



11. AAI & AAT sessions

- The permanent cat caregiver at the facility:
 - monitors the health of the cats on a daily basis. If the cats become ill, all AAI sessions must be cancelled until the cats are completely healed (Khan & Farrag, 2000).
 - shall inform the patients in advance, about:
 - the cat's behaviour;
 - how to prevent and recognise stress in cats. This way the patient can understand the cats better and respond appropriately;
 - doesn't need to remain present during the AAI sessions. The presence of the therapist or patient caregiver (with basic training in cat welfare, - behaviour and - training) is sufficient.
 - A suitable pet carrier or crate is used when the cats need to be moved (exceptionally).
 - asks permission from those already in the lift before entering with the cat (Lefebvre et al., 2008).

- The therapist or patient caregiver:
 - remains present during the AAI sessions.
 - never leaves the cats alone with the patient (Khan & Farrag, 2000).
 - if necessary, directs the behaviour of the patient during an AAI session. Especially AAI sessions with children under the age of 12 can be stressful for cats (Marinelli et al., 2009);
 - can make use of cat toys during AAI sessions;
 - doesn't give food to the cats during the visit. Food rewards are not recommended except when given by the permanent cat caregiver. In consultation with the therapist or patient caregiver an exception could be made for patients, provided that:
 - the cats are trained in gently picking up the food rewards (Lefebvre et al., 2008);
 - the therapist or patient care giver decide which type of food rewards can be given. Avoid dehydrated, non-sterilized food rewards of animal origin (Lefebvre et al., 2008);
 - the patient offers the food reward with the hand palm open or from the ground (Lefebvre et al., 2008).
 - creates a register in which the AAI sessions and any possible comments can be recorded (Khan & Farrag, 2000), such as:
 - an inventory of which patients may show aggressive behaviour towards cats (Ophorst et al., 2014);
 - an inventory of which patients are allergic to or have a fear/phobia of cats (Ophorst et al., 2014);

- The cats:
 - Ensure the cats have control over the situation during the AAI sessions (Hall et al., 2008) and always have access to:
 - the resting areas;
 - cat litter boxes;
 - the water bowls;
 - food;



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- lookouts;
 - hideaways.

- The patient:
 - Patients can only visit the cats when:
 - a relative granted authorisation (minor)
 - permission has been given from their attending doctor and if applicable, his or her therapist (Disalvo et al., 2006).

- Duration and number of AAI sessions a day:
 - An AAI session lasts 45 minutes up to a maximum of one hour.
 - The number of sessions a day is strongly depending on how much the individual cats will be able to do.
 - It is recommended the cats shall have 2 days off per week.