

Interdisciplinary Mental Health Approach to Equine Assisted Therapy For Veterans

Elizabeth Large MOT, Brier Van Valin MOT & Sonia Zimmerman, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA

Why this topic?

Brier

Interested in the veteran population, specifically with PTSD

Beth

knowledge of EAT

bringing OT to a unique and beneficial environment

bringing research expertise of OT field to help EAT industry

Objectives

Attendees will verbally define occupational therapy.

Attendees will gain an understanding of research leading to the formation of the program plan.

Attendees will gain information regarding the interdisciplinary program plan called VETS.

Attendees will gain knowledge in how VETS can serve veterans in a deeper way, add to quality programming at PATH Intl centers, and increase research supporting use of equines with this population.

Occupational Therapy

“Therapeutic use of everyday life activities(occupations) with individuals or groups for the purpose of enhancing or enabling participation in roles, habits, and routines in home, school, workplace, community, and other settings.”

Introduction

- **Purpose:**
 - Develop a program with a manual that provides an interdisciplinary, theory-driven structure to increase veterans’ occupational performance in the community using equines as a therapeutic medium.
 - The program is called Veterans Equine Therapy Services: An Interdisciplinary Approach (**VETS**)
- **Problem:**
 - Veterans are returning from deployment and encountering a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder, which hinders their ability to reintegrate into non-military life

Review of Literature

- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2015) between 11-20% of veterans coming back from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom are diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- **Care of Veterans:** Hoge, Castro, Messer, McGurk, Cotting and Robert (2004) many veterans do not receive adequate care because of a lack of accessibility and stigma surrounding mental health treatment.

- **Cultural Norms:** Signoracci, Bahraini, Matarazzo, Olson-Madden and Brenner (2014)
Veterans experience different cultural norms when switching from the military culture to the civilian culture

Why Equines

Equines are used because of their natural instincts:

Cody et al, (2011)

Equines are used because they respond using their natural instincts, which leads the client to experience their own emotions through the reaction of the equine.

Equines mimic emotions:

MacLean, (2011)

Equines are prey animals, unlike dogs, who require humans to gain their trust. Veterans with PTSD are often hypervigilant, similar to equines, which leads to a mutual understanding.

If veterans with PTSD express strong emotions, equine characteristics of being large and sensitive allow them to automatically reflect the veteran's emotions in a noticeable way. Equines require humans to work to gain their trust, leading to a stronger bond and breaking the isolation that veterans with PTSD often feel

Veteran Equine Therapy Services: An Interdisciplinary Approach (VETS)

Admission Criteria

All veterans will be screened prior to being admitted into VETS to help ensure a higher chance of completion and positive outcomes of the program

Total of 8 vets accepted for each 11 week session, allowing for 4 programs to be run each year

Veterans must be discharged from a US military branch w/in the past 2 years,

Primary diagnosis of PTSD

Can effectively participate in the group setting

Have access to reliable transportation

Referral from a psychologist, psychiatrist, or primary care physician

Should be able and will attend all sessions, including orientation

VETS

Model of Human Occupation (MOHO)

Gary Keilhofner (2008, p. 1)

Supports occupation centered intervention (the doing)

Helps in determining client needs

Provides holistic view of clients

Offers a client-centered paradigm

Allows for easy goal setting

Provides rationale for intervention

The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO)

- **Selecting MOHO**

MOHO was selected as the theoretical basis to guide the structure of VETS because the core concepts aligned with the purpose and goals of the product, promoted interprofessional collaboration, and is supported by evidence that confirms its validity and reliability. It also have a therapeutic reasoning guide.

- **Concepts Used to Guide Interventions**

MOHO concepts were used to guide the creation of each week of intervention for VETS, first raising awareness of the concept through engaging with the equines, then by engaging veterans in occupations at the center, and finally discussing the application the concept to each veterans' occupations outside of the center environment.

The Concepts of MOHO Applied to VETS

Week 1: **Environment**

Week 2: **Volition**

Week 3: **Habituation**

Week 4: **Performance Capacity**

Week 5: **Occupational Participation**

Week 6: **Occupational Performance**

Week 7: **Performance Skills**

Week 8: **Occupational Identity**

Week 9: **Occupational Competence**

Week 10: **Occupational Adaptation**

Week 11: **Achievement**

Assessments

- **The Clinician Administered PTSD Scale for DSM-5:** U.S Department of Veterans Affairs, (2015)
- **Occupational Performance History Interview-II:** Forsyth, K., Kielhofner, G., Bowyer, P., Kramer, K., Ploszaj, A., Blondis, M,...Parkinson, S., (2008)
- **Occupational Self-Assessment:** Forsyth, K., Kielhofner, G., Bowyer, P., Kramer, K., Ploszaj, A., Blondis, M,...Parkinson, S., (2008)
- **Program Evaluation**

Cole's 7 Steps

- Introduction
- Activity
- Sharing
- Processing
- Generalizing
- Application

- Summary

Session Content

- Week 1: **Environment**
 - *Group day 1:* Veterans complete assessments and get acquainted to the social and physical environment.
 - *Group day 2:* Veterans become comfortable with equines and the environment.
 - *Individual session:* Review results of assessments and create and intervention plan
- Week 2: **Volition**
 - *Group day 1:* Veterans participate in determining motivation of equines to move without using equipment.
 - *Group day 2:* Personal goals are developed and a discussion on motivation to accomplish those goals is conducted.
 - *Individual session:* Past motivations of the veterans are discussed and applied to their goals of program

Therapeutic Riding Lesson

- Purpose
- Skills

Limitations and Recommendations

- Lack of quantitative research
- Transportation
- 11 week program
- Funding

Conclusion

- Purpose of VETS
- Best practice guide
- Provides structure and recommended outcomes measures
- The VETS manual is available for purchase for \$26
Please contact Brier or Beth at bsvanvalin@gmail.com or beth.large2016@gmail.com to order!

References

- American Occupational Therapy Association, (2014). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (3rd ed.). American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 68 (Suppl. 1), S1-S48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2014.682006>
- Borioni, N., Marinaro, P., Celestini, S., Sole, F., Magro, R., Zoppi, D., Marreli, F., Dall'Armi, V., Mazzarella, F., Cesario, A., & Bonassi, S., (2012). Effect of equestrian therapy and onotherapy in physical and psycho-social performances of adults with intellectual disability: a preliminary study of evaluation tools based on the ICF classification. *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 34 (4), 279-287. doi: 10.3109/09638288.2011.605919

- Cody, P., Steiker, L.H., & Szymandera, M.L., (2011). Equine therapy: Substance abusers' "healing through horses." *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 11, 198-204. doi: 10.1080/1533256X.2011.571189
- Cole, M.B., (2012). *Group dynamics in occupational therapy: The theoretical basis and practice application of group intervention (Fourth Ed.)*. Thorofare, NJ: SLACK Incorporated.
- Forsyth, K., Kielhofner, G., Bowyer, P., Kramer, K., Ploszaj, A., Blondis, M,...Parkinson, S., (2008). Assessments combining methods of information gathering. In Kielhofner, G., (Ed.). *Model of human occupation: Theory and application (4th ed.)* (pp. 288-310). Baltimore, MD: Wolters Kluwer, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.)
- Hoge, C., Castro, C., Messer, S., McGurk, D., Cotting, D., & Robert, K. (2004). Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, mental health problems, and barriers to care. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 351 (1), 13-22. doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa040603
- Kielhofner, G. (2008). *Model of human occupation: Theory and application*. Baltimore, MD: Wolters Kluwer, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Lanning, B., & Krennek, N. (2013). Guest editorial: Examining the effects of equine-assisted activities to help combat veterans improve quality of life. *Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development*, 50(9), vii-xiii. doi: 10.1682/JRRD.2013.07.0159
- MacLean, B. (2011). Equine-assisted therapy. *Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development*, 48(7), ix-xii.
- NARHA, (2015). Professional association of therapeutic horsemanship international. Retrieved from: <http://www.pathintl.org/resources-education/resources/eaat/27-resources/general/193-eaat-definitions>
- Plach, H., & Sells, C. (2013). Occupational performance needs of young veterans. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 67, 73-81. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2013.003871>
- Signoracci, G.M., Bahraini, N.H., Matarazzo, B.B., Olson-Madden, J.H., & Brenner, L.A., (2014). Delivering mental health services to OEF/OIF veterans: A VHA qualitative study. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 32(3), 161-172.
- Spelman, J., Hunt, S., Seal, K., & Burgo-Black, L. (2012). Post deployment care for returning veterans. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 27(9), 1200-1209. doi: 10.1007/s11606-012-2061-1
- Tsai, J., Harpaz-Rotem, I., Pietrzak, R.H., Southwick, S.M., (2012). The role of coping, resilience, and social support in mediating the relation between PTSD and social functioning in veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. *Psychiatry*, 75(2), 135-149.
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2015). PTSD: National center for PTSD. Retrieved from: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/adult-int/caps.asp>