APPENDIX P

Challenges in Researching Animal Assisted Activities: Is the Tail Wagging the Dog?

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Challenges in Researching Animal Assisted Activities: Is the Tail Wagging the Dog?

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“The Outside of a Horse Is Good for the Inside of Man”

Sir Winston Churchill

Common Difficulties in AAA Research

1. Typical research goes from idea to design, but... AAA research goes from what is available to design.

2. This research needs to consider safeguards of BOTH children and animals.
Common Difficulties in AAA Research

- Animal people are not usually clinical researchers.
- Clinical researchers are not usually well informed about animal care and behavior.
- Researcher does not control all of the elements of the research-dependence on animal people for access, training and guidance.

Study I

Independent Variable: Live Dogs (2) vs. Stuffed Animal

Dependent Variables: WISC-IV Digit Span, Symbol Search W-J Math Fluency

Study I Design

- Counterbalanced order of levels of IV
- Counterbalanced experimenter
- Random assignment of dogs
- Assess activity level of dogs
- Assess child’s comfort with dog/stuffed animal
- Administer DS, SS & MF

Recommendations

- Get everyone on board including administration, clinical staff and farm staff
- Look at what is naturally occurring in your agency for clues as to what to study
- Call Dr. Kazdin
- Start with small, well controlled studies
- Choose studies that can be built upon
- Get IRB approval before sending consent

Recommendations

- Have animal staff on IRB
- Call Dr. Kazdin
- Set aside time for training of research assistants with handling of research animals
- Explain to administration why so much time is being spent on research efforts and or call Dr. Kazdin
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Contact Information

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