Therapy Dog Brings Relief to Little Girl With Liver Disease

Service and therapy dogs provide emotional support and assistance to people with illnesses, often resulting in better health outcomes.

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In Green Acres, Washington, a 6-year-old patient with liver disease is raising awareness about the benefit of therapy dogs in treatment, KXLY reports.

Clara Peterson, has been taking medication her entire life to alleviate the symptoms of an undiagnosed liver ailment. Her doctors can see something is wrong with her liver but don't yet know what's causing it. One of Clara's main symptoms is that she is itchy all the time, likely a result of improper blood filtration by her liver and gall bladder.

So what's a patient to do when there seem to be no treatment options? Cue Dogology Northwest, a local company that trains dogs to become service/therapy dogs. Clara's parents discovered the company while searching for alternative solutions to help ease their daughter's pain and distract her from scratching.

The company suggested a goldendoodle named Chester, who was trained from 8 weeks old to help people like Clara cope with their illness or disability.

"It's night and day. She's a completely different child," said Natalie Peterson, Clara's mother. "He will put his head on her chest, her arms, her legs, wherever, and she'll calm down."

Studies show that service and therapy dogs can provide emotional support and basic assistance to people with various conditions and illnesses—including cancer, HIV, posttraumatic stress disorder, autism, hearing impairment and more—and help them achieve better health outcomes. Clara's case suggests they could also help people with liver disease.

The family must now raise the $15,000 needed to purchase Chester, who has been on loan to the Peterson family. Friends, family and church members have already started fundraising, but the Petersons have yet to reach their goal.

Click here to learn more about Clara, her liver disease and Chester the support dog on her GoFundMe page.

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