

“PETS AS THERAPY” VISIT UCT PRIVATE ACADEMIC HOSPITAL ACUTE REHAB

Origin of Pets as Therapy

“Pets as Therapy was established in South Africa in 2000 by Hazel Hill and a small group of committed individuals who all shared the vision of enriching lives through animal companionship. The main purpose of PAT is to provide therapeutic visits to a variety of institutions, including hospitals, hospices, retirement homes and special care facilities as well as special needs school. These venues are visited by volunteers and their specially selected and matched pets” This concept has spread worldwide, with many thousands of patients and residents benefiting from similar volunteer activated initiatives.

Why do we need PAT?

Sick, elderly and disabled people often feel isolated, especially when in hospital for rehabilitation. The unconditional affection offered by a PAT pet encourages even the most withdrawn person to open up and to let the barriers down. These dogs bring everyday life closer and with it all the happy associations for them of home comforts. The constant companionship of an undemanding animal that gives unconditional love is often one of the most missed aspects of their lives. PAT was formed to help make this loss more bearable, to speed recovery or simply to provide unconditional warm companionship.

Recent research continues to validate the very real value of regular visits by PAT volunteers to those in our communities most in need of a little boost in addition to medical and nursing skills received.

Hayley with Cassey, and Heidi with Olivia now visit UCT Academic Hospital on a regular basis.

“Human Animal Interaction (HAI) is a method of intervention used to improve the quality of life of patients and clients, either individually or in groups.”

This is exactly what Cassey the Border Collie and Olivia the Golden Retriever does when visiting the clients in rehab . Olivia follows in the 'paw prints' of her 'big brother', Wizard who was one of the first dogs to be assessed when PAT started up .At that stage, Wizard was visiting the Spinal Unit then based in Wynberg at Southern Cross Hospital. Both Wizard and Olivia are Service Dogs trained by South African Guide Dogs Association for the Blind.

Cassey recently joined PAT. She is a calm and gentle Border Collie who loves to lie next to her 'clients' and receive loving strokes of affection. Her presence has a calming effect on many who receive her attention as you can see in the photographs.

Cassey and Olivia just love their visits to the unit, as they know they will in turn be rewarded with treats.....this helps the clients interact with the dogs.

What Cassey and Olivia give both the clients and staff on duty at the unit is therapy that is both motivational and recreational. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing a client who at the start of a visit was looking sad and lost, then break out in a huge smile and look content and happy with their newly found canine companion.

“We do not need to wait for Heaven, to be surrounded by hope, love and joyfulness. It is here on earth and has 4 legs.”

The Acute Rehabilitation Unit based at UCT Private Academic Hospital, which opened 01 October 2002, serves the rehabilitation needs of patients who have suffered a devastating incident. This has normally left the sufferer with a significant neurological deficit requiring the expertise of several disciplines. Although based within Groote Schuur Hospital, UCT Private Academic Hospital is a fully independent private hospital. The unit is medically managed and coordinated by 2 full time medical doctors who, between them, have more than 55 years of experience in this field. The unit can accommodate 37 patients but an outpatient service is also offered, both for rehabilitation and for chronic medical follow up for these patients.

Patients requiring rehabilitation following a devastating incident are normally admitted for assessment and intensive treatment for a variable length of time depending on the severity of the deficit.

Contact Doctors:

Dr Ed Baalbergen ebaalbergen@ucthospital.co.za

Dr Ray Shrosbree rshrosbree@ucthospital.co.za

Tel Number 021 442 1826



Olivia - a regular visitor



Hayley and Cassie



Heidi and Olivia enjoying some time outdoors

