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## A pet therapy intervention with geriatric psychiatry inpatients.

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### Abstract

**OBJECTIVE:** The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of **pet therapy** on geriatric psychiatry inpatients. A demonstrable impact could lead to more widespread or targeted use of animal companionship programs for hospitalized older persons.

**METHOD:** The study design was a randomized, parallel-group control treatment trial with pretreatment and posttreatment measures. Fifty-eight subjects with chronic age-related disabilities who were patients of the Wills Eye Hospital Geriatric Psychiatry Unit were assigned to a **pet therapy** intervention group or an exercise control group for 1 hr a day for 5 consecutive days. Every subject was blindly evaluated with the Multidimensional Observation Scale for Elderly Subjects (MOSES) before and after the intervention week.

**RESULTS:** No significant differences in MOSES scores were found between or within groups before and after the interventions. There was a nonsignificant tendency for subjects who received the pet intervention to have less irritable behavior after treatment. However, women with dementia who received either **pet therapy** or exercise intervention had improved irritable behavior scores after treatment.

**CONCLUSION:** This pilot study demonstrates the need for further research on animal-assisted interventions with hospitalized elderly persons. Differential improvement in women with dementia also requires further investigation.

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Publication Types, MeSH Terms

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