

Dog-Resident Interactions in a Japanese Retirement Home

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Abstract:

We observed a dog visitation program in a geriatric retirement home in Japan, to obtain quantitative data on the human-dog interactions. Seven volunteer handlers and seven adult pet dogs were divided into two groups. Each group visited the home on one of two activity days each month for 18 months. The program was conducted in a consistent way and the features of it did not change during the course of the study. Five to 12 senior residents, among a total of 31 (9 men and 22 women, 16 with normal/mild and 15 with moderate/severe disabilities in activities of daily living: ADL), voluntarily participated in each activity day. We focused on each dog as a target, using a focal animal sampling method, and monitored the seating arrangements of the residents. We found that both the residents and dog handlers contributed to the interaction. Affiliative physical contact was predominantly used as an interaction tool. Neither sex, ADL level, nor the rate of adjacent vacant seats affected the frequency of each resident's isolation. However, less disability in ADL and a higher rate of adjacent vacant seats facilitated more resident-dog interactions. The dogs more frequently initiated behavior toward female residents than toward males, but the sex of the residents was unrelated to the frequency of the dogs' receiving and reciprocating behaviors with the residents. Despite Japan being historically and culturally different from Western countries, the program worked well.

Keywords: [ANIMAL-ASSISTED ACTIVITY](#); [DOGS](#); [INTERACTION](#); [RETIREMENT HOME](#); [SENIOR RESIDENTS](#)

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