



Paws for thought

Description



Researchers are not ‘kitten around’ – robocats might be ‘purr-fect’ for people with dementia.

A recent [study](#) by Florida Atlantic University found automated animals can boost cognition and mood – and decrease feelings of fear and anxiety. They paired robotic cats with 12 individuals who suffered from Alzheimer’s and related dementias at an adult day centre.

Researchers observed participants smiling and talking to their robopets

Each participant was assigned a robotic cat, and were told their pets were robots and not live animals. They spent 30 minutes with their pets twice a week for 12 weeks.

Researchers observed participants smiling and talking to their robopets. The findings said the 'nurse-practitioner-led programme' was 'beneficial' to those who took part. This was shown through an increase in positive mood/behaviour and a decrease in depression risk.

Participants enjoyed interacting with the robotic pets. The automatons 'provided them with a companion and allowed them to express their feelings and provided a sense of comfort'. The electronic cats offered 'a safe alternative' to help improve the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

According to a report on the [inews](#) website, robotic cats and dogs have provided comfort and joy to residents with dementia at Methodist Homes (MHA) – while they've been unable to see their families during the coronavirus outbreak.

'Because of Covid the robots have become even more important'

MHA started trialling [robotic cats](#) made by Hasbro offshoot [Joy For All](#) in three of its homes as far back as October 2019. The life-size cat robot, which purrs, nuzzles its head into the hand of the person stroking it and rolls onto its back for a tummy rub, is battery-powered and costs around £105.

MHA's dementia lead David Moore told inews, 'Because of Covid the robots have become even more important, especially for those who couldn't see their families and didn't really understand what was going on with regards to speaking to them over iPads or the telephone'.

In the [summer 2019 edition of Roof 'n' Roots](#), our own CEO Mairi Johnstone explored the idea of using robots in caring contexts. 'Many experts say, in the future, robots could be better caretakers for those who are older,' Mairi wrote. 'Such machines could be programmed with endless patience.' (*Photos: Ageless Innovation*)



Category

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