



**CONFERENCE: August 24th, Rotterdam**

### **Horses, Healthcare & Science: Connected by Horsepower!**

*What we know, what we do, and how we approach patients and horses in the world of Healthcare.*

### **Never before a conference of this size on Equitherapy in Europe**

On the 24th of August 2019 the Organizing Committee of the Longines FEI European Championships Dressage, Jumping and Para-Dressage and LS&H Lawyers team up with the prestigious International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO). We kindly invite you to purchase tickets for our international conference where we dive into the world of Equine Assisted Interventions.

About a year and a half ago, Nicole Kien of LS&H Lawyers, a Rotterdam law office that focuses entirely on the Life Science & Health sector, and general manager of the European Championships, Fred Rozendaal, came up with the idea of organizing the Horses, Healthcare & Science conference. While a few meters away from our conference location top athletes (on two and four legs) show what horses and humans can accomplish together in sports, we zoom into a world where horses show extraordinary other talents (e.g.) to assist us together with professionals in interventions for vulnerable people, such as e.g. children with cerebral palsy, children with autism, patients/clients with psychiatric or psychological problems with coaching managers. **Tom van 't Hek (NL)**, ex hockey player, coach and former practitioner will moderate the conference. Our key note speakers will present high level showcases, outcomes of scientific research, international developments in healthcare systems, and zoom into the necessary conditions that need to be met if we wish to carefully, effectively and horse-friendly, engage in this world.

### **Keynote speakers**

We are very proud to announce that **Prof. Dr. Marie-José Enders-Slegers (NL)**, Professor in Anthrozoology at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the Open University in Heerlen, President of IAHAIO as well as Chair of the Institute for Anthrozoology will take care of the opening speech at our conference. She will introduce the subject, zoom in to the backgrounds, reveal recent scientific research and the most important international developments. She explained the topics and relevance of the different keynotes.

“This is going to be very special! Never before there was so much knowledge and experience with regards to equitherapy, working with a horse as partner, from all around the world in one place! These professionals do pioneering research and are related to prominent universities. And more.... They all are very interesting people with a unique story.”

The results of **Nina Ekholm Fry (USA)** in the USA by involving horses in the treatment of veterans are amazing. **Martine Hausberger (FR)** will present examples of using horses for treating autism.

**Roswitha Zink (AT)** is biologist and psychologist. She has achieved a lot by treating children with brain injury or children in palliative care. Not using many words, just using horse language. Roswitha wrote an intriguing book about that method. The story of **Rupert Isaacson (USA)** is about his experience with his own son, who has autism. Together they made a fascinating journey through Mongolia on a horseback. PhD student **Marloes Ernst (NL)** is researching this ‘Horse Boy’ method and will share her research method during the conference. **Machteld van den Dierendonck (NL)**, who is well known in the equestrian world, takes a different look at equitherapy. She will discuss the wellbeing of the horses involved in these treatments. And **Irene Sanquin (IT)** will explain how her Institute succeeded including equine assisted interventions in the Italian national health system.

In short, a variety of subjects, stories and experiences. Interesting not only for health or horse professionals, but also for people who can benefit from equitherapy. The conference is also a must for people who want to get equitherapy widely accepted.

### **Information & conference tickets**

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## Conference program: Horses, Healthcare & Science: Connected by Horsepower!\*

**Saturday August 24th, The Boathouse Rotterdam**

Version 29 July 2019

**09:00 hrs. Registration**

**10:00 hrs. Official opening**

**10:05 hrs. Welcome and agenda by Tom van 't Hek (NL)**

**10:20 hrs. Opening remarks by Prof. Dr. Marie-José Enders-Slegers (NL)**

*The history and state of art of practice and research of Equine Assisted Interventions.*

Thousands of years already horses are playing important, however very different, roles in human lives. An overview of their roles will be presented as well an explanation how their role in Equine Assisted Interventions started. The global upcoming of Animal Assisted Interventions will be discussed as well as definitions will be explained (IAHAIO, 2108). The state of art in the field of equine assisted interventions will be highlighted as well the leading organizations and Universities. The mechanisms behind EA Therapy and the targeted client groups will be discussed. Research findings from the last decennia will illustrate the effects horses can have on vulnerable people. Finally, will be explained why quality standards and protocols are necessary to safeguard the wellbeing of human and animal and are indispensable for professionalizing our field.

**10:45 hrs. Nina Ekholm Fry (USA)**

*Overview of Research and Report of Experiences of Equine Interactions with Veterans with PTSD.*

Equine-Assisted Therapy for Veterans in the U.S.A. The Healing Power of Horses in the Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress: Overview of Research and Report of Experiences of Equine Interactions with Veterans with PTSD.

Through research and clinical examples, this presentation addresses how interactions with horses, both as part of supportive services and in psychotherapy, can be helpful and healing to veterans and active service members. Elements present in the equine-assisted therapeutic environment that are especially suitable for U.S. military veterans are described, along with how interactions with horses can enhance existing, evidence-based trauma treatment approaches for this population. Aspects of touch and movement, relationship, motivation, and the therapy setting will be presented, all relative to military trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

**11:20 hrs. Martine Hausberger & Marine Grandgeorge (FR)**

*Children with autism and equine assisted therapy (how and why it works).*

Dept Ethologie animale et humaine, CNRS, Université de Rennes 1 et Caen, France

Equine assisted interventions for people with autism spectrum disorders are more and more widespread. Nevertheless, scientific studies (effects on horses and on humans) on this topic remain scarce. We review, using an ethological approach, their effects on both human and horse welfare, assessing in particular the real benefits of the practice for the humans. We also propose lines of thought for further studies and approaches that could help improving equine assisted interventions.

**11:55 hrs. Rupert Isaacson (USA)**

*Introduction into ATHENA-Horse Boy Method*

Rupert Isaacson is a journalist, horse trainer, best selling author (The Horse Boy, The Long Ride Home), an autism dad and founder of New Trails Learning Systems.

Horse Boy Method is developed by father and son, the first of ATHENA (Applied Techniques for Horsebased and Neuroscientific Approaches).

Developed over the last 15 years and backed by neuroscience. During this introduction, founder Rupert Isaacson will tell how it all started and how he collaborated with neuroscientists and people of the population we serve to innovate further. We are currently collaborating with the Open University and Institute for Antrozology to investigate the mechanisms of our approach.



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### 12:05 hrs. Marloes Ernst (NL)

*The Horse Boy Method: the challenges of research.*

Most equine-assisted interventions are developed in practice, by professionals providing the interventions. There is a vast amount of practical knowledge already available on how to provide equine-assisted interventions. In recent years, research is catching up to investigate if and when involving horses in interventions might work. Conducting research into the mechanisms of action of equine-assisted interventions leads to unique ethical, practical and scientific challenges. For example, the specific contributions of the horse or of riding the horse on the effects of the intervention are not unraveled. Within our collaboration with New Trails Learning Systems (ATHENA-Horse Boy Method), we have developed a methodological design mitigating several of these challenges. Our primary goal is to differentiate between the environmental factors and the unique contribution of the horse. Within our design, research participants will take part in one of four conditions: riding horseback, on the ground with the horse, riding a horseback riding simulator and play activity in a natural environment. This design allows us to differentiate between the environmental factors, the specific movements of riding horseback and the relationship development with the horse. We hope to identify the unique contributions of the horse to several outcomes, including salivary cortisol measures, behavioural measures and measures of executive functioning.

### 12:35 hrs. Lunch break

### 13:30 hrs. Welcome back by Tom van 't Hek

### 13:35 hrs. Roswitha Zink (AT)

*Horses touch more than our skin!*

*How horse assisted psychotherapy can help children with brain injury and children in palliative care.*

Children with brain injury same as some in palliative care often face a challenging personal development and have problems using language properly and feeling understood. Therefore, resource-based therapy methods are preferred to support the children's coping with the disadvantages due to their disability or to their condition. The special experience of taking up the reins and being carried at the same time is paradoxical and can dissolve duality and illustrate ambiguity tolerance to the client. To observe horses in their herd, to discuss their ranking and their social network, reveals how much they are always looking anew for this balance. During training, it helps to stay gentle and loving but also concentrated and consistent. Patients are carefully instructed in the basic handling and training of horses and inevitably experience these poles. The regulation of affect and activity are important cornerstones of any crisis. Emotional transmission and synchronization are important for every social interaction because every creature strives for synchronization and coherence. These processes of interaction can occur not only within the same species but also between animal and human. They support, depending on the specific needs, social as well as motoric skills, awareness of self-efficacy and a mindful behavior towards our environment. Physiological processes in the body play an important role here.

### 14:10 hrs. Machteld van Dierendonck (NL)

*Equine Welfare and Wellbeing in Equine Assisted Interventions: safeguarding animal and human wellbeing, what challenges to overcome?*

Horses, donkeys and their hybrids (Equines) are frequently used in Equine Assisted Interventions (EAI). Equines are usually performing their EAI task with a therapist as an influential third member in the equation. This means that risk factors for welfare problems can be expected before, during and after interventions.

By definition the welfare of an animal, can only be perceived and judged by that animal itself. Therefore, to be able to influence this welfare in a positive way, knowledge of basic equine behaviour and equine ethological needs; neurobiological mechanisms of motivation as well as a valid and reliable assessment of husbandry and management is paramount to be able to lower the risks of welfare problems during the 23 hours the animal is not in function.

One of the welfare risks for the patient/client can be found simply in the pitfalls related to observations by the therapist: since anthropomorphism, over-estimation of equine cognition, selective attention and expectation biases can distort the observation of the therapist without realising. As a result, this can endorse a wrong believe, and thus influence (inappropriate) actions or future therapies by the therapist.

During the intervention additional challenges occur like the differences in sensory perception, the link between physiological and ethological responses to stressors, risk of zoonoses and other health related safety



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violations as well as the influence of the upbringing, socialisation, training and selection etc. of the used individuals. The importance of skills in low stress handling and recognition of pain and stress indicators for the equine handlers / therapist will be addressed.

The challenge is to safeguard the welfare (including health and safety) of the involved animal(s) as well as the patient/client; therapist, bystanders and environment at the same time, while they have different motivations and perceptions. Prevention and knowledge are the key.

#### 14:45 hrs. Irene Sanguin (IT)

##### *Animal Assisted Interventions in a National Health Care System: The Italian approach*

The Italian National Health Service was established on December 23rd 1978 and approved by 85% of the Parliament (L.833/78). The NHS is founded on the principles of universal coverage, social financing through the use of general taxation and non-discriminatory access to the health care services.

The Italian NHS is currently organized on the basis of two levels: the central government, which has planning and funding responsibilities and the 21 regional governments, which organize and supervise the provision of healthcare services within their jurisdiction and allocate overall financial resources to the productive units. In Italy, animal assisted interventions (AAI) are regulated by the Agreement between the Government, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano on the document bearing "National guidelines for Animal Assisted Interventions". (25 March 2015)

The aim of the Agreement is to guarantee the high quality of AAI, the standardization of practices, the qualification of professionals, the safety of patients and the welfare of animals involved.

The National Reference Centre for Animal Assisted Intervention, in collaboration with Italian Ministry of Health, in order to ensure uniformity within the national territory, has developed Digital Pet.

Digital Pet is an IT tool for the collection of data for the creation and publication of the official lists of certified professionals, specialized Centers and recognized structures offering AAI, and the lists of therapeutic and educational projects activated annually at national level.

#### 15:20 hrs. Closing remarks by Prof. Dr. Marie-José Enders Slegers and Tom van 't Hek

#### 15:30 hrs. Cocktails

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*\*Please note the program is subject to possible changes.*



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