

Dogs give emotional boost to sick kids in Quito

August 20 2012



In this July 25, 2012 photo, Paola laughs as Lancelot, an American cocker spaniel, walks on her bed at the SOLCA hospital in Quito, Ecuador. The dog's owner says her dogs are used every Wednesday to cheer up the most discouraged of the patients. Hospital workers began to notice that on Wednesdays fewer children had to be kept over because of problems after chemotherapy. Doctors found that youngsters' adrenaline levels rose from being with the dogs, boosting their resistance to chemo's side effects. (AP Photo/Dolores Ochoa)

(AP) — Every Wednesday, Lancelot and Juci scamper into a special mission: nudging and pawing youngsters into smiles at the only hospital in Ecuador's capital that treats children with cancer.

Veronica Pardo, the [hospital](#) volunteer who owns the dogs, says the animals are used to cheer up the most discouraged of the patients, especially those with the grimmest prognosis.

"Sometimes they do not want to eat, their moms haven't visited them, they don't want to take their medicine, or they don't want to talk with the doctor," Pardo said.

Then she brings her dogs in on Wednesdays, and small miracles happen as the sick youngsters caress and cuddle the dogs. "The children smile, talk. They're infused with life."

Pardo recalled a patient named Dana, a 7-year-old girl who took a special liking to Lancelot, a 15-month-old American cocker spaniel, before she died early this month.



In this Aug. 8, 2012 photo, eight-year-old Edison hugs farewell to Juci, a Parson Russell terrier, after playing with her at the SOLCA hospital in Quito, Ecuador. The dog's owner says her dogs are used every Wednesday to cheer up the most discouraged of the patients. Hospital workers began to notice that on Wednesdays fewer children had to be kept over because of problems after chemotherapy. Doctors found that youngsters' adrenaline levels rose from being with the dogs, boosting their resistance to chemo's side effects. (AP Photo/Dolores Ochoa)

"When she died, her parents told me: 'You have no idea how my

daughter had fun on Wednesdays," Pardo said.

When Pardo first started bringing dogs in 2005, they stayed in the hospital garden and played with children before chemotherapy treatments.

Over the next five years, statistics at the hospital showed that on Wednesdays, fewer children had to be kept over because of problems after chemotherapy. Doctors found that youngsters' adrenaline levels rose from being with the dogs, boosting their resistance to chemo's side effects.

So the hospital began allowing Pardo's dogs to visit [children](#) in their beds. She and her husband have 18 [dogs](#) in all that they work with.

Edison, an 8-year-old farm child whose cancer is declining, is delighted to see Juci, a 5-year-old Parson Russell terrier, holding her tight.

"He knows a lot about animals, because they live in the country," Pardo said.

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Citation: Dogs give emotional boost to sick kids in Quito (2012, August 20) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-08-dogs-emotional-boost-sick-kids.html>

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