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## **New Research to Study Whether Therapy Dogs Can Lower Dose of Sedation in Children Undergoing Surgery**

***Human Animal Bond Research Initiative Awards Grant to University of Tennessee***

**(Washington, D.C.) October 13, 2016 – The Human Animal Bond Research Initiative (HABRI)** announced today it has awarded a \$79,000 grant to the **University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine** for a new study, *The Effect of Animal-Assisted Intervention on Preoperative Anxiety and Dose of Sedation in Children*. This study will examine the effect of animal-assisted intervention (AAI) on children’s anxiety levels and sedation medication dosages prior to surgery.

“The goal of this study is to determine if interaction with a therapy dog 20 minutes prior to surgery has a significant effect on reducing a child’s anxiety levels and, in turn, lowering the dose of medication necessary for sedation,” said the study’s principal investigator, Zenithson Y. Ng, DVM, MS, College of Veterinary Medicine at University of Tennessee. “The results of this study may be further used to justify and advocate for AAI in various medical situations and open doors for additional research on measurable medical outcomes associated with AAI.”

The three-year, cross-over-designed study on behalf of the veterinary college’s Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences and Biomedical and Diagnostics Sciences will examine 72 children between the ages of 2 and 17 and randomly determine whether the child receives a therapy dog or an iPad tablet 20 minutes before sedation. Dr. Ng and co-investigators Julia Albright, DVM, MA and Marcy Souza, DVM, MPH, will then evaluate heart rate, blood pressure and medicine levels for sedation and compare the amounts of each group. It is expected that children provided with a therapy dog prior to surgery will have significantly lower preoperative anxiety and will require a decreased amount of medication for sedation compared to children who do not interact with a therapy dog.

“Scientific research has shown that therapy dogs in hospital settings can have a calming effect, ease stress and provide reassurance to patients young and old, and to their families as well,” said HABRI Executive Director Steven Feldman. “HABRI’s grant to the University of Tennessee will help advance the science on the benefits of companion animals in hospital settings. The more we can demonstrate the positive role pets can play in human health, the more people can benefit from the healing power of the human-animal bond.”

The **HABRI Foundation** maintains the world's largest online library of human-animal bond research and information; funds innovative research projects to scientifically document the health benefits of companion animals; and informs the public about human-animal bond research and the beneficial role of companion animals in society. For more information about the HABRI Foundation, visit [www.habri.org](http://www.habri.org).

One of 30 veterinary colleges in the United States, **the UT College of Veterinary Medicine** educates students in the art and science of veterinary medicine and related biomedical sciences, promotes scientific research and enhances human and animal well-being. Through its mission of research, teaching and service, the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) touches lives and provides Real. Life. Solutions. [ag.tennessee.edu](http://ag.tennessee.edu)

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