



EQUINE IMMERSION
FOUNDATION

ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPIES: **DATA, IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES**

UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND
WARRIOR CARE COALITION CONFERENCE

April 11, 2024



PANEL PURPOSE



ACCEPTABILITY



IMPLEMENTATION



DATA



OUTCOMES



ACCEPTABILITY

- ✓ **STIGMAS**
- ✓ **BARRIERS**
- ✓ **INITIATION EFFORT**
- ✓ **SUSTAINED EFFORT**
- ✓ **THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE**

IMPLEMENTATION



1

DYSREGULATION & DISCONNECTION

2

PHYSIOLOGICAL - Horse as biofeedback loop

Decreased cortisol, increased oxytocin, higher heart rate variability, parasympathetic nervous system activation

3

SOCIAL - Attachment theory, herd dynamics

The Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults-short version (SELSA), Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

4

EMOTIONAL - Psychological flexibility, empowerment

The Coping Self Efficacy Scale (CSES), The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF)

5

SPIRITUAL - Identity, transpersonal, meaning

Cognitive Orientation Towards Spirituality (COS), Experiential/Phenomenological Dimension (EPD), Existential Well-Being (EWB)

MAN O' WAR PROJECT

Neural changes following equine-assisted therapy for posttraumatic stress disorder: A longitudinal multimodal imaging study

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19 VETERANS

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8 WEEKS EAT/S GROUND WORK

(sMRI), (rs-fMRI), and diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) at baseline, post-treatment and at 3-month follow-up.

Results: At post-treatment patients showed a significant increase in caudate functional connectivity (FC) and reduction in the gray matter density of the thalamus and the caudate. The increase of caudate FC was positively associated with clinical improvement seen immediately at post-treatment and at 3-month follow-up. In addition, higher baseline caudate FC was associated with greater PTSD symptom reduction post-treatment.

Conclusions: This exploratory study is the first to demonstrate that EAT can affect functional and structural changes in the brains of patients with PTSD. The findings suggest that EAT may target reward circuitry responsiveness and produce a caudate pruning effect from pre- to post-treatment.





Using Therapeutic Riding as an Intervention for Combat Veterans: An International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) Approach

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51 VETERANS AND ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS 8-WEEK THERAPEUTIC RIDING PROGRAM

Results: Clinically significant decrease in PTSD symptoms, improved social functioning, vitality, less interference of emotions on daily activities, and increased participation. Qualitative themes discovered included improved confidence, trust, acceptance of self and others, and gratitude. Qualitative and quantitative data linked to the ICF components.

Beth A. Lanning, Amelia L. Wilson, Nancy Krenek & A. Alexander Beaujean (2017)
Occupational Therapy in Mental Health,
33:3, 259-278, DOI: 10.1080/0164212X.2017.1283282





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