

УДК 159.91

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## ТЕРАПИЯ С ПОМОЩЬЮ ЖИВОТНЫХ ДЛЯ УЛУЧШЕНИЯ ПСИХИЧЕСКОГО ЗДОРОВЬЯ: ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА И СЛОЖНОСТИ

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## ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY FOR MENTAL HEALTH: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

### Introduction

The objective of this study is to analyze several animal therapies and identify their advantages and disadvantages.

The relevance of this article is that in the modern world people are constantly experiencing stress. Caused by both problems in their personal lives and problems in society. Problems can be completely different, such as professional burnout or pressure from society and relatives. And many people, trying to deal with these problems, find solace and comfort in contact with animals. After all, people and animals have lived together since ancient times. And when people began to use animals for survival, they helped them not only at work, but also simply in life. For example, people communicate with animals when they are sad or lonely, finding support in our smaller brothers. And now people use animals to relieve stress or bad mood. Modern psychology offers people zootherapy, where interacting with animals can relieve stress and improve your physical and mental state. [1]

Animal therapy or animal therapy is a type of treatment through direct contact and communication with an animal. As an independent method of treatment, animal therapy was recognized in the middle of the 20th century, now the positive influence of animals on the emotional state of a person is recognized by the World Health Organization.

### Ornithotherapy

The first of the therapies considered is *ornithotherapy*.

*Ornithotherapy* is an alternative medicine method that uses birdsong to improve a person's physical and emotional well-being. This therapy is unique because it helps relieve stress and fill you with positive emotions. Listening to birds singing is good for your health. Ornithotherapy specialists select the sounds of different birds depending on the patient's illness. People have long noticed that birds singing is pleasant to the ear. It creates a mood, calms, brings comfort, heals the soul, and balances all the processes occurring in our body. Psychotherapy with sounds of na-

ture along with music therapy is very popular these days. A lot of stress, monotony of colors of city life, constant anxiety that we are not in time for something, lead to the fact that we stop feeling the natural environment necessary for maintaining our mental health. [2]

### **Mechanism**

Birdsong affects humans through auditory receptors that convert sound waves into electrical impulses, affecting different parts of the brain. This can cause positive emotions and even relieve physical pain due to the activation of vibroreceptors in the skin that perceive sound waves of a certain frequency[3][4].

Research shows that:

The singing of each bird is unique. Accordingly, the effect of this or that "feathered doctor" on the body is different. According to ornithopaths:

- the singing of a nightingale provides a surge of energy and helps get rid of depression;
- the trills of the warbler relieve headaches and have a beneficial effect on the functioning of various systems of internal organs;
- larks, finches, thrushes, buntings, and canaries are an ideal remedy for normalizing heart rhythm and getting rid of arrhythmia;
- the song of the blackbird helps to normalize blood pressure;
- the singing of the goldfinch and siskin is an excellent addition to the treatment of neuroses;
- the singing of robins is ideal for treating headaches and heart pain, as well as relieving stomach and liver spasms;
- canaries help not only to cope with arrhythmia and neuroses, but also to survive stress without a trace, preventing diseases that develop on their basis;
- the lark gives peace of mind and a feeling of high spirits;
- the robin's song helps relieve joint pain or insomnia.

### **Methods**

Ornithotherapy can be implemented in several ways:

- Listening to Recordings: Using audio recordings of various birds singing. This is especially useful for those who do not have the opportunity to listen to live singing.
- Live Birds: Keeping songbirds at home (such as canaries or parrots) can also be beneficial. It is important to provide conditions for their active singing, including the use of sound stimulators.
- Nature Walks: When taking nature walks, it is recommended to focus on the sounds of a particular bird, which helps improve concentration and relaxation[3][6].

Ornithotherapy is a unique treatment method that combines elements of psychotherapy and natural medicine. Given the growing interest in alternative treatments, ornithotherapy may become an important addition to medical practices.

### **Hippotherapy**

*Hippotherapy*, or *therapeutic horseback riding*, is a rehabilitation method that uses human interaction with a horse to improve physical and psycho-emotional

state. This approach combines elements of physical therapy, psychology and interaction with animals.

### **Mechanism**

Hippotherapy affects the body through two main mechanisms:

- Biomechanical effect: the horse's walking movements transmit oscillatory impulses to the rider, which imitate the movements of the human body when walking. This helps activate muscles, improve coordination and balance.
- Psychogenic effect: communication with a horse and the process of horse riding help reduce anxiety and depression, improve mood and promote social adaptation. [3]

### **Stages of classes**

Hippotherapy classes are conducted in stages:

1. Initial adaptation: Patients are introduced to the horse and learn how to control it. This helps to develop confidence and reduce fears.
2. Physical activity: This stage focuses on developing coordination and strengthening muscles. Patients perform tasks on a horse, which helps improve physical fitness.
3. Psychological work: Interaction with a horse helps develop emotional stability and social skills.

### **Methods**

- Passive movement therapy: Used for patients with severe movement disorders; they sit on a horse that moves under the guidance of an instructor.
- Therapeutic horseback riding: Patients can ride the horse themselves or perform exercises on its back.
- Therapeutic vaulting: Performing gymnastic elements on the animal's back; used at later stages of rehabilitation.
- Psychological contact with the horse: Interaction with the animal through care and communication, which is especially useful for people with mental illnesses.

### **Dolphin therapy**

The last therapy to be considered is *dolphin therapy*.

*Dolphin therapy*, or *dolphin-assisted therapy (DAT)*, is a method of medical and psychological rehabilitation that uses human interaction with dolphins to improve health and psycho-emotional background. This approach combines elements of psychotherapy and animal therapy, which makes it unique and attractive to many patients.

### **Mechanism**

Dolphin therapy is based on several key mechanisms:

- Social interaction: Interaction with a dolphin helps improve interpersonal skills and increase trust in patients. This is especially important for children with autism and other disorders.
- Biosonar effects: Dolphins produce sounds that can positively influence the bioelectrical activity of the human brain. Ultrasound emitted by dolphins can improve the state of the nervous system and promote relaxation [4].

- Emotional support: Interacting with dolphins evokes positive emotions, which helps reduce stress and anxiety.

### **Stages of classes**

Dolphin therapy sessions are usually conducted in special centers under the supervision of qualified specialists. The process includes several stages:

1. Preparatory stage: During the first session, patients get to know dolphins and learn to interact with them on the shore or in shallow water.

2. Main stage: In the following days, patients spend time in the water with dolphins, performing various exercises and tasks aimed at developing motor skills, communication and emotional stability.

3. Evaluation of results: After completion of the course, an evaluation of the achieved results and further recommendations for rehabilitation is carried out.

Dolphin therapy is an interesting and promising rehabilitation method that combines elements of human-animal interaction and psychotherapy. Despite criticism from the scientific community, this method continues to attract the attention of both patients and professionals due to its potential health benefits. [4]

In conclusion, animal-assisted therapy (AAT) presents a unique and valuable approach to enhancing mental health treatment. The benefits of AAT, including increased emotional support, improved social interaction, and reduced anxiety and depression, highlight its potential as a complementary therapeutic option. However, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges associated with implementing AAT, such as the need for trained professionals, ethical considerations regarding animal welfare, and the variability in individual responses to therapy. [5] As research continues to evolve, integrating AAT into traditional mental health practices may offer innovative solutions for those seeking holistic and effective treatment options. By addressing the challenges and maximizing the benefits, AAT can play a significant role in promoting mental well-being and enriching the therapeutic experience for individuals of all ages.

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