



Am J Alzheimers Dis Other Demen. 2004 Mar-Apr;19(2):111-6.

Therapeutic robocat for nursing home residents with dementia: preliminary inquiry.

Libin A, Cohen-Mansfield J.

Research Institute on Aging, Hebrew Home of Greater Washington, Rockville, Maryland, USA.
libina@georgetown.edu

Abstract

Traditional **pet therapy** enhances individual well-being. However, there are situations where a substitute artificial companion (i.e., robotic pet) may serve as a better alternative because of insufficient available resources to care for a real pet, allergic responses to pets, or other difficulties. This pilot study, which compared the benefits of a robotic cat and a plush toy cat as interventions for elderly persons with dementia, was conducted at a special care unit of a large, not-for-profit nursing home. Various aspects of a person's engagement and affect were assessed through direct observations. Though not identical, similar trends were seen for the two cats. Interacting with the cats was linked with decreased agitation and increased pleasure and interest. The study is intended to pave the way for future research on robotherapy with nursing home residents.

PMID: 15106392 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

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