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The therapeutic use of animals in health care provision

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The benefits of animal to health have long been believed and recent research into the human animal bond and its positive effects on people has been strengthening and proving this hypothesis. My Master's research strengthened this belief so much that my D/Prof work now sees this concept being incorporated into the nursing curriculum, whereby students are introduced to the animal therapy concept, the beneficial outcomes, applications and possibilities for patient, families and staff, facilitating recovery, health and wellbeing. Students are taught through a theoretical and kinaesthetic approach allowing them to fully appreciate and understand the concept. Topics covered include prescribing animals including reptiles and amphibians, mental health surviving or thriving, basic animal therapy principles and concepts, use of unusual animals as well as mainstream pet companions. Students are taught to look at therapy within main stream health care environments (all hospital departments), community services such as GP's, health centres, care homes, palliative care, residential opportunities, day services and where appropriate and feasible patients own homes. Through the D/Prof work this approach to nursing care provision will be further developed and expanded through the three years of the course and embedded within the curriculum to enable all students the opportunity to engage actively with the subject. This also includes the opportunity for them to utilise these benefits for themselves by spending time with a dog / other animal before their big year 3 final exams to aid in personal stress relief.

Biography

Jenny Phillips is a qualified neonatal intensive care nurse where she worked for 13 years, with a passion for special educational needs and disabilities. She now works for Middlesex University as a fulltime child health lecturer and has done so for 4 years. Upon completion of her Masters a new found belief and passion in animal therapy now sees her undertaking her D/Prof within this area and incorporating the subject into the curriculum and across the different branches of nursing, as well as undertaking different research projects within the field of animal therapy.

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