

THE PRESENT AND PERSPECTIVE OF HIPPO THERAPY IN BIHOR

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Abstract

Hippo-therapy is a special world that unites horses, persons with disabilities, children and adults, volunteers and professionals from the medical, psychological and educational field. In hippo-therapy the lives of everyone involved are improved. Horse riding for people with special needs is known to be one of the most progressive forms of therapy.

Hippo-therapy is a unique form of rehabilitation, and horse riding acts in two ways on the human body: psychogenic and bio-mechanical. The riders exceed their physical deficiencies, but also their psychological phobias, through the motivation formed by the interaction with the animal.

The declared purpose of this scientific paper is to evaluate the present and the future of hippo-therapy in Bihor and to promote a modern element in treating human affections.

In the studies made in Bihor, it has been noticed a modest preoccupation among the owners of tourism and agrotourism pensions for recreational equestrian tourism, in general, and founding farms for equestrian tourism in special. Their therapeutically purpose is inexplicably ignored.

Contrary to expectations, concerns about the establishment and operation of a equestrian tourism farm were recorded among breeders of race horses, although the real interest was expected from tourism and agrotourism pensions owners.

We must only have the courage to give the horse the noble status that it deserves. On a value scale of breeding horses, it seems we are on the last steps, but the chance to fix this situation lays in the future generations, whose commitment and love towards this animal, we hope to be more profound than ours.

Key words: Hippo-therapy, horses

INTRODUCTION

Hippo-therapy is a method of therapy with the help of horses. This practice dates since ancient Greece where the wounded soldiers were helped through this therapy to come back as soon as possible on the horse. *Hippocrates* said “*the saddle removes mans dark thoughts and brings good and cheerful ones*”, and the french philosopher *Denis Diderot* wrote in the XVII century the treaty “*About horse riding and it’s importance to maintaining and getting your health back*”. A scientifically approach as a therapy takes place around year 1870, and the big moment and the recognition of this hippo-therapy is celebrated in 1952. At the Olympic games from Helsinki, Finland, *Liz Hartel*, won the silver medal at horse riding – training, a young lady that appears at the premiere in a wheel chair. In 1982, at Hamburg , took place a congress on the hippo-

therapy problems. Horse riding helps rehabilitating the spine after different traumas, in case of muscle atrophy, leg paralysis or arthritis. Doctor Noel Brenner from the London hospital The Priory said: "*Horses are a miraculous remedy for those who cannot control their emotions*". He resorts to hippo-therapy for treating drug and alcohol dependencies, and also for treating patients with nervous diseases. The horse can be considered a physical, psychological and relational therapeutic remedy because its qualities: nobility, power, grandeur, gentleness, warmth, and vitality. The forced relationship between horse and man is more related to the senses than the intellect and it occurs after touch, knowledge and movement along with the animal. It is not by chance that equestrian therapy or education through horse riding, as it is called, ranks among the most effective techniques of zoo-therapy applied as such in many countries. Used since the fifth century, this therapy slowly makes its appearance in Romania and the results are as encouraging as in other countries. *In Romania, riding centers were established in many rural areas of the country where people can enjoy such recreational way and Treatment.* Since 1970, Germany has a proper center for practicing this therapy, and across the country work cca. 1100 hippo-therapists treating patients with different diagnoses. This medical practice is used by psycho-therapists, the intended objective is depicting psycho-motor rehabilitation of patients with a compulsion of communication and building a trusting relationship with the animal. Riding helps those who practice it to relax, get rid of stress, and to rebuild their psychological balance. Hippo-therapy can improve concentration and coordination of hyperactive children.

There are three equestrian therapy applications: hippo-therapy, technique used in physiotherapy, using the horse's steps as a therapeutic agent. Patient should not perform certain moves but just to accommodate to the movement of the horse; - adapted riding, practiced by people with physical and mental disabilities, using both jump, acrobatics, training, linkage; - reeducation through riding is a practice that helps motor skills, emotional and cerebral. Concrete actions which are produced in the physical, psychological and rational plan, by this therapy can be defined as follows: -physical, overall tonic (300 muscles function at step), synchronizing movements, adapting the body to maintain balance, upper limb coordination with lower levels; -psychological, man-horse body contact awakens feelings of its own existence, safety gained through rhythm (horse step); -relational, rider horse relationship authenticity, the relationship is unconditional accepted without waiting for any reward.

Therapeutic riding, part of hippo-therapy, also called assisted horse riding therapy, therapy with help of the horse or riding for people with

disabilities, means use of horse in activities aimed to achieve a variety of *therapeutic targets*: cognitive, physical, emotional, social, educational and behavioral. This treatment is one of the most effective to improve posture, balance, mobility, and other functions in individuals with impaired motor dysfunctions (*table 1*).

Table 1

Disease areas recommended for therapeutic riding

<i>Ortopedic Affection</i>	<i>Neurological disorders</i>	<i>Other clasifications</i>
Amputations	Polio	muscular dystrophy
Scoliosis	Spina Bifidia	Authism
Perth disease	water on the brain	Vision problems
Hip Congenital dislocation	Spine affections	Sight and hearing problems
Arthritis	epilepsy	Growing problems
	Meningitis / Encephalitis	Learning problems
	Brain injury	Emotional problems
	Paralysis	Dwarfism
	Multiple Sclerosis	

Benefits of therapeutic horseback riding are: physical (improves balance, strengthen muscles, improves coordination, stretching tight or spastic muscles, reducing spasticity, increases joint mobility range, reduces abnormal movements, improves breathing and circulation, improves appetite and digestion and sensory integration), psychological (feeling well, increasing self-confidence, increased interest, increased interest for its own subsistence, increased ability to assume responsibility, develop patience, emotional control and self-discipline, a sense of normalcy and increased capacity control), social (friendship, respect and love for animal, diversification experiences and joy), educational (improving reading, sequencing, and planning model, improve eye hand coordination, visual-spatial perception and differentiation).

The disease that rehabilitates the best with hippo-therapy is cerebral palsy, in this case young people can lead an almost normal life. Therapy sessions last between 20-60 minutes, depending on an individualized program for each condition separately. Participation in equestrian therapy has physical, emotional and mental rewards. Due to line movement of the horse, the rider who is not able to walk alone can have similar feelings to walking and improves their flexibility, muscle strength and balance. Horse power turns in aid to arterial circulation and moves the spine, joints and muscles. The horse is led by a trained therapist and goes slowly and varied as it is asked to. Sometimes the horse has to take two persons in the saddle who can not stand the normal riding position. While driving the horse, the therapist works with the patient to achieve certain goals.

The general objectives of hippo-therapy in Down syndrome are: - toning back muscles, muscles of upper and lower limbs, and abdomen; - self-awareness - communication - self esteem - the modification of problem behaviors or maladaptive thinking patterns; - Improvement of negative emotions and the effects of the different traumas - providing support, - the acquisition and development of adaptation strategies - facilitating behavior or learning new skills - preventing problems and maintaining mental health. Through hippo-therapy, the specific problems of children with Down syndrome (shyness, fear of pronouncing a word, emotional instability, self-closing, isolation) are more easily affordable. High motivation and pleasure that these affectionate children feel when they ride are issues of great help in the therapeutically approach. Through hippo-therapy, aquatic therapy and physical therapy, children with Down syndrome get to overcome physical deficiencies, but also those related to the difficulty in integrating into society. *Hippo-therapy* is a psycho-motor stimulation method that can help children with Down syndrome to develop almost normally. With this therapy we can win a few extra months: children are able to go and to stand upright much earlier.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

I have taken the General information which led to the preparation of this scientific paper, from the specialized literature as presented in the bibliography and those that aim the recreational horse and Hippo-therapy in Bihor county, from the records of Improvement and Reproduction Office in Bihor and also from the technical operative records provided by the Department of Agriculture Bihor. Especially helpful was the data provided by 30 breeders of race horses in Bihor, stud farm Fitero and ANTREC, Bihor branch.

Bihor tourism potential is exceptional, it has accredited by MDRT, 100 guesthouses, 2 Farmhouses, 6 chalets and 5 campsites, plus Baile Felix and Baile 1 Mai resorts, and Stana de Vale, Vartop and Padis mountain resorts, around which there are possibilities for setting up equestrian tourism farms, through which an increasing number of guesthouses, regardless of the location, can offer to those interested a quiet vacation outdoors, fishing, horseback tours, carriage rides and, depending on the season, with sleigh rides, away from the noise, bustle and pollution of the city.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Territory of the county includes heights between 1849 m, maximum altitude of Bihor and 90 m, minimum altitude low Cris Plain, consisting of

three levels of land form: *mountain stage occupies 24%, 32% hills and valleys, and plains 44%.*

In Bihor county are over 60 natural reserves, natural monuments and Apuseni Natural Park, 75,784 hectares, of which 31.92% on the county territory. Bihor residents have well preserved traditions. Every household has a clean room, the best room, reserved only for guests, and put food made by hosts on the table. National Association of Rural Ecological and Cultural Tourism (*Asociația Națională de Turism Rural Ecologic și Cultural – A.N.T.R.E.C.*), founded in 1994, is responsible movement arising from the development of tourist accommodation at local population. A.N.T.R.E.C. BIHOR branch is located in Oradea, Pta Unirii, no. 5, ap 2. Through activities of the association members, emblems of housing assigned meeting specific requirements. Recommended Bihor county destinations: Alesd, Baile 1 Mai, Baile Felix, Baita, Balc, Beius, Bratca, Budureasa, Campani, Chiscau, Curatele, Draganesti, Gepiu, Haieu, Hidiselul de Jos, Hidiselul de sus, Madaras, Marghita, Nucet, Olcea, Paleu, Pietroasa, Pocola, Remetea, Remeti, Sacuieni, Sambata, Sanmartin, Sarcau, Suncuius, Tamaseu, Tarcaia, Vadu Crisului and Valea lui Mihai.

I managed to identify 30 race horse breeders Bihor county who own a herd of 535 heads, and the pleasing thing is that at Sacuieni there is a private herd of horses belonging to the local Fitero Peter. From a total of 30 breeders of race horses, identified in Bihor (Fitero Petru-Sacuieni, Nistor Nicolae-Cefa, Onita Daniel-Haieu, Portan Roman- Ciutelec, Sim Cristian-Biharia, Racz Peter-Saldabagiu de Munte, Rakoczi Ludovic-Cubulcut, Portan Teodor-Ciutelec, Cismas Alexandru-Salonta, Costin Adrian-Chiraleu, Ferche Marcel-Bogei, Zatyko Iozsef-Saniob, Csorba Carol-Oradea and Kiss Roth Lajos-Ineu de Cris), 14 are obviously concerned, for ultimate performance, quality and profit through their horse, the rest, for now, are horses lovers and surely wait the time of integration into national and European equine chain.

Notable concerns about the establishment and operation of equestrian tourism farms were recorded, contrary to expectations, among race horse breeders, although the real interest was expected to come from the owners of guesthouses and agritourism. There is, to date, no concern about horse exploitation for therapeutic purposes, horse owners as well as the potential beneficiaries of the effects of hippo-therapy lacking medical and technical information about the horse. Even if Bihor benefits from excellent natural conditions. Onita Daniel-Haieu owns a equestrian tourism ranch with a number of 25 Lipizzaner horse race, Romanian Semigreu and poney, providing equestrian services in Baile Felix and Baile 1 Mai.

Hanul Pescarilor from Saldabagiu de Munte offers equestrian services with 15 Lipizzaner, Frisian and ponies, property of breeder Racz

Peter, in good conditions, and which in the future will gain for certain qualitative improvements. Worth the notice is the effort of Sim Cristian, breeder of race horses, who managed to build a equestrian tourism farm which is meant to be an example for current and prospective horse breeders, owners of tourism and agritourism hostels in Bihor, and beyond. Horses and excellent facilities are associated with a Western-style professionalism and profit and performance are to be expected at race horse farm in Biharia.

Unfortunately, in Bihor, the work of the institutions for promoting equestrian tourism and hippo-therapy is not felt and losses are incalculable, both financially and human. We miss an opportunity to make a different type of Tourism and enable sufferers to find the well expected remedy. Equestrian clubs, along with equestrian tourism farms, represent the key to success in equestrian tourism activities and hippo-therapy.

Unfortunately, many Romanian that have the necessary conditions for raising a horse prefer other pets, and this is the result of misconceptions about both the financial and the emotional aspect. It is true that a horse takes time, patience and affection, but the remuneration is undoubtedly much higher.

Through public education about the importance of race horses and by organizing competitions to promote their values, people need to understand that in addition to the strong relationship between horse and man, it can become a major player, in tourism in a country studded with farmhouses, and a cure for the suffering.

We just have to have the courage to restore this noble animal the status it deserves. On a scale of increasing values of horse breeding, it seems that we are on the last step, but a chance to fix this is in the next generation, whose dedication and love for horses we hope to be deeper than ours.

CONCLUSIONS

Territory of the county includes heights between 1849 m, maximum altitude of Bihor and 90 m, minimum altitude low Cris Plain, consisting of three levels of landform: mountain stage occupies 24%, 32% hills and valleys, and plains 44%.

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RECOMENDATIONS

The present and future of recreational horse in Romania and Bihor, depends on how we support the establishment, strengthening and

development of race horse farms and equestrian tourism farms as a mandatory and necessary prerequisite to integration in the European equine chain and exploitation of tourism potential that we have.

The welfare and protection of horses in farms, is an essential condition for the operation of recreational horse in conditions for performance, quality and profit

The institutions with a role in monitoring and improving the Romanian horse aim mainly at improving the genetic potential in terms of economicity.

Hippotherapy is a special world that unites horses, persons with disabilities, children and adults, volunteers and professionals from the medical, psychological and educational field. In hippotherapy the lives of everyone involved are improved.

The horse can be considered a physical, psychological and relational therapeutic remedy because its qualities: nobility, power, grandeur, gentleness, warmth, and vitality, thus maintaining optimal conditions for development of hippotherapy in Romania and Bihor, and the benefits of therapeutic horseback riding should become accessible to those who suffer, imposing a real support from the decision makers in a field for the future in Romanian medicine.

As the Romanians in general and Bihoreni, in particular, will have money, Hippotherapy, or therapeutic riding as part of it will be, certainly, a common treatment for people with disabilities.

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