

AN EXPLORATION ON ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY (AAT) FOR CLIENTS WITH SUBSTANCE DEPENDENCE



明愛青少年及社區服務

「Gato House」(貓空)

動物輔助治療戒毒輔導和康復計劃

Gato House : 計劃對象及特性

- 我們在過去共服務了**70位**30歲或以下及濫用藥物2年或以上的女性



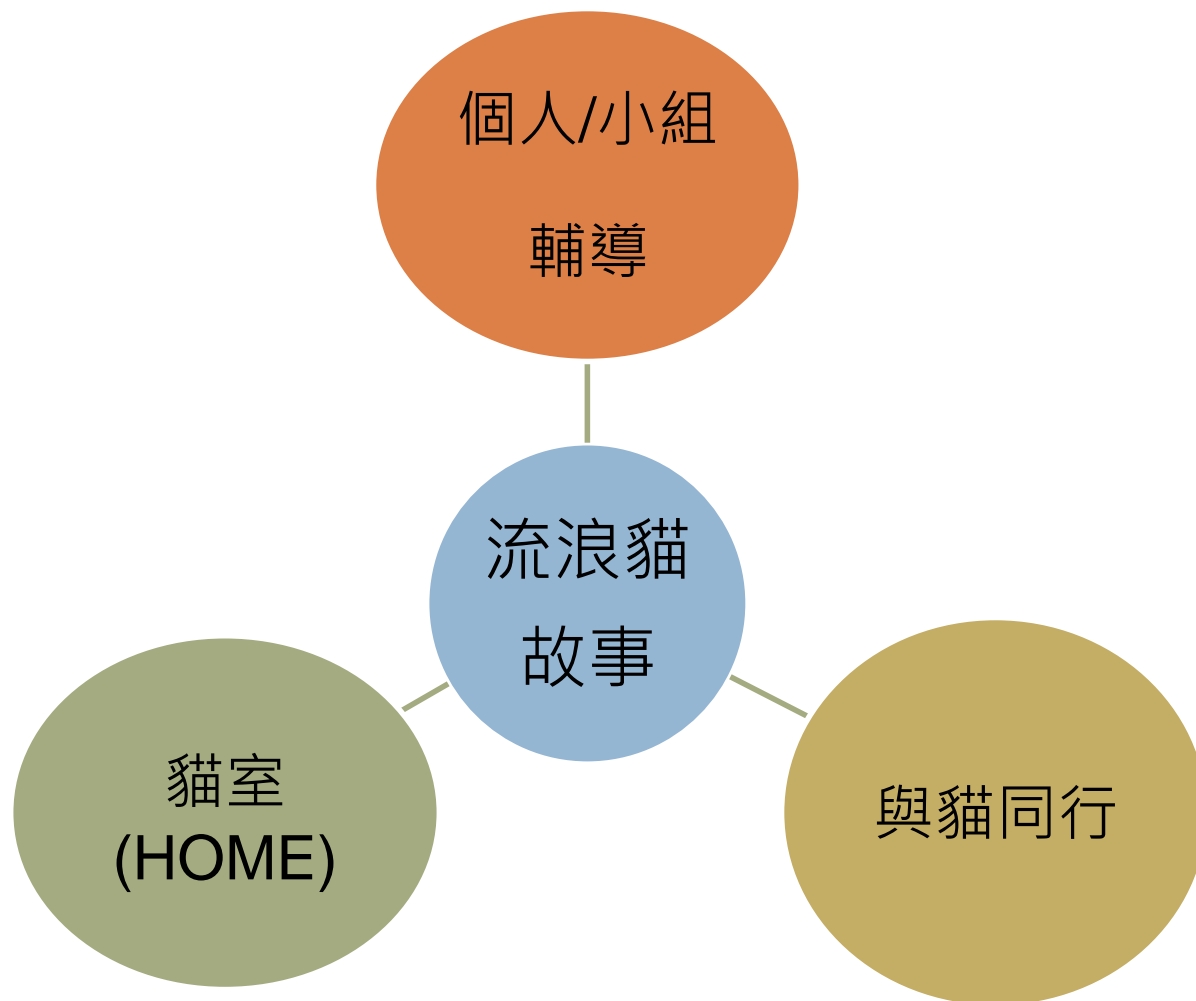
Gato House : 計劃目標

改善對象的情緒及濫藥情況

提升對象的自主能力，擺脫“ 濫藥者” 的單一身份

鼓勵繼續投入治療及改變的歷程。

Gato House : 服務設計



Purpose of this study

A preliminary study to explore

- the therapeutic outcomes of Gato House's animal assisted therapy (AAT) in group therapy
- cats adoption programme for clients who have a background of substance dependence

Introduction

- Very difficult to engage clients of substance dependence - very high (up to 57%) dropout rate (Brorson, Arnevik, Rand-Hendriksen, & Duckert, 2013)
 - → Treatment completion can reliably predict positive therapeutic outcomes (eg fewer relapses & higher employment rate) (Dalsbø et al., 2010; Stark, 1992)
- Thus, if engagement of clients is enhanced, it will increase therapeutic outcomes
 - → AAT to enhance client engagement & other therapeutic outcomes?

Literature Review

- As AAT is an under-research intervention, there is no unified theory to explain how animals can have a therapeutic effect on humans
- But various theories can explain how relevant qualities of animals can contribute to therapy
 - Social mediation
 - Attachment theory, transitional objects & social needs
 - Improved affect etc

Methodology

- Participant observation for 11 sessions (out of 12 sessions in total for one treatment programme at a Female Residential Drug Treatment Center) plus one visit with the same group of clients to a dogs/cats shelter
- Focus group with staff
- Visits to Gato house
- Semi-structured interviews with 7 participants who have participated in the AAT group treatment programmes and/or Gato House's adoption programme
- Interview guide was informed by data from participant observation & focus group with staff
- All the interviews lasted from about 1 hour to 1.5 hour
 - Voice recorded & transcribed for data analysis

Methodology: participants

Code names	年齡	背景	AAT group / Adopt Gato cats / already have cat at home
T	28	21 歲開始濫藥，曾接觸K仔，主要濫用冰，已停藥約 1 年。	Group
S	29	19 歲開始濫藥，主要濫K仔，已停藥約半年。Fear of cats.	Group
K	28	16 歲開始濫藥，曾接觸 Fing 頭，主要濫用K仔，已停藥約 9 個月。	Group
Y	25	14 歲開始濫藥，曾接觸白瓜子，主要濫用K仔，已停藥約 1 年。	Group + own cat
H	17	14 歲開始濫藥，主要濫用冰，已減少吸食。	Group + Gato cat
M	25	14 歲開始濫藥，曾接觸白瓜子，主要濫用K仔，已停藥約 3 個月。	Gato cat
L	22	15 歲開始濫藥，主要濫用冰，已停藥兩年。	Gato cat

Methodology: Data Analysis

Triangulation of participant observation & interview data

Thematic data analysis by word processing & Nvivo program

7 major themes emerged from data:

1. Engagement
2. Transitional object
3. Animals' stories as therapy metaphors
4. Object for confinement
5. Stronger sense of responsibility
6. Companion for societal integration
7. [(4), (5) & (6) contribute] Attachment



Findings: 1st Theme Engagement

- According to both participant observation and interview data, all participants showed high level of engagement during AAT groups
 - supported the findings in existing literature
- Sub-themes from engagement:
 - Enhanced rapport building
 - More interest & enjoyment
 - Look forward to group
 - Improved group dynamics
 - Improved trust
 - More willing to talk



Findings: 2nd Theme: Transitional Object

- ◆ Sub-themes from Transitional Object:
 - As comfort object
 - More relax and less awkward/anxious (particularly important for clients who are anxious and not able to articulate themselves well)

Findings: 3rd Theme: Animals' stories as therapy metaphors

- According to Chandler (2017), animals' stories - lower client's defenses & resistance
- When clients imagine the animals' experience/stories, it “helps to tap more deeply into suppressed and even repressed client feelings and experiences” (Chandler, 2017, p. 213)

◆ Sub-themes from Animals' stories as therapy metaphors:

- Improved empathy
- Self insight

Findings:4th Theme Object for confinement

Sub-themes from object for confinement:

- Keeping secrets
- Immediate availability
- Non-judgemental
- More genuine than humans
- Being understood

Findings: 5th Theme: Stronger sense of responsibility

Sub-themes from Stronger sense of responsibility:

- Duties for pets
- New role
- Importance of being needed
- Decrease/abstain from drugs

Findings: 6th Theme: Companion for societal integration

- Cat helped assisted L to recover from social anxiety
- Cat helped those who were not good at communicating with others, and improved their communication with others

Findings: 7th Theme: Attachment

- Cat as one's soul mate.
- Pet attachment is less demanding (compared to human child)

Q & A