

Pet Stress Away

Using Dogs to Help Students Cope with Stress

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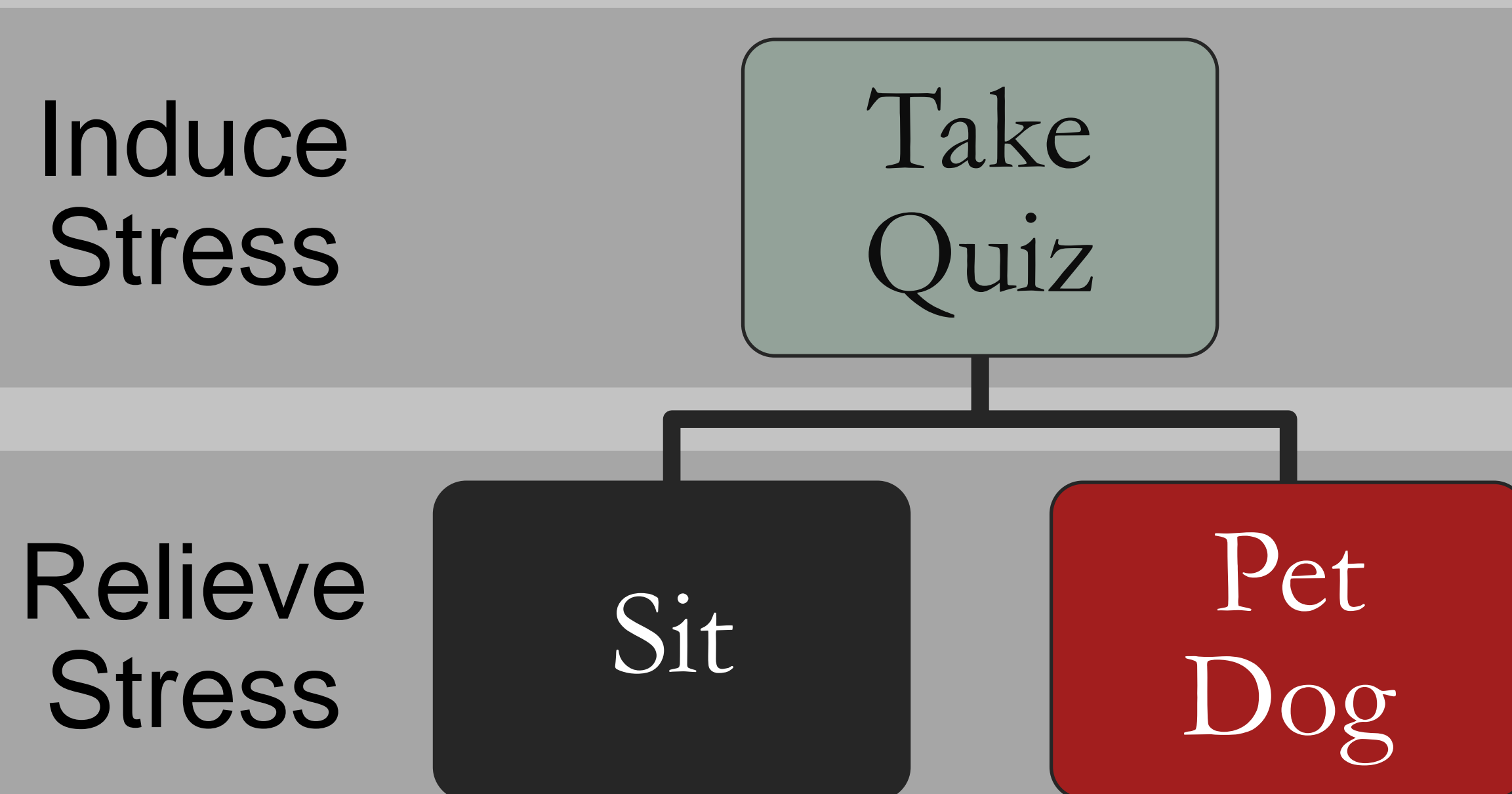
Problem

College students are under stress. Without healthy coping strategies, stress can lead to undesirable consequences. Colleges offer programs to help, but many are underutilized.

Background

- 85% of college students report feeling stress on a daily basis¹
- Just petting a dog has been proven to reduce blood pressure and pulse and alleviate stress²

Assessment Plan

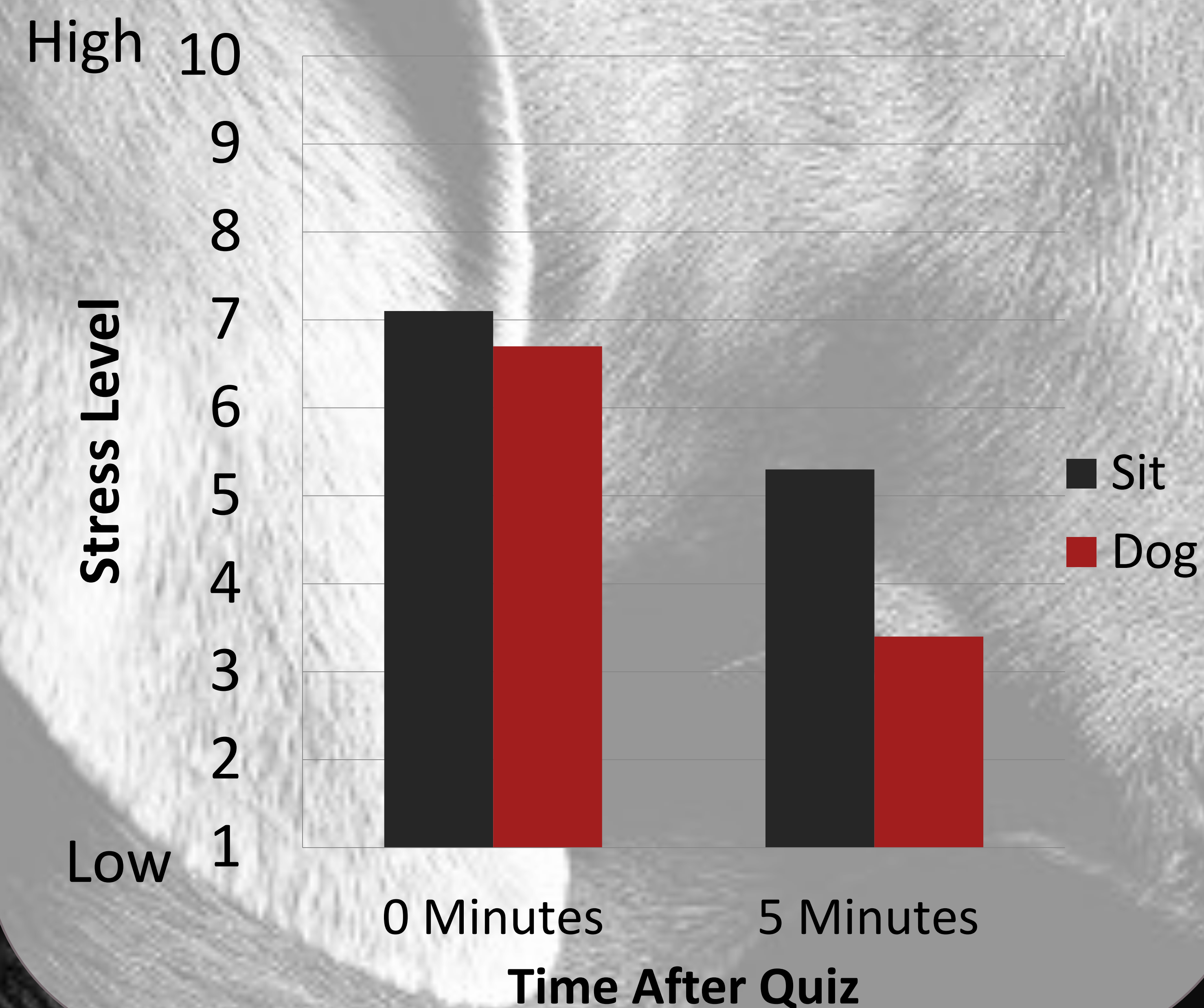


Students reported stress on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) after each step.

Results and Recommendations

Petting dogs reduced stress levels twice as much as sitting. Colleges should provide access to dogs to enable students to relieve stress in a healthy way.

Reduction of Student Stress Levels



Cost - Benefit

- Little to no monetary cost
- Fun and healthy way to relieve stress
- Institutionalizes a new program at WPI

Long-Term Outcome

The student club PAWS (Promotion of Animal Welfare Society) will use our project to institutionalize a therapy dog program at WPI.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Gregory Snoddy for helping us bring therapy dogs to WPI, to the IRB for their efficient service, and to PAWS for continuing the program.



References

1. "College Stress and Mental Health Poll". March 2009. mtvU/Associated Press.
2. Hansen, K., Messinger, C., Baun, M., & Megel, M. (1999). Companion Animals Alleviating Distress in Children.