

For Immediate Release

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Baylor University Completes Research Project

Effects of Therapeutic Horseback Riding on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms in Combat Veterans

Chagrin Falls, Ohio, December 15, 2016 - Horses and Humans Research Foundation (HHRF) is pleased to announce the Baylor University research team recently completed its research project, *'Examination of the Effects of Equine Assisted Activities on PTSD Symptoms, Quality of Life, and Functioning in Combat Veterans'*. This 2014 HHRF awarded grant, led by Dr. Beth Lanning, is now being submitted for publication.

The aim of the study was to investigate the effects of an 8-week structured therapeutic horseback riding (THR) program on Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, depression, quality of life, and functioning of combat veterans diagnosed with PTSD. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) model was used to help guide the study. Eighty-nine veterans met inclusion criteria and were enrolled in the study. Fifty-one participated in the THR program and 38 were in the waitlist/control group. Seventy-six percent completed all 8 weeks of the program and 55% completed the 2-month follow up surveys. Twenty-nine of the 38 waitlist/control group members completed all 8-weeks. The sample consisted of 62 males and 27 females, average age was 39 years, and most participants had completed at least 2 tours of duty.

Overall, the findings of this study support the beneficial effects of THR for veterans with PTSD. The participants reported clinically meaningful improvement in PTSD symptoms and mental health, and marked improvement in participation and overall functioning over the course of the program. The differences in PTSD and depression symptoms and overall mental health and functioning scores between the THR and Control group grew larger over time; the THR group reported more improvement in overall functioning than the Control group. The size of the differences was found to be medium to large, indicating a moderate to high practical significance.

Qualitative analysis of post intervention interviews revealed several emerging themes that were consistent with the quantitative findings. Participants reported feeling anxious, depressed and isolated prior to the intervention. Post intervention responses indicated feelings of self- acceptance, increased confidence, gratitude, hope, reduced anxiety and anger, and increased patience. The participants also stated the importance of the barn environment and the unique relationship with the horse as key components that contributed to their improved quality of life and functioning.

Additional information about this project and other HHRF funded research can be found at the Horses and Humans Research Foundation website horsesandhumans.org.

Horses and Humans Research Foundation (HHRF) is dedicated solely to funding research to support the equine-assisted activities and therapies field. Since its founding, HHRF has awarded \$410,000 in professional research efforts led by nine research teams in the United States, Canada and Germany. HHRF is a non-endowed foundation dependent solely on donations. To make a donation and/or learn more about this and other Horses and Humans Research Foundation projects visit <http://www.HorsesandHumans.org>. Through investment in rigorous research, Horses and Humans Research Foundation will serve as a catalyst to advance knowledge of horses and their potential to impact the health and wellness of people.

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