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Puppy Therapy Helps Cancer Patients

By Holly Corbett, Prevention
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Pets may do more than provide unconditional love—they may also help us heal. One study found that time spent with dogs decreased anxiety and despair levels in cancer patients, while another discovered heart attack and stroke patients with pets were more likely to survive one year after being released from the coronary care center. The Beverly Hills Cancer Center is now using Chiclet, a Miniature Doberman Pinscher that weighs just nine pounds and is only six inches tall, as one of their newest cancer-fighting weapons.

Chiclet, pictured above, joined the medical team when one of the cancer experts on staff, Dr. Ari Gabayan, adopted the rescued pet from the humane society after she was abandoned as a six-week old puppy. Dr. Gabayan says he knew that Chiclet was a special dog because she was so calm and good-natured. He says that small dogs such as Chiclet are easy for patients to interact with because of her small size and weight, so he had her trained as a therapy dog. Chiclet knows to stay quiet and that she's not allowed to walk around Beverly Hills Cancer Center without a patient or doctor with her.

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Puppy therapy seems to be working well at the center, which is known for alternative treatment options: Patients often request that Chiclet is in the building on their treatment days. Dr. Gabayan notes that the moment patients pick her up or stroke her, he sees an immediate boost in their mood and less anxiety. Talk

about puppy love!

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