

***Canines Utilised For Therapeutic Purposes In The Physical And Social Health Of
Older People In Long Term Care***

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Key to Abbreviations

AAAs	Animal-Assisted Activities
AAIs	Animal-Assisted Interventions
AAT	Animal-Assisted Therapy
ACTUARI	Analysis of Cost, Technology and Utilisation Assessment and Review Instrument
CAAs	Canine-Assisted Activities
CAIs	Canine-Assisted Interventions
CAT	Canine-Assisted Therapy
CReMS	Comprehensive Review Management System
EBHC	Evidence-Based Health Care
EBM	Evidence-Based Medicine
EBP	Evidence-Based Practice
JBI	Joanna Briggs Institute
MAStARI	Meta Analysis of Statistics, Assessment and Review Instrument
NOTARI	Narrative, Opinion and Text Assessment and Review Instrument
QARI	Qualitative Assessment and Review Instrument
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
SUMARI	System for the Unified Management of Assessment and Review Instrument

Abstract

Background

Interactions between animals and humans have been examined over many years giving rise to the belief that animals can act as therapeutic entities. Canines are the most common animal utilised due to their domestication and trainability. With the population now living longer there has been an influx of people residing in long term care facilities. The potential benefits of such interactions (referred to as canine-assisted interventions [CAIs]) for older people span across physical, emotional and social outcomes. To date the literature on this area examining the efficacy or otherwise of CAIs has been confounded by poor methodological design and variation in interventions in terms of setting, patient population, and outcomes used.

Aims

This thesis explored through the systematic review of existing literature, the role of canines as therapeutic tools in the health and social care of the older population who reside in long term care facilities. More specifically the questions addressed were:

- What international literature exists in regards to the use of canines as therapeutic interventions in the health and social care of older people?
- How feasible are CAIs in the health and social care of older people?
- How appropriate are CAIs in the health and social care of older people?
- What is the meaningfulness of CAIs in the health and social care of older people?
- What are the effects of CAIs in the health and social care of older people?

Method

The research questions were addressed by reviewing and synthesising the available international literature. This approach stems from the evidence-based movement, in particular through the development of the systematic review of evidence and its developing methodologies. Systematic reviews use transparent procedures to find, evaluate and synthesise the results of relevant research on a particular topic.

Results

Four systematic reviews were conducted to determine whether CAIs were effective, meaningful, appropriate and feasible for older people in long term care. Limited in-depth analysis was undertaken across all of the reviews due to the lack and methodological quality (design and reporting) of the available research. A fifth paper was developed to describe the common limitations associated with the current research in this area and to recommend strategies for undertaking further CAI studies.

Conclusions

CAIs may provide some short term benefits on a physical, social and emotional level for residents of long term care facilities. This systematic review of existing literature has highlighted a dearth of evidence-based material to support these benefits and considered ways in which rigorous data and evidence might be collected in future research.

Thesis Declaration

I, Cindy Stern certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Date: _____

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Finally I would like to dedicate this to my Grandpa who I did not realise at the time, inspired me to choose this topic. In his later years Pop suffered from the debilitating effects of Alzheimer’s disease and there were many times when he didn’t remember who his family and friends were but every time he saw Inca his German Shepherd (who we took in after he moved into a nursing home) there was no doubt that he recognised her and reminisced about his past Shepherds. Inca had an effect on Pop that never faltered.

Man himself cannot express love and humility by external signs, so plainly as does a dog, when with drooping ears, hanging lips, flexuous body, and wagging tail, he meets his beloved master.

Charles Darwin