

# Possible Utility of Using A Virtual Pet to Replace the Pet Therapy In a Skilled Nursing Facility during COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Background

- ❖ Benefits of introducing pets into an institutionalized resident's routine
  - ✓ Foster sociability
  - ✓ Reduce reliance on psychotropic medications
- ❖ Discontinuation of pet therapy during COVID-19 pandemic
  - ✓ High risk of the virus spread through the pets and volunteers
  - ✓ No alternative methods are being used in the nursing facility currently
- ❖ Alternative to pet therapy
  - ✓ Virtual pet visit through iPad can be helpful?

## Quality Improvement Objective

To understand the effect of discontinued pet therapy on nursing home residents. Eventually, find a rationale for starting a virtual pet therapy as an alternative.

## Summary

**The patients in Asbury height are being impacted negatively by the pet therapy discontinuation. Most of them want to have a virtual pet visit if pet therapy cannot be continued.**

## Methodology

- ❖ **Study Design:** Open-labeled study
- ❖ **Participants:** Nineteen patients in the nursing facility, Asbury height with a capacity for 92 residents
- ❖ **Patient population:** All patients age ≥ 70 years old who agreed to participate and stayed in the nursing home at the time of survey
- ❖ **Survey Questions:**
  - i. How much they loved and now miss the therapy pet?
  - ii. How much do you feel now about the COVID restriction and the pet cannot visit you?
  - iii. How happy would you be to have virtual pet visit?
  - iv. How happy you were after having the virtual pet visit?
  - v. Would you prefer actual pet or virtual pet visit?
  - vi. Do you like virtual pet? Yes=Y, No=N
- ❖ **Outcomes measured:** Numeric rating scale of 1(most negative) to 5(most positive)

## Results

Figure 1. Q1 to Q4 Survey Responses

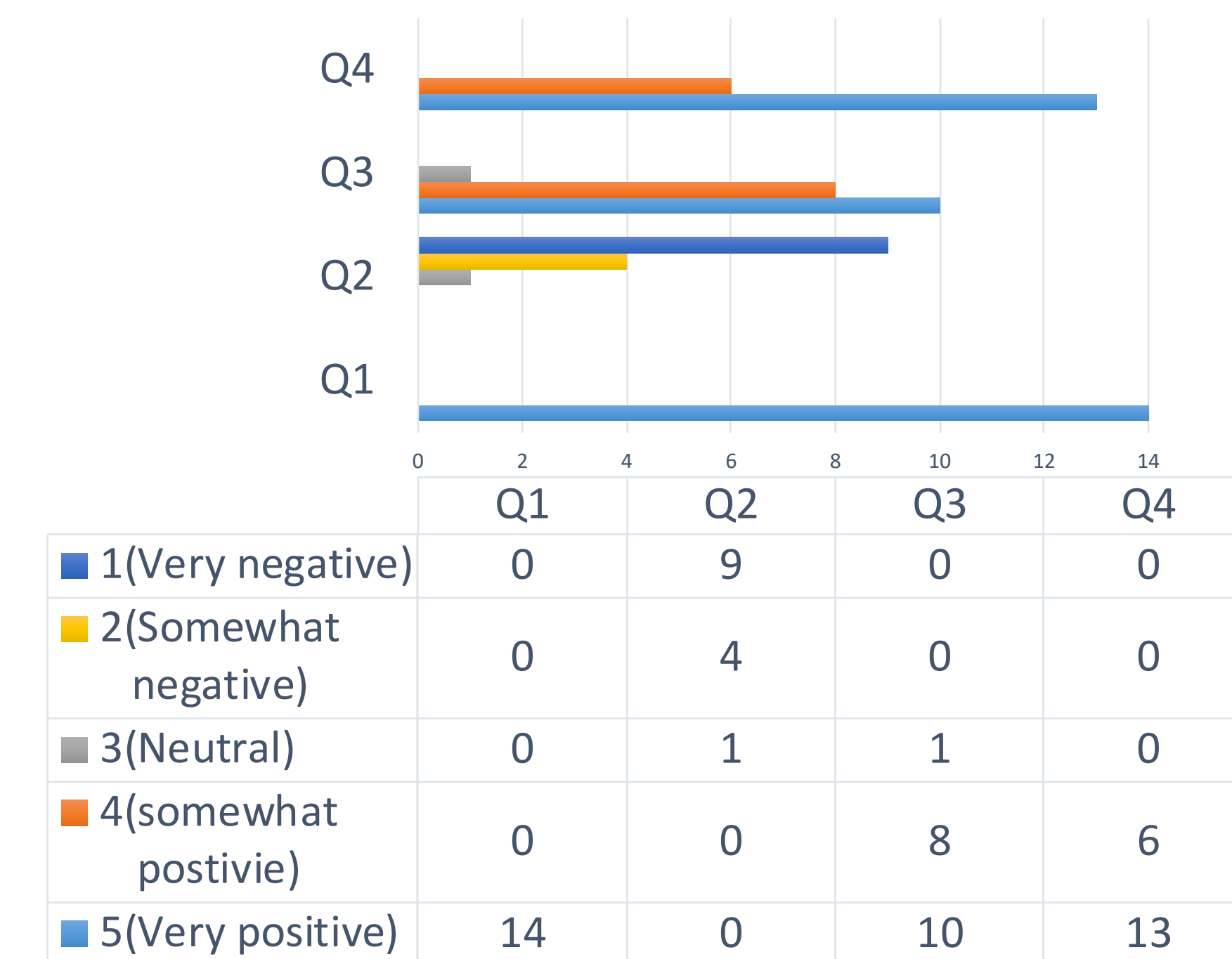
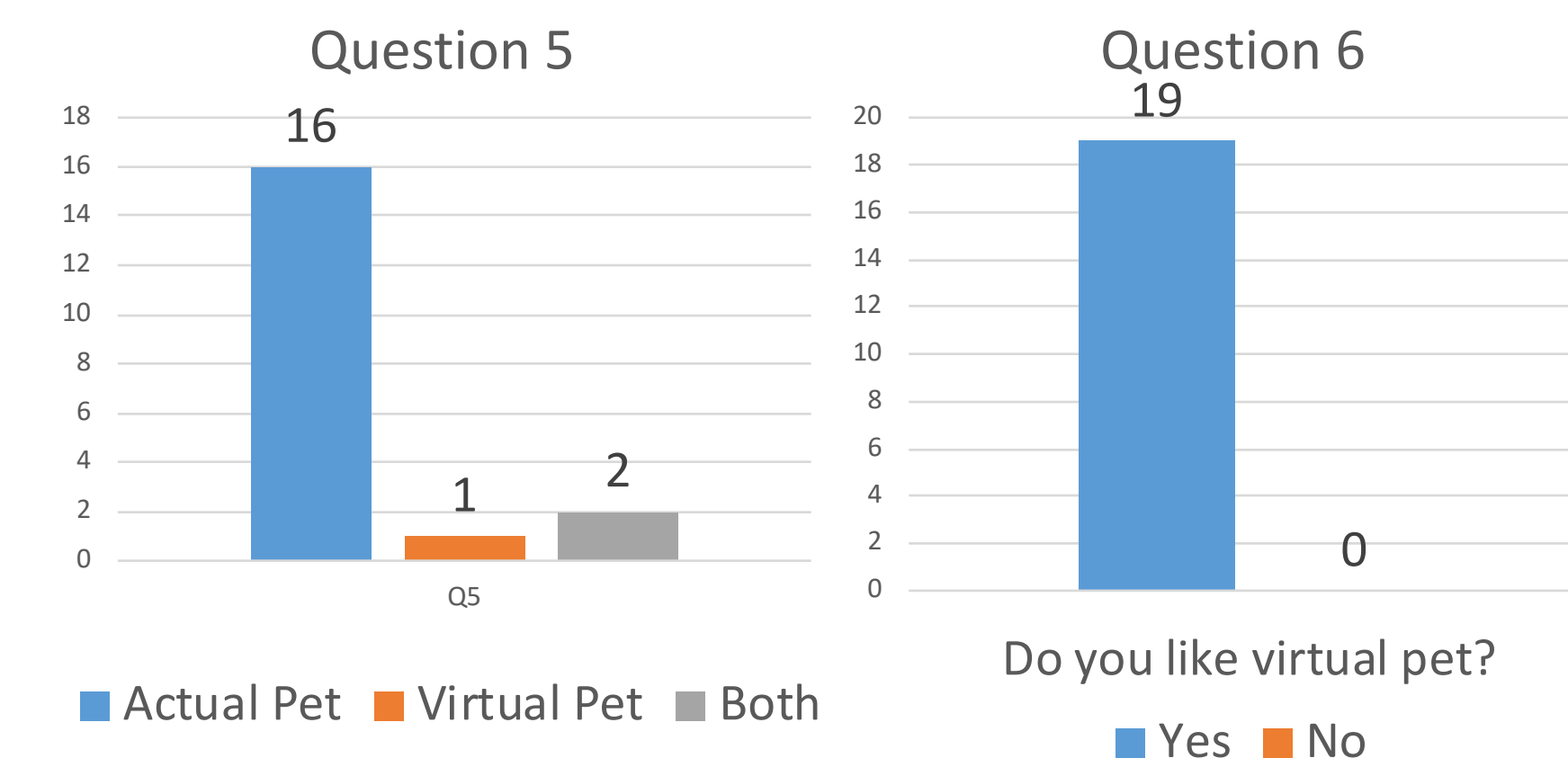


Figure 1. Q5 and Q6 Survey Responses



## Discussion

- ❖ Demonstrated that virtual pet visit can be an alternative to pet therapy
- ❖ The participants are negatively impacted by pet therapy discontinuation
- ❖ Most of the participants want to have a virtual pet visit if pet therapy cannot be continued
- ❖ The patients still prefer actual pet visit compare to the virtual pet visit
- ❖ Strengths
  - Used numeric rating scale which can be easily applicable in other settings
- ❖ Limitations
  - Small number of patients participated in the survey
- ❖ Next steps
  - Continue virtual pet visit while actual pet visit is prohibited due to COVID-19
  - F/U with the impact of virtual pet visit during COVID-19 Pandemic