

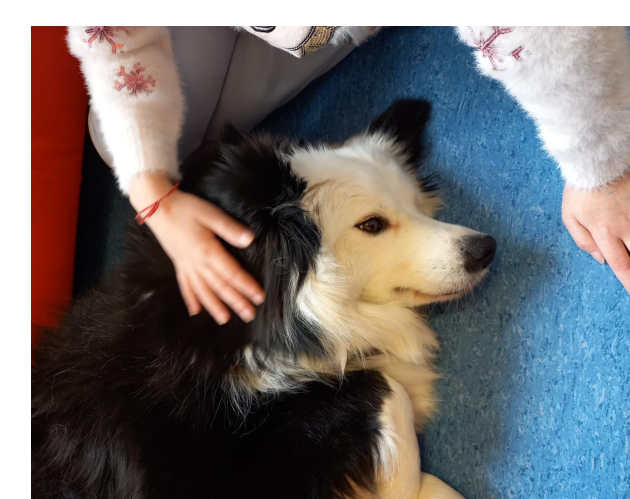


"Dogs'n Dreams"

Educational Project of Assisted Intervention with Animals (AAE) aimed at children and young people being treated at the pediatric hemato-oncology unit of Treviso (Italy)

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The "Dogs'n Dreams" project was started in 2016 at the pediatric hemato-oncology unit of Treviso in response to a request from the head of the unit and the psychotherapist. The project involves a weekly activity with dogs aimed at improving the quality of life of patients and reducing stress. The interventions are provided to patients who are not severely immunocompromised and have favorable clinical conditions for contact with animals. The project is registered at the National Reference Center for Assisted Interventions and has a team of professionals, including project manager, veterinarian, coadjutors of the dogs.

Objectives:

The objectives favor the educational aspects over those of learning even if the presence of animals help creating a positive, serene and harmonious learning context.

Educational objectives:

- 1.improvement of self-esteem and motivation,
- 2.decreased sense of isolation,
- 3.decreased stress
- 4.improvement of interpersonal skills

Learning objectives:

5. experimentation of a particularly significant relational context
- 6.acquisition of appropriate approach behaviors to animals and respectful of their welfare;
- 7.acquisition of new terminologies and language



Activities:

The activities aimed at the individual or small group must be declined according to the objectives established:

Objective 1: Users subjected to strenuous and heavy treatment paths risk seeing themselves only as a disease. All this associated with isolation causes lack of self-esteem that often results in contracted body posture, resigned tone of voice, low mood. The activities proposed in these situations consist of small obedience work units with dogs: users play to give simple commands to dogs such as sitting, grounding, turning, searching, taking, leaving ... The dog responds more assertively the more the command and posture becomes.

Objective 2: The weekly appointment with the dogs translates into a sense of expectation and then of great joy at the time of meeting with the animal and also with its coadjutor. At a time when external relationships are rare, these appointments become important for children. The multidisciplinary team also organizes the therapies of children deemed suitable to participate in the interventions in order to coincide the care on the days when assisted activities are planned, thus forming groups of peers who are involved in simple games with dogs

Objective 3: To reduce stress and promote empathic communication with the animal, grooming activities are proposed that can be carried out by placing the animal on the table or on the bed.

Objective 4: The presence of the animal stimulates curiosity and dialogue contexts that focus on its correct care. The assistants answer questions about the care and behavior of the dog in this way parents and children bring their attention and the contents of their dialogues to topics that are not purely clinical.

AAE Operations Team:

Cristina Pizzato, doctor in charge of the pediatric hemato-oncology unit;
 Carla Giugno, teacher of the school in the hospital, AAE project manager, AAE intervention referent and dog coadjutor;
 Gabriella Zampariolo, Paola Gusella,
 Deborah Grespan, coadjutors of the dogs;
 Michela Pavanetto, psychotherapist;
 Tiziana Favaro, nurse;
 ...and our amazing dogs: Chanel, Kori, Mimi, Panda, Princy, Rosa, Savana.



Evaluation:

before and after each intervention there is a briefing by the operating team where the intervention is prepared and at the end of which the observation forms filled to monitor the effectiveness of the intervention on the patient and the behavior of the dog during the session are compiled.

The multidisciplinary team of hemato-oncology has the task of identifying the subjects to whom to propose the AAI, in a year about 20 patients are involved in the activity.

During the course of the meetings and through the analysis of the observation sheets and sometimes thanks to the video documentation carried out, it was verified:

- increased mood;
- increased tone of voice;
- improvement of self-esteem;
- improvement of child-child, adult-child, adult-adult relationships;
- improvement of future design;
- increased collaboration during medical practices.

