A photograph of a person in a blue polo shirt petting a brown dog. The dog is wearing a pink and black braided collar. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter.

# **A “Re-Look” at Definitions in Animal Assisted Interventions**

**Melissa Winkle, Marie-Jose Enders-Slegers,  
Jo-Ann Fowler and Amy Johnson**

# Agenda

- How and why AAI and IAHAIO came together for this work
- Existing approaches and developments in the terminology
- How YOU can help
- Next steps

## AAI TERMINOLOGY WORKGROUP DIRECTORS



# IAHAIO

International Association of  
**Human-Animal Interaction**  
Organizations

Since 1992, Global organization: Human-animal interactions & human-animal bond

Board of trustees (volunteers), a director >100 member organizations

- Education – training, conferences
- Knowledge hub – declarations, White Paper, position statements
- Research – Online Journal (PAIJ), grants
- Collaboration – online forum, Task Forces Best Practices  
Dissemination – online newsletter People and Animals Int. Journal

# IAHAIO

International Association of  
**Human-Animal Interaction**  
Organizations

Promote good standards of care and welfare for people and animals involved in AAI. Guidelines published and others in development

Forge closer links between researchers and practitioners in HAI and AAI to enhance quality and output for both

Provide opportunities for collaboration for IAHAIO members and those working in the field, and dissemination of key findings



- Organization began in 2011, incorporated as a non-profit in 2013
- Working Board of Directors: practitioners, dog trainers, business
- Member driven organization via visionary and working groups
- Goal is to facilitate collaborations (Like IAHAIO), education and community with our members and other AAI organizations, educational institutions and programs, and create member community for all areas of AAls



- Members are individual practitioners or organizations
- Literature supported **Standards of Practice** for individual practice areas
- Literature supported detailed **Competencies** for practice areas and with entry, intermediate, advanced and expert level guidance
- **Accreditation process** (portfolio, virtual and in-person)

# About our goals with Melissa

<https://www.istockphoto.com/search/2/image?page=2&phrase=dog%20group%20playing>



**IAHAIO**

International Association of  
Human-Animal Interaction  
Organizations

**asii**

animal  
assisted  
intervention  
international

*“Coming together  
is a beginning,  
keeping together  
is progress,  
working together  
is success”*

*Henry Ford*



<https://www.istockphoto.com/search/2/image?page=2&phrase=dog%20group%20playing>

*We are more  
powerful  
when we  
empower  
each  
other.....*

# Project Goal Components

Current Topic: Selected Terminology

- Animal Assisted Intervention
- Animal Assisted Activities
- Animal Assisted Education
- Animal Assisted Therapy
- Many other terms for example  
“Coaching”....

# Project Goal Components

Upcoming Topic: Selected Terminology

- Descriptions of the animals involved
- Ex: “Therapy Dog” may be misleading
- Ex: “Animal Therapy” is misleading:  
animals do not give therapy

# Why Terminology Matters

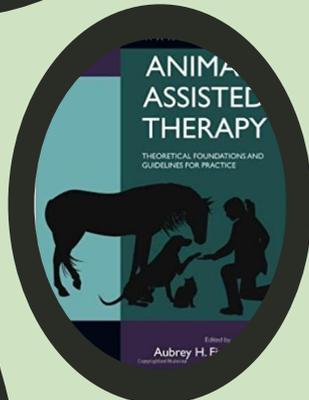
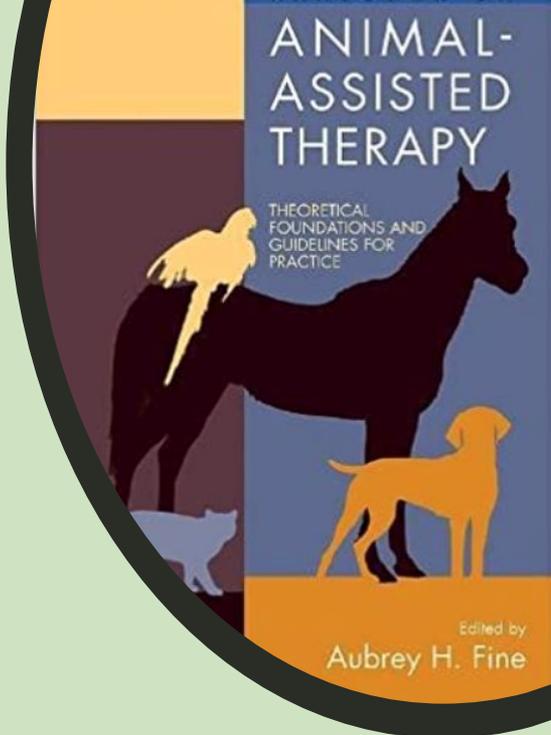
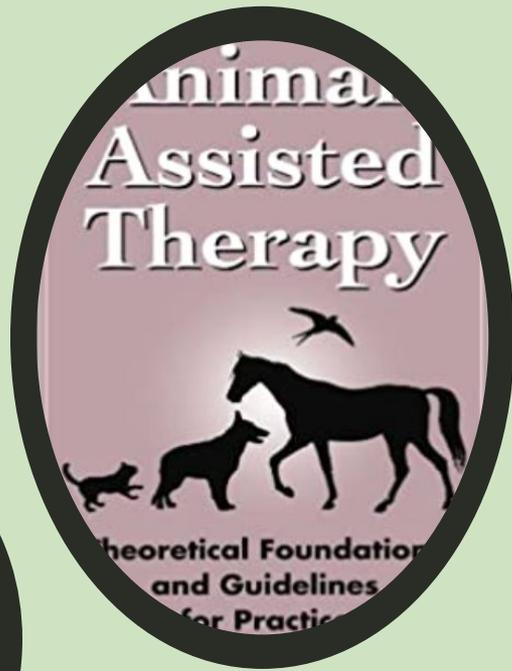
- Replication crisis (inability to replicate)
- Theoretical foundations may be different
- Lack of clearly identified objectives/goals
- Universities and some organizations that sponsor research need clarity about goals, settings, objectives, protocols
- University professors/students, sponsor organizations and editors of journals may not know the difference in scope or do not reinforce the use of specific, correct terminology

# Why Terminology Matters

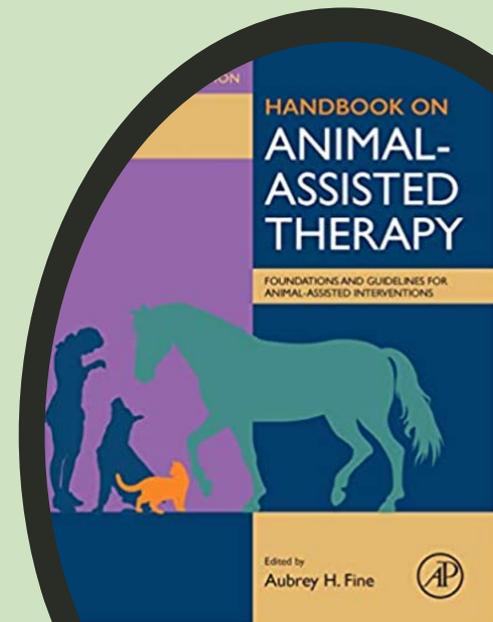
- Misuse/misrepresentation/undefined terms in titles and in body of research articles are misleading to readers, and unethical
- Misuse of terms means that outcomes are not accurately being reported or applied, findings cannot be duplicated

# Why Terminology Matters

- History and current practice by many volunteers and disciplines:
- Some organizations have selected what terms to use based on their current organizational structure
- Are active internationally, and so is our literature. Should consider the larger AAI community
- Consider terminology when working with all species to maintain consistency
- Consider the terminology referring to credentials (professional background) of humans and animals



This is not a new concern



# **It is impossible when using different terminology...**

to understand each other

to be transparent and open

to share your work in practice and research

to work efficiently together

to share data and outcomes for best practices

to learn from each other

to further the professional field

to further research

# We are not the first ones to notice

---

- Reviewed the literature and **identified 20 different definitions** of Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) and 12 terms for the event (LaJoie, 2003)
- Formally **called for consist terms** (Beck and Katcher, 2003)
- **Discussed definitions and theoretical foundations, and umbrella term of AAI** (Kruger and Serpell, 2006; Kruger and Serpell 2010)
- **Repeated the call for clear definitions and described blurred boundaries and distinctions among the various categories of practice, and the implications of this** (Parish-Plass, 2014)
- AAI Terminology and Standards (2013); **IAHAIO White paper** (2014, 2018 revised)

# Some Previous Work (cont'd)

---

- Some of the factors that contribute to this uncertainty include lack of standardized terminology used, weak research designs, and insufficient information about protocols used (Griffin, McCune, Maholmes, & Hurley, 2011)
- Non-standardized terminology use makes the scientific study of AAT difficult because it impedes the ability to compare studies (Fine & Beck, 2010; Fine et al., 2010)
- New terms continue to be created, which minimizes the impact of AAT and causes more confusion (Fine, Tedeschi & Elvolve, 2015)

# Some Previous Work (cont'd)

---

Literature Review with aim to evaluate animal assisted **THERAPY** articles, of those that identified as AAT (in title or body of paper), only 18 of 100 met our criteria for AAT (Winkle, Crowe & Ashraf , 2017)

# Some Previous Work (cont'd)

---

2020 ISAZ sessions by Tiffani Howell and Pauline Bennett discussing **terminology** for assistance/service animals and those working in AAls

2021 IAHAIO Workshop in IAHAIO Conference on Definitions by Enders, Winkle, Johnson and Fowler

2021 Launch International Consortium AAI (IC-AAI)

# Some Previous Work (cont'd)

---

*Uniform Terminology for **Services that Incorporate Horses to Benefit People**: A Consensus Document*  
(Wood et al., 2020)

# Review of International Definitions

Winkle, Johnson, Enders-Slegers & Fowler

## Considerations

- Criteria for practitioners may not be the same in every country
- “Certification” of human and/or animal has a different meaning
- Governmental agencies may have terminology/criteria in place (legal)
- Language and cultural differences - different meanings and significance

## Missing Areas of Existing Definitions

- Certain human service disciplines may not fall under the category of “therapy” so may not use the term AAT (legal)
- Not all professional work fits into existing well used categories AAA, AAE and AAT

# Outcomes from ISAZ Session 2020 and IAHAIO/AAll workshop 2021:

---

- The interdisciplinary nature of AAI makes it complicated to reach consensus
- Researchers and practitioners should use the same language to describe studies/their work
- Need a more cohesive language and to be more precise
- Need fewer categories with clearer distinctions
- Need to say precisely what we do to those who don't understand, to those who are outside of the field and not just to those within the field
- 'Intervention' as a term is problematic as it has negative connotations
- 'Therapy' is problematic in that different definitions of what constitutes a 'therapist' in different parts of the world and within different professions
- AAT is a modality within an existing professional field
- We 'partner' rather than 'use' animals
- 'Animal therapy' is misleading as it is not the animal delivering therapy

# Questions Posed to IC-AAI Members

- Question 1: Do you think the word 'interventions' in 'animal-assisted interventions' is problematic? Yes/No
- Question 2: In the practice of animal-assisted therapy, do you think an alternative term for 'therapy animal' is necessary? Yes/No

# Working Groups

## **Group One: TERMINOLOGY “INTERVENTION”**

**Co-chairs: Nancy Parish-Plass, Israel and Amy Johnson, USA**

- Is the term intervention appropriate as the umbrella term for AAA, AAE and AAT? If not, what is the alternative?
- Definitions AAI / support services
- AAT in a variety of occupational options (Mental Health, Occupational Therapy, Nursing, etc.) e.g. Animal-assisted psychotherapy (occupation specific), occupational therapy with animals (occupation/discipline first);
- How it could be implemented; possible plan for implementation

## **Group 2: THERAPY ANIMAL TERMINOLOGY**

**Co-Chairs: Tiffany Howell, Australia and Marie Jose Enders-Slegers, NL**

- ‘Therapy Animal’ suggests that the animal is the therapist. How to find terminology that describes the functions of the animals in any category of AAI (such as AAA, AAE, AAT) in a transparent way.
- How could it be implemented; possible plan for implementation

# Working Groups

## **GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS FOR AAI**

***Co-Chairs: Adele Lau, Singapore and Jo-Ann Fowler, UK***

- Definitions of AAIs and coinciding regulations / where they exist and where they don't
- What are the variety of governmental regulations and tie it in with AAI Term
- Are there Governmental rules for wellbeing animals involved in AAI?

## **EDUCATION / CONTINUING EDUCATION CRITERIA**

***Co-Chairs: TBD and Melissa Winkle, USA***

- Background of provider, qualifications (as professional and as AAI provider (animal side))
- Coach vs counselor, etc. (clear descriptions)
- Handler may not be a therapist
- Include IAHAIO/AAll white paper criteria, AAll Competencies (with Leslie Stewart) look also for other worldwide educational criteria and recommendations in the literature)
- Different roles in delivery of AAI / required education, background, criteria (Ex: AAT vs AAA or AAE)
- Discipline specific governing body requirements for alternative or complementary therapies

# Our Next Steps

## Grow IC-AAI

- Online platform is open to:
  - Researchers and practitioners
  - Educators
  - Officers/directors of AAI programmes
- Publications, commentaries, position statements
- Collaborations with equine sector/others
- Develop dissemination plans to disseminate information



Photo credit: teacherspet

## Takeaways

1. Tell others
2. JOIN!
3. Volunteer
4. Keep in touch!

# Join our International Consortium of Animal Assisted Interventions



**Request to join:**

[facebook.com/groups/237718257833223](https://facebook.com/groups/237718257833223)

# THANK YOU!

**Melissa Winkle**

**CONTINUING EDUCATION WORKGROUP**

melissa@dogwoodtherapy.com

**Jo-Ann Fowler**

**GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS**

Marie-Jose.Enders@ou.nl

**Marie-Jose Enders Slegers**

**TERMINOLOGY - "THERAPY" ANIMAL**

director@iahaio.org

**Amy Johnson**

**TERMINOLOGY - AAI**

dramyjohnsonlpc@gmail.com

