

Publication

"There is a cat on our ward" : inpatient and staff member attitudes toward and experiences with cats in a psychiatric ward

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The aim of this study was to investigate inpatient and staff member attitudes toward and experiences with ward cats, and identify possible mechanisms for how cats affect patient satisfaction in a psychiatric clinic. Thirty-three inpatients diagnosed with depression or psychosis residing on wards with and without cats and 17 staff members working on wards with cats participated in semi-structured interviews using a cross-sectional study design. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and correlations. The results showed that 17 out of 19 inpatients and all the staff members liked having a cat on their ward. Further, 12 out of 14 inpatients on wards without cats would like having a cat on their ward. Inpatient perceptions of the cat's impact on the ward atmosphere correlated significantly with their emotional relationship with the cat (; $p = 0.015$; $r = 0.561$), how often they saw the cat (; $p = 0.002$; $r = 0.676$), and if they liked cats in general (; $p = 0.041$; $r = 0.486$). Our results highlight the positive attitudes of inpatients and staff members toward ward cats and the potential of ward cats to enhance patient satisfaction. This influence might be mediated by factors such as the frequency of contact, the relationship between each patient and the cat, and each patient's attitude toward cats in general.

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