

Abstract

The aim of the study is to compare nonverbal behaviour of elderly people in three studied interactions: 1) with a therapeutic animal, specifically guinea-pig (*Cavia aperea porcellus*), 2) with a plush guinea-pig toy and 3) with an ordinary single-coloured cup. Twenty one elderly people (3 men and 18 women, average age of 85 years, SD 7,95 y) participated in the study. All data used for the purpose of the study (video recordings) were collected in a Prague residential house for elderly people in summer 2009. An ethogram composed of sixty elements was prepared. Consequently the Interact software was used for coding of those elements. The inter-subject comparison demonstrated that a guinea-pig significantly enhances an interest in an object and tactile behaviour of observed people. There was no significant difference between the three examined situations in terms of respondent's communication with a therapist, facial expressions or the overall activity.

Keywords: nonverbal behaviour, animal-assisted activity, elderly, guinea-pig