

Caring for Both Ends of the Leash: Effects of Owners Visiting their Dogs Hospitalized in an Intensive Care Unit



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Introduction:

Research has shown the importance of the human-animal bond, especially concerning the positive effects that animals have on the lives and health of people. Some benefits include lowering cholesterol, lowering blood pressure, reducing stress levels and improving mental health. Unfortunately there has not been much research conducted on the effects that humans have on their pets.

Specific Aims & Hypothesis:

This study aims to:

- Examine clinical effects in dogs hospitalized in a small animal hospital intensive care unit when visited by owners
- Determine if there are beneficial or detrimental effects on the dogs that are visited.
- Study the owners' perceived benefits of their visit

HYPOTHESIS:

There will be no negative effects of owner visitation on heart rate, blood pressure or pain in dogs hospitalized in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).



Sample and Methods:

- One-group, pretest-post-test design is used to study 40 dogs hospitalized for medical and surgical conditions and their owners
- Blood pressure, heart rate and pain are assessed at 4 intervals:
 - Before the owner visits
 - 5 minutes into the visit
 - Just before the owner leaves
 - 5 minutes after the visit has ended

Variable	Visitors (N=11)	Variable	Dogs (N=11)
Owner Age (Years)	Range= 28-64 Mean= 47	Dog Age (Years)	Range= 1-13 Mean= 6
Owner Gender	Female= 8 Male= 3	Dog Gender	Female= 9 Male= 2
Owner Race	Caucasian= 11	Days in ICU at time of visit	Range= 1-4 Mean= 2.5
Owner Marital Status	Married= 8 Not Married= 3		

Instruments:

- Heart rate and blood pressure are measured using a portable Cardell Vet Monitor 9401 BO with an appropriately sized blood pressure cuff
- Heart rate is measured concurrently by auscultation
- Pain is measured using a modified version of the Glasgow Composite Measure Pain Scale
- Owner questionnaire is completed following the visit

Results:

Study in Progress

Interval	Heart Rate (BPM)	Blood Pressure Systolic	Blood Pressure Diastolic	Pain Scale 0-12
Before Owner Visit	Range= 63-124 Mean= 95	Range= 120-208 Mean= 155	Range= 68-123 Mean= 81	Range= 1-4 Mean= 2.7
5 minutes Into Visit	Range= 64-126 Mean= 92	Range= 122-202 Mean= 157	Range= 51-132 Mean= 90	Range= 0-4 Mean= 0.9
Before Owner Leaves	Range= 78-129 Mean= 102	Range= 134-215 Mean= 171	Range= 64-173 Mean= 111	Range= 0-6 Mean= 1.5
5 minutes after Owner leaves	Range= 70-133 Mean= 98	Range= 117-213 Mean= 164	Range= 67-125 Mean= 98	Range= 0-6 Mean= 2.5

Sample Descriptions:

Owner	Dog
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Conclusions:

- We have completed the data collection for the first 11 study subjects.
- Data collection is on-going.

This project is made possible by:

