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Psychologist at the adult psychiatric clinic, Norrköping 2002 - 2007

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Category: short paper

Topic: Treatment methods of equine-assisted psychotherapy: Individual therapies, family- and couple therapy

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Title: EQUINE-ASSISTED COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (EA-CBT) FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Keyword 1: Equine-assisted cognitive behavior therapy

Keyword 2: depression

Keyword 3: anxiety

Abstract:

Objective: Working in a child and adolescent psychiatric clinic it's evident that the traditional context for therapy is not suitable for all patients. The context normally expects a variety of demands that the patient may perceive aversive, for example sitting face to face with an adult, having eye-contact and expecting to verbalize his /her problems and needs. Some children refuse such setting and the clinic struggles to get access to the child who sometimes suffer from serious anxiety and / or depression, not rarely with self-harming behaviour or suicidal thoughts. By offering them a different context and with the attendance of the horse we wanted to explore whether these patients would 1. attend and complete therapy and 2. get symptom reduction from anxiety and depression.

Design: Twelve children and adolescents (aged 6-17) participated in EA- CBT, ten individual sessions each. The participants were selected and offered EA-CBT by his / her ordinary contact within the psychiatric clinic. The children / adolescents and one of their parents filled in two self-rapport questionnaires before and after therapy; one for depression and one for Anxiety.

Results: The results showed that all participants completed EA-CBT. The mean results showed that both the patients and their parents valued over clinical cut off level before therapy and the patients and

parents valued below cut off level for anxiety but parents still above cut off level for depression. All but two had completed all their goals for therapy.

Conclusion: Despite the limitations of a small sample size and absence of a control group, the outcomes hint at the fundamental efficacy of delivering CBT within a supportive context where patients actively participate. Additionally, the results imply that EA-CBT may alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression, although further research is warranted to substantiate these findings.