

Natureza do trabalho: Resumo

TÍTULO

INTERACTION OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER AND PETS: THERAPEUTIC CONTRIBUTIONS.

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RESUMO

Introduction: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), with a estimated prevalence of one in every 150 children, predominantly in males, in USA¹, is classified as a neurodevelopmental disorder according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - DSM V. There are two groups of symptoms: deficits in social interaction and communication; repetitive behaviors and restricted activities². The precise etiology of ASD still remains unknown, but it is known its related to genetic patterns and environmental factors such as stressful experiences, maternal diet and infections, advanced parental age, prematurity, and low birth weight³. Several psychoeducational interventions for patients with ASD are proposed, but are not fully effective in all children⁴. In order to strengthen these interventions, therapies with assistances pets, animal-assisted intervention (AAI) or Human-Animal interaction (HAI), has promoted a social functioning improvement in many autistic children^{5,6}. **Objective:** Elucidate therapeutic contributions of the interaction between children with ASD and assistance pets. **Material and Methods:** A systematic literature review was conducted of 5 published studies in the databases MEDLINE and SciELO, using the descriptors: Autism, Children, Therapy, Pets. **Discussion:** The literature review exposed the positive effects and proven therapeutic efficacy of the interaction between autistic children and pets. There was a sharp increase of both verbal and nonverbal social behaviors⁷. Studies showed an increase in social interaction, more playful mood, decreased anxiety, aggressive responses and more manageable routines of sleep^{8,9}. The reduction of the children's volatile behavior is due to the certified decrease in levels of Cortisol Awakening Response (CAR). This reduction can be explained the demonstrated sensibility of the CAR to the presence of an assistance dog, in children with ASD. After the introduction of dogs there was a decrease to 10%, compared to the control group which had a 58% increase in serum cortisol morning after awakening. However, there were no reported long-term effects, with the removal of the pet this values was resettled¹⁰. The contribution of these animals extended to children's family. An improvement in the quality of life of parents was noted with the introduction of a pet at home, in consequence of additional sense of security and enhancement of social interactions in the family circle, even affecting the quantity and quality of parent's sleep. As a result of the reduction of emotional outbursts, and the ability to dampen social isolation, the presence of the assistance dog is helpful for integrate the whole family into the social community, including relieving embarrassing and stressful situations, facilitating public outings and family activities¹¹. **Conclusion:** Therefore, it is concluded that interaction child-dog, either by activities or animal assisted therapy has positive modulation in the behavior of children with ASD, widening the duration and frequency of positive behavior and reducing aggressive responses, deficits in reciprocity and social communication. These factors suggest this interaction as a promising complement for the treatment of children with ASD, highlighting the need for further studies on its effectiveness, making it more eligible.

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