



Abstract Booklet

The 5th Nordic seminar on Equine Assisted Interventions 2024

September 12-13, 2024, at Halmstad University, Sweden

Equine Assisted Interventions for sustainable health, performance and participation

The 5th Nordic seminar on Equine Assisted Interventions 2024 in the form of a two-day conference embracing Equine Assisted Interventions to support health, learning, and activity irrespective of physical or mental disability. The seminar is a cooperation between The Swedish organisation for equine assisted interventions (OHI), Halmstad University, Lund University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. The seminar incorporates OHI's 30th anniversary.

The conference aims to offer researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders in the field of Equine Assisted Interventions as well as accountable decision-makers and politicians at various levels within the health care sector and related areas access to recent research results and the opportunity to exchange experiences regarding equine assisted interventions in the field of sustainable health, learning and activity for all in the society. The topic of evidence-based practice is an important fundamental aspect and constitutes a unique opportunity to define areas in need to be established with the help of high-quality research and development work as well as collaboration in and around Equine-Assisted Interventions. The seminar concerns both researchers and practitioners from all over the Nordic countries to jointly increase our knowledge about Equine Assisted Interventions.



Program

Day 1 Thursday September 12, 2024

Room	S1002
09:30 - 10:00	Registration
10:00 - 10:15	<p>Introduction Maria Vilain Rørvang, PhD, Associate professor at Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences Elisabeth Argentzell, PhD, Associate professor at Lund University Henrika Jormfeldt, PhD, Professor at Halmstad University/ member of OHI research Group and HETI executive committee</p>
10:15 - 10:45	<p>Keynote speaker - Henrika Jormfeldt Professor of nursing, School of health and welfare, Halmstad University <i>Holistic Equine-assisted services in a specialised health care and support system – barriers and benefits</i></p>
11:00 – 12:00	<p>Peer reviewed oral presentations on “Equine Assisted interventions – Relationships to Promote Health and Recovery” Moderator: Elisabeth Argentzell</p> <p><i>Taking a One Health approach to Equine Assisted Interventions by engaging a multispecies triad perspective.</i> Andrea Petitt, University of Liège, Belgium, E-mail: Andrea.petitt@uliege.be Henrik Lerner, Department of Health Care Sciences, Marie Cederschiöld University, Stockholm. E-mail: henrik.lerner@mchs.se</p> <p><i>Horses in Equine-Assisted Services - working on a relationship toward Human Health.</i> Inês Pereira-Figueiredo Tiago Mendonça, Ana Rita Matias, Graça Duarte Santos Thekids Fellows-Research Group in Anthrozoology, Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal, Institute of Neurosciences of Castilla y León, University of Salamanca, Salamanca, Spain, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Lusófona University, Portugal. E-mail: thekidsfellows@gmail.com</p> <p><i>Equine Assisted Psychological Treatment (EAPT) according to CBT and ACT in a primary care context.</i> Emma Lindeblad, Clinical psychologist and psychotherapist in CBT; PhD in Psychology, Region Kronoberg och Linnéuniversitetet, E-mail: emma.lindeblad@lnu.se</p> <p><i>Experiences of Equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) from Stallen Gaustad at Oslo University Hospital.</i> Christina Thorpe nurse and equine-assisted therapist at Stallen Gaustad, Oslo University Hospital. Norway. E-mail: chra@ous-hf.no</p>
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch and exhibition
13:30 – 14:00	<p>Keynote speaker - Tobba Therkildsen Sudmann Professor at Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in Bergen, Norway <i>Norwegian perspective on Equine-assisted interventions in social exclusion, addiction, and dementia</i></p>



14:00 – 15:00	<p>Peer reviewed oral presentations on “Experiences from equine-assisted and nature-based interventions” Moderator: Maria Vilain Rørvang</p> <p><i>A therapeutic equine-assisted group intervention- experiences among people with common mental disorders on sick leave.</i> Linda Fridén, PhD-student, Halmstad University, Sweden, E-mail: linda.friden@hh.se</p> <p><i>Equine assisted education for students with problematic school situations.</i> Malin Larsson, MSc in agriculture with a major in animal science, MSc in environmental psychology. E-mail: malinlarsson@yahoo.com</p> <p><i>Young people's experiences of Equine-Facilitated Therapy (EFT) in promoting psychological functioning.</i> Hanna Huttunen, Occupational Therapist, Equine-Facilitated Therapist, Master’s Degree in Health Sciences University of Oulu Finland. E-mail: hanna.hanninen81@gmail.com</p> <p><i>Participation and inclusion for persons with intellectual disabilities in horse related activities.</i> Marie Gustavsson & Susanne Larsson, Division of Social Work, Department of Culture and Society, Linköping university. Sweden. E-mail: marie.gustavsson@liu.se</p>
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee break and exhibition
15:30 – 16:30	<p>Peer reviewed oral presentations on “Impact of Equine assisted interventions” Moderator Henrika Jormfeldt</p> <p><i>Animal-assisted and nature-based intervention with horses for young adults with autism and social withdrawal, A feasibility study with a health economic perspective.</i> Sara Holmberg, MD, associate professor, Department of Research and Development, Region Kronoberg, Sweden. Email: sara.holmberg@kronoberg.se</p> <p><i>A process of embodied recovery from stress-related mental health problems. Exploring and explaining the process of personal recovery from participating in a nature-based intervention including equine-assisted therapy.</i> Marie Gudmundsson, PhD student, Department of Health Sciences, Lund, Sweden. E-mail: marie.gudmundsson@med.lu.se</p> <p><i>The movement of the horse building parameters of walk for chronic low back pain patients (CLBP).</i> Mattila-Rautiainen Sanna, University of Eastern Finland, Biomedicine. E-mail: sanna.mattila-rautiainen@uef.fi</p> <p>Physiotherapists’ experiences of Equine assisted therapy: A way to reach several levels of movement simultaneously. Matilda Ugglå Master’s Programme in Physiotherapy (2023) Umeå University, Sweden. E-mail: Matilda.uggla@gmail.com</p>
16:45 – 17:30	<p>Keynote speaker - Nina Ekholm Fry, clinical psychologist, Director of Equine Programs at University of Denver’s Institute for Human-Animal Connection</p> <p><i>Clinical Conceptualization and a Trauma-Informed Approach to Equine Interactions in Therapy Services: A Nordic Perspective on Developments in America</i></p>
19:00 -	Jubilee Dinner and a ceremony by OHI with speeches, announcing honorary member and singing



Day 2 Friday September 13, 2024

Room	S1002
9.00 – 9.30	Keynote speaker - Sven Forsling Psychologist, researcher and honorary member of OHI <i>Horses in Compulsory treatment - A summary from 60 years of Equine assisted interventions</i>
9:30 – 10:00	Keynote speaker - Margareta Håkanson Licensed physical therapist, med licentiate degree, OHI Research Network <i>Development of Equine Assisted Interventions in Sweden - milestones and challenges</i>
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee break and exhibition
10:30 – 11:30	Panel dialogue led by Elin Lee Apple at The Swedish Horse Industry Foundation (HNS) Including representatives of politics, OHI, researchers and practitioners in the field regarding what needs to be done to make Equine-assisted interventions available to those who need it. The panel dialogue will be held in Swedish, while the dialogue with the panel will be summarized and translated into English.
11:30 – 12:00	Closure and Information about upcoming conference/seminar regarding Nature based health at SLU Alnarp 2025.
12.00 – 13:20	Lunch and exhibition
Room	S1004, S1023, S1072, S1078
13:20 – 15:00	Workshops in smaller groups based on, geographical or activity-specific focus
15:00 – 15:10	Take away “fika” and goodbye

Registration is done via the conference website <https://www.hh.se/english/about-the-university/events/the-5th-nordic-research-seminar-on-equine-assisted-interventions-2024.html>



Keynote speakers



Henrika Jormfeldt

Henrika Jormfeldt is a full Professor of Nursing, licensed nurse specialized in mental health and the chief-editor of the International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being. She is the program manager of the master's level mental health nursing program at Halmstad University and the project manager of ongoing doctoral projects regarding equine assisted interventions within nursing, pedagogy and habilitation. Henrika is the Director of “Bråddared's Horse for Health & Well-being” <http://braddaredshast.dinstudio.se/17/10/in-english/> She is certified by the Swedish Organization of Equine-assisted Interventions (OHI) to perform equine-assisted interventions and holds over 50 years of experience with horses and work in partnership with her own breedings in equine assisted services. Henrika is a delegate of the executive committee in The Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy International (HETI). Henrika’s recent research involves investigations of equine assisted interventions for children and adults with mental health conditions.



Tobba Sudmann

Tobba Sudmann, full Professor of Public Health, physiotherapist and medical sociologist, and academic head of the PhD-program Health, functioning and participation at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. She has her own adjunct practice where she offers equine-facilitated physiotherapy. Her research focus on how people use their bodily resources to enhance their well-being and social participation, whether the means are in- or outdoor physical activity, technology, nature, or horses. Professor Sudmann is currently studying physical activities for persons with dementia, crisis shelters for persons with substance dependency, horses in mental health work (including substance use), and green social work with horses.



Nina Ekholm Fry

Nina Ekholm Fry is the Director of Equine Programs at University of Denver's Institute for Human-Animal Connection in Denver in Colorado (USA) and a faculty member in the Graduate School of Social Work and the Graduate School of Professional Psychology. She is the coordinator of the Human-Animal-Environment Interactions in Social Work specialization within the Master of Social Work program and leads the Post-Master's Equine-Assisted Mental Health Practitioner Certificate program. For the past 15 years, her work has included animals in human services with a focus on equine interactions in psychotherapy and counseling. Nina serves as an advisor to the State of Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services on matters related to mental health services in green environments. She has a background as a psychologist specializing in trauma treatment and as an equine behavior consultant. Nina has a particular interest in applied ethics and social justice perspectives within human-animal interactions and is actively engaged in national and international organizations for both human and equine wellbeing.



Sven Forsling

Sven Forsling is a psychologist and researcher. He holds an American farrier training and has worked as a research assistant to Gunnar Borg (The Borg Scale), and he has had a lifetime working relationship with Richard Blum at University of Berkeley and University of Stanford in California. Forsling has been the chief psychologist for §12 - care within Stockholm County Council, and a member of the scientific council at the state board of institutions (SiS). He was the head of department for the home for girls in compulsory care “Stall Frossarbo” during the period between 1987 to 1999. He wrote the book “444 Stockholmsungdomar i kris” [444 Stockholm youths in crisis] 1987”. In 1998 he was awarded the foundation “Allmänna Barnhuset's” big prize for his efforts for socially disadvantaged young people. He is the author of “Flickan och hästen” (2001) translated to “The Girl and the Horse” (2003).



Margareta Håkanson

Margareta Håkanson, OHI certified physiotherapist, clinical specialist in psychiatry and psychosomatics, certified in Balance in Movement and has a medical licentiate degree in public health at the University of Gothenburg. She participated in clinical research in physiotherapy regarding group treatment for patients suffering from stress related symptoms like chronic pain and anxiety and on equine assisted physiotherapy for patients suffering from eating disorders and from low back pain. She was project leader for the project "Animals and human health" at the Swedish University for Agricultural Sciences (SLU). She has also been involved in development of OHI certification process, survey of EAI providers, multiprofessional education and have been teaching on human animal interaction and equine assisted interventions. OHI research group was founded to assemble the academic resources within OHI and create a meeting point for the diverse professions and disciplines spread all over Sweden and its universities. One outcome from the groups meetings is this 5th Nordic research seminar.



Peer reviewed oral presentations

Taking a One Health approach to Equine Assisted Interventions by engaging a multispecies triad perspective

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This conceptual paper takes a point of departure in the current debates within One Health (and One Welfare) (Lerner & Berg 2017) discussions around equine assisted interventions (EAI), with a tendency to aim for more holistic evaluations with focus on both humans and animals (García Pinillos 2018; Lerner 2019). We aim to unpack the potential divergence present in multispecies encounters within such interventions. By engaging multispecies intersectionality theory (Petitt 2023) we take up the challenge (Andersson 2019; Forsling 2020) to better understand the roles of the different participants in EAI and how species is performed in intersectional and divergent ways. By contrasting the human-horse species dyad working together in EAI with those of human-dog dyads in similar interventions, and thus gaining an abstract multispecies triad perspective (Petitt 2023, Petitt and Brandt 2024) we investigate how thinking species in social terms might trouble biological notions within current One Health discourses relevant for understanding multispecies interactions in interventions aimed at humans. Within the literature reporting effects achieved through EAI there is a diverse range of research methodologies, but little discussion on methods allowing for conceptualisation and problematisation of the relationship between horse and human, and the role of the horse (Lerner & Silfverberg 2020). We aim to enhance this latter aspect by looking further into already existing research methodologies that might be fruitful for such purposes and discuss the need for methods development at the cross section of One Health and EAI.

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Horses in Equine-Assisted Services - working on a relationship toward Human Health

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In the last decades, several studies have shown the health benefits of interacting with animals and nature. The term *human-animal bond* was established in recognition of the importance of the therapeutic potential that animals can play in human health. Previous research has shown that the horse's characteristics, as species, are exceptional, offering unique emotional, physical, educational and wellness benefits to people of very different needs and ages. The horse is large and impressive, and this can be intimidating but challenging. But the horse is also a prey, therefore fearful and sensitive, very attentive to its environment, with sharp senses. It is also well-known horses are social and “empathetic” therefore they may recognize the emotional states of the people close to them, accepting proximity and bonding attachment. For some researchers, inter-specific relationships could be used as a mechanism to promote healthy neurobiological development through touching and proximity, evocating rewarding emotions (positive valenced) in both humans and animals. For the above reasons, developing a therapeutic process with the horse and the equestrian context promotes individuals' socioemotional competencies (beyond motor competence), facilitating relations with others and with themselves in a relaxing environment. Most studies focused on the mental, emotional, and social factors that equine-assisted services address. However, less is known about the many aspects of human-animal interactions and horse-human attachment processes. Here we will explore state of the art on human-horse relationships and their importance in improving standardized protocols for equine-assisted Services, particularly regarding the ‘theory of Attachment’ and the “Emotional Transfer Hypothesis.”

Keywords: competences; health; human-horse bond; socioemotional



Equine Assisted Psychological Treatment (EAPT) according to CBT and ACT in a primary care context.

Emma Lindeblad, Clinical psychologist and psychotherapist in CBT; PhD in Psychology

Katarina Gottfridsson, Clinical psychologist and psychotherapist in CBT

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Background: The therapeutic value of human horse interaction in a treatment context has been established in several previous studies. The horse's position in the animal hierarchy as prey animals makes it attentive and sensitive to its surroundings which enables it to react upon human moods and inner states, even though they may be subtly displayed. Previous studies have shown that horses are non-judgmental and may also reflect human emotions and contribute the gain of increased self-knowledge in the human. In this study, the natural behavior of a horse is assumed to contribute positively and reinforcingly to a psychological group treatment of stress, anxiety, depression. The intervention group was compared to a Treatment As Usual (TAU) group at primary care level.

Method: This study had an exploratory intention since the EAPT-CBT/ACT had not to our knowledge been studied in a primary care context with adults before nor with a quantitative approach. It followed a pre-post between groups design with a non-equivalent comparison non-randomized sample and pre-post intervention assessments and a follow up assessment 3-6 months after interventions was accomplished. The design was shape from the idea that the whole concept of the treatment method was being evaluated, including elements as group treatment, horses and being outside. Four questionnaires regarding depression, anxiety, burnout and psychological flexibility were administrated pre and post treatment and 3 months after interventions for both groups. Participants in EAPT took part in 9 group sessions of 90 minutes each in groups of 5-7 people. In total 76 participants received EAPT and 78 TAU. Each session in EAPT started with a theoretical part with psychoeducation and home assignment follow up. This was continued by horse assisted practices ensuing the theme of the theoretical session. The intervention program followed the CBT principles of treatment of psychological ill-health. The results were analyzed with repeated measures ANOVA.

Results: There were no significant differences on any of the four measures with small differences in mean values between the groups EAPT and TAU. The dropouts from both groups were few and very similar to the group who fulfilled the interventions. All four main effects of Time were significant, meaning that groups generally lowered their scores after the intervention, however, as only two out of four between group effects was significant (and with very small effect sizes) and that no interaction effects between Time and Group were significant, we cannot distinguish between treatment type, but findings show that regardless of type of treatment, participants reported symptom reduction.

Conclusions:

The results indicate that horse's natural behavioral repertoire can be helpful to humans for psychotherapeutic purposes, and just as helpful as TAU. Further research is needed to understand the contributions of each component in the treatment.

Experiences of Equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) from Stallen Gaustad at Oslo University Hospital.



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For the last 50 years, Stallen Gaustad, a Norwegian institution, has been using horses to treat mental illness and drug addiction. Over the years, their approach has evolved, and today, the stable is a part of the specialist health service in Norway. Stallen is now an outpatient unit in the Department of Addiction Treatment, Division of Mental Health and Addiction (KPHA) at Oslo University Hospital (OUS). Over the past decade, Stallen Gaustad has prioritised professionalism, research, and development due to the increased requirements for documentation, method development, and practitioner competence. Stallen has a treatment team consisting of a psychologist, a psychiatric nurse, and a clinical social worker. In addition, another team is responsible for caring for the horses, consisting of an ethologist and two equine apprentices. Stallen Gaustad at Oslo University Hospital provides Equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) as a group treatment for patients who are struggling with mental health issues and substance addiction and offers this therapy in addition to other treatments that the patients receive in the Norwegian specialist health service. According to Stallen Gaustad's experience, EAP is a beneficial form of therapy for patients. Research conducted by Ann Kern Godal at the same facility also indicates the effectiveness of this therapy. However, due to the limited research available on EAP, further studies are necessary to understand this treatment's potential outcomes fully. Therefore, a new research project in the form of an observational study was initiated in 2018 at Stallen Gaustad.

Currently, our study includes 240 participants. Our patients come from both substance abuse treatment and mental health services, and their diagnoses are often severe. Patients' ages vary between 16 and 70. Our findings indicate that patients who participated in EAP experienced a significant increase in self-efficacy (GSE-5), mental health (HSCL-10), quality of life (QoL) and emotion regulation (Sipp-118 (Severity Indices of Personality Problems)). Furthermore, the results show some interesting findings regarding outcomes for different patient groups, where patients diagnosed with personality disorders and anxiety seem to benefit the most from the treatment.



A process of embodied recovery from stress-related mental health problems. Exploring and explaining the process of personal recovery from Participating in a nature-based intervention including equine-assisted therapy

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Objective: Stress-related mental health problems (MHP) are increasing worldwide but the evidence-base for rehabilitation interventions for this target group is still weak. It has been shown that people with stress-related MHP may benefit from nature-based interventions (NBI), including equine-assisted therapy (EAT) to support their clinical and personal recovery. However, there is a knowledge gap concerning how people with stress related MHP experience the process of personal recovery when participating in an intervention combining NBI and EAT. The aim of this study is thus to explore and explain how people with stress-related MHP experience the process of personal recovery from participating in a novel nature-based intervention including equine-assisted therapy.

Design: Open-ended face-to-face in-depth interviews were performed by one of the researchers with 18 service users, referred from psychiatry, who had participated in the intervention. Interviews were performed until data saturation occurred and the questionnaire was developed during the interview process. The interviews are currently being analysed using Grounded Theory methodology.

Results: A preliminary core concept is currently: 'A process of embodied recovery from stress-related mental health problems. Furthermore, there are currently eight preliminary categories: 'Making a choice of your own', 'Connecting to the physical nature, animal and human environment', 'Experiencing external support', 'Lowering the guard and letting new experiences in', 'Having the time to build acceptance, trust and feelings of safety', 'Using all your senses and making emotions awaken', 'Reconnecting to self and body as a whole' and 'Bringing new strategies into everyday life'. Preliminary results will be presented and discussed at the seminar.

Discussion: The results of the study may be used to develop optimal support towards recovery for the target group of people with stress related MHP.



A therapeutic equine-assisted group intervention- experiences among people with common mental disorders on sick leave

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Objective: The objective was to describe the experiences of people with common mental disorders participating in an equine-assisted intervention.

Design: The qualitative study had an inductive descriptive approach. Semi-structured interviews were performed and analysed with conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Ten participants were interviewed after participation in a 12-week-long equine-assisted intervention in a rural setting.

Results: The result showed that the participants experienced the equine-assisted intervention as facilitating recovery. The environment of the horses contributed to relaxation and the ability to be in the present, the presence of the horses facilitated supportive group relationships, emotional interaction with the horse supported inner power, and the interplay with the horses entailed physical activity as well as bodily improvements (Friden et al., 2024).

Conclusion: The horses and their environment played a significant role in the recovery of the study participants, and the horse's contribution to nature-based interventions is emphasised. Knowledge of how people with common mental disorders experience participation in equine-assisted interventions may facilitate healthcare professionals in their support of holistic health in people with common mental disorders.

Keywords: common mental disorders; equine-assisted intervention; experiences.

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Equine assisted education for students with problematic school situations

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Introduction: There is an increasing interest in Equine Assisted Education (EAE), such as including horses in educational programmes for students of various ages. However, there is not much research on effects, on educational methods, and on how participation in EAE may affect horse welfare. The aim of this pilot study was to collect information about EAE with focus on students with problematic school situations, as a preparation for a full-scale research project. The study included three facilities: A municipality and a riding school in Sweden working with EAE for school students in grade 1-9 with problematic school absence (S), a folk high school in Sweden working with weekly EAE sessions for adult students at a local riding school (T), and an EAE training centre working mainly with autistic children in Texas, USA (U).

Methods: An interview protocol was prepared for practitioners at the facilities. Interview questions covered different aspects such as educational activities, effects of activities on students and horse welfare. Two facilities (S and U) were visited, and educational activities were observed. Two practitioners at S were interviewed in site, and one at U in written form. The practitioner-teacher at T was interviewed by telephone since visiting the facility was not possible.

Results: At S, activities involved scheduled, structured, teacher-led educational activities, mounted (on horseback) and on ground. School subjects, such as maths, science, language and reading, were incorporated in the activities. Horses, movement, and natural surroundings provided possibilities for experiential learning. Practitioners reported the students to relax on horseback, open up to learning, and improve self-esteem and social skills. At T, students worked in pairs to prepare the horses, followed by ground and mounted exercises. Subjects such as languages and mathematics were taught in connection to equine activities. The teacher reported the horses to support students in building relationships and improving social abilities. Students were reported to learn more and make faster progress than without horses. At U, the "Horse boy method" was developed to give autistic children (usually with a history of school failure) a safe, sensory-friendly environment. School subjects were taught outdoors, mounted and on ground, following the child's interests. Horses, movement, and natural surroundings were reported to reduce stress and promote learning. The practitioners at all three facilities reported horses to enjoy their work, which was more varied than ordinary riding lessons. Horses at S were selected for their calmness and reliability. At T, horses were selected for each activity according to personality. U horses (some of them with traumatic background) were specially trained for their work and were reported by the practitioner to thrive better than in ordinary riding schools.

Discussion: This small study indicates that there might be positive effects on learning and psychosocial functioning of EAE for students with problematic school situations, such as high absence or neurodevelopmental issues. There was no indication of horse welfare problems due to EAE in this study. Further research is needed on educational methods in EAE, as well as effects of EAE on students and horses.



Young people's experiences of Equine-Facilitated Therapy (EFT) in promoting psychological functioning.

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The purpose was to describe young people's experiences of Equine-Facilitated Therapy (EFT) in promoting psychological functioning. **The aim** of the research was to provide new information for clients and rehabilitation professionals about EFT as one possible form of rehabilitation in terms of psychological functioning and for the development of EFT taking into account the experiences of young people. **Methods:** The data was collected individually through thematic interviews. Discretionary sampling was used in the participants' selection and participants were from different parts of Finland. Eight interviews were conducted remotely via Teams or by phone. Seven interviews were conducted in person in EFT-environment. 15 young people participated in the study and the average age of the participating young people was about 17 years. Eight participants were currently undergoing the EFT-process and seven participants had already finished EFT-process, and no more than two years had passed since the end of EFT. **Results:** The data was analyzed with inductive content analysis and the results formed three main categories: 1) therapeutic elements of promoting the psychological functioning of young people, 2) the effect of EFT in promoting psychological functioning of young people, and 3) factors challenging young people's motivation and commitment in EFT. The young people experienced that EFT enables active occupation and they can make their own choices. The young people felt that EFT is a motivating and versatile form of rehabilitation, which allows emotional work also in other ways than just talking. It was considered liberating that there was no pressure to speak in EFT and the therapeutic properties of the horse as well as reciprocal and multi-level interaction with the horse was important. The young people described that EFT increased their psychological resources as everyday activities and functioning in social environments were felt easier than before. Factors challenging the youth's motivation and commitment were challenges related to the young person's own being, for example tiredness, challenges related to the therapy environment and the therapy horse, and challenges related to travel to therapy and the therapy situation. **Conclusion:** The horse, the stable, the natural environments, and the professional Equine Facilitated Therapist, can be utilized to enable young people's motivation and commitment to therapy and promote young people's psychological functioning.

Keywords: adolescent; equine-assisted therapy; mental health; performance; rehabilitation; wellbeing.



Participation and inclusion for persons with intellectual disabilities in horse related activities

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The overall aim of the Able to Ride research project (funded by The Swedish-Norwegian Foundation for Equine Research) has been to further the understanding of the meaning of horses in the everyday life of persons with intellectual disabilities. Persons with intellectual disabilities can encounter horses under different circumstances. One arena which became increasingly important during the study has been daily activities involving horses. Daily activity is one of the supports entitled by the Swedish Act Concerning Support and Services for Certain Functional Impairments (LSS, SFS 1993:387). Through participant observations and interviews we have investigated natural occurring situations and interactions during daily activities offered in accordance with the LSS-Act at two establishments. To capture the participants' own experiences, we also have used the method Photo Voice (Wang & Burris 1997).

The project departs from the human rights perspective formulated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, UN 2006) emphasising participation and inclusion in the society, which also imply that persons with disabilities have the same right to meaningful activities and work as everybody else. We use the umbrella term Horse Related Activities to cover all kinds of social activities related to or including horses, ranging from body-to-body interactions with horses (such as riding and grooming), to activities related to everyday sustenance and other more general farm work.

While working on project we have on several occasions been asked questions on how important the horses really are for our findings. Is it possible to take the horse out of the equation? The questions are grounded in the fact that many of our empirical examples do not really include a horse present in the actual situation. A significant part of our empirical examples is on preparing food, water and mucking out in the stables while the horses are outside. We also provide examples of grooming or riding, but in the overall picture more time is spent doing work for the horse's well-being than interacting with the horse. In this presentation we would like to reflect on the importance of the horse and the 'presence' of the horse, also in its' absence.



Animal-assisted and nature-based intervention with horses for young adults with autism and social withdrawal - A feasibility study with a health economic perspective

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Introduction: Equine-assisted interventions have potential to reach groups where healthcare and welfare efforts fail. Despite proven experiences and a growing body of research, more knowledge is needed on how health promoting interventions can be used. Longitudinal evaluations, including health economic aspects would contribute to further knowledge.

Aim: The objective was to study the feasibility of an animal-assisted and nature-based intervention, including horses, for young adults with autism and social withdrawal.

Research questions: How does a practical implementation work? Participation rate? Experiences from participants and personnel? Occupational engagement after one year?

Participants: Young adults with autism and social withdrawal, with no organized occupations during the previous year, and having financial compensation from the social insurance.

Intervention: A 12-week intervention, two half-days per week in small, supervised groups, was carried out on a rural family farm. The intervention involved interaction with various animals, especially with horses in pastures and stable, grooming, groundwork, and riding.

Methods: This study had a feasibility design, using mixed methods. Participants' characteristics and attendance was assessed. Their current life situation, expectations before and experiences of participating in the intervention were inquired in interviews. Finally, a one-year follow-up interview focusing on occupational engagement was performed. Data was analyzed with descriptive statistics, qualitative content analysis, and health economic calculations.

Results: Eleven of 13 participants performed the intervention with high attendance. Interviews with participants revealed a dynamic process based on meaningfulness, creating a comfort zone, and developing structure in everyday life. Trusting supervisors and help with transportation to the farm were crucial. Twelve weeks were perceived by all parts as short for sustainable change. At the time for the one-year follow-up, two of ten participants had an organized occupational engagement, another five reported improvements in various everyday occupations, and three participants reported no change. The overall cost for the intervention in this research design was approximately 45 000 SEK per participant. The potential health economic gain is potentially high if one out of ten becomes economically self-sufficient in view of the large societal costs of exclusion.

Conclusion: This project showed good feasibility for a healthcare intervention including horses. The one-year follow-up indicates high socioeconomic potential. Controlled studies with randomized designs are needed to ensure effect and guide implementation in the welfare system.

Collaboration: The project was carried out by the Research and Development Department in Region Kronoberg in Sweden and developed in collaboration with personnel at the local habilitation clinic, the social insurance office, and the social services.

Publication: Gunnarsson, A. B., Aurin, I. E., & Holmberg, S. (2024). Being in a meaningful context. Nature and animal-assisted activities as perceived by adults with autism. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 1–14.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1440-1630.12940>



The movement of the horse building parameters of walk for chronic low back pain patients (CLBP)

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Movement of the horse is known to be healing body and soul throughout the history. Referral can be found from doctors and myth. We all have seen the benefits of the Equine-Assisted therapy but do we know why? My aim is to shed light to the process of rehabilitation of low back pain and the outcomes of 12-weeks equine facilitated physical therapy treatment and a study conducted from it.

The design of the study had a bio-psycho-social approach for the treatment of chronic low back pain patients. The methods were quantitative and qualitative in nature, with appropriate statistical analysis. A nesting was applied to every session; each CLBP patient having an “own horse”, same assistant and same certified therapist trained for Equine-Facilitated Therapies (EFT). The horses were systematically trained with positive cues for the work. To reduce the stress for the horses and to create social interaction for the CLBP patient, sessions were implemented in small groups of two nests.

Chronic pain is rapidly growing disease, one reason being the lack of natural movement pattern in urban environment. This is what the horse can bring us- natural three-dimensional movement that helps restoration of physiological movement. With the activation of autonomic nervous system functionality and satisfaction for function of CLBP patients can be increased. The horse's conformation and movement were both assessed and trained to be able to produce exactly the movement that the therapist saw the CLBP patient lacking and needing.

The exercise time was being built gradually not to overload the muscles responsible for maintaining balanced and symmetrical posture. The posture, symmetry, and rhythm of the CLBP patient were assessed with observational form, with movement analysis and electromyography twice in the timeline to prove the efficacy of horses' movement in rehabilitation.



Physiotherapists' experiences of Equine assisted therapy: A way to reach several levels of movement simultaneously

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Introduction: The knowledge of Equine Assisted Therapy (EAT) is growing, and studies describe beneficial effects in various groups of patients. Describing EAT in general has been difficult due to methodological reasons. Since EAT in clinical practice serves as a complement to professions, this study wants to deepen the knowledge from a physiotherapeutic perspective. EAT can thereby be described with a clear connection to clinical applicability.

Aims: Investigate OHI-certified physiotherapists' experiences of working with EAT from a perspective of movement.

Methods: Qualitative study with semi-structured interviews with eleven OHI-certified physiotherapists, using qualitative content analysis by Graneheim and Lundman. As theoretical framework "The movement continuum Theory of Physical Therapy" was used.

Results: The theme "The horse and its environment enriches the physiotherapeutic practice" is based on four sub themes and nine sub-sub themes. EAT has potential to enrich physiotherapeutic practice by influencing several levels of movement simultaneously. Riding can provide external conditions promoting movement, also involving professional judgment between benefits and elements of risk. Resources to stimulate internal factors as motivation, commitment, and social factors in the alliance were experienced. EAT is perceived to support a resource-focused approach to movement, where body, mind and emotion are involved.

Conclusion: How EAT enriches the profession depends on the physiotherapist's decisions based on purpose, professional knowledge, and personal competence. The versatility provides opportunities to use EAT with different populations. When clinical practice of EAT are described in context of physiotherapy, the complexity of EAT can be understood, and terms as evidence-based practice come within reach.

Keywords: equine assisted interventions; equine assisted therapy; evidence-based practice; health promoting; movement; physiotherapy; qualitative method.