

# Pet Therapy Program and Its Effects on Anxiety and Depression on a Medical-Surgical Unit

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## Background

- Pet therapy programs researched have shown a positive impact in various long-term healthcare facilities such as hospice, home care, day cares for the elderly and the young, and hospital units.
- Increased sense of companionship, affection, and improved social interactions occur when pets, usually dogs, visit these facilities.
- In the elderly population this companionship can give a sense of self-worth due to caring for an animal, as well as help keep the patient on a schedule as a reminder to do daily activities and can even help encourage exercise.
- Pet therapy programs have been found to benefit both mental and physical health by decreasing blood pressure, anxiety, and aggression with elderly patients.
- There is currently a pet therapy program at EMMC but there is not a well advertised/structured program in place.

## Practice Change

Increase registered nurse's (RN's) knowledge of the scheduled pet therapy program.

## Methods

- Develop survey about pet therapy program.
- Distribute survey to staff and patients, willing to fill out the survey, on Merritt 3 and Grant 5.
- Analyze the results of the survey and report back to shared governance and floor managers about input from staff and patients.
- A survey will be used to obtain information from staff and oriented patients and their input on personal benefits of pet therapy. The survey will be handed out to willing staff and patients starting January 1, 2018 for one week. Once all surveys are collected, analysis will be done to conclude if participants believed this would have a positive impact for Medical -Surgical units at Eastern Maine Medical Center.



## Results

	No	Yes	Haven't heard of program
Have you ever heard of the pet therapy program at EMMC?	28%	72%	-
If so, have you ever participated in the Pet Therapy Program?	69%	13%	
If you did participate, did you notice positive aspects?	16%	34%	50%
Do pets brighten your mood generally?	12%	88%	

## Summary/Discussion

- When asked, 28% of staff members had not heard of the Pet Therapy Program at EMMC, and 69% of staff members had never participated.
- When asked about what aspects of the Pet Therapy Program could be improved or changed, these were the responses received:
  - 30% of staff wanted a more consistent schedule with the pets on the floors
  - 7% stated more volunteers would be helpful
  - 63% stated they have never heard of the program
- However, 88% of staff reported that when the therapy animals were on the floor, both staff and patient happiness levels improved.

## Conclusion

- Many staff members of Merritt 3 Surgical and Grant 5 have not heard of the Pet Therapy Program, or have not been able to utilize the program.
- Staff reported that if there was a more structured program, the program would be easier to utilize and patients would have more benefits from the program.
- Education completed on a pet therapy program would be helpful, as well as putting a structured pet therapy program in place.

### References

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