

Implementing Robotic Pets in Continuing Care for Persons Living with Dementia in Canada: Tips for Care Providers



Depending on the resident, a facilitator (such as a care staff member, family member, or friend) may be necessary for interactions with robotic pets and residents to occur successfully



Before Implementation

1 Things to Consider



Using robotic pets may:

- Increase care staff's feelings of joy, well-being, comfort, and satisfaction
- Increase residents' quality of life
- Be used for residents' walking rehabilitation
- Be combined with daily care activities

Robotic pets may be used with residents who:

- Have a range of cognitive abilities (such as dementia), mobility challenges, or repetitive behaviours
- Are socially isolated, agitated, or anxious
- Need the robotic pet in the moment, or as indicated in their care plan

Tips

- Use your social skills to evaluate and shape robotic pet interactions
- If residents do not show interest in robotic pets initially, try again later



2 Actions to Take

Assessments to conduct:

- Intake assessment (resident's interests and preferences for animals)
- Functional assessment (conducted by an occupational therapist to assess residents for robotic pet use)



Consult:

- Family members for approval to use robotic pets if residents can't consent
- Other care staff to coordinate interactions



Training:

- Receive training before using robotic pets, such as preparing for conversations where residents question the realistic appearance of the robotic pet



During Implementation

3 Things to Consider



Robotic pets may assist you with navigating residents' activities of daily living by reducing behaviours that disrupt them



- Have a protocol in place, should robotic pets run out of batteries; do not replace them in front of residents
- Avoid statements like "Can you watch this pet for a few hours?", which may overwhelm residents



4 Actions to Take

Introductory techniques:

- Discreetly turn the pet on/off, place the pet within the resident's reach, sanitize resident's hands before group interactions, approach residents slowly, introduce the pet in a neutral manner ("Look at this!") rather than drawing attention to the fact that it is robotic



Try to hold the robotic pet like a real pet and in a way that gets the attention of residents. Position yourself to be the same level as residents

Personalize each interaction:

- Follow the resident's lead about whether the robotic pet is real or not, enter their reality
- Name the robotic pet something related to the resident's history

Additional Tips:

- Watch residents for agitation
- Console residents who may worry that the pet will escape or bite them
- Turn the pet to 'mute' if the environment is noisy
- Follow infection, prevention, and control protocols during outbreaks
- Assess how residents with violent/aggressive behaviour respond to robotic pets before leaving them alone with one



After Implementation/ Sustaining the Program

5 Things to Consider



Skillfully beginning a robotic pet interaction

is just as important as skillfully ending an interaction

Robotic pet use over time may:

- Motivate you to use robotic pets more if you notice they increase residents' quality of life
- Help you learn more techniques to optimize interactions between residents and robotic pets

6 Actions to Take

- Robotic pets may be stored in a safe location when not being used to prevent something from happening to them
- Robotic pets may be left with residents if appropriate
- Trained care staff should clean robotic pets according to a cleaning protocol, and maintain the appearance of pets (i.e., brushing them, removing debris, cleaning them when soiled)
- Continually monitor the appropriateness of robotic pets for each resident as their needs/abilities/preferences may change over time



To find a complete list of implementation tips:

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