

EQUINE THERAPY AS A THERAPEUTIC RECOURSE IN THE TREATMENT OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Heloisa Bruna Grubits Freire

Abstract

In 1997 we initiated research which aimed to evaluate the possibilities of Equinotherapy as a therapeutic resource in the treatment of autistic children or children presenting with atypical autistic disturbances as classified by DSM IV. The research involved a case study and clinical evaluation using evaluation measurements before and after the intervention by considering equinotherapy as the introduced independent variable. The dependent variables were eleven kinds of behaviour which typify the autistic condition according to the DSM-IV and nine other ones considered by the researcher, through her clinical experience, as relevant in the definition of the autistic child. Seven children ranging in age from 4 to 9 years old, being four of them diagnosed as autistic and three of them carrying atypical autistic disturbances, were selected for the research. Besides the continuous records of the sessions, behavioural observation report cards and patterned evaluative cards from the "Friends of the Autistic Association" were utilised. A half-an-hour session was performed once a week for two semesters. In the results and conclusion we present the history of the patients, a description of the sessions of one of the cases studied, an analysis of one of the observed behaviours and finally, a discussion of the results before and after the evaluation. After analysing the results we have concluded that significant changes have occurred in the development of the postural tone normalisation motricity. This raises issues for other projects and research in regard to equinotherapy therapeutic resources and work with autistic children.