

ARTICLE SIX

Incidents and Injury within the Hippotherapy Milieu: Four Years of Safety Study Data on Risk, Risk Management, and Occurrences

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: It is becoming increasingly popular for therapists to provide treatment incorporating hippotherapy. However equine activities involve inherent risk. The aim of this study was to discover incident and injury occurrences within the hippotherapy milieu. **Method:** Annual data on risks and injury was collected from hippotherapy providers in each of the years 2007 to 2010 via an internet survey. **Results:** A total of 425 responses, representing 143,855 hippotherapy sessions, revealed a rate of one injury for every 14,386 hippotherapy sessions (0.007%) with no injury being permanent or disabling. This compares favorably with injury rates for recreational and sporting activities with horses. **Identified risk factors** included horse behavior, weather conditions, and absence of assistants. **Conclusions:** Because there are inherent risks associated with hippotherapy, a sound risk management program and skilled expertise beyond traditional academic courses is essential for a safe treatment environment.

KEYWORDS

Hippotherapy; Safety; Risk Management; Incidents; Injury; Occupational Therapy; Physical Therapy; Speech Therapy; Equine Assisted Therapy.