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Evaluating college student interest in pet therapy.

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Abstract

The first year of college can be extremely stressful, especially for students residing on campus.

OBJECTIVE: The authors obtained information from college freshmen about their relationships with pets and investigated interest in a **pet therapy** program as social support for transient stressful periods.

PARTICIPANTS: As part of a university orientation program, 246 college freshman attended 1 of 5 health issues sessions offered during the 2006-2007 academic year. Approximately 50 freshmen attended each session.

METHOD: Participants completed a questionnaire at the beginning of the session, followed by a 20-minute presentation about **pet therapy** that ended with **pet therapy** visitation.

RESULTS: Students identified that visits with certified **pet therapy** dogs could be beneficial to college freshman during their first year away from home.

CONCLUSIONS: These students indicated that a **pet therapy** program could temporarily fill the absence of previous support systems and be a catalyst for establishing new social relationships.

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MeSH Terms

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