



Horses and Humans Research Foundation News & Updates



From the Executive Director's Desk



Wow, what a great few months of learning about HHRF and all the reasons that research is so important to our industry. We are the best kept secret! To share the importance of research with the world, HHRF has undertaken a campaign of awareness. To meet that goal, I have initiated two key projects. You might have seen the quotes in the last newsletter that have been highlighted individually in "[Motivational Mondays](#)" on social media. These messages are important because they show how the horse and human connection is so important in making a differences in lives.

The second project is to bring you video clips from people who work in the field every day sharing why research is so important. [Please share these clips](#) on your Facebook page to help bring awareness about research and HHRF.

We are also creating several educational projects in the new year to help with the understanding of research. Please take some time to complete the survey in the newsletter so we are aware of the topics and interests about research as well as how it should be delivered. Hoping to inspire and educate those to learn and be encouraged about research as well as support it.

Wishing everyone happy holidays and a healthy but fun 2021 after this crazy year!

Research Update on 2019 HHRF Funded Project

Psychophysiological effects of Equine-assisted therapy on horses and in veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

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Horse Data Collection



The Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy sessions at Serene View Ranch along with specific data collection began in January 2020. We quickly learned that coordinating both the university research team and the counsellors from Serene View Ranch while engaging the study participants for the research project would take a huge amount of commitment from all involved. So far, the experience has progressed in a timely manner, despite the interruptions related to the Pandemic. The two teams have been working extremely well together and learning from each other. We have been successful in recruiting veterans to participate in the study, and they have been extremely dedicated. In fact, participants in the first cohort did not miss a single session. This was true even during a Prince Edward Island winter! The horses have also been quite obliging and present to the participants as kind and patient “therapists”. In an attempt to prevent aversion to having saliva and blood collected on therapy days, we positively reinforce the horses for quiet behavior during data collection. A complete set of data was collected from the first cohort of participants prior to any closures due to COVID 19. Completing the first cohort was a valuable experience that helped our research teams gain confidence as they ramped up for subsequent sessions. COVID 19 caused a delay in moving forward with Cohort #2; however, once UPEI declared a staged return to research, both the research teams and the research participants eagerly returned to Serene View Ranch to resume the study. Since early May, we have been able to involve several UPEI students in various aspects of the project providing a unique research experience for summer student workers and students completing in-term requirements. The students have benefitted directly from their interaction with horses and humans, and through this interaction have enhanced their ability to learn about qualitative and quantitative data collection and evaluation. The project is on-going well, and we expect to have preliminary findings to share in the first quarter of 2021.

[Read Application](#)

HHRF Celebrates Published Article with Dr. Caitlin Peters and her team from Colorado State University, Temple Grandin Equine Center

Background

Equine-assisted services are promising, yet supporting research is limited. This Phase 2 study sought to assess the feasibility and acceptability of the newly manualized intervention and assessment protocol for occupational therapy in an equine environment for youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Method

A multi-site randomized controlled design was implemented. Twenty-four youth with ASD, age 6–13, were randomized to receive occupational therapy in an equine environment or in a garden environment. Feasibility indicators included rates of recruitment, treatment delivery, attendance, attrition, fidelity, and assessment completion. Acceptability was assessed with satisfaction surveys (parents and therapists) and focus groups (therapists).

Results

Twenty-three participants completed the study, attending 89% of occupational therapy sessions in the equine environment, and 88% in the garden environment. Providers achieved 93.7% fidelity to the experimental intervention, and 94.0% fidelity to the control condition. Parents and study staff completed 100% of outcome assessments, however only 54% and 80% of blinded raters in the experimental and control conditions completed all assessments. Parental satisfaction was highest for the experimental intervention (89.7%). Occupational therapists expressed satisfaction with the evaluation (90.7%) and intervention (93.3%), and provided recommendations for future studies.

Conclusions

The manualized intervention and assessment protocol is feasible to implement and acceptable to parents and therapists. Future studies can schedule make-up sessions, improve blinded rater assessment completion, and make minor modifications to the study protocol.

[Read full published article](#)

YOUR OPINION MATTERS

The Horses and Humans Research Foundation (HHRF) Education Committee is envisioning a dynamic new direction to support members and the horse-human research field at large. To promote rigorous investigations and advance global knowledge on the benefits of horse-human interactions, the Education Committee would like to start hosting educational webinars. We appreciate your feedback to guide us on creation and implementation of these webinars. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Please feel free to forward the survey to any of your personal contacts within the horse or research fields.

[Online Survey Software | Qualtrics Survey Solutions](#)

On behalf of the entire HHRF team, thank you for your support!



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