

# THERAPY POST

To find out more information  
regarding Hippotherapy, or to  
make a donation/sponsor a child,  
please call 318.364.6031

**Phone: 318.364.6031**  
**Fax: 318.741.6753**  
**Therapypost@live.com**  
**www.therapypost.org**

## **Mission:**

**To increase independence and quality of life in children with disabilities by providing specialized therapy services with the help of a horse.**



## **What is hippotherapy?**

**A physical, occupational, or speech therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement as part of an integrated program to achieve functional outcomes.**

**Benefits of Hippotherapy can offer improvements in the following areas:**

- **Arousal and attention**
- **Balance Strategies**
- **Bilateral integration**
- **Body awareness**
- **Circulation**
- **Dynamic postural stability**
- **Endurance**
- **Muscle strength**
- **Neuromotor function**
- **Sensorimotor integration**
- **Symmetry and alignment**
- **Self-confidence**
- **Speech and language**
- **Oral-motor function**
- **Mobility of pelvis, spine, and hip joints**
- **Problem-solving movement strategies**

**Common Clinical Impairments that could benefit from Hippotherapy include:**

- **Abnormal muscle tone**
- **Impaired balance and coordination**
- **Poor oral motor functioning**
- **Impaired mobility**
- **Abnormal reflexes**
- **Impaired communication**
- **Postural asymmetry**
- **Impaired sensorimotor function**



"Treatment with the Help of the Horse"

AMERICAN HIPPO THERAPY ASSOCIATION, INC.

## **What is hippotherapy?**

Hippotherapy is a physical, occupational or speech-language therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement. Hippotherapy is used as part of an integrated treatment program to achieve functional outcomes.

## **Why is it called hippotherapy?**

The term "hippotherapy" was inherited by therapists in North America from colleagues in Europe who have used the term since the early 1960's. Internationally, hippotherapy means "treatment with the help of the horse" and is derived from the Greek word "hippo", meaning horse. The term "hippotherapy" was created to distinguish the medical or rehabilitative use of the movement of the horse from other equine activities which emphasize applications for education, recreation or sport riding for the disabled. The term has continued to be used by North American therapists, to maintain consistency in the use of semantics internationally and to designate that the movement of the horse is being used by PTs, OTs, SLPs, PTAs and COTAs in a treatment setting.

PTs, OTs, SLPs, PTAs and COTAs in North America have integrated hippotherapy in medically necessary treatment sessions that have been prescribed by physicians in the United States since the 1970's. Internationally, therapists have been using hippotherapy for over 35 years. Its origins are found in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. A recent review has indicated that hippotherapy is currently used in 24 countries.

## **Is Hippotherapy a separate form of therapy?**

Hippotherapy is not a separate form of therapy. The term "hippotherapy" is an inclusive term that refers to the use of the movement of the horse as a treatment strategy and may also include therapeutic exercises and activities while on the horse. Therapists are able to modify the use of this strategy depending on their patient population, clinical expertise and the scope of practice of their particular profession.

Based on the PT, OT or SLP's evaluation of the patient's impairments, functional limitations and disabilities a treatment plan is designed with specific functional outcomes. The therapist then chooses the most appropriate plan of care which include treatment tools and strategies for the patient which may include hippotherapy. The therapist uses the movement of the horse in a variety of ways, depending on the needs of the patient. Equine movement is continually modified during the treatment session and over a period of time in response to a patient's adapted response or attainment of functional outcomes. The therapist documents results of the treatment sessions in accordance with their professional disciplines.

## **What service communities recognize Hippotherapy?**

Hippotherapy is widely accepted within the medical, professional and educational communities. The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) all recognize hippotherapy as a treatment strategy in which the movement of the horse is used to address impairments and functional limitations in patients in order to achieve functional outcomes. The APTA, since 1994, and AOTA since 1996, have written position letters recognizing the use of hippotherapy within their scope of professional practice. Copies of these letters are available through the AHA Office and on the AHA website.

# Frequently Asked Questions About Hippotherapy

## **Who is American Hippotherapy Association, Inc.?**

In 2003, AHA, Inc. was incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The membership is composed of Physical Therapists (PT), Occupational Therapists (OT), Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP), Physical Therapy Assistants (PTA), and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTA), interested in the use of the movement of the horse as a treatment strategy as well as parents, doctors, administrators and interested members of the public. AHA, Inc. offers continuing education workshops in hippotherapy since 1987 in the United States and established a standardized curriculum in 1992.

The American Hippotherapy Certification Board has been instrumental in establishing a certification process to identify therapists with advanced knowledge in hippotherapy; upon passing a national examination these therapists become Hippotherapy Clinical Specialists® (HPCS).

AHA, Inc. has been actively encouraging research studies which explore how and why hippotherapy affects the CNS and the efficacy of hippotherapy in treatment and differential diagnosis. The current AHA Bibliography and additional information can be obtained by going to the resource section of the AHA website at [www.AmericanHippotherapyAssociation.org](http://www.AmericanHippotherapyAssociation.org).

## **Are there hippotherapists in the United States?**

No. Hippotherapy is not a separate form of therapy; therefore, the term "hippotherapist" is incorrect. The therapist is a PT, OT, SLP, PTA, or COTA who incorporates hippotherapy as a treatment strategy after receiving specialized training.

## **How is hippotherapy different from adaptive horseback riding?**

Hippotherapy is a medical treatment provided by a licensed PT, OT, SLP, PTA, or COTA. Adaptive horseback riding is a recreational activity taught by a trained instructor.

## **What makes hippotherapy an effective treatment strategy?**

The three dimensional movement of the horse's pelvis is within 1-2 cm of the movement of the human pelvis at the walk. This three dimensional movement has been shown to affect the CNS which in turn stimulates the Motor Pathways and the Vestibular System in the human brain. This movement naturally affects all the systems in the human body.

The horse's movement has rhythmicity and symmetry providing a dynamic base of support and multiple planes of movement. It provides multi-sensory input, proprioception, and movement through space, repetition and variability. All of this is provided within a natural environment with the therapist able to modify both the movement of the horse and the environment. This encourages the patient to shift from his or her current preferred pattern of behavior in order to achieve new functional outcomes/behaviors. Patients explore, self-organize, and make postural adjustments and problem solve in a highly motivating and natural environment, with the resultant development of an adapted response and the ability to use new movement strategies and incorporate them safely and appropriately into their normal environment.

## **Is hippotherapy safe?**

Specially trained PTs, OTs, SLPs, PTAs and COTAs work with specially trained horses and staff to ensure that the environment is as safe as possible. A therapy session is carried out by a trained treatment team.

## **Which therapist can practice hippotherapy?**

Any licensed PT, OT, SLP, PTA or COTA who has had additional training in the movement of the horse and the integration of horse and human movement. AHA, Inc. maintains a list of therapists who have received specialized training in hippotherapy as well as a list of Hippotherapy Clinical Specialists.

# THERAPY POST

## DONATION FORM

Therapy POST strives to increase Independence and quality of life in children with disabilities by providing specialized therapy services with the help of a horse. Hippotherapy helps boost a child's self esteem as well as makes working on individualized therapy goals fun. Some children that could benefit from hippotherapy are unable to afford this unique experience.

If you would like to sponsor a child or make a donation, please fill out the following and mail it to Therapy POST, 5414 Shasta Drive, Bossier City, LA 71112:

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to sponsor a child for ONE session at \$85

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to sponsor a child for 6 WEEKS at \$510

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to sponsor a child for 12 WEEKS at \$1020

\_\_\_\_\_ other donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: Great Results Equine Assisted Therapies, Inc and *EARMARK* It for Therapy POST (if you are sponsoring a certain child, please write their name on this form or the check as well)

Any Questions? Call 318.364.6031 or email [Therapypost@live.com](mailto:Therapypost@live.com)