

Abstract

Background: This review aimed to describe current research on equine-assisted services for people with Down syndrome to inform the development and evaluation of syndrome-informed practices.

Method: We conducted a scoping review, searching nine databases with terms related to Down syndrome and equine-assisted services. Data were extracted from the 14 included studies.

Results: Studies were published in 8 different countries from 1989-2023. Participants were mostly children, while two studies included adults. Hippotherapy was the most widely investigated intervention, followed by therapeutic riding. Motor outcomes were studied in 93% of papers, most reporting significant gross motor improvements.

Conclusion: Current research is in early phases of scientific development, with a focus on hippotherapy as an intervention to improve gross motor outcomes in children with Down syndrome. We propose several areas of research that merit further scientific attention to realize the development of syndrome-informed equine-assisted services for people with Down syndrome.