

## **A Multicenter Study of Animal-Assisted Activity and Anxiety Among Older Adults Hospitalized in Acute Care Settings**

Investigators: Patricia Panfile MA RN CPAN

Hunterdon Medical Center Medical Center Flemington, New Jersey

Co-Investigators: Donna Cole PhD RN CNOR NE-BE CDE,

Mildred Ortu Kowalski PhD RN NE-BC CCRP, Carnette Smith MS RN-BC, Eileen Bersick PhD RN,

Nowai Keleekai-Brapoh PhD RN NPD-BC, Sami V. Abate PhD RN

**Introduction:** Hospitalizations in the older adult population are increasing. This can be a very stressful and anxiety provoking time for the older adult. Physiological changes in the older adult make anti-anxiety medication difficult because side effects may impact mobility and /or perception.

**Purpose of the Study:** The study was to determine if an animal-assisted activity (AAA) visit from a registered human-animal team would reduce perceived anxiety for older hospitalized adults.

**Methodology:** A multicenter, interventional, comparative, pre-post design was used. The short form Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory was used. The Spielberger short form measures perceived anxiety.

The study was conducted in eight medical centers in one north-eastern state in the United States. The final sample size was 140. The median age was 75. 69 Males and 71 females participated in the study.

**Results:** The pre visit median anxiety score was 14. The post median anxiety score was 10. The median difference was -3; this difference was statistically significant (Wilcoxon Statistic=705.5,  $p<0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** AAA significantly decreased anxiety in older adults with mild anxiety during inpatient hospitalization. This non-pharmacological intervention can be considered as an alternative intervention for anxiety in this population.

**Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research:** In the future, research can explore if using the AAA team can reduce patient's pre-operative anxiety.