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The Effects Pet Dogs and Cats Have On Children

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Abstract:

The following report will discuss some of the positive effects dogs have on people such as the associations with healthy weight and mental health among children and the possibilities of using dogs to prevent types of chronic diseases. This report will also compare and discuss some of the negative effects cats have. The first study was cross-sectional and it obtained a sample of children over 18 months in a primary care setting with a mean age of 6&7 years old, it studied 643 children; 58% of which had pet dogs in the home. The parents of children aged 4 to 10 years completed the DartScreen, its main domains being child body mass index (BMI), physical activity, screen time, mental health, and pet-related questions. The second study was obtained through a total of 9354 children, aged 5–17 years, from 24 elementary schools and 24 middle schools in the Seven Northeastern Cities were evaluated during 2012–2013. BP measurements were taken using a mercury sphygmomanometer. Hypertension in children was defined as having an average DBP or SBP in the 95th percentile or higher for the child's sex, age, and height. The last study was done by comparing 180 children who lived with cats with 463 children who did not have cats. The first study concluded that having a pet dog in the home was associated with a decreased probability of childhood anxiety, The second suggested that Pet ownership reduces the odds of hypertension and elevated BP in children. Lastly, the third study ultimately found that children with cats had three times the risk of developing mental health problems compared to children without cats, and that they had much more attention problems; there was also no evidence of lowered anxiety as there was with dogs.

Introduction:

It is believed that pets have a positive influence on humans' physical and psychological wellbeing, as well as their close relationships. In general, people who hold a positive view of people in turn hold a favorable view of pets. Childhood mental illness and obesity are significant public health problems around the world. Preventive and early intervention approaches are needed, due to these conditions starting in childhood. Pet dogs have been linked with varied positive physical and mental health benefits for adults, that are promoted by the US Public Health Service (USPHS). Although we know a lot dog ownership affects on adults and how it may improve physical activity, body weight, and mental health, there is a lot less known about the relationship between pet dogs and children's health. In Australia and the United Kingdom, dog ownership was associated with increased accelerometer measured physical activity among children aged 5 to 12 years and a lower likelihood of overweight or obesity among children aged 5 to 6 years. In those countries, the idea that promoting walking and active play with a dog is an effective strategy to increase children's physical activity. The question of whether dogs and cats are good for kids is particularly important.

Discussion:

It is suggested that children who have a pet dog in the home have a lower anxiety screening score than children who do not. A greater percentage (21%) of children without pet dogs than children with pet dogs (12%) had a SCARED-5 score of 3 or higher, a point at which further assessment is indicated to diagnose anxiety. Despite controlling for age, sex, poverty level, and parent PHQ positivity, the association between having a pet dog in the home and a lower child anxiety score remained significant. However we observed no difference in body weight, screen time, or physical activity between children with and children without pet dogs in the home. Because anxiety disorders often start in childhood, they persist into adulthood, and have the longest delays for treatment (eg, age 20–23 y for social and separation anxiety disorders) , addressing conditions in primary care settings during childhood is a reasonable target for preventive interventions . Pet dogs could reduce childhood anxiety, particularly social and separation anxiety, by various mechanisms. A pet dog can stimulate conversation, an ice-breaking effect that can alleviate social anxiety. Companionship with a pet can decrease separation anxiety and strengthen attachment. Social interaction of humans and dogs may also lead to increased oxytocin levels in both the human and the dog. Interacting with a friendly dog also reduces cortisol levels most likely through oxytocin release, which attenuates physiologic responses to stress.. It may be that less anxious children have pet dogs or pet dogs make children less anxious. However, parental concerns about emotional and behavioral problems, if carefully elicited, can detect mental health problems among children age 4 years or older. Furthermore, in primary care settings, moderate to high concordance between parents' and children's reported anxiety scores have been documented. Blood pressure levels can also be effected, based on a study taken 2127 of the 9354 participants had current exposures to pets, with 989 of all participants having dogs. Pet exposure was negatively associated with hypertension and BP in men and women. When the analysis was done by sex, exposure to pets was negatively associated with hypertension in men and the associations with lower BP strengthened with higher levels of current pet exposure. As for BP, the associations between pet exposure and DBP were detected more in women; estimated decreases in mean DBP was 1.10 mmHg for current pet exposure. Based on their dog results, the researchers hypothesized that kids with cats would have fewer mental health problems than children without cats. They were wrong. Children with cats were nearly three times more likely than children without cats to have been diagnosed with a mental health problem. Cat-owning kids had significantly more attention problems, even after the researchers statistically controlled for factors like poverty, age, and parental depression. Finally, unlike with dogs, there was no evidence that having a cat was associated with lower rates of anxiety. But why should living with cats be linked to mental health problems in young children, there are several reasons. First, it is possible that something about cats produces more psychological issues in kids. It is, however, unclear what the mechanism of such an effect could be. The Bassett Institute researchers raise the intriguing possibility that the attention problems in children

with cats could be caused by *Toxoplasmosis gondii*, a tiny parasitic organism that can invade the cells of mammals, including cats and humans. Some studies have reported that Toxinfection is a risk factor for mental health problems, including attention disorders. However, these results are controversial, and other researchers have not found associations between Tox and human psychiatric problems. Second, factors unrelated to cats per se could be at the root of the problem. For example, a recent study in the journal *Anthrozoos* reported that, compared to dog owners, cat-owning adults scored lower on measures of positive emotions and conscientiousness and higher on scales measuring negative emotions and neuroticism. Though it is highly unlikely, it is theoretically possible that the types of adults who choose to live with cats are also more likely to have kids with psychological issues.

Conclusion:

In conclusion it is observed that owning a pet dog has a lot of positives associated with it whether it be physically or psychologically; whereas owning a pet cat has the opposite conclusions, all of which being negative.

Bibliography:

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