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Curriculum vitae:

Graduated in 2018 at University of Milan (Italy) as a neurodevelopmental disorder therapist. Specialized in animal assisted interventions in 2022. Working at Niguarda General Hospital, Milan (Italy) at the Child Neuropsychiatry Department at the Equestrian Rehabilitation Centre Vittorio Di Capua since 2022. Role: horse assisted therapies to patients in developmental age mostly with neurodevelopmental disorders, genetic syndromes, and intellectual disabilities.

Category: Oral presentation

Topic: Disabilities & Symptoms: Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Title: LONGITUDAL PROSPECTIVE STUDY IN NIGUARDA GENERAL HOSPITAL, MILAN: EQUINE ASSISTED THERAPY IN A SAMPLE OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM, DISORDER

Keyword 1: Autism Spectrum Disorder

Keyword 2: Equine Assisted Therapy

Keyword 3: Developmental disability

Abstract:

Objective: Our study seeks to identify, through a battery of standardized test, the potential effects that Equine Assisted Therapy (EAT) can have on emotional regulation, communication, social and motor skills in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and to highlight the potential benefits of integrating EAT with other treatments.

Design: We recruited 15 children diagnosed with ASD at V. Di Capua Equestrian Rehabilitation Center, at the Niguarda General Hospital, Milan. Inclusion criteria: ASD severity level 2 or 3 (DSM-5); aged 6 to 13 years. Exclusion criteria: presence of contraindications to EAT. Each patient was evaluated at the beginning of EAT, and after 40 sessions of EAT, using: Child Behavior Check List (CBCL), Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scale (VABS), Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS), Autism Behavior Checklist (ABC), Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory (PedsQL), Emotional Contagion Test (TCE) and Movement Assessment Battery for Children (M-ABC).

Results: The main result is the statistically significant improvement in all the VABS subscales scores (Communication, Daily living skills and Socialization), which is crucial for the adaptive aspects that we aim to generalize to the different spheres of daily life. Another interesting result is the significant global improvement of the TCE, which indicates the ability to recognize emotional aspects in other people, as a precursor of empathy. We also detected a general improvement in the SRS (Social cognition and Social communication), CBCL (Aggressive behaviour) and M-ABC (Aim and grasp and Balance) scores.

Conclusion: Our study shows promising and significant improvement in social functioning (social cognition and availability to social interactions) and in communication. It also shows a positive trend in behavioural skills, emotional aspects and motor functions, as highlighted by the test results and by the monitoring video recordings.