

Randomize Controlled Trial of Animal Facilitated Therapy with Dolphins in the Treatment of Depression. Antonioli, Christian; Reveley, Michael A. *BMJ*. Nov 26; 2005, 331(7527):1231-4.

Objective: To evaluate the effectiveness of animal-assisted therapy with dolphins, controlling for the influence of the natural setting, in the treatment of mild to moderate depression and in the context of the biophilia hypothesis.

Setting: The study was carried out in Honduras. Recruitment took place in the United States and Honduras.

Design: Single, blind, randomized, controlled trial.

Participants: Outpatients, recruited through announcements on the internet, radio, newspapers, and hospitals.

Results: Of the 30 patients randomly assigned to the two groups of treatment, two dropped out of the treatment group after the first week and three withdrew their consent in the control group after they had been randomly allocated. For the participants who completed the study, the mean severity of the depressive symptoms was more reduced in the treatment group than in the control group (Hamilton rating scale for depression, $P = 0.002$; Beck depression inventory, $P = 0.006$). For the sample analyzed by modified intention to treat and last observation carried forward, the mean differences for the Hamilton and Beck scores between the two groups was highly significant ($P = 0.007$ and $P = 0.012$, respectively).

Conclusions: The therapy was effective in alleviating symptoms of depression after two weeks of treatment. Animal-assisted therapy with dolphins is an effective treatment for mild to moderate depression, which is based on a holistic approach, through interaction with animals in nature.