

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



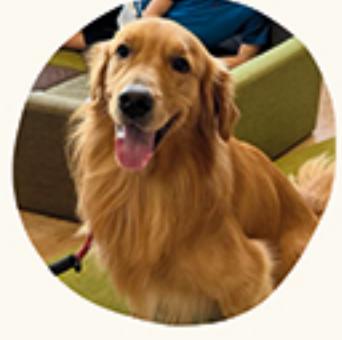
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Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT): Enhancing Quality of Life for the Elderly



What is Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)?

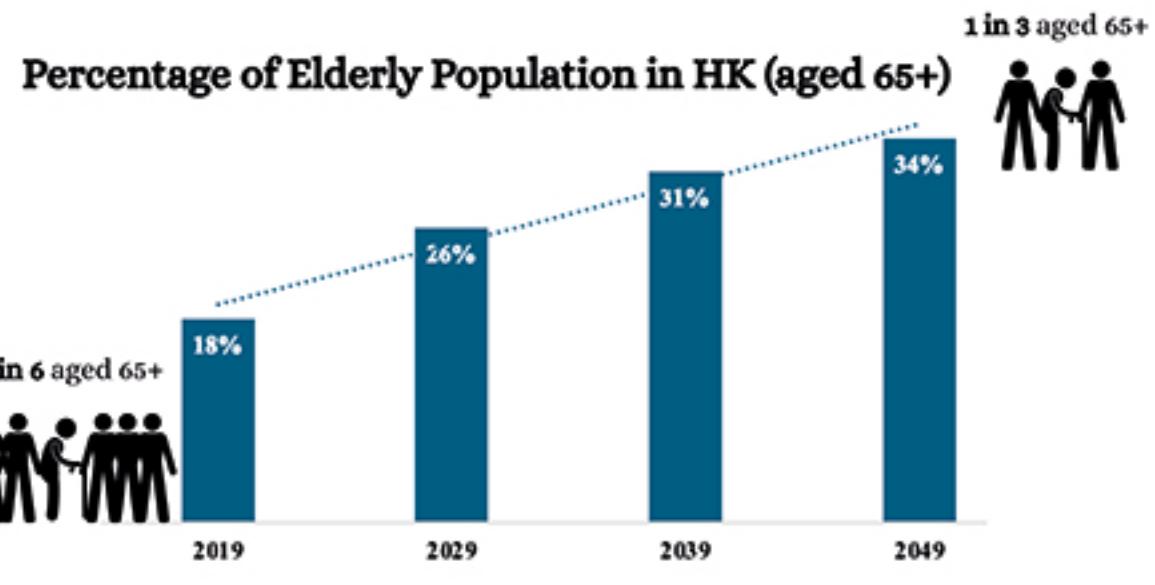
- AAT uses structured interactions between **individuals in need and certified animals** (usually dogs) to provide social, emotional, cognitive, and physical benefits (Bert et al., 2016).
- By 2049, every **1 in 3 people will be aged 65 or above** (Census and Statistics Department, 2023); Elders face **chronic illnesses and loneliness**.
- Target 3.4: Reduce Mortality from Non-Communicable Diseases and Promote Mental Health

How can the elderly benefit from AAT?

Mental Health Boost:

- Improved overall mental well-being
- Reduction in **depression** and **anxiety**
- Decrease in reported **loneliness**

(Syed Elias, Neville & Scott, 2015; Pels, F., & Kleinert, 2016)



Social and Cognitive Stimulation:

- Rise in **communal interactions** among the elderly during therapy sessions
- Improvement in **memory recall**

(Joyce et al., 2021; Freak-Poli et al., 2021)

Physical Health Improvements:

- Higher **physical activity**
- Lower cortisol levels
- Reduced **blood pressure**

(Cherniack & Cherniack, 2014; Yilmaz & Kartin, 2025)

What are the underlying theoretical frameworks?

Biophilia Hypothesis: Humans are inherently drawn to nature. Having a keen interest in interactions with animals is **evolutionarily beneficial** (calm animals signal safety; Beetz, 2017).

Oxytocin System: Physical contact with dogs can result in the **release of oxytocin** by the pituitary gland (Handlin et al., 2011). Oxytocin can relieve pain, promote relaxation, and facilitate social interactions (Ito et al., 2019).

Distraction: Positive interactions with therapy dogs can divert attention away from negative emotions, leading to an **increase in subjective well-being**.

How does Rise Wise conduct AAT for the elderly?

Elders become:

Happier

Less fearful

More active

More talkative/engaged
More relaxed

according to our observations at AAT sessions with the elderly.

Patting



Grooming



Tricks



Chatting/
Sharing



← Feeding

Potential challenges and solutions

- Hygiene/allergies - Collect preferences beforehand
- Risk of infections/injury - Safety protocols and clear instructions
- Community outreach - Not just nursing homes...
- Types of dog/activities - Individualization

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS