

## **Analysis of the Development of Communicative Skills After Participating in the Equine-Assisted-Therapy Program Step-By-Step in Communication**

**Authors :** Leticia Souza Guirra, Márcia Eduarda Vieira Ramos, Edlaine Souza Pereira, Leticia Correa Celeste

**Abstract :** Introduction: Studies indicate that equine-assisted therapy enables improvements in several areas of functioning that are impaired in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), such as social interaction and communication. Objective: The study proposes to analyze the development of dialogic skills of a verbal child with ASD after participating in the equine-assisted therapy Step By Step in Communication. Method: This is quantitative and qualitative research through a case study. It refers to a 6 years old child diagnosed with ASD belonging to a group of practitioners of the Brazilian National Equine-Assisted-Therapy Association. The Behavioral Observation Protocol (PROC) was used to evaluate communicative skills before and after the intervention, which consisted of 24 sessions once a week. Results: All conversational skills increased their frequency, with participation in dialogue and initiation of interaction. The child also increases the habit of waiting for his turn and answering the interlocutor. The emission of topics not related to conversation and echolalia showed a significant decrease after the intervention. Conclusion: The studied child showed improvement in communicative skills after participating in the equine-assisted therapy Step By Step in Communication. Contributions: This study contributes to a greater understanding of the impact of equine-assisted therapy on the communicative abilities of children with ASD.

**Keywords :** equine-assisted-therapy, autism spectrum disorder, language, communication, language and hearing sciences

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