



# Newsletter

Horses in Education and Therapy  
International, AISBL

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## “Something Good in Everything I See”<sup>1</sup>

by Ann Kern-Godal

A recent edition of the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* contains a paper with the disturbing title, “Equine-related Treatments for Mental Disorders Lack Empirical Support: A Systematic Review of Empirical Investigations” (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22113>).<sup>2</sup>

Of greater concern are the paper’s conclusion that, “The current evidence base does not justify the marketing and utilization of ERT (EAP and THR) for mental disorders. Such services should not be offered to the public unless and until well-designed studies provide evidence that justify different conclusions”, and its recommendation that, “in view of the current evidence base, individuals in need of mental health services avoid seeking out ERT and treatment centers avoid

practicing this approach. We further urge major organizations, such as the United States armed forces and United States Department of Veterans Affairs, to hold off on the implementation of ERT (EAP and THR) programs on a wide-scale basis unless and until a strong research foundation for this treatment emerges.”

What are procurers of equine assisted therapy services and the practitioners, clients, and researchers of the services to do in the face of such unequivocal statements in such a highly reputable scientific journal?

Well, first we need to take the paper seriously. It should not simply be dismissed as “irrelevant medical evidence based science,” as some colleagues have suggested. Nor should it be ignored. I have yet to see a rebuttal. It is too serious, too important, and in any case our clients and patients deserve better of us than that.

Years ago, in the 1980s I was involved with some of the world’s first HIV/AIDS patients in Australia. One of them taught me, in the words of the then popular Abba song, to look for “something good in everything I see.” As he said, “it’s not always easy but worth a try, and you’ll often be surprised at what you find.”

Can we find anything “good” in this paper?

Undoubtedly many will quarrel with Anestis, et al’s terminology (but, has there ever been international agreement on terminology in EAT?) and their review methodology (the search was very limited). That said, the paper has much that is useful, not least of all a good check list of what many evaluators look for in our research and which funders and health insurers use for decision making. So we should make use of it also.

More importantly, and perhaps what Anestis intended, is the paper’s challenge which we, in the interests of our clients, must try to meet. The challenge is to produce scientifically acceptable studies; studies aimed at finding the evidence needed to (if EAT practitioners are correct about the value of their work) convince the health service funders and insurance agencies.

To meet the challenge, we need first to identify the problem, namely, why we cannot provide the required studies. Lack of research funding and the difficulty in finding reasonably sized homogeneous populations must be high on the list of problems to be overcome.

This is where I have the greatest criticism of Anestis et al. In order to get good studies underway and

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## From the President

Dear Friends,

Another year is coming to an end and, as we so often do, we are reflecting on the past year. It has been relatively a quiet year for the HETI Executive Committee as we complete projects that started with our week-long Skype the year before. I feel very fortunate to have worked with such dedicated individuals and remain very excited about the work that HETI does around the world by supporting research through the *Journal*; by providing educational opportunities for programs and countries where no opportunities exist currently; and by providing continuing education opportunities to our members through the newsletter and directory.

This year we have seen HETI move into the 21st century. We are now able to meet electronically, reducing the costs attributable to the Executive Committee. The HETI Bylaws and Articles of Association have been confirmed. The revised Bylaws allow us to conduct business swiftly through electronic dissemination of materials and e-voting. We are able to conclude business in a couple of weeks where it would have taken six months to three years to complete under the previous Bylaws. The newsletter this letter is in is electronic. Articles from the *Scientific and Education Journal of Therapeutic Riding* are available on-line. The list grows longer every day.

Whilst it is wonderful that we can be informed or share information with each other in seconds, this electronic age has brought difficulties for membership organizations. Not-for-profit membership organizations have seen a decline in their membership rolls.

Because information is at our fingertips, we feel we no longer have to meet each other face-to-face; we don't need to have a hard copy of a document; it is no longer necessary to see someone's face to determine their emotions or mood – just use an emoticon! While we are saving some money in the budget on the printing and mailing of documents, those documents, journals, directories, newsletters, etc. require the time and effort of real people and they do cost money to produce. Putting together the XV Annual Congress in Taiwan in June of 2015 has required herculean efforts and time on the part of the organizing committee as well as the expenditure of a great deal of money.

So why am I bringing all of this up? I am asking you to evaluate if receiving a peer-reviewed *Journal* is important to you; if having newsletters about events around the world is important to you; if having a voice in the future of therapeutic horsemanship is important to you; if meeting every three years to further your education, network with peers, and be exposed to the most up-to-date information in the industry is important to you? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then please, renew your own membership and be a voice for HETI and bring forward new members. Memberships are our only source of income and without these memberships, none of these opportunities will be available. Register for the International Congress – yes, Taiwan may be far away for many of us, but it is surely worth the professional support, the educational interactions, and the camaraderie – no emoticons necessary!

I look forward to seeing you at Congress and catching up on your life events; seeing you published in the *Journal*; reading an article you have provided for a newsletter; or just reading a suggestion you might have for the future.

Ann O'Shallie

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**Registration for the XV. Congress is online and now open at [www.heti2015.org](http://www.heti2015.org)**



## From the Director

Dear Members,

A busy and wonderful summer is past. My travels have taken me to Portugal and Brasil. In June I was in Portugal with Ann O'Shallie to teach HETI Level I Certification. We



we were thrilled to be in Portugal, but moreover, thrilled to be among a group of students so eager to learn. Our Certification program is but a few months old but already it is apparent that there is a great need – and a great desire – for this type of education among our member organisations.

I had no more returned from Indonesia last fall that there were new enquiries about certification training waiting for me in my email inbox, and it was the same situation when I returned from Portugal. There is no doubt for me that this is where HETI is coming into its mission. As with all programs there are bound to be growing pains. One is that we are going to need additional instructors very soon.

It was a great personal pleasure for me to attend the VI Brazilian Congress of Therapeutic Riding in Bento Gonçalves, Brasil in September. I had been asked to give a presentation for which I believed myself well prepared, but at the eleventh hour I was also asked to give a short introduction before the

mayor of Bento Gonçalves and other dignitaries. I wasn't sure I could pull it off...but when I became aware of the level of excitement and interest that the participants had in therapeutic riding, my task became not a task but a pleasure.

All this is to say that HETI has a very willing audience wherever it goes. This is an exciting time to belong to this organization, as we hit our stride in our educational offerings. I am pleased to be part of it, and I am even more pleased that you, our members, as part of this wonderful journey as well.

Gisela Rhodes  
Executive Director

### Something Good..

*Continued from page one*

attract highly skilled researchers and the funding that comes with them we need larger scale populations to study. armed forces and veterans departments in the USA, UK and Australia probably offer the best opportunity there is for a large, multi-centre trial. It's not easy to find "good" in injured veterans but if they feel therapeutic benefit from working with horses and are willing to become involved in research then they should not be barred from participation as Anestis et al. recommend. Rather, the Departments of Veterans Affairs in each of the countries should be pressured into funding the needed study.

Practitioners and researchers, should put aside our differences (for this project for this project at least)

and agree on a protocol to be followed in all participating centres.

For my part, looking for the "good" in his paper, "I have a dream" that Professor Michael Anestis might accept a challenge and take a leading role in a major multi-center ERT (his terminology) trial.

**Postscript:** Since the above was written *Psychiatry Services in Advance* has published the first EAT randomized controlled study (RCT), considered to be the "gold standard" in evidenced based medicine. The results were positive as can be seen in the summary in the following link: <http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=1912427><sup>4</sup>

**Ann Kern-Godal** is a PhD student at the Department of Addiction Treatment, Oslo University Hospital, Norway<sup>3</sup>

### Footnotes

1. I have a Dream ABBA 1979 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r82fyOb8F5w>
2. Anestis MD, Anestis JC, Zawilinski LL, Hopkins TA, Lilienfeld SO. Equine-related treatments for mental disorders lack empirical support: A systematic review of empirical investigations. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 2014:On-line issue.
3. The author is funded by the Norwegian Research Council and the Swedish Norwegian Foundation for Equine Research.
4. Animal-Assisted Therapy With Chronic Psychiatric Inpatients: Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy and Aggressive Behavior Jeffrey R. Nurenberg, M.D.; Steven J. Schleifer, M.D.; Thomas M. Shaffer, B.A.; Mary Yellin, B.S., O.T.R.; Prital J. Desai, M.D., M.P.H.; Ruchi Amin, M.D.; Axel Bouchard, M.A.; Cristina Montalvo, M.D., M.B.S. *Psychiatric Services* 2014; doi: 10.1176/appi.ps.201300524

## The Most Egalitarian of Sports?

by Ann Kern-Godal

Traditionally horse racing has been referred to as the sport of kings; and in literature, art and sculpture horse ownership is often used as an indicator of wealth, standing and masculinity. But if one looks at the details of today's horse sport, a different image emerges.

Recently, when enjoying the spectacle of the highly successful World Equestrian Games in France (on TV unfortunately) I began to wonder whether horse sport may in fact be the most egalitarian of sports.

What I saw, in addition to beautiful horses, was an image of amazing equal opportunity, including:

- ◆ Women and men competing against each other on equal terms
- ◆ Riders still in their teens pairing with a horse to match their skills against opponents who were

maybe up to three times their age

- ◆ Para equestrian as a fully integrated discipline, no longer something separate and special.

So I did some web searching and found that:

No other Olympic sport, except some sailing events, permit men and women to compete against each other

- ◆ The oldest woman to compete in the Olympics was British rider Lorna Johnstone, who participated in Equestrian at the 1972 Olympic Games at 70 years of age and Arthur von Pongracz of Austria competed at age 72 in Dressage in 1936, becoming one of the oldest ever competitors at the Olympics
- ◆ The remarkable Lis Hartel who in 1952 was one of the first wom-

en to compete against men in an equestrian sport at the Olympics. Her silver medal in that year for Individual Dressage was the first by any woman in any individual sport when in direct competition with men at the Olympics.

[http://  
simplymarvel-  
ous.wordpress.com/2009/02/23/  
lis-hartel-danish-equestrian-  
legend-dies/](http://simplymarvelous.wordpress.com/2009/02/23/lis-hartel-danish-equestrian-legend-dies/)

In comparison with other sports, equestrian is perhaps the most egalitarian of all competitive sport. As such, it provides a role model for other sports to emulate; and its individual pathfinders, like Lis Hartel continue to inspire and engender hope.

Ann Kern-Godal  
Norway

## Three New Federation members!

The International Council has approved the applications of the following as Federation members of HETI. They are:

**Festina Lente** is an embracing not-for-profit organisation in Ireland which provides a range of occupational, learning and employment opportunities for people whose needs have not been met in mainstream services. Website: [www.festinalente.ie](http://www.festinalente.ie) The chief executive officer is Jill Carey, [jillcarey@festinaletnte.ie](mailto:jillcarey@festinaletnte.ie)

**Fraktionen af Ridefysioterapeuter** (Fraction of Physiotherapists with Training in Therapeutic Riding - subsidiary of Association of Physiotherapists in Denmark). Its mission is to promote quality research in physical therapy and ride establish cooperation between physiotherapists from across Denmark, and develop training for ride physiotherapists. Website: [www.ridefys.dk](http://www.ridefys.dk) The director is Hanne Dahl Iversen, [hdi@ridefysioterapeut.dk](mailto:hdi@ridefysioterapeut.dk)

**Ippostirixi: Therapeutic Ridings, Hippotherapy and Education (Greece)**. Its mission is to practice and promote equine assisted therapy. Website: [ippo-stirixi.blogspot.com/p/h.html](http://ippo-stirixi.blogspot.com/p/h.html) The director is Maria Mitrouli, [ippostirixi@yahoo.gr](mailto:ippostirixi@yahoo.gr)

*HETI and its members send a warm welcome to these organizations!*

## Northern Lights Therapeutic Riding Wins Grants to Teach Movement Skills

Northern Lights Therapeutic Riding Association (NLTRA) is pleased that the Ontario (Canada) Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport Ontario has awarded them a grant in the amount of \$73,613 to teach Fundamental Movement Skills in 2014-2016.

NLTRA is launching a project which will act as a foundation and pathway for coaches of all disciplines and community volunteers to increase their capacity of qualified leaders in northern Ontario. Their mission is to engage leaders through a number of initiatives that will include coach education program.

The workshops will benefit sport development and capacity building at the active Start, FUNdamentals and Active for Life stages within the sport talent development system and athlete performance programming. This two year "Fundamental Move-

ment Skills" initiative will offer coaches of all sports to a National Coaching Certification Program. The NCCP is a national standard that focuses on learning and practicing coaching skills. It is ideal for community leaders who are working with children ages 3-12. This includes coaches, physical education teachers, anyone involved in early child care.

The program consists of an education program to teach movement skills and offer training workshop, long-term equestrian development emphasizing fundamental movement skills and training workshops for young athletes in the equestrian sport; long-term equestrian development which teaches fun, safety and active participation, learning and training to ride; and social and non-competitive activities. This program will utilize northern Ontario's greatest asset, the Boréal Forest. A large percentage of equestrian prefer trail riding and the social aspect.

The long term goal is to create for Northern Ontario a link to the existing provincial sport organisation's adapted to its particular needs in collaboration with the Ontario Equestrian Federation and the Ontario Therapeutic Riding Association. This project will enable northern Ontario with the NLTRA and its community partners to acquire the knowledge to identify gaps in the current development pathway that could be affecting its talent development system and athlete performance. It will also improve communication at all levels of participation and development where riders can create a networking system than encourages bonding with other eques-

trians in social non-competitive activities.

### Additional Grant from Canadian Paralympic Committee

Northern Lights Therapeutic Riding Association (NLTRA) announced that the Canadian Paralympic Committee approved funding in the amount of \$5,625 for a new program for awareness and training in the para-equestrian sport. This in support of NLTRA's efforts to further develop sport opportunities for persons with a disability.

This training will be specific to Para-Dressage using Equine Canada's Coaching Equestrian with a Disability: Dressage reference and workbook, Equestrian Sport in Canada Long-Term Equestrian Development and The Power of Para-Equestrian Sport a coaching guide for therapeutic riding instructors. The expansion of an existing successful initiative providing a positive introductory ParaSport experience by educating directors/coaches of riding establishments of the possibilities of including Para-Riders in lesson, shows and so much more.

### Supporting Petals Floral Network Supports HETI as well.

Every time you order floral products from Petals Florist Network, a portion of the proceeds benefits HETI! Thank you, Petals, for this generous offer.

