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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Heart Rate (BPM)</th>
<th>Blood Pressure Systolic</th>
<th>Blood Pressure Diastolic</th>
<th>Pain Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Owner Visit</td>
<td>Range= 63-124</td>
<td>Range= 120-208</td>
<td>Range= 88-133</td>
<td>Range= 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean= 95</td>
<td>Mean= 155</td>
<td>Mean= 81</td>
<td>Mean= 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes into Visit</td>
<td>Range= 64-126</td>
<td>Range= 122-202</td>
<td>Range= 53-152</td>
<td>Range= 0-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean= 92</td>
<td>Mean= 157</td>
<td>Mean= 90</td>
<td>Mean= 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Owner Leaves</td>
<td>Range= 76-129</td>
<td>Range= 134-215</td>
<td>Range= 64-173</td>
<td>Range= 0-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean= 102</td>
<td>Mean= 171</td>
<td>Mean= 111</td>
<td>Mean= 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes after Owner leaves</td>
<td>Range= 70-133</td>
<td>Range= 117-213</td>
<td>Range= 87-125</td>
<td>Range= 0-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean= 96</td>
<td>Mean= 164</td>
<td>Mean= 98</td>
<td>Mean= 2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

This project is made possible by: