

The Influence of Animal-Assisted Therapy on Social and Motor Skills in Individuals With Intellectual Disabilities

Baleigh Nelson, OTS, Katie Jackson, OTS, Priya Patel, OTS, Ashley Harris, OTS, Allie Dillard, OTS, Conley Day, OTS

Introduction

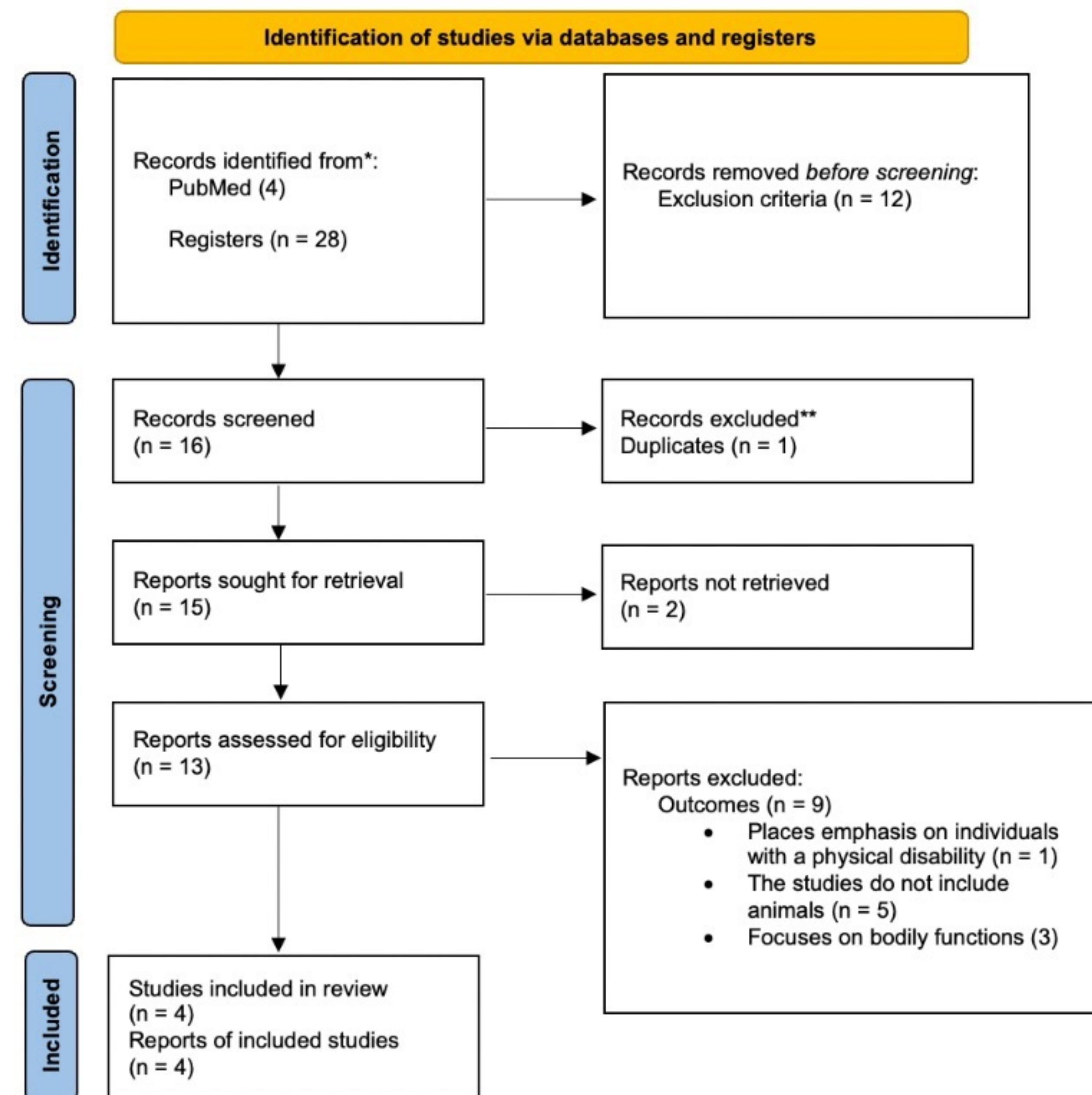
Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) is a unique form of therapy that involves using animals in a therapeutic intervention for patients. Larger land animals such as horses and elephants can offer beneficial therapeutic experiences because clients can perform various tasks involving these animals that one cannot do with smaller land animals.

Methods

Inclusion Criteria: (1) written in English, (2) published within the last 10 years, (3) full-text available, (4) participants diagnosed with an intellectual disability (ID)

Exclusion Criteria: (1) did not involve AAT, (2) participants did not have a diagnosed ID, (3) study outcomes were not reported

Results



Author/Year	Results
Giagazoglou et al. (2013)	<i>Muscle Reaction Time:</i> - (significant results in rectus femoris muscle only)
Palsdottir et al. (2020)	Intervention group: + OVal-pd: + EQ-VAS: +
Satiansukpong et al. (2016)	Visual Motor Integration: + Balance: - (no significant difference at alpha = .05) Postural Control: - <i>*Important to note that item 5 for balance (walking forward heel-to-toe on line) improved in the experimental group pre-test and post-test.</i>
Scorzato et al. (2017)	ICF: no significant findings AAT group using BAB: + AAT group using LAP: +

Conclusions

- AAT improved aspects of motor control, such as balance and posture, and increased social participation, including verbal and nonverbal interactions.
- Positive benefits were also found for visual-motor coordination and integration.
- AAT, specifically, hippotherapy and elephant-assisted therapy, is an effective intervention for improving social and motor skills in individuals with ID.