

Does Pet Therapy Benefit Clients In A Brain Injury Rehabilitation Centre?



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Introduction

Pet therapy builds on a natural pre-existing human-animal bond. Using this natural relationship, pet therapy aids progress toward goals in physical, social, emotional, and cognitive functions ^{1, 2}.



Methods

- All dogs certified by the SPCA outreach therapy pets
- Available for all clients at ABI
- Consent gained through clients or family
- Therapists identified goals for pet therapy
- Four clients are presented due to their consistent engagement in the programme
- The pet therapy programme included dogs on site two days per week and involved four dogs.
- Retrospective thematic analysis was completed

Results

Within the four reviewed case studies, benefits were noted within all themes reviewed over the period of their inpatient rehabilitation. Clients also reported a significantly positive experience during all pet therapy sessions.

Thematic Analysis of Clinical Notes

✓ Improvements in verbal short term memory – details and names of dogs

✓ Able to sustain attention for 30minutes with dogs

✓ Functional dysarthria work giving the dogs commands and calling them “Good Girl”

✓ Able to recall episodic details from pet therapy sessions

✓ Improving co-ordination and control of left and right upper limb

✓ Appropriate use of functional objects (comb) in pet therapy session

✓ Visually engaged for 30 minutes

✓ Calmly sitting with the dog

✓ Promoting communication through greetings with dogs

✓ Smiling when visited by dog

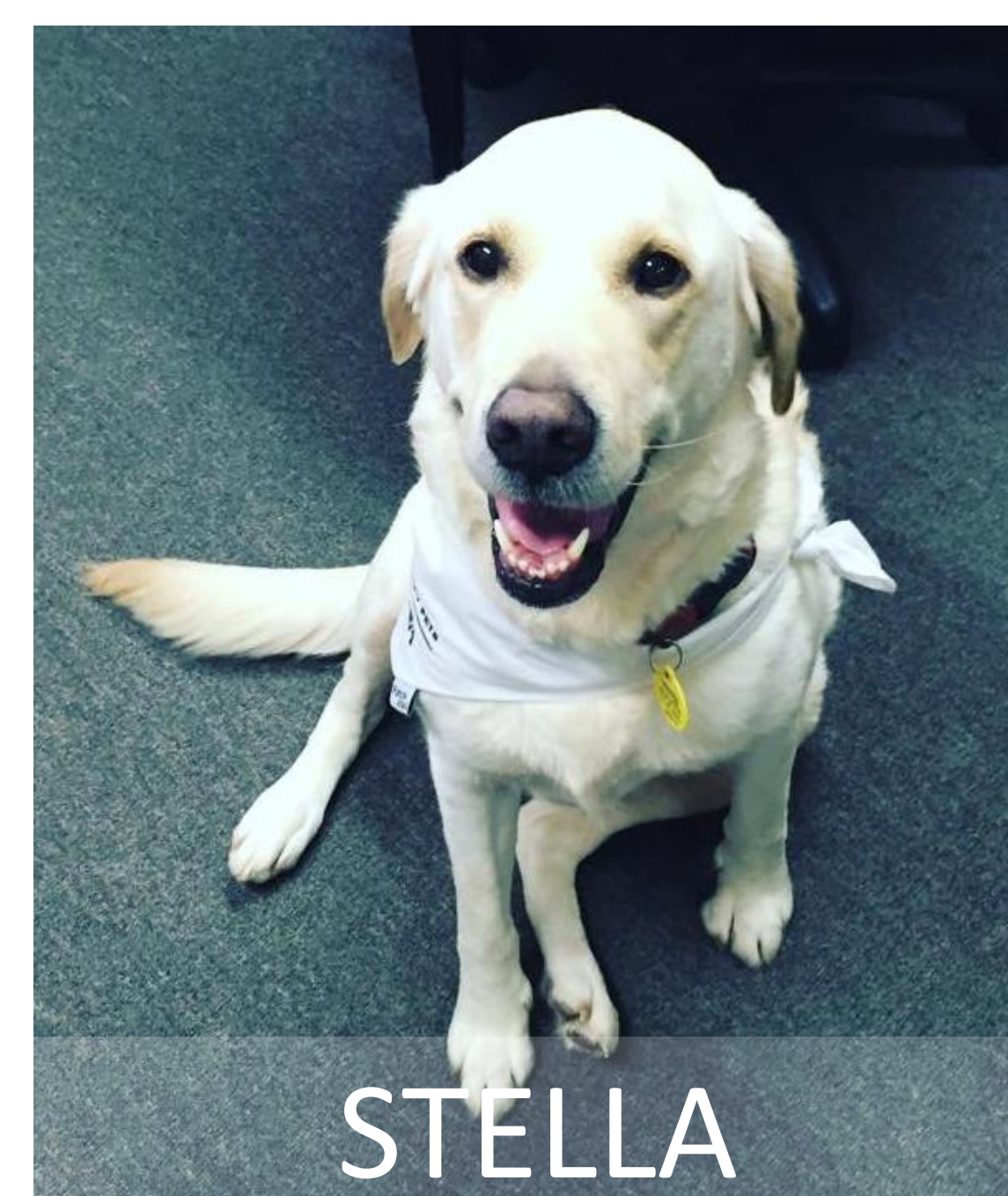
✓ Improving mood and engagement in rehab



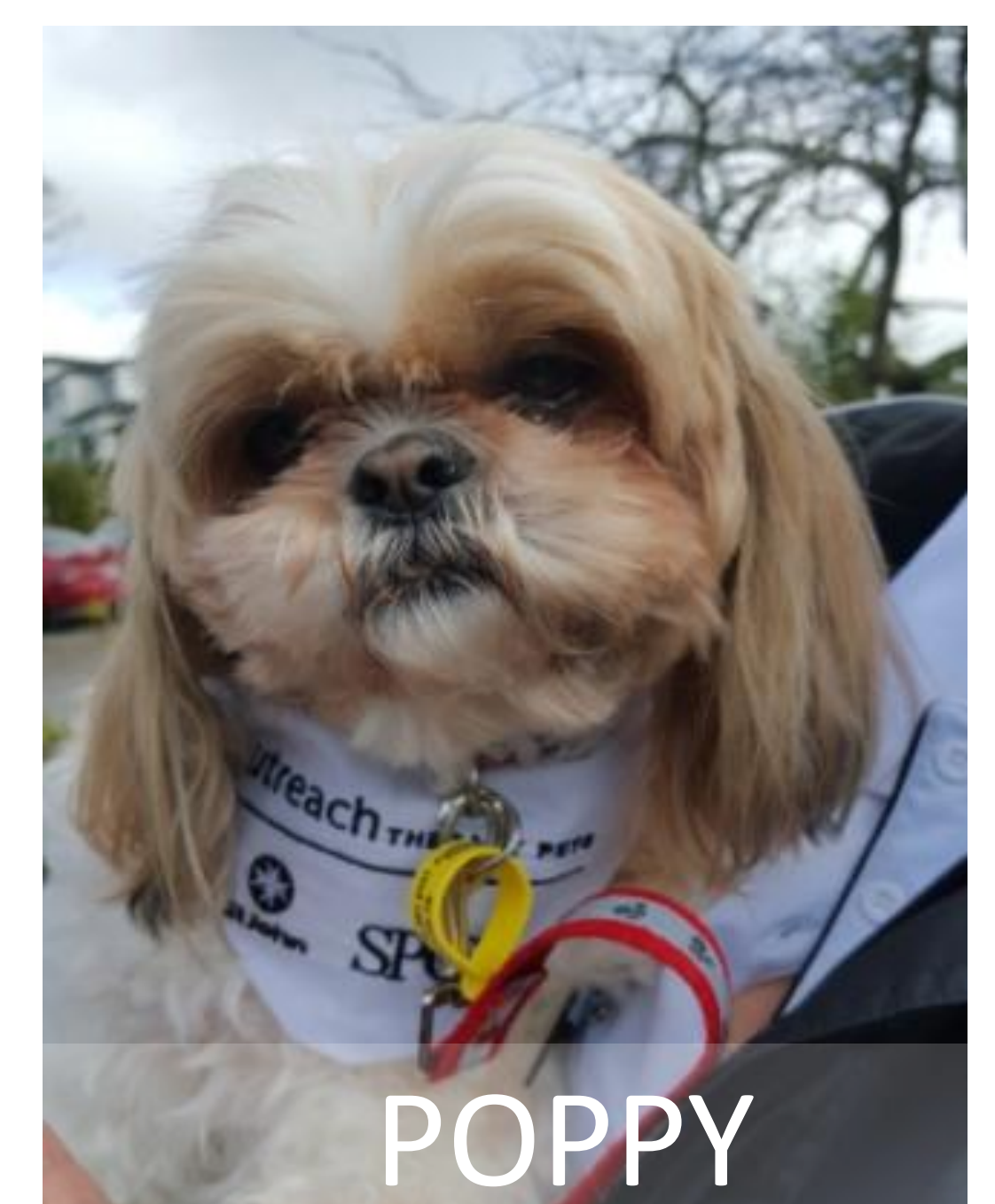
SANDY



BRUCE



STELLA



POPPY

Appropriate and increased initiation of conversation

Increased memory and recall

Increased functional use of objects

Reduced behavioral episodes

Increased visual skills

Increased upper limb function

Discussion

This quality project indicated a need for an outcome measure to gather quantitative measures, i.e. timed trials around increased engagement and attention. These improved benefits cannot be claimed to be solely due to the pet therapy however this treatment option served to offer a positive medium in working with the client on their goals. Positive affects have also been observed with staff through having dogs at the workplace, lifting mood and increasing communication.

Pet therapy appears to be beneficial for clients with traumatic brain injury on multiple levels and will continue at ABI Rehabilitation.

References

1. American Veterinary Medical Association. 2013. Guidelines for animal-assisted activity, animal assisted therapy, & resident animal programs.
2. Matuszek, S. 2010. Animal-facilitated therapy in various patient populations: Systematic literature review. Holistic Nursing Practice. 24:187

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