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## Animal-Assisted Activities: Results From a Survey of Top-Ranked Pediatric Oncology Hospitals.

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### Abstract

Animal-assisted activities (AAA) are increasingly common, yet little is known about practices in pediatric oncology. To address this gap, we surveyed the top 20 pediatric oncology hospitals in the United States in May and June of 2014. Questionnaires were sent via e-mail and generally returned by e-mail or postal mail. Among the 19 responding hospitals, the 18 that offered AAA to pediatric patients formed the basis of our analysis. All sites had written AAA policies. Most programs were restricted to dogs. At 11 hospitals, children with cancer could participate in AAA activities. Outpatient waiting rooms and individual inpatient rooms were the most common locations for AAA with pediatric oncology patients. Safety precautions varied by hospital, but all required hand sanitation after visits and that animals receive an annual health examination, be on a leash or in a carrier, be  $\geq 1$  year old, and not be directly from a shelter. Our findings reveal consistencies and variations in practice that may help other hospitals develop their own programs and researchers identify areas of future study.

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**KEYWORDS:** animal-assisted activities; human–animal interaction; oncology; pediatrics

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