised)
  - Certain high stress situations (depends on the animal)
Our Certification

- Pet Partners
  - A nonprofit organization
  - Largest
  - Founded in 1977 under the name “Delta Society”
  - Changed name to Pet Partners in 2012
- **Mission:** Pet Partner’s mission is to improve human health and well-being through the human-animal bond
The Process

Basic Obedience Training → Canine Good Citizen Test (CGC) → Therapy Training Class (onsite or online) → Health Screening (vet)

Team Evaluation (Certification Exam) → Team Registration → ID badge Liability Insurance → Facility-Specific Requirements
Testing

Skills Examination
- Accept a friendly stranger
- Accept petting
- Appearance & grooming
- Good behavior walking
- Walking through a crowd
- Reaction to distractions (loud noise)
- Sit on command
- Down on command
- Stay on command
- Come when called
- Reaction to a neutral dog

Aptitude Examination
- Overall examination – ears, tail, mouth, feet
- Clumsy petting
- Restraining hug
- Staggering and gestures
- Angry yelling
- Bumped from behind
- Crowded and petted by several people
- Leave it
- Offer a treat
How did we get there?
Therapy ARC

*Therapy ARC is the only community partner of Pet Partners in TN*

- For a list of facilities that Therapy ARC graduates are currently serving, please visit their website
- For additional questions, contact: Linda Brewer

http://www.therapyarc.org/

http://therapyarc.org/facilities.htm
Layla went to school
The “Rehab Lab”
Ended up leading to a research study
We Graduated!
Where We Visit & What We’ve Learned......
What Layla & I do

- Visit Vanderbilt Health One Hundred Oaks
  - Pediatric Rehabilitation
  - Infusion Center
  - Nurses and staff
What Layla & I do

- Camp T.A.L.K

Courtesy of Camp T.A.L.K.
What Layla & I do

- Constraint Camp
What Layla & I do

- Constraint Camp
What Layla & I do

- Constraint Camp

Courtesy of Vanderbilt Health One Hundred Oaks - Pediatric Rehabilitation
Courtesy of Vanderbilt Health One Hundred Oaks - Pediatric Rehabilitation
Pups and Popsicles at Belmont
Research at Belmont

- Effect of Therapy Dog on anxiety, HR, blood pressure of 1st year PT students prior to taking a lab practical exam
- Statistical significance was found in anxiety reduction (STAI)

“We spend so much time studying for practicals and stressing out over every possible thing that could go wrong. Even 15 minutes were I could just shove all of that to the back of my mind and get rid of the knot in my stomach was worth it.”
To what extent do you feel that a Certified Therapy Dog in a PT program would benefit students?

“I think every program needs a therapy dog. Grad school is so stressful, and I had no idea how much of a difference it made on my anxiety and mental health just to have a few minutes of puppy love! I think it could make a huge impact...!”

“The program is so high stress, and we tend to get wrapped up in school and the work we have to put in. The time with Layla brought in a little bit of fun and distraction to reset our brains and help us to refocus.”
Research at Vanderbilt
Qualitative Data:

» At the end of the session, a 4-year girl said “Well.....I’m ready to go have my spinal tap now”

» One 5-year-old boy cried when he couldn't come to the clinic for his chemo because his blood counts were too low.

» One 6-year-old boy with Down syndrome wouldn’t get in the car to come to the hospital until his mom reminded him they were going to see “Swoosh” and then he jumped into his car seat and said “Let’s go, mamma!”

Courtesy of Vanderbilt University Medical Center
Are Dogs Really a Child’s Best Friend?

Background
More than 40,000 children undergo cancer treatment each day in the United States, more than 11,000 children are newly diagnosed each year. Although survival rates have improved greatly, the lingering psychological and behavioral effects may negatively impact cancer survivors and their families. Quality of life for childhood cancer patients and their families remains a concern.

Results
Changes in stress, anxiety, and quality of life among children and their parents over time were analyzed to document preliminary effects of AAI. Activities of dog and child during each intervention will be summarized.

Aims
The longitudinal study examines:

1. The physiological and psychological impact of therapy dogs on children with cancer and their parents.
2. The impact of animal-assisted intervention (AAI) sessions on participating therapy dogs.

Methods
Baseline data were collected from children newly diagnosed with cancer (N=12), mothers (N=12), fathers (N=12), therapy dogs (N=2) and owners (N=2). Families were randomized to usual care or intervention groups. Each intervention consisted of approximately 15-minute AAI sessions at the start of weekly clinic visits. Researchers collected physiologic, data, data (BI-P and cortisol level of dogs), psychological data, anxiety, quality of life, inventory of critical events for parents, and video-recording at each AAI session for 16 time points across 4 months.

“Now when we come to the hospital there are no tears and he doesn’t tense up. When we get near the hospital, he’ll start to say ‘Swoosh!’ It’s been wonderful for us, a fabulous experience. It’s made a huge difference.”

— AMY HUDDLESTON

Conclusion
This study, funded by Zoetis and American Humane Association, contributes to the state of science on palliative care. Rigorous data from the randomized trial of the psychological and/or behavioral effects of AAI for children with cancer, their parents, and therapy dogs increases our understanding of the benefits of AAI. After analysis from multiple perspectives is complete, the study will inform the optimization of future research and best practices.
Frequently Asked Questions

“How can I get Pet Therapy Interventions set up at my facility?”

1. Contact your local organizations

2. Contact Pet Partners
   1. https://petpartners.org/learn/pet-partners-at-your-facility/

3. R.E.A.D.

4. Other
Frequently Asked Questions

“What do I need to do to get myself and my pet certified?”

1. General Obedience Training / Canine Good Citizen Test
2. Take a Handler Course with a Therapy training program
3. Team Evaluation
4. Team Registration
5. Begin Volunteering!
Together we can make a difference
Thank You!

Christi Williams, PT, DPT, OCS, Cert. MDT
christi.williams@belmont.edu
- Reading Education Assistance Dogs
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9LToaB_s4I

- Pet Partners
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCXXxfVCA6Y
References