

HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTION (HAI) IN RESEARCH AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

Dr. Deborah Linder, DVM, DACVN

Dr. Megan Mueller, PhD

Tufts Cummings School of
Veterinary Medicine

Eliot Pearson Department
Of Child Development,
Tufts University

Center for Animals and Public Policy

WHAT IS HAI?

Any interaction between humans and animals:

- Educational outreach or activities that discuss the topic of animals or pets
- Pets in households
- Animal visitation from registered therapy animals
- Animal assisted therapy (AAT) and animal assisted activities (AAA)

HOW SHOULD WE RESEARCH THIS?

- Assess benefits or success of outreach
- Obtain information on the bond between humans and their pets
- Targeted animal therapy
 - Importance of registered and insured therapy animals: PetPartners
 - Train 'both ends of the leash,' minimize public health concerns



Photo credit: www.tufts.edu/vet/paws

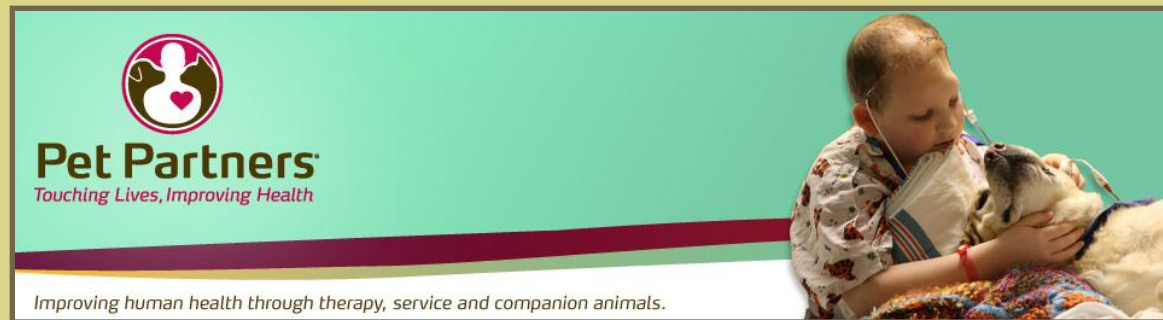




Photo credit: www.petpartners.org

LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING HAI RESEARCH

- Small, selective samples
 - Pre- and post-test designs without the use of a control group or statistical control procedures
 - Narrow scope of assessment
 - Lack of mixed methods designs
 - Lack of high quality existing data
 - Human-animal relationships can take many different forms
 - Ethical concerns with animals in intervention research
- 

COLLABORATIVE WELL-DEVELOPED RESEARCH NEEDED

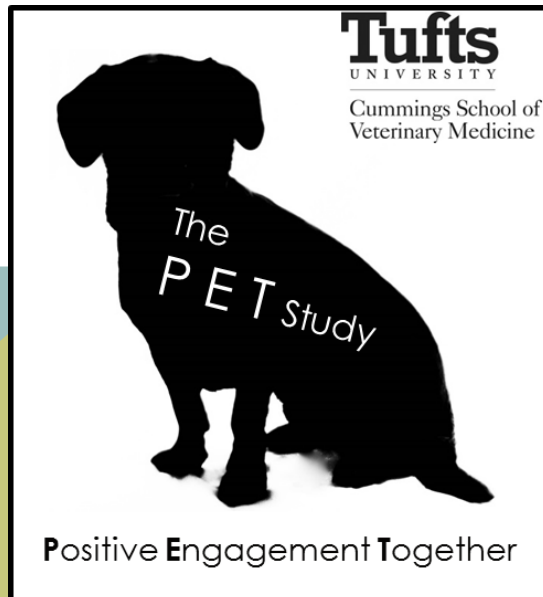
- Veterinary, medical and social science researchers needed as a team
 - Growing field of interest
 - Collaboration and teams are key
 - Standard of care for HAI programs
 - Current studies
 - Future possibilities
- 

'PET STUDY': HAI IN MILITARY-CONNECTED YOUTH

Positive Engagement Together:

Exploring the role of animals in the lives of military-connected youth

Collecting data to provide initial information about the covariation between animal ownership and psychological and physical health in middle and high school students.



R.E.A.D. PROGRAM

Pilot study:

Paws for People R.E.A.D. Program

Small sample size

Potential for further research



Photo credit: <http://www.tufts.edu/home/feature/?p=paws>

Figure 1:

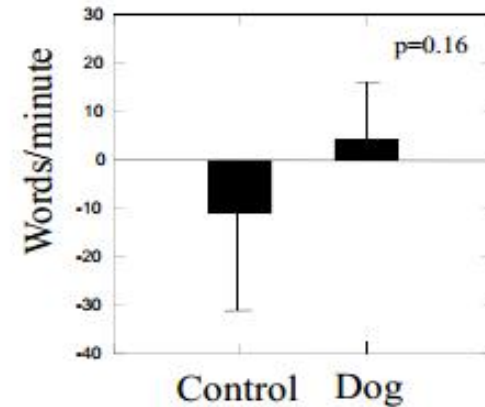


Figure 1: Change in Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) scores between baseline and week 5 in the Dog versus Control Groups.

Figure 2:

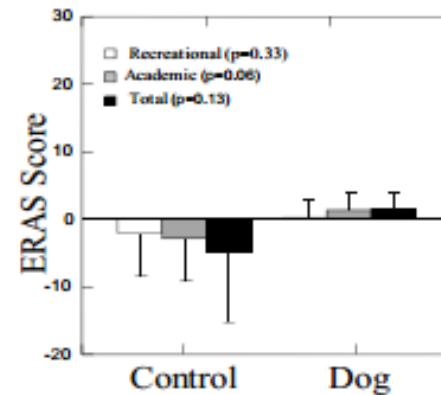


Figure 2: Change in Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) scores between baseline and week 5 in the Dog versus Control Groups.

Data credit: http://www.tufts.edu/vet/pr/resources/benefits_of_reading_assistance_dogs.pdf

PARTNERING WITH PETS TO ACHIEVE WELLNESS: PROJECT PAWS

TUFTS OBESITY
CLINIC FOR
ANIMALS

Collaborative future project with the Center for Youth Wellness at Tufts Medical Center by teaching healthy lifestyles to overweight teens through animals



10 week program:

-Animal visitation

-Videos/cases

-'You be the vet'

-Treats

-Portions

-Media

-Social support

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE HAI RESEARCH

- Clinical settings
 - HAI programs to improve patient physical or mental health
- Educational outreach
 - Integrating knowledge about human and animal well-being
- Setting new standards
 - Establishing empirically-predicated best practice for research and interventions
- Collaborative and truly novel partnerships
 - Multi-disciplinary projects aimed at health and positive development

Contact information to reach our collaborative team of researchers:

Deborah Linder, DVM, DACVN: Deborah.Linder@tufts.edu

Megan Mueller, Ph.D: Megan.Mueller@tufts.edu