INTRIGUED ABOUT EQUINE MODALITIES
To the Editor:

The article “Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy in Clinical Practice” by Masini (October 2010, Vol. 48, No. 10, pp. 30-34) was very intriguing to me, and as a physical therapy student, I found it very educational. It is an excellent article to inform people about equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) and its numerous benefits, as well as the wide array of disorders it can be used with.

It was briefly mentioned in the article, but I think it should also be noted that EAP is being used as a treatment method for returning war veterans because, for some, it may be more effective than traditional therapies. It has been very effective helping them adapt to being home again, as well as helping them through any issues they developed, including posttraumatic stress disorder.

It seems to be treating military personnel more effectively than standard therapies because it allows the veterans to be more at ease and to learn to trust and interact again, but with a horse instead of a therapist, which is much less intimidating (Bassett, 2009). I think it would be beneficial to do more research in this field because of the current war and the veterans who are in desperate need of effective therapies.

Since there are a variety of activities that are performed in EAP, are there specific ones that make clients heal faster? The article states that EAP can be used with children, adolescents, and adults. I believe that EAP would be highly effective in treating children because they would be more open and comfortable in this type of therapy session rather than in an office, which might be scary to them. But is there any research that supports this?

I think it would have been interesting to have included information about therapeutic horseback riding. Some of the physical benefits of therapeutic horseback riding include increased muscle strength, coordination, mobility, balance, and sensory motor function (Bender & McKenzie, 2008). Others include improved respiration, circulation, metabolism, and range of motion (Bliss, 1997).

REFERENCES

Angela Masini, PhD
Knoxville, Tennessee
doi:10.3928/02793695-20110208-97

Response:
I would like to thank Ms. Ashton for her interest in my article. To single out particular benefits or target populations is beyond the scope of the article, and the objective was to provide an overview. I described the most frequently used activities and highlighted research with a variety of groups, including veterans and children. Ms. Ashton’s comments affirm the need for further research especially aimed at investigating specific therapeutic efficacies.

As to information on therapeutic horse riding, I mentioned the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association’s website (http://www.narha.org) as a resource for those interested in that modality. Because my background is in the field of EAP, that is what is more prominently featured.

Angela Masini, PhD
Knoxville, Tennessee
doi:10.3928/02793695-20110208-97

We’re waiting to hear from you!
Send your letters to the Editor to:
Journal of Psychosocial Nursing
& Mental Health Services
6900 Grove Road, Thorofare, NJ 08086
E-mail (preferred): jpn@slackinc.com

Please include your full name, mailing address, and e-mail address. Letters may be edited for clarity and length, and may be sent to the article authors for a response.