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Title: ANIMAL –ASSISTED INTERVENTION FOR ELDERY WITH DEMENTIA IN TAIWAN

Keyword 1: Animal Assisted Therapy

Keyword 2: Dementia

Keyword 3: Community Care

Abstract:

Objective: This paper presents a comprehensive study on implementing animal-assisted therapy for elders with dementia in Taiwan. The focus is an AAT program held by the Dementia Center of Asia Eastern Hospital. Participants are diagnosed with dementia, with Clinical Dementia Rating (CD-R) scores ranging between 0.5 and 1.

Design: This AAT program consists of 12 sessions of animal-assisted therapy led by trained animal-assisted therapists and social workers, guiding groups of approximately 15 dementia patients. Each session lasts for two hours with structured content, using therapy dogs. The study employs diverse analysis methods. Data includes quantitative scores of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD), in-depth interviews with facilitators, and observational notes. Data includes pre -and post-testing CD-R Scores, which are utilized to evaluate dementia severity. Both quantity and quality evaluations for Individual assessments are conducted after each group session. Observations and participant feedback are recorded to evaluate the course's effectiveness.

Results: pre-defined outcomes demonstrate the program has impacts on four dimensions as below,

1. Maintain cognitive ability.
2. Emotional Expression: The elderly recall and share past experiences with animals, increasing positive emotions and language expression.
3. Interpersonal Interaction: the interactions of participants with each other and professionals increase in more natural situations, reducing patients' discomfort in the medical environment.

4. Quality of Life: AAT dogs arouse the motivation and action of the elderly to care for others and thereby gain the sense of achievement and self-worth brought by giving.

Conclusion: This AAT decelerates the deterioration of dementia patients, and also enriches well-being. Recognizing the advantages of animal-assisted therapy allows Taiwan to bolster its mission of creating friendly and inclusive care environments for the elderly.