

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

PETS AND HUMAN QUALITY OF LIFE

Dear Sir,

The contribution of pets to human quality of life, mainly regarding hospitalization of their owners, has been the subject of many recent publications in Brazil and abroad.

A number of authors have noted several important improvements in hospitalized patients, such as better social interaction, mood changes, motor benefits and improved quality of life after contact with their pets. Dogs and cats should be looked at more closely in such studies since they are frequently considered part of the family unit. Other small pets that also take part in Assisted Animal Intervention, although to a lesser degree, may also be carriers of organisms of zoonotic interest.

The presence of pathogenic micro-organisms related to pet visits to hospitalized patients has been identified in some publications, namely Weber et al. (2011) who found helminths and protozoa with zoonotic potential such as ancylostomids, *Toxocara* and *Giardia* in parasitological examinations of dog feces.

There is no consensus in relation to the introduction of pets into this environment. Nevertheless, according to Caprili & Messeria (2006), working with animals and hospitalized patients produced favorable results in children with terminal diseases in a hospital in Italy. This study involved 138 children over a one-year period, with the purpose of determining the infection rate before and after pet visits. According to the authors, dogs had a positive effect on terminal patients while infections rates were kept to a minimum.

Even considering that pathogen transmission by animals in these situations is slight; the subject requires further studies presenting consistent results. Murthy et al. (2020) suggest a number of guidelines and note that the subject of animals transmitting pathogens in hospitals has been poorly addressed.

Considering the work of the afore mentioned authors as well as the references in the “opinion article” by Avila-Pires (in this issue) I would agree with Mandrá et al. (2019) that “the utmost attention is necessary to avoid the introduction of pathogens by means of measures such as guidelines to minimize the dissemination of animal transmitted infections”

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Finally, these visits should undergo active surveillance and animal selection should be performed according to examinations conducted by a veterinarian, planned and programmed according to the risk of exposure.

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