Research program IZS VE 10/15

Animal assisted interventions with dogs in healthcare facilities: how to set up a safe admission protocol

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The main objective of this project is the realization of an operating instrument that supports the writing and the validation of admission protocols for dogs involved in animal assisted interventions (AAI) at health care facilities. This instrument will help the healthcare facility manager, who must ensure the adoption of appropriate measures to protect the health of the patient in respect to that of the animal. At the same time it can provide a valid support to promote the dissemination of AAI within healthcare facilities.

In recent years, several western countries have highlighted the benefits provided by the relationship between animals involved in AAI and patients recovered at health care structures. This relationship has an important effect and the dog is the species universally engaged in this sort of activity.

However, the spread of this practice with therapeutic, educational or recreational purposes poses problems for its adoption by sanitary structures. These problems arise because of the greater vulnerability of the hospitalized patients and their need to be protected from infections, cross-contaminations and accidents by strong monitoring and prevention policies.

This project therefore pursues the following aims:
1. Identification and enunciation of the principles on which a protocol should be created for dogs' admission to healthcare facilities, including ethical issues, aspects related to animal and human health, social acceptability, ethology and the welfare of the animals involved;
2. Realization of a practical and effective tool (a checklist) for the drawing up of the above-mentioned protocols;
3. Identification of a method for the protocols' validation based on the principles of process validation.
4. Communication and distribution of the operational tool to the community.