

## **ARTICLE ONE**

# **A Historical Perspective of Psychotherapy Involving Equines<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> This paper is excerpted from the introductory material of a systematic review of the literature conducted in fulfillment of the requirements for completion of the Master of Science in Social Work degree at The University of Texas at Arlington, May, 2009. The full systematic review has been accepted for publication in the journal *Health Psychology*.

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### **ABSTRACT**

Equine-facilitated psychotherapy is explored in a historical context to enhance understanding of the treatment approach and as a basis for the continued construction of a theoretical framework. An overview of the European and North American history of horsemanship as therapy is presented, and the preeminent professional organizations are identified. Hippotherapy, therapeutic horsemanship, therapeutic riding, and other activities with horses are described as they relate to therapeutic techniques involving equines in the mental health setting. The importance of standardized terminology is emphasized to ensure proper usage, and to promote comprehension and agreement across settings. Some relevant theoretical constructs are suggested, which include animal-assisted therapy, biophilia, myth and metaphor, as well as theories of attachment, neurodevelopment, the therapeutic relationship and exercise; they are identified as important foundational elements of the evolving theoretical underpinnings of this unique form of treatment.

### **KEYWORDS**

Equine Therapy; Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy; Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy; Equine-Assisted Activities; Therapeutic Horsemanship; Therapeutic Riding.