

Letter to Editor

The therapeutic impact of the interaction between horses and patients with mental disorders: Veterinary and psychodynamic reflexions in the clinical application of equine assisted therapy

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Dear Editor,

An increased scientific interest is observed nowadays in the clinical application of Equine Assisted therapy for patients with mental disorders, reflected on recent numerous systematic reviews, scoping reviews and concept analyses.

The investigations concerning the biological activity of horses (autonomous nervous system activity, respiratory and heart rates, measurement of concentrations of cortisol and oxytocin) and their behavioral response before, during and after the realization of the therapy sessions, have suggested that these activities are minimally stressful for those animals [1-4].

Theoretically, on a psychodynamic basis, the presence of the horse has strong connections with the paternal and maternal internal archaic images of the human being: its strength and muscular power refer to the person's internal paternal images [5-10].

The horse's step during equitation - a soft, rhythmic, repetitive and symmetrical movement - refers to the maternal Holding - as described by the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott. The process of healthy maturation of the psychism of human beings is based on the renouncement of absolute omnipotence and, simultaneously, the realization that external subjects have independent behavioral reactions.

Further studies and research are needed to specify the use of behavioral indicators of equine emotions, especially positive emotions, in the interaction between human patients and horses during the sessions of Equine Assisted Therapy [11,12]. Those results could be used clinically as therapeutic moderators to encourage the ethical development of a

relationship of trust between the animal and the patient, leading him this way to develop, by the mediation of the horse, empathy and the ability to creation of healthier interpersonal relationships.

This letter states that the following letter to the editor is original, has not been submitted or published elsewhere and has the approval of all authors.

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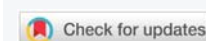
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