

The Meaning Of Therapeutic Horseback Riding For Children With Cerebral Palsy: An Exploratory Study¹

Joyce R. MacKinnon² and Jennifer R. Ferreira,³

Abstract

The meaning of therapeutic horseback riding (THR) for children with cerebral palsy was explored. The sample size was seven, consisting of four females and three males between the ages of eight and 12. A literature review generated 10 variables from three broad conceptual areas, namely social, personal and sport, of THR considered meaningful. A structured questionnaire was developed based on these variables. The questionnaire consisted of 30 yes/no questions and three open-ended questions, which was administered to subjects in an individual interview format. Results indicated that all 10 variables of THR under investigation were considered meaningful by this sample with the most meaningful concept of THR being social. The personal variables of sense of control and skill mastery were also very important. Sport, also, was important but less so. Results of these concepts and variables may be used in: structuring THR programs, guiding future THR research projects and exploring THR benefits.