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ENCONTRO NACIONAL DE
EPIDEMIOLOGIA VETERINÁRIA

BENEFITS OF EQUINE THERAPIES IN THE COGNITIVE OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND META-ANALYSIS

4º Encontro Nacional de Epidemiologia Veterinária, 4ª edição, de 19/07/2022 a 21/07/2022
ISBN dos Anais: 978-65-81152-81-9

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RESUMO

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental and neurobiological disorder whose etiology is multifactorial and the diagnosis is associated with signs/symptoms related to impairment of cognitive and behavioral areas, social deficits and changes in two or more areas of adaptive skills. These clinical manifestations precede the first three years of life and can help in the classification of ASD, considering that the classification varies according to the speech or language development disorders; intellectual development disorder; developmental disorder of motor coordination; presence of stereotyped movements and others. Based on the characteristics of ASD and the increasing number of individuals diagnosed with ASD in recent years (one among 54 people have autism/ASD, according to the report by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, USA), this survey aimed to describe the benefits in the cognitive areas of children with ASD/autism who practice Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies. A systematic review was carried out with meta-analysis of scientific articles indexed in online databases (BVS Salud, CAPES Periodicals, PubMed, Science.Gov, Scielo, REDALYC and platform ANDE Brasil), and the inclusion of articles was performed according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) and their quality was evaluated by the Consolidated Standards for Reporting Trials - CONSORT checklist, resulting in a total of 1,496 articles, of which 29 studies were included after the screening process and application of inclusion and exclusion criteria. In total, 591 practitioners of equine-assisted therapies were evaluated, being 78% males and 22% females aged between 5 and 11 years. It was also observed that the methods used in the interventions and evaluations differed among the articles, however, it was possible to identify positive responses in the cognitive areas, especially with regard to the social and emotional cognitive. According to the studies analyzed, these cognitive responses occur due to the movement performed by the horse called three-dimensional movement and the stimuli transmitted by the animal and the environment. It is concluded that activities and therapies with horses promote benefits in cognitive development in children with ASD/autism.

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