

# Implementing Robotic Pet Therapy 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 and increase residents' QoL
- 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



- Use your social skills to evaluate and shape robotic pet interactions
- Re-approach residents later who initially do not show interest in robotic pets

## 2 Actions to Take

#### Assessments to conduct:

- Intake assessment (to know a 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
- Be prepared for conversations where residents question the realistic appearance of the robotic pet

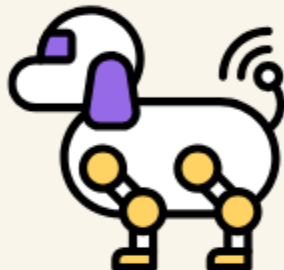


## During Implementation

### 3 Things to Consider



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



- 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:

Scan this QR code

