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Dog-Walking, Health and the Human-Dog Bond

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have indicated that you own a dog and walk him on a regular basis. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

(1) What is this study about?

This study aims to investigate the effect of walking a dog on the owners' physical health and emotional wellbeing, and the dogs' mental wellbeing.

(2) Who is running the study?

Lauren Powell is conducting this study as part of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Associate Professor Emmanuel Stamatakis.

(3) What will the study involve for me?

As a participant of this study, you will be asked to complete four different tasks, namely; walk your dog, walk without your dog, interact with your dog whilst staying physically inactive and spend time on your own whilst staying physically inactive, across four separate days. This will involve meeting with a researcher in your home, at a time suitable to you. Measurements will be collected before and after each task.

QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire will be used to collect information on your relationship with your dog, including how much time you spend in activities together and your emotional closeness. This will only need to be completed once, prior to beginning your first task.

BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES AND MEASUREMENTS

- You will be asked to provide saliva samples to measure oxytocin, a biological indicator of positive emotion and bonding. The saliva will be collected by chewing a piece of cotton and then placing the cotton into a tube.
- Your heart rate variability will be measured using a sensor band placed around your chest.
- Your dog will need to provide urine samples to measure oxytocin, also an indicator of positive emotion and bonding in dogs. The researcher will collect these samples using a tray, when your dog urinates spontaneously. Please be aware, that your dog should not urinate during its walk but rather, once at the beginning and again 15-30 minutes after the walk.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

It is estimated that each participant will need to allow approximately 40-60 minutes for each task, so between 3 and 4 hours in total.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

To be eligible to take part in this study, you must be 18 years or older, live in the Sydney Metropolitan Area and be the primary or joint carer of a dog. You must not currently own any other dogs and must walk your dog for a minimum of 15 minutes, 4 times per week.

Additionally, your dog must have an absence of physical limitations that may prevent dog-walking, be male, be 1 year of older but not yet entered the last quantile of the expected lifespan for its breed. Your dog must also weigh between 5 and 32 kg.

(6) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and neither you, nor your dog are under any obligation to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney. You are also free to withdraw at any time if you change your mind after providing consent.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect there to be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study, outside of those inherently associated with dog walking.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that you or your dog will receive any direct benefits from being in this study.

(9) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting information and biological samples from you for the purposes of this research study. Your information and biological samples will be stored securely at the University of Sydney and will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

(10) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, we encourage you to tell other people about the study.

(11) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Lauren Powell will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Associate Professor Emmanuel Stamatakis via email (emmanuel.stamatakis@sydney.edu.au) or telephone (02 8627 1867) or Lauren Powell via email (lauren.powell@sydney.edu.au) at any time.

(12) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. This feedback will be in the form of a one-page summary, outlining the main findings of the study. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(13) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans and animals in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or an Animal Ethics Committee (AEC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC [2017/215] and AEC of the University of Sydney [2017/1161]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* and the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (2013)*.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- Telephone: +61 2 8627 8176
- Email: human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
- Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

Animal Welfare Veterinarian, University of Sydney:

- Telephone: +61 2 8627 8174
- Email: animal.ethics@sydney.edu.au

This information sheet is for you to keep