

Supplement 1: Focus group questions

Focus Group Guide

The role of companion animals in chronic pain management among community-dwelling adults aged 70+

This document is meant as a guide only. It is our intention that the participants at each focus group direct the flow of conversation. This document is not meant as a script, but as a tool for the moderator to make sure that all areas of discussion are covered. Questions formatted in *italics* are suggested probes that may or may not be necessary.

Questions for discussion

- *Tell us about your pets. (what type? what is your relationship like? How do you interact on a day-to-day basis.)*
- *Tell us about any ways that you think your pet affects your health. (note: broad definition of health – probe for both psychological and physical effects, and both positive and negative effects)*
- *Which aspects of your pet’s personality are helpful or not helpful when it comes to helping you cope with your pain?*
- *Imagine that you are having a pain flare-up. How does that change your interactions with your pet, and your ability to care for your pet? [probe: Are there any changes in your daily routine with your pet when you are having pain? Probe: ability to walk dog)*
- *How do your interactions with your pet affect your pain level? The extent to which you think about your pain?*
- *Now I will ask similar questions about feeling tired or fatigued. When you are tired or fatigued, how does that change your interactions with your pet? How do your interactions affect your fatigue level? The extent to which you think about your fatigue?*

- *What are some of the ways that your pet affects how you interact with other people? These can be positive or negative.*
- *How, if at all, does your pet help or make it more difficult for you to relax?*
- *How does your pet affect your physical activity?*
- *How does your pet affect your sleep, if at all?*
- *Do you have any worries or concerns regarding your pet?*
- *What kind of help do you need in taking care of your pet? Does this change if you are having a pain flare-up?*
- *Can you tell me a little bit about other things that you do to manage your pain?*
- *Is there anything else at all that you would like to tell us on the topic of pets and your health and everyday life?*

Supplement 2: Focus group themes and associated codes

Themes	Codes
Mood Management	
Offers comfort, patience, support, protection	#comforts #support #patient #protects
Provides love, companionship, emotional connection	#indispensable #companionship #love #memories #family
Sense of responsibility, purpose, being needed	#needed #responsibility
Makes life enjoyable, provides laughter	#enjoyable #laughter
Prevents loneliness, fills a void	#loneliness
Relaxation/Distraction	
Physical presence, contact	#presence #contact
Intuitive response to owner's pain	#intuitive
Provides distraction from pain	#distraction
Aids with relaxation	#relax
Physical Activity	
Encourages walking	#walking
Necessitates other physical activity	#physical_activity
Behavioral Activation	
Motivation, no choice but to get up, go outside	#despite (pain) #choice #get_up #outside
Provides a routine	#routine #pacing
Encourages cognitive activation	#teach #cognition
Increases energy	#energy
Social Activation	
Increases social activity with humans	#social
Provides social connection with pets	#communication #talk #listener

Sleep	
Soothing presence	#sleep_comfort
Provides sense of security	#sleep_protection
Encourages adherence to a routine	#sleep_routine
Negative / Null Effects	
Negative effects	#negative #worse #concerns #cost #difficulty #unable #PetHealth #sleep_negative
Null effects	#no_effect