

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Industry Notes

Study: Your Next Dementia Fix Could Be Animal-Assisted Therapy

Therapy animals help to ease aggression and depression in nursing home residents suffering from dementia, according to a new study published in the American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry.

The researchers studied 65 nursing home residents with dementia who were assigned Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) as part of their treatment(s) over the course of 10 weekly sessions. Using the Cohen-Mansfield Agitation Inventory and the Dementia Mood Assessment Scale, the researchers determined a baseline of aggression and depression symptoms among the participating residents.

When the researchers compared that baseline to subsequent tests performed at the end of the 10-week period, they discovered that the residents who received the AAT had steady, unchanged frequency and severity of aggression and depression symptoms. The control group not receiving AAT, however, experienced significantly increased agitation/aggression and depression.

"AAT is a promising option for the treatment of agitation/aggression and depression in patients with dementia," the study states. "Our results suggest that AAT may delay progression of neuropsychiatric symptoms in demented nursing home residents." But the researchers concede that more research is necessary to determine the long-term effects of AAT on dementia.

Get Ready for More Appendix B Changes

On Oct. 22, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released yet another update of the Resident Assessment Instrument (RAI) manual's Appendix B. The updated Appendix B contains changes to the lists of MDS automation coordinators, state RAI coordinators, RAI panel members, and regional office contacts.

To view the updated Appendix B, go to www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/NursingHomeQualityInits/MDS30RAIManual.html and scroll down to the Downloads section at the bottom of the page.