Intermountain Therapy Animals

Pets Helping People
“Beyond a Walk in the Park”

The Value of Including Animals In Therapeutic Regimens

University of Utah

March 15, 2016
"My therapy is quite simple: I wag my tail and lick your face until you feel good about yourself again."
The Mayo Clinic has been using animals to assist in therapy since 1994.
Intermountain Health Care and University of Utah facilities have also been using ITA animals to assist in therapy since 1994.
The mission of Intermountain Therapy Animals is to enhance quality of life through the human–animal bond.
• Founded 1993 in Salt Lake City
• Currently 350+ Volunteer Teams
• Utah, Montana, and Idaho
• 15 Colleague groups in 12 additional states are now using ITA’s Training/testing methods
Important Distinction:

What’s the difference between a Service Dog and a Therapy Animal?
A Service Animal:

Any animal individually trained to assist a person with a disability with one or more life activities.

- from the Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990
Service Animals Have Full-Time Careers
Therapy Animals Volunteer Part-Time
How can animals be “therapy”?

What are the special qualities that enable animals to be gifted as therapists when people—even highly-trained human therapists—sometimes can’t?
Pets are good for us!
They Listen

They never talk about themselves, but listen to you while you talk about yourself, and keep up an appearance of being interested in the conversation.

– Jerome K. Jerome
English Humorist
Stephen R. Covey

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent ... to reply.”
They’re Fun!
Laughter

. . . so rarely prescribed by any clinician, is surely the most therapeutic thing in the world. Laughter is free, can be administered by anybody, and has no negative side effects.

– Alexander McCall Smith
They’re Comforters
They’re Friends
Maya Angelou:

“People may not remember what you say, but they’ll always remember how you make them feel.”
Animals are Genuine, Authentic, Whole ... and PRESENT
They let us be Genuine, Authentic, Whole
They Don't Judge or Criticize
Offer total acceptance without judgment.

Animals never cringe, flinch, judge, or turn away from our conditions.
Being with an animal:

- Blood pressure goes down
- Heart rate slows
- Breathing rate decreases
- Overall measurable relaxation
Oxytocin
The super bonding hormone
Oxytocin (The super bonding hormone)

- “like a miracle drug”
- Creates social connection
- Helps wounds heal faster
- Increases trust; makes one better at reading others
- Flu in the nose
- **Doubles** in someone stroking a pet
Even Just looking . . .
Just looking . . .
Just looking . . .
Just looking . . .
Just looking . . .
Animals connect us to nature.
Researchers have found that, regardless of culture, people gravitate to images of nature.
“Nature Deficit Disorder”
“Vitamin N”
— Richard Louv
“Nature is the ultimate antidepressant.”
“Human beings exist in nature anywhere they experience meaningful kinship with other species.”

- Richard Louv
With children:

“Animals appear almost universally to provide a beneficial and positive influence upon children.”

- Beck & Katcher, 1983
Study with Cardiac ICU Patients (UCLA - 2005):

- Baseline measurements taken with patient alone
- Human visitors: 10% reduction in anxiety
- Dog visitors: 24% reduction in anxiety; 17% reduction in stress hormones, 10% reduction in heart/lung pressure
- “You can get new drugs onto the market with less convincing evidence than that.”
Study with Stroke Patients:

... goal to work on early ambulation

- 28% refused to try to walk
- Only 7.2% refused to walk with a dog
- Walking distance almost doubled (120 steps alone, 235 steps with dog)
- Motivators for patient compliance
Help people forget pain, limitations:

- Children in an oncology unit who spend an hour with a dog need less pain medication for a full eight hours afterward.

- Adults who use pet therapy while recovering from total joint replacement surgery require 50% less pain medication.
One Conclusion:

“Dogs just may be the real wonder drug.”

– Kayla O’Malley (2008)
Another Conclusion:

Harvard Medical School says, “Get healthy, get a dog!”
Beyond Science:

“Not everything that counts can be counted.
And not everything that can be counted, counts.”

- Posted on Albert Einstein’s office door at Princeton
“We are so obsessed with science that we have come to think if we can’t measure something, it doesn’t exist.

But who can measure love?”

- Dean Ornish, MD
“Story is how we experience life and share it with others. Story is what matters—love, connection, the yearning of hearts. It’s why we live. It’s why we labor. It’s why we gather, and share, and dream. Story captivates, fulfills, changes us.”

- John McWade
Evidence-Based

“The plural of anecdote is data.”

- Marc Bekoff, PhD
Animal-Assisted Interactions (AAI)

- Animal-assisted activities (AAA)
- Animal-assisted therapy (AAT)
Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)

- Motivational
- Educational
- Entertaining
- [Progress not documented and evaluated]
Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)

- Goal-directed
- Integral part of treatment plan or educational process
- Directed by a health services or education professional
- Documented and evaluated
Some general/universal therapeutic goals

• Motivation to Participate / Heal
• Overcoming Depression
• Stimulation
• Comfort
• Trust
• Acceptance (of self, situation)
• FUN
Caleb’s Story
Animals in a therapeutic setting . . .
Typical Settings

• Seniors: care centers / assisted living
• Hospitals: room visits
Alleviate loneliness
Provide opportunity for touch
The elderly in care centers often feel lonely and isolated. But when the animals arrive, the smiles and conversations always light up the room.
Alleviate depression
Animals on the beds of patients are often more effective than medications.

—Wolfgang Piotrowski, Director The Neurological Clinic, Mannheim, Germany
Alleviate anxiety, anger
More Settings Where Animals Can Benefit Patients

- All Rehabilitation Therapies
- Crime Victims
- Prison Inmates / Youth in Detention
- Abused Children
- Children with Autism / Asperger’s
- Reading Tutoring
- CAMPS: Cancer / Grief / Special Needs
- Wilderness Programs
- Eating Disorders
Relationship and Connection

... are everything.

Foster Progress and Healing
Therapy animals open doors so that healing may begin.

— Unknown
Catalysts & Motivators
Hope can be a medicine, and love can be a cure.

— Marlo Thomas
Motivators:

Make patients eager and willing to participate in their vital therapies.
Help people forget pain, limitations
Meet us where we are (with no pressure)
The Turnaround Effect
An opportunity to do for others
Susan Daynes & Diva
New Equipment for Kids Can Turn Grind Of Physical Therapy Almost Into Playtime

Spanish Fork firm markets fun trikes developed by a University of Utah professor

BY VINCE HORIUCHI
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

The challenge in designing equipment for children with cerebral palsy is to make the devices therapeutic — without looking that way.

That was University of Utah professor Don Bloswick’s approach two years ago when he, a colleague and several students designed a tricycle for children with cerebral palsy. The CP trike is now licensed to a Spanish Fork company that sells them.

The trike, which is like a wheelchair, moves on leg power.

“They stand on the pedals and perform a walking movement like in a scissor fashion, and it propels them forward,” said Bloswick, director of the Ergonomics and Safety Program in the U’s mechanical engineering department.

“Another thing we tried to design into the trike was to make it look as much like a trike and as little of a therapy device as possible,” he said. “We used bright colors and streamers in the handle bars.”

Bloswick also helped develop a wheelchair that allows the user to easily stand up out of it. The chair uses a spring-loaded seat that slowly rises.

Bloswick said he got the ideas for his engineering projects by expanding the ergonomic designs of equipment for able-bodied people.

“Ergonomics is the same general discipline for someone working in a plant as for someone in a wheelchair,” he said. “You still need to look at what the people need and design a system to give them those capabilities.”

Safety and durability are first considerations in designing equipment for people with disabilities, Bloswick said. He also wants them to be functional, but fashionable.

Many times, however, equipment for people with disabilities is customized from parts here and there to make a device for a particular need.

“You’ve got a specific individual with specific needs, and you have to match that with that particular person,” Bloswick said. “There may not be a market for that.”

Bloswick’s trike was licensed to Viewpoint Manufacturing and comes in three models of different sizes, but also can be adapted to specific needs. They cost anywhere from $500 to $1,200.

“The intent is to try to get the therapeutic benefits out of something that is playful,” said Viewpoint President Brad Moore.
Elicit smiles, laughter, fun
Makes the environment feel more like home
Makes the environment feel more like home
Provide comfort
Foster feelings of safety and acceptance
Trustworthy
Animals often facilitate counseling
Facilitate counseling
Fears / Issues of Abuse

Developing healthy relationships /
generalizing to people
Enhance self-esteem
Increase positive expectations of both self and others
Normalize extremes in a healthy direction
Therapeutic Use of Self
Provide opportunity for nurturing, doing for others.
Encourage positive social behaviors
Animals appear almost universally to provide a beneficial and positive influence upon children.

- Beck & Katcher, 1983
Reading Education Assistance Dogs® (R.E.A.D.®)

Since 1999
A Program of Intermountain Therapy Animals
Mission of R.E.A.D.: to improve the literacy skills of children in a unique approach employing a classic concept—reading to a dog.
Focusing questions around the dog takes pressure off the child.

“FEAR CAN DESTROY INTELLIGENCE”

--William Ayers, Educator
“After the first day reading with George the R.E.A.D. dog, one of my struggling kids told me it was the best thing he’s ever done at school.”

- Hannah Nielson
- K-8 teacher, Penn Valley, California
Journey & Joshua
What Do We Hope You’ll Remember?

1. Therapy animals are not service animals
2. Therapy visits are not just “warm and fuzzy,” but a powerful and valuable therapeutic intervention
3. An animal’s presence benefits all in the environment, whether client, family, or staff—and even the team
4. Animals function as catalysts, motivators, and sources of comfort. And they’re fun.
What Do We Hope You’ll Remember? (cont.)

5. Our goal is always to TEAM with healthcare professionals.

6. Only a small percentage of pets can do this kind of volunteer therapy work.

7. We partner with our animals; we do not “use” them as tools.

8. This kind of volunteering requires an investment of time, money and commitment.
“Dog Medicine”

– Native American term for what is dispensed by the greatest healers: loyalty, service, companionship and unconditional love
The vital function that pets fulfill in this world hasn’t been fully recognized. They keep millions of people sane.

– Eckhart Tolle (words) & Patrick McDonnell (art)
In Guardians of Being
Thank You!

For more information:
Call 801.272.3439
www.therapyanimals.org