

Psychological and Emotional Effects of Equine Assisted Activities among Military Veterans with PTSD

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INTRODUCTION:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has become an increasingly common diagnosis among U.S. military veterans. One potential alternative intervention is Therapeutic Horseback Riding (THR).



RESEARCH QUESTION:

- To what extent is participating in the program associated with improvements in psychosocial and physical outcomes among U.S. veterans?
- What are the veterans’ perceptions of a six week THR program?

HYPOTHESIS:

- Veterans randomized to participate in the six week THR program will have improved self-efficacy, emotion regulation, and social engagement than veterans randomized to a wait-list control group.

METHODS:

- Collaboration with Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) accredited THR centers.
- Randomized design consisting of a Riding Group (RG) and wait-list Control Group (CG).
- A one hour weekly intervention for six weeks.
- Data collection at baseline, week 3, and week 6.
- Collected weekly riding diary from participants.



INSTRUMENTS:

- Demographic Questionnaire & Health History
- PTSD Checklist- Military Version
- Coping Self Efficacy Scale
- Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale
- Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults- Short Version
- Weekly Riding Diary

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RESULTS:

		Week	RG (n=9)	CG (n=9)	CG converted to RG (n=8)
<i>PTSD Checklist-Military (PCL-M)</i> Decrease desired	Mean (SD) Range	0	59.56 (13.50) 42-79	55.13 (20.49) 21-74	58.29 (18.15) 31-76
		3	55.43 (17.99) 35-82	57.38 (14.83) 31-73	47.20 (16.15) 28-70
		6	51.67 (26.01) 26-78	58.29 (18.15) 31-76	Still Riding
<i>Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DERS)</i> Decrease desired	Mean (SD) Range	0	105.56 (19.27) 75-134	110.63 (35.63) 58-149	107.57 (39.10) 43-142
		3	93.14 (28.13) 61-147	108.88 (27.49) 58-147	110.60 (10.59) 93-120
		6	105.00 (14.79) 95-122	107.57 (39.10) 43-142	Still Riding
<i>Coping Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES)</i> Increase desired	Mean (SD) Range	0	91.67 (53.35) 20-171	135.75 (63.86) 46-255	122.43 (59.39) 61-236
		3	117.00 (64.07) 51-209	115.50 (66.84) 35-255	130.20 (52.57) 49-192
		6	95.33 (14.57) 80-109	122.43 (59.39) 61-236	Still Riding
<i>Social/Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA)</i> Decrease desired	Mean (SD) Range	0	58.11 (12.93) 41-82	54.63 (17.47) 33-85	61.71 (21.69) 18-81
		3	54.86 (10.61) 45-76	60.86 (19.57) 38-88	57.20 (23.53) 26-88
		6	60.67 (9.50) 51-70	61.71 (21.69) 18-81	Still Riding

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS:

- Current trend for the PTSD symptoms supports hypothesis.
- Self-efficacy and loneliness show improvements between the baseline and week 3.
- Data collection is ongoing.



QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

“I am more empathetic around animals and it has helped me be more empathetic with my new born daughter.”

“I have been reminded of some very pleasant memories of my past. It felt good to be close to the horse. I better remember being a little boy. There are tears in my eyes right now.”

“It has made me calmer and a bit more confident in myself to try new things.”

