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The Canine Touch

Nursing home staff perceptions of visiting dogs' relevance for people with dementia

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The problem

- Many residents in nursing homes have dementia, and as the condition progresses, activity options narrow down, behavioural and psychological symptoms such as apathy or agitation increase, and opportunities for pleasant encounters decrease (Cadioux et al, 2013).
- This burdens staff of nursing homes, too, and burned-out staff provides poorer care, which in turn increase symptoms of dementia (Barbosa et al., 2015).
- Visiting dogs remain a viable option for even people with severe dementia (Bernabei et al, 2013; Thodberg et al, 2016).
- Rossetti (2008) explored animal assisted therapy as positive for staff too, but more research is needed on how staff perceives potentials and pitfalls of visiting dog programmes.

Objective

Explore staff descriptions of visiting dogs' impact on residents with dementia, themselves, and the ward milieu.

Method

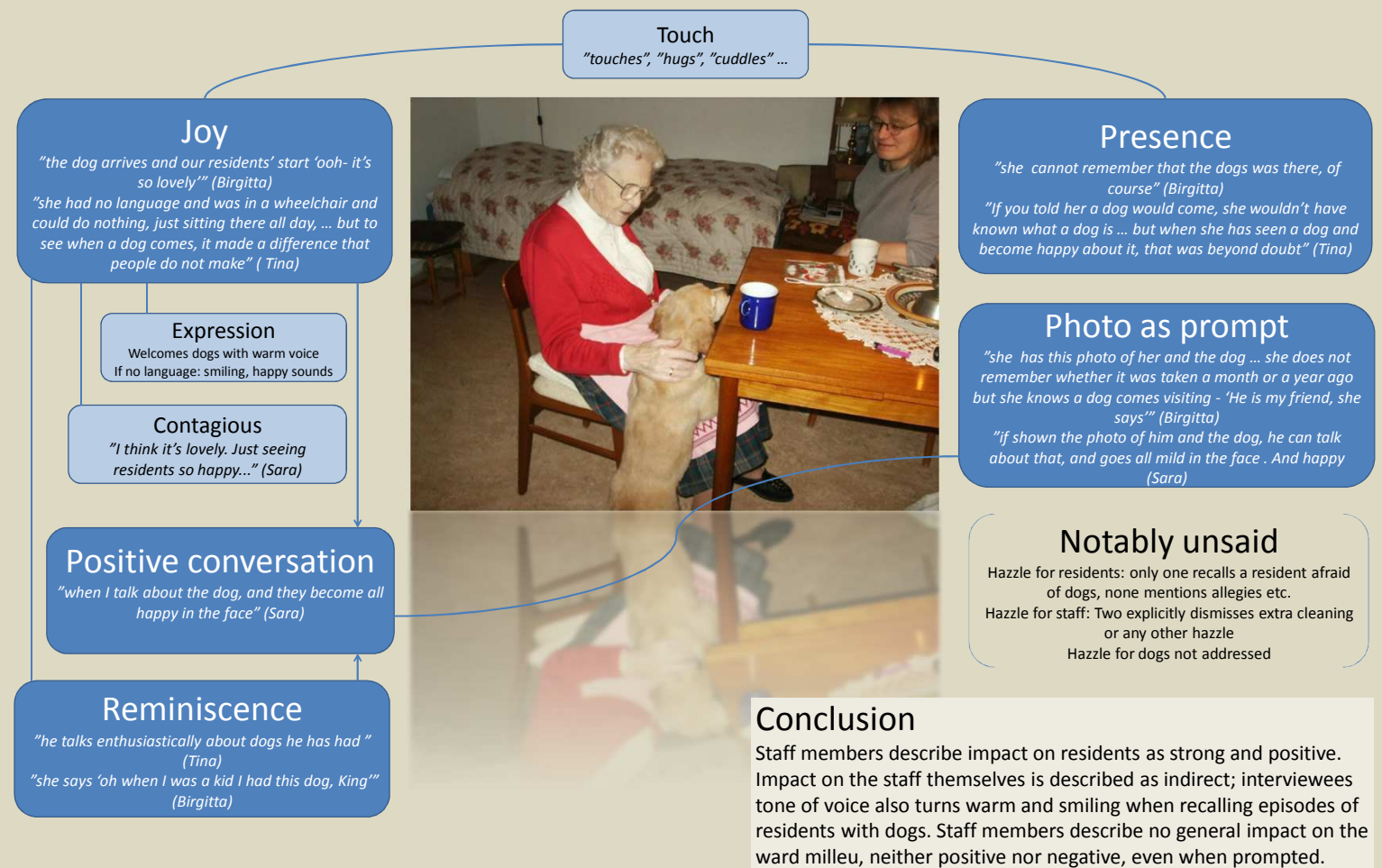
The study is part of the "Between visit effects?" dimension of a project investigating how to improve dog visits at nursing homes. (Thodberg et al, 2015)

After an experimental series of dog visits run by KT, TGBH conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews (1 hour) with nursing home day team members (N=3). Arrangements were made by nursing home management. The interview guide addressed the three themes of the objective, including questions about between visit effects and pros/cons.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and cross-case analysis was applied by TGBH & CG.

The epistemological approach is critical realism (Lund, 2005), and themes were semantically derived, theoretically governed by the three aspects expected from the literature and made explicit in the objective and interview guide (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Predominant **themes** and **subthemes** were found in all interviews. Names are pseudonyms.



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