Pet-therapy: a trial for institutionalized frail elderly patients.

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Abstract
Twenty-eight subjects with chronic age-related disabilities living in the nursing home "Istituto di Riposo per la Vecchiaia" in Torino were assigned to a pet-therapy intervention group, consisting of 3/week sessions of almost one-hour visit for 6 weeks with a little cat, of to a control group undergoing usual activity programs. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of pet-therapy on nursing home inpatients. There were no differences in demographic or clinical characteristics and in mean duration of institutionalization between the two groups. Results showed that patients with animal interaction had improved depressive symptoms and a significant decrease in blood pressure values. The pet-therapy programs are desirable components of the multidisciplinary treatment for frail elderly patients in long-term care.

PMID: 15207440 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]