

**Paws for Help – Animal-assisted Therapy**

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**Introduction:**

Previous research indicates that pet ownership and animal assistance in therapy and education may have a multitude of positive effects on humans, providing physical, physiological and psychological health benefits for patients.

Animal-assisted Therapy is a goal-directed intervention, led by a specialized professional, in which an animal that meets specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. There are specified goals and objectives for each individual and measured progress.

Literature has been cementing the idea that animals presence, spontaneous behaviors and availability for interaction may facilitate therapy.

It has been demonstrated that interactions with a friendly animal can result in reducing levels of cortisol and increasing oxytocin, dopamine, endorphins and phenethylamine.

**Objectives and Aims:**

The authors aim to study Animal-Assisted Therapy regarding animal-human relation, characteristics of the animals, theoretical bases, definitions, types of therapies and results.

**Methods:**

It was conducted a review of the literature about Animal-assisted Therapy.

**Results and Conclusions:**

Recent research shows how interaction with animals can benefit individuals with a range of mental health issues, including affective disorders, anxiety, dementia, schizophrenia and trauma.

Scientific evidence on the effects is far from being consistent. It's necessary to conduct rigorous studies to prove the efficacy of Animal-Assisted Therapy, so it could become an empirically supported treatment.

It's also important to standardize terminology and methodologies.

Overall, Animal-assisted Therapy is an emergent field in mental health, and it can potentially be a very useful complement for the treatment of mental disorders.