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The effect of different therapeutic dog programs on institutionalized residents with dementia

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The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of different therapeutic Dog Programs on improving agitation, depressive mood and social interaction of institutionalized residents with Dementia. A quasi-experimental design was applied. Fifteen residents with moderate-severe Dementia living in a Dementia Continuing Care Nursing Home were selected by convenience sampling. 15 participants were divided equally into three groups: Animal-Assisted Therapy group (AAT), Animal-Assisted Activity group (AAA), and Control group without dogs. The experiment continued for two weeks, four times a week, 40 minutes per each. During this experimental period, the AAT group experienced structured AAT activities led by qualified AAT Specialist, and the AAA group was exposed in an unstructured AAA nursing care activities with dogs, while the Control group was given common daily nursing care only. Cohen-Mansfield Agitation Inventory (CMAI), Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia (CSDD), Multidimensional Observation Scale of Elderly Subjects (MOSES), and observing records for negative agitation, depressed mood, social interaction, and positive behavior, were applied for evaluation. The results of this study showed that 1) both structured AAT group and unstructured AAA have obviously improved participants' negative agitation, depressed mood, social interaction, and positive behavior; 2) AAT group led by professional AAT specialist has significantly better improving effect on participants' "self-care function" and "disorder behavior" than the unstructured AAA group. The above results reveal the importance of AAT specialists on attaining therapeutic goals. This research 1) supports nursing homes to involve AAT or AAA programs into their daily cares; 2) highly recommends the specialist led AAT programs for improving residents' behavioral, emotional, and social functions; 3) suggests to increase the exposure times of activities, if using unstructured AAA design.

Biography

Ming-Lee Yeh is an assistant professor in the National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences. She is also the founder of The Professional Animal Assisted Therapy Association of Taiwan. This NGO proposes the concept of "Golden Triangle AAT model", and also creates the first AAT specialist training program in Taiwan. Yi-Ning Feng is a Head Nurse in the St. Joseph Home and also a certified AAT specialist in dementia care.

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