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THE HIPPOTHERAPY HORSE IN ROMANIA

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Abstract:

Hippotherapy is a form of physiotherapy that uses the motion of the walking horse to provide therapeutic movement to the rider. Generally, the hippotherapy involved a three-part factor squad for a normal basic interaction among an effective session: the horse, the horse trainer or handler and the therapist. This therapeutic horse riding involves teaching riding skills to people with very diverse disabilities. To improve confidence and self-esteem as well as the physical benefits the rider will still get therapeutic benefits, but will be more actively riding the horse. Therapists are not able to provide high quality therapy using equine movement without the right horse. Horses who do not move freely do not provide quality input to the patient, and will decrease the therapeutic benefits of incorporating equine movement into treatment. Overall, the horse plays a critical role by providing a unique and stimulating environment for individuals with disabilities or medical conditions to engage with. The horse's movement can help to improve balance, coordination, strength, and motor function, making hippotherapy an effective and enjoyable form of therapy for many patients. Choosing the right horse for therapy is the most important part of ensuring the success of hippotherapy sessions. Here are some factors to consider when selecting a horse for therapy: breed linked to conformation and constitution, temperament, type of gaits, balance and willingness, sex and background.

• Introduction

Hippotherapy is becoming increasingly popular as a form of therapy for individuals with disabilities or medical conditions. There are now several facilities and organizations throughout the country that offer hippotherapy services. In Romania, hippotherapy is typically conducted by non-licensed therapists who have only often received specialized training in working with horses and individuals with disabilities or medical conditions. These therapists must be physical therapists, occupational therapists, or speech therapists, depending on the needs of the patient. In the same sense, the horse trainer must be a qualified person, a rider, trainer, or somebody with great experience in equestrian disciplines.

• Material and method

When selecting a horse for therapy, it is also important to work with a qualified therapist or instructor who has experience with hippotherapy and can help to make an informed decision. At the moment we have some therapists, licensed in European countries. Horses, sometimes are chosen by trainers and riders, coming from equestrian disciplines, and are handled in safety conditions, by the same persons. Considering the compatibility between the horse and the therapist, too, as well as the specific needs of the riders, some horses may respond better to certain types of riders or therapeutic techniques, so it is important to find a horse that complements the therapy team and the goals of the therapy program. To provide valuable guidance and help assess the suitability of a horse for therapy based on a professional knowledge and the specific needs, it was sent a questionnaire to the persons that are acting in this field:

- Are the horses ridden by a qualified person, in usual trainings?
- What age, breed and gender are your horses?
- Riding or only petting/ contact the horse?
- How many times per week, the client meet the horse?
- How long is the interaction in a training schedule?
- Walking or staying in a fix position?
- Do you work with the horse on both hands? What is the dimension of the circle?
- Shod or barefoot?
- How often you must call the vet for?
- How long horses are taking part of the program, and why they are going out of it?

• Results and discussions

Finding the right horse for therapy is the most important part of the beginning process. For the success of hippotherapy activity, it is possible to start with an ex-sport horse, or to train ex-draft carriage horses. Here are some factors to consider when selecting a horse for therapy:

Temperament: The horse should have a calm and patient temperament, and be able to tolerate sudden movements, loud noises, and unfamiliar objects or people.

Gait: The horse's gait should be smooth and rhythmic, as this will provide the patient with the desired sensory input and help to improve their motor function.

Breed and build: The horse should be an appropriate size and build for the patient. The horse's height and weight should be matched to the patient's size and strength, and the horse's build should be such that the patient can comfortably sit or lie on its back.

Training: The horse should have experience with being handled by people with disabilities or medical conditions, and should be trained to tolerate different types of equipment that may be used during therapy.

Health and fitness: The horse should be in good health and physical condition, and should be regularly checked by a veterinarian to ensure that it is able to safely perform its duties.

• Conclusions

The best option, generally accepted is that old sport horses, with some championships in background are the most useful and easily adapting individuals for hippotherapy work.

Using horses in therapy, may be stressful for them. When a horse is threatened, in an uncomfortable situation, or confined, hormones like adrenaline and cortisol are released into the bloodstream. Infrequent and short releases of these hormones can be beneficial as it enhances the body's ability to deal with stressful situations. Long-term stress, on the other hand, can negatively impact gastrointestinal and immune health and manifest as stereotypic behaviors. Therapy conditions may frequently place animals in unpleasant situations that cannot be avoided or escaped. All the assisted mounting equipment for severely disabled individuals or the different type of harness can conduct in time to unsolving health problems in some horses.