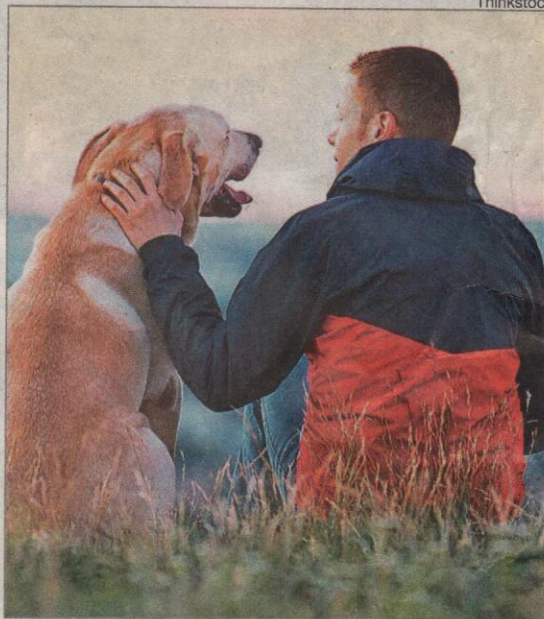


Dogs could help reduce ADHD symptoms

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Therapy dogs are effective in reducing the symptoms of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children, finds a study. The research involved children aged 7 to 9 who had been diagnosed with ADHD and who had never taken medicines for their condition. The study randomised participants to compare benefits from evidenced-based 'best practice' psychosocial interventions with the same intervention augmented by the assistance of certified therapy dogs.

Results from the research indicate children with ADHD who received canine assisted intervention (CAI) experienced a reduction in inattention and an improvement in social skills. And, while both CAI and non-CAI interventions were ultimately found to be effective for reducing overall ADHD symptom severity after 12 weeks, the group assisted by therapy dogs fared better with improved attention and social skills at only eight weeks and demonstrated fewer behavioural problems.

"Our finding that dogs can hasten the treatment response is very meaningful. In addition, the fact that parents of the children who were in the CAI group reported significantly fewer problem behaviours over time than those treated without therapy dogs is further evidence of the importance of this research," said lead author Sabrina EB Schuck.

"The take away from this is that families now have a viable option when seeking alternative or adjunct therapies to medication treatments for ADHD, especially when it comes to impaired attention. Inattention is perhaps the most salient problem experienced across the life span for individuals with this disorder," added Schuck.

Animal assisted intervention (AAI) has been used for decades. However, only recently has empirical evidence begun to support these practices reporting benefits including reduced stress, improved cognitive function, reduced problem behaviours and improved attention.

— ANI



Studies have found that if you leave a piece of clothing that smells of you with your dog, your pet will feel comforted when it's away from you. The scent reportedly helps them deal with separation anxiety.