## Saskatoon veterans benefit from university research

SASKATOON – The Universities of Saskatchewan (U of S), Regina and McMaster, along with the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program, are releasing a new resource for service providers, educators and community members.

The resource is a song titled *I had A Dog*, with accompanying video and lyric sheet, and is based on research with war veterans in Saskatoon. The study involved visits with veteran residents by therapy dogs and their handlers, supported by funding from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) and a U of S One Health Research Development Grant.

Inspired by the research findings, the song was composed and sung by local Saskatoon musician Wes Froese. Along with the video, the song shares how visiting with a therapy dog can bring back fond memories for the veterans and a chance to reminisce.

"We are excited to be able to offer a product from our research that can be easily applied in practice, and at no cost to service providers, to help improve patient health," said U of S sociology researcher Colleen Dell.

Animals can provide a good way to open up lines of communication, especially for humans who feel alone, Dell said. This resource can be used by service providers with older adults and others to encourage conversation, uplift mood or simply bring about past memories which can be beneficial. The resource can also be used to promote understanding about the beneficial role of animal-human relationships, or for educational purposes in health care or classroom settings.

"Health care providers can explore many different topic areas based on this resource, including aging, clinical practice methods, grief and loss, total health care, mental health and problematic substance use, and so much more. The possibilities really are endless," said U of R researcher Darlene Chalmers.

The video will be released at noon on April 29 at the U of S One Health symposium. Details are at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/hevtl2b">http://tinyurl.com/hevtl2b</a>. The video also marks National Therapy Animal Day on April 30, with details at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/zp7pud7">http://tinyurl.com/zp7pud7</a>.

The full report of this research study will be submitted to VAC in May.

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