

# EAGALA Inter-Professional Team Development

## Background

Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) is a team approach to problem solving in which a group or team interacts with horses to accomplish various tasks. The horses are not ridden but instead worked in an open setting to allow reflection and understanding between team members. EAGALA has been used in multiple settings, such as, combating compassion fatigue in community care workers. (Black 8-13)

EAGALA uses experiential learning to realize the goals of the participants. This offered an opportunity for interprofessional collaboration between the COM, Nursing, and Social Work students with a technique that has been suggested to reduce burnout among community health professionals. (Notgrass and Pettinelli 162-174)

## Purpose and Hypothesis

Students from the COM, Nursing, and Social Work colleges came together to experience this unique team building and skill developing practice with licensed mental health clinicians from EAGALA. Together the students encountered situations where they gained confidence in unfamiliar and uncomfortable situations where they were unable to rely on chosen professional backgrounds. They gained a deeper understanding of their individual and team member capabilities. These lessons were transposed onto their respective professions through dialog and reflection during discussion of each activity.

## Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn about their individual communication skills.
- Participants will reflect and discuss difficulties with communicating with patients.
- Participants will reflect on their roles and responsibilities in situations involving patients.



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## Materials and Methods

### Materials

Two horses, familiar with the indoor arena, responded to the early energy of the participants as they were welcomed to the event. The EAGALA specialist and the licensed mental health clinician worked within the arena with patients (horses) and participants. Various props were available within the arena to use in the exercises.

### Methods

Funded by a mini grant from CECE; the American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine (AOAAM) Student Chapter was the organization



who, under the direction of Victoria S. Thieme, DO, organized and invited the Nursing and Social Work students to collaborate. A pre and post survey was distributed to the participants and comments were collected recording the impressions.

EAGALA professionals guided the students through three progressive sessions allowing the horses to heighten the participants' awareness of: emotions between and within, relationship formation, instinct, and sensory awareness. Students met with facilitators after each session to debrief and process.



## Results

The group consisted of students who had participated in other IPE UNE experiences and those who had not. In order to assess the effectiveness of the training with regards to self and team discovery a pre and post workshop survey was utilized. All participants agreed strongly that the experience: was relevant to their professional development, helped them think about their role on the team, required them to collaborate, confronted their assumptions, and thought the experience was AMAZING!

## Conclusions

EAGALA Equine Assisted Therapy is an effective and engaging experiential teaching tool for students in the health professions. Although this intimate learning arena adds to the interpersonal learning experience, it is limited by the number of students that can participate at any given time. We recommend the activity continue to be supported for future classes at UNE.

## References

1. EAGALA, Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association. 2018. [www.eagala.org/model](http://www.eagala.org/model).
2. Black, M. "Combating compassion fatigue in community care professionals using the Eagala Model." *Counseling Australia*, Volume 16, Number 2, Winter 2016, 8-13.
3. Notgrass, Clayton G., and J. Douglas Pettinelli. "Equine assisted psychotherapy: The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association's model overview of equine-based modalities." *Journal of Experiential Education* 38.2 (2015): 162-174.

## Bibliography

