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Canine-Assisted Therapy (CAT): A nurse-initiated program to reduce patients' perception of pain and anxiety at a critical access hospital

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BACKGROUND

- Patients encounter stressors impacting recovery.
- Increase concern regarding the use of opioids for pain.
- Canine-assisted therapy (CAT) has a positive impact for hospitalized patients.
- However, no studies examined the effect of CAT on reducing pain and anxiety within a rural critical access setting.
- Understanding the benefits, nurses implemented CAT at Mariners Hospital, a critical access hospital.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does CAT effect inpatients' perceived level of pain and anxiety at a rural critical access hospital?



METHODS

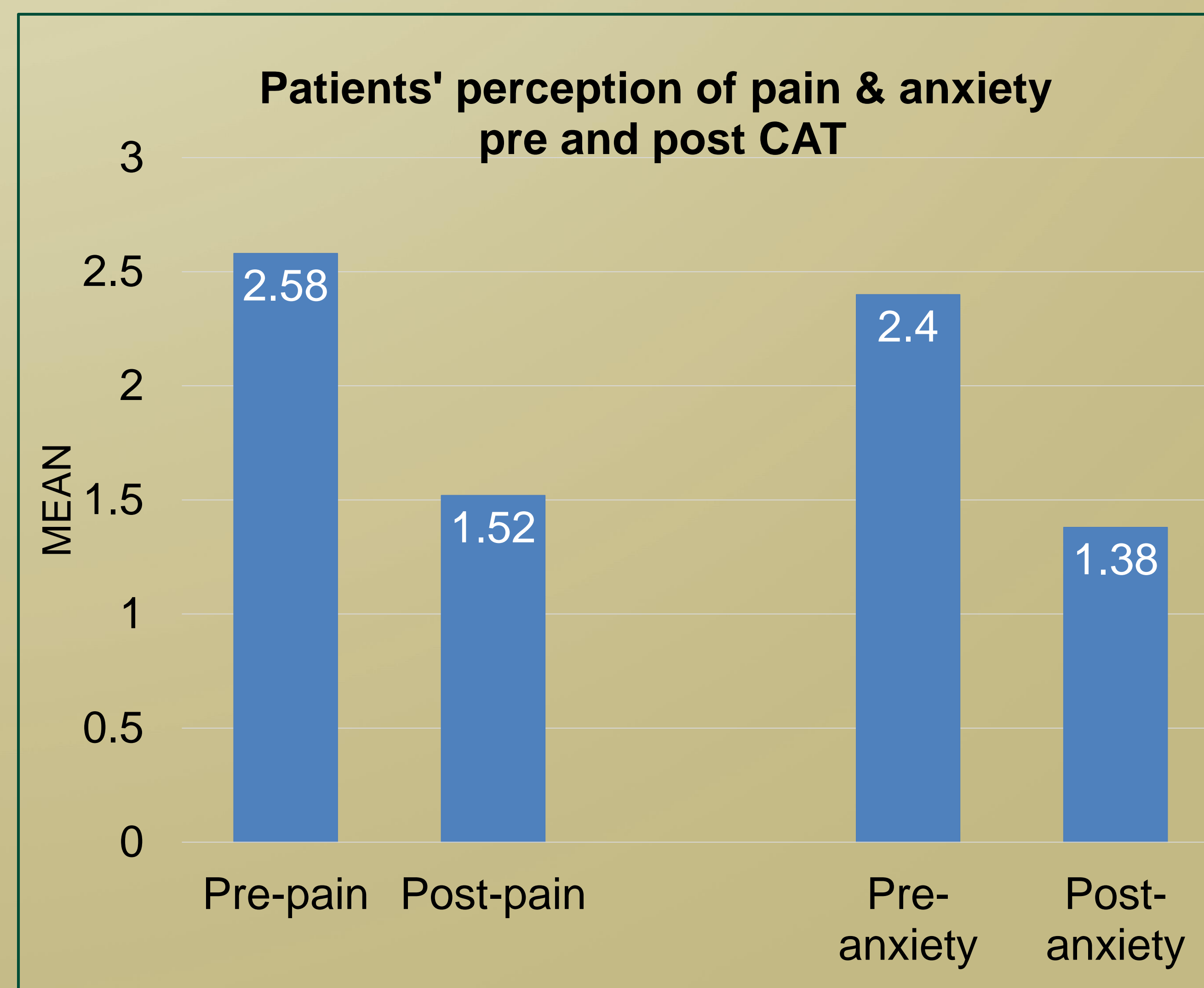
- Quasi-experimental design
- Inpatients who met inclusion criteria were invited to participate
- Wong-Baker Pain Scale (WBPS) & Numerical Pain Scale (NPS) assessed patients' pain pre & post CAT
- Faces Anxiety Scale (FAS) assessed patient's anxiety pre & post CAT
- Participants decided length of CAT: 5 - 15 minutes
- Paired sample t-tests utilized to compare pre & post pain and anxiety reported by the participants



Ollie: Mariners Hospital Certified Therapy Dog

RESULTS

- 50 participants
- The results showed a statistically significant decrease in the pain levels pre CAT (M=2.58, SD=2.82) and post CAT (M=1.52, SD=2.17); $t(49)=4.90$, $p=.000$, $\text{cohen's } d = 0.692$.
- The results for anxiety showed a statistically significant decrease in the anxiety level pre-therapy (M=2.40, SD=1.34) and post-therapy (M=1.38, SD=0.64); $t(49)=6.36$, $p=.000$, $\text{cohen's } d = 0.899$.



CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

- Study results strongly suggest that CAT is effective in reducing patients' perception of pain and anxiety.
- With the increasing regulation and concern regarding the use of opioid pain medications, other interventions need to be examined and utilized to assist in reducing pain and anxiety for inpatients.
- CAT is cost effective, positive return on investment.
- Supports patients' healing and well-being.
- CAT is a therapeutic intervention that rural critical access hospitals should consider incorporating as another modality to decrease patients' pain and anxiety.



Sonny: Mariners Hospital Certified Therapy Dog



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