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Canine visitation (pet) therapy: pilot data on decreases in child pain perception.

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Abstract

PURPOSE: To explore the effectiveness of canine visitation therapy (CVT) in pediatric pain management in a tertiary care children's hospital, a descriptive pilot study was conducted.

METHOD: A convenience sample of 25 English-speaking children ages 5 to 18 years who underwent surgery and experienced acute postoperative pain participated in a standard, one-time CVT intervention. Each child completed a pre-post survey and a post intervention interview.

FINDINGS: Quantitative pre-post findings indicate that CVT significantly reduced perceived pain. Qualitative findings suggest that one mechanism that makes CVT effective may be cognitive. That is, CVT distracts children from pain-related cognition and possibly activates comforting thoughts regarding companionship or home.

CONCLUSION: The study findings suggest that CVT may be a useful adjunct to traditional pain management for children.

IMPLICATIONS: Nurses may better serve their patients when CVT is an option.

Comment in

Commentary on "canine visitation (pet) therapy: pilot data on decreases in child pain perception".

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