

The Effect of Therapeutic Horseback Riding on Five Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: a Pilot Study.

Source: Cuypers, K., De Ridder, K., Strandheim, A. (2011). The effect of therapeutic horseback riding on five children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: a pilot study. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. 17 (10); 901-908.

Purpose:

What effect does therapeutic riding have on behavior, health-related quality of life, and motor performance on children with ADHD?

Design/Methods:

This study took place at a riding school in Norway, parental consent was obtained and their primary physicians approved participation. The 5 children in this study were male, had a primary diagnosis of ADHD, were between 10-11 years old, and lived in Norway. The kids were included in the study if they have been taking and reacting positively to a medication called Concerta for more than a year. Each session the kids did 1 hour of therapeutic riding twice a week for 8 weeks. In this study therapeutic riding is considered combinations of hippotherapy and recreational therapeutic horseback riding. The combination of these two forms of therapy were described as space, time understanding/attention, and executing tasks from hippotherapy, and equestrian skills from recreational therapeutic riding. They conducted 2 pretest and 2 posttests within 8 weeks apart. The researchers used the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire and the KINDL- Health Related Quality of Life Questionnaire to measure health-related quality of life. The Modified Function-Neurological Assessment, and lastly the Movement Assessment Battery for Children were used to measure the motor aspects.

Results:

In this study therapeutic riding resulted in a positive effect on all 5 children in the study. The areas where there were positive effects were social role behavior, quality of life, and motor performance. The researchers had the parents, teachers, and the kids filled out the questionnaires.

Conclusion:

Using therapeutic riding is a possible tool to be considered when treating children with ADHD as shown in this study.

Strengths:

This study used a good assessment tools to measure change.

Limitations:

This was such a small sample size with no control group that statistical power was limited.

Practical Application:

Based on this study, using therapeutic riding as a tool to help treat children with ADHD. The areas where improvement occurred was behavior, quality of life, and motor performance. Further research is needed to develop a protocol specific to this population and to look at these domains on more children.