

## What?

Equine-assisted learning involves a trained facilitator, who guides activities using horses to promote development of life skills for professional and/or personal growth. It has been shown to **improve self-regulation, self-awareness, and socialisation skills** in children and adolescents<sup>1</sup>. A recent study explored the use of **equine-assisted learning to support well-being in medical students**<sup>2</sup>.

## Why?

Around **29% of medical students are given a mental health diagnosis whilst at medical school, and 85% could be classified as 'exhausted'** using the Oldenburg Burnout Scale<sup>3</sup>.

ANCOVA analysis, where post test scores ( $t_2$ ) for each dependent variable were regressed on intervention dummy variable (0 = control; 1 = equine assisted learning)<sup>2</sup>.

**The coefficient for MBIpa was positive and significant ( $\beta = 3.74$ ;  $P = .03$ ), indicating taking the equine-assisted course predicted a greater sense of personal accomplishment. There was also a tendency for well-being to improve.**

	$\beta$	SE	T-value	P-value
<b>MBIpa</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>1.65</b>	<b>2.27</b>	<b>0.03</b>
<b>Well-being</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>1.80</b>	<b>0.08</b>

MBIpa: Maslach Burnout Inventory personal accomplishment  
 $\beta$ : Coefficient, SE: Standard Error

The use of equine-assisted therapy aids learning as well as mental well-being<sup>2</sup>:

“The horses were a great way to introduce concepts and tie it to something tangible rather than reading theory.”

“I will be more vigilant of my patient’s comfort and what nonverbal cues they are giving. I will not attribute their behaviors to a negative source without trying to understand why and what is causing the behavior.”

## Who?

**Medical students frequently experience burnout and have impaired well-being.** They report a positive experience during and after the curriculum, but with no strong effects, 3 months post course.

## Author Comments

This was a small, unrandomized, unblinded study with no dummy intervention, so results are to be interpreted with caution. However, using horses to support medical learning is a new concept and may be explored further to **diversify learning and support mental health. Long-term well-being may require additional support.**

## References:

1. Coffin J. The Nguudu Barndimanmanha Project-Improving Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Aboriginal Youth Through Equine Assisted Learning. *Frontiers in Public Health*. 2019;7.
2. Artz N, Robbins J, Millman S. Outcomes of an Equine Assisted Learning Curriculum to Support Well-Being of Medical Students and Residents. *Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development*. 2021;8:238212052110164.
3. Farrell S, Kadhum M, Lewis T, Singh G, Penzenstadler L, Molodynski A. Wellbeing and burnout amongst medical students in England. *International Review of Psychiatry*. 2019;31(7-8):579-583.