Canine-Assisted Therapy (CAT): A nurse-initiated program to reduce patients’ perception of pain and anxiety at a critical access hospital

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Canine-assisted therapy (CAT): A nurse-initiated program to reduce patients’ perception of pain and anxiety at a critical access hospital

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BACKGROUND

• Patients encounter stressors impacting recovery.
• Increase concern regarding the use of opioids for pain.
• Canine-assisted therapy (CAT) has a positive impact for hospitalized patients.
• However, no studies examined the effect of CAT on reducing pain and anxiety within a rural critical access setting.
• Understanding the benefits, nurses implemented CAT at Mariners Hospital, a critical access hospital.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does CAT effect inpatients’ perceived level of pain and anxiety at a rural critical access hospital?

METHODS

• Quasi-experimental design
• Inpatients who met inclusion criteria were invited to participate
• Wong-Baker Pain Scale (WBPS) & Numerical Pain Scale (NPS) assessed patients’ pain pre & post CAT
• Faces Anxiety Scale (FAS) assessed patient’s anxiety pre & post CAT
• Participants decided length of CAT: 5 - 15 minutes
• Paired sample t-tests utilized to compare pre & post pain and anxiety reported by the participants

RESULTS

• 50 participants
• The results showed a statistically significant decrease in the pain levels pre CAT (M=2.58, SD=2.82) and post CAT (M=1.52, SD=2.17); t(49)=4.90, p=.000, cohen’s d = 0.692.
• The results for anxiety showed a statistically significant decrease in the anxiety level pre-therapy (M=2.40, SD=1.34) and post-therapy (M=1.38, SD=0.64); t(49)=6.36, p=.000, cohen’s d = 0.899.

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

• Study results strongly suggest that CAT is effective in reducing patients’ perception of pain and anxiety.
• With the increasing regulation and concern regarding the use of opioid pain medications, other interventions need to be examined and utilized to assist in reducing pain and anxiety for inpatients.
• CAT is cost effective, positive return on investment.
• Supports patients’ healing and well-being.
• CAT is a therapeutic intervention that rural critical access hospitals should consider incorporating as another modality to decrease patients’ pain and anxiety.

REFERENCES


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