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Curriculum vitae:

Beth L. Macauley, PhD, CCC-SLP, HPCS, FNAP, ACUE
Associate Professor, Dept. of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI USA
BOOKS
Macauley, B.L. (2006). Resources for Research and Education in Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapy. Publisher Services: Chicago, IL.
BOOK CHAPTERS
Macauley, B.L. (2021). Animal-Assisted Interventions in Speech-Language Pathology. In Driscol, C. (Ed.) Animal-Assisted Interventions for Health and Human
Macauley, B.L. (2022). Animal-Assisted Therapy for Pediatric Patients. In Atschuler, E., (Ed.) Animal-Assisted Therapy Use by Condition. Boston: Elsevier Publishers
Dr. Macauley received her PhD in 1998 from the University of Florida specializing in neurogenic communication disorders. She has published 34 articles, given 130 conference presentations, facilitated 24 workshops, and presented at every HETI Congress beginning in 2003 in Budapest.

Category: Oral presentation abstract

Topic: Disabilities & Symptoms: Speech and Language Impairment

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Beth Macauley

Title: EQUINE ASSISTED SPEECH THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH APAXIA OF SPEECH

Keyword: Speech-Language Pathology

Keyword 2: apraxia of speech

Keyword 3: children

Abstract:

Objective: Apraxia of speech is a motor speech disorder affecting the ability to plan and execute the movements necessary for speech production. Traditional speech therapy approaches focus on improving muscle coordination through repetitive exercises. However, recent research has explored alternative methods, such as incorporating equine-assisted therapy, to enhance speech outcomes in children with apraxia. This study examines the effectiveness of speech therapy incorporating horses in facilitating speech motor coordination and phoneme articulation for children with apraxia of speech.

Design: Two 4-year-old children diagnosed with apraxia of speech participated in speech therapy sessions incorporating hippotherapy for 10 months. Each therapy session involved structured activities on horseback, focusing on the rhythmic movement of the horse to promote sensory integration and coordination of the speech motor system.

Results: Both children demonstrated significant improvement in speech motor coordination and phoneme articulation. They showed increased confidence and proficiency in producing speech sounds, with measurable improvements in speech intelligibility. Additionally, observations from therapy sessions indicated enhanced engagement and due to the novel and stimulating environment provided by equine-assisted therapy.

Conclusion: The results of this study suggest that speech therapy incorporating horses can be an effective intervention for children with apraxia of speech. The rhythmic movement of the horse, coupled with sensory integration techniques, appears to enhance speech motor coordination and facilitate the articulation of phonemes.