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Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapy for Treating Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: To investigate clinical effects of **equine-assisted activities** and therapy (EAA/T) for treating attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children age 6-13 years.

METHODS: This 12-week, prospective, open-label trial included 24 sessions of EAA/T. Twenty participants (19 boys and 1 girl) completed 12 weeks of EAA/T. Various clinical tests were administered at baseline and after EAA/T. Assessments included the investigator-administered ADHD-Rating Scale (ARS-I), Clinical Global Impressions (CGI)-Severity Scale, Clinical Global Impressions-Improvement Scale (CGI-I), Gordon Diagnostic System, Korea-Child Behavior Checklist (K-CBCL), Self-Esteem Scale, second edition of the Bruininks-Oseretsky test of motor proficiency (BOT-2), and quantitative electroencephalography. The primary efficacy measure was the response rate.

RESULTS: The response rate was 90% based on a 30% or greater decline in the ARS-I score or 85% based on CGI-I scores of 1 or 2. The mean±standard deviation ARS-I score decreased from 33.65±6.42 at baseline to 16.80±6.86 after 12 weeks of EAA/T ($p<0.001$, paired t-test). EAA/T also resulted in significant improvement in the social problems subscale of the K-CBCL and in the manual dexterity, bilateral coordination, and total motor composite subscales of the BOT-2. The theta/beta ratio on electroencephalography was decreased significantly at the Pz electrode after 12 weeks of EAA/T.

CONCLUSION: This is the first study demonstrating that EAA/T is effective for improving core ADHD symptoms. On the basis of these results, EAA/T could be a viable treatment strategy as a part of a multimodal therapy for children with ADHD.

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