

The Effect of Dog Therapy on Ambulance Service Staff Burnout



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Introduction

- NHS Trusts are keen to improve staff welfare
- Ambulance Staff have the highest rates of suicide
- Small sample of nurses - 76.6% (strongly) agree pet therapy would ↓ **stress** and ↑ **wellbeing**. (Stallter & Gustin 2021).
- Qualitative research with health care professionals utilising therapy dog services reported **lower levels of stress**, on stress scales and verbal scoring systems. (Kline et al, 2020).



There is no evidence relating to therapy dogs and burnout in ambulance service staff – (And there still isn't!)

Methods

- Observational feasibility study of existing dog therapy service.
- Recruitment target of 20 participants
- 2 cohorts of staff
 - Face-to-face patient contact
 - Remote patient contact
- Participants to approach research team
- Participants sent electronic consent form
- Complete a Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) as baseline and a follow up after 8 weeks of dog therapy.

Eligibility Criteria

- Taking part in YAS dog therapy scheme
- Participated in less than 2 previous dog therapy sessions prior to enrolment
- Working in a role with patient contact (remote or face-to-face)

Planned Outcome Measures

- Mean difference for each section of the CBI between baseline and follow-up.
- Number of times engaged in dog therapy
- Withdrawal rate
- Effect of dog therapy on ambulance turnaround times
- Sensitivity analysis for those attending ≤5 or ≥6 sessions.
- Descriptive statistics for demographic data collected.



Results

- Recruitment n=14, baseline survey n=7, follow up survey n=0

	Overall
Mean CBI Score (SD)	
Client Related Burnout	53.6 (20.6)
Work Related Burnout	62.2 (11.6)
Personal Burnout	57.1 (16.7)
Overall	57.7 (15.0)
Median CBI Score (IQR)	
Client Related Burnout	54.2 (72.9–35.4)
Work Related Burnout	64.3 (67.9–55.4)
Personal Burnout	60.0 (70.0–45.0)
Overall	62.3 (67.0–47.8)

Conclusion

- The success of the therapy dogs project is the fundamental flaw in this research project – too few people met the inclusion criteria so there was an inadequate number of participants.
- Repeat in an area where therapy dogs are newly introduced
- Redesign the study so participants complete all study activities in one session