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Virtual Lecture Spotlights New Research on the Health and Developmental Benefits of Companion Animals for Young Children

IDEXX Sponsored Human-Animal Bond Lecture Series Highlights Important Role of Veterinary Medicine in Strengthening the Human-Animal Bond

WASHINGTON, DC (March 18, 2021) – The Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI) and IDEXX held a virtual lecture on the impact of pet ownership on young children’s physical activity and development. Today’s lecture marks the third in the IDEXX-sponsored series to highlight impactful scientific research on the health benefits of the human-animal bond and the importance of veterinary medicine in strengthening human-animal bonds.

This lecture titled, “The Health and Developmental Benefits of Companion Animals for Young Children”, features Dr. Hayley Christian, BSc, PhD, Principal Research Fellow at the Telethon Kids Institute, National Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellow, and Associate Professor at the University of Western Australia, discussing her ongoing HABRI-funded study, “*The Health and Developmental Benefits of Companion Animals for Young Children: Advancing the Evidence Base*”, including recently published findings which demonstrate that children in dog-owning households experience lower peer problems, lower conduct problems, and higher prosocial behaviors than children from non-dog-owning families.

“With HABRI, IDEXX is proud to be delivering this virtual content to pet owners, families with young children, and animal health professionals to help strengthen and promote the human-animal bond,” said Kerry Bennett, Corporate Vice President, IDEXX.

Results from Objective 1 of Dr. Christian’s HABRI-funded study were published in the journal [Pediatric Research](#) in July 2020. The aim of this objective was to investigate if active play and walking with the family dog facilitates improved developmental outcomes in young children. Results indicate that children of dog-owning families had lower peer problems, lower conduct problems, and higher prosocial behaviors than children from non-dog-owning families. In addition to benefitting from the presence of a dog in the home, even a small to moderate commitment to involving young children in time spent walking with the family dog may provide important social and emotional benefits for young children. Objective 2 of the study consists of a pilot test of strategies and interventions aimed at increasing the amount of time children spend active with their family dog for improving health and developmental outcomes. Dr. Christian also leads the [Play Spaces and Environments for Children’s Physical Activity and Health \(PLAYCE\)](#) program of research, a multidisciplinary team focused on turning challenges into opportunities to make a positive difference in children’s health and wellbeing.

“The HABRI-IDEXX Lecture Series is a wonderful educational opportunity for pet owners and veterinarians to learn about ongoing research investigating the benefits of the human-animal bond for everyone from young children to older adults,” said Steven Feldman, President of HABRI. “We are grateful for the continued support of IDEXX of this series, which has helped bring HABRI’s scientific research program to a broader audience than ever before.”

Professionals who viewed this session live will be eligible to receive RACE-approved Continuing Education (CE) credit through the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB). The lecture will remain available on-demand at <http://www.habri.org/HAB-Lectures>. The previous lectures in the Human-Animal Bond Lecture Series, “The Efficacy of Service Dogs for Veterans with PTSD” and “The Impact of a Feline Fostering Program for Older Adults Living Alone” are also available on-demand at <http://www.habri.org/HAB-Lectures>.

About HABRI

HABRI is a not-for-profit organization that 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, please visit <https://www.habri.org/>.

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