

Effects of dog-based animal-assisted interventions in prison population: A systematic review

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Abstract

Background: Animal-assisted interventions, in concrete dog-assisted intervention, have been introduced in prisons to reduce recidivism as well as to improve the well-being of prisoners. Therefore, the aim of the present systematic review is to provide an up-to-date analysis of the research on the effects of dog-based animal-assisted therapy in prison population. **Methods:** An electronic search of the literature was performed, and 20 articles were included. The PRISMA guideline methodology was employed. **Results:** Included studies involved a total of 1577 participants. The vast majority of protocols included activities related with dog training, dog caring, or activities, which included vocational or educational components. Duration of dog-based therapies ranged between 60 and 120 min, with the frequency being between 1 and 3 days/week. Statistically significant improvements in prisoners were observed in 13 studies. **Conclusions:** Dog-based animal-assisted therapy may improve anxiety, stress, recidivism, and other social variables in male or female inmates.

Author keywords

Animal-assisted therapy
Anxiety
Dog therapy
Inmates
Prison
Recidivism
Stress