

Psycho-educational Riding (PER) and Autism: an exploratory study

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Abstract

This exploratory study aimed to determine if, after the application of Psycho-Educational Riding (PER) (one session per week for sixteen weeks), we would monitor: improvements in different aspects of development and behaviour, of five autistic children (between five and ten years of age); data that might confirm the effectiveness of PER; the development of the necessary skills leading to an increasingly improved performance of the proposed tasks during the sessions. The methodology used focussed on the written composition of all sessions; on the employment of the Observational Grid (individual/session) for Psycho-Educational Riding (PER) with autistic children; in the application, to the participants, of the Psychoeducational Profile Revised (Schopler, et al. 1994), prior to and after the treatment; the parents were asked to fill out the Autism Treatment of Evaluation Checklist (Rimland & Edelson, 2000), every two weeks; and, at last, audiovisual techniques were also applied on a monthly basis. The results fulfilled all the hypotheses raised at the start of this study. This evidence raises the question on the importance of the horse's catalytic role in the core of a technician-child relationship, which must be viewed as crucial.