

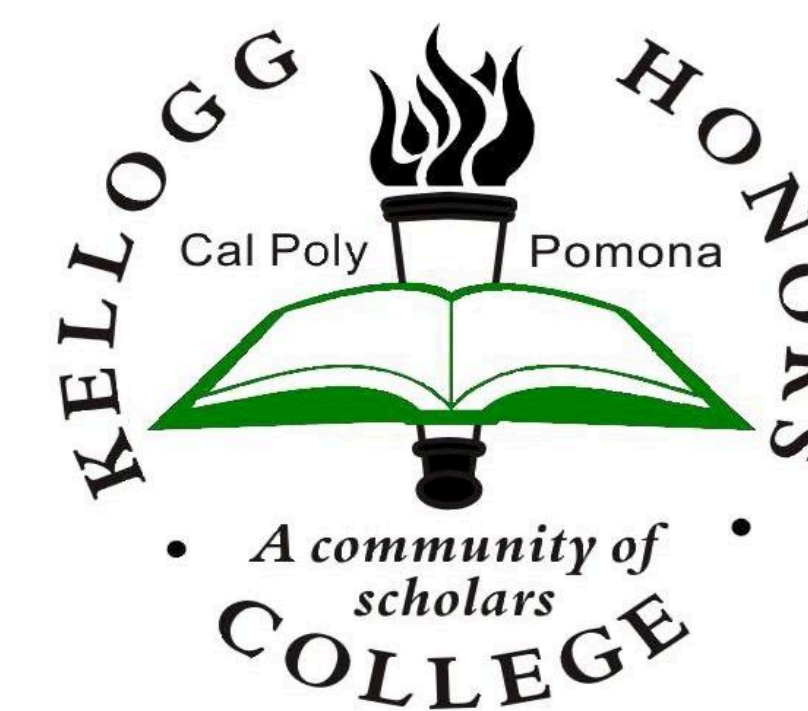
# Occupational Therapy and Hippotherapy



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**Kellogg Honors College Capstone Project**

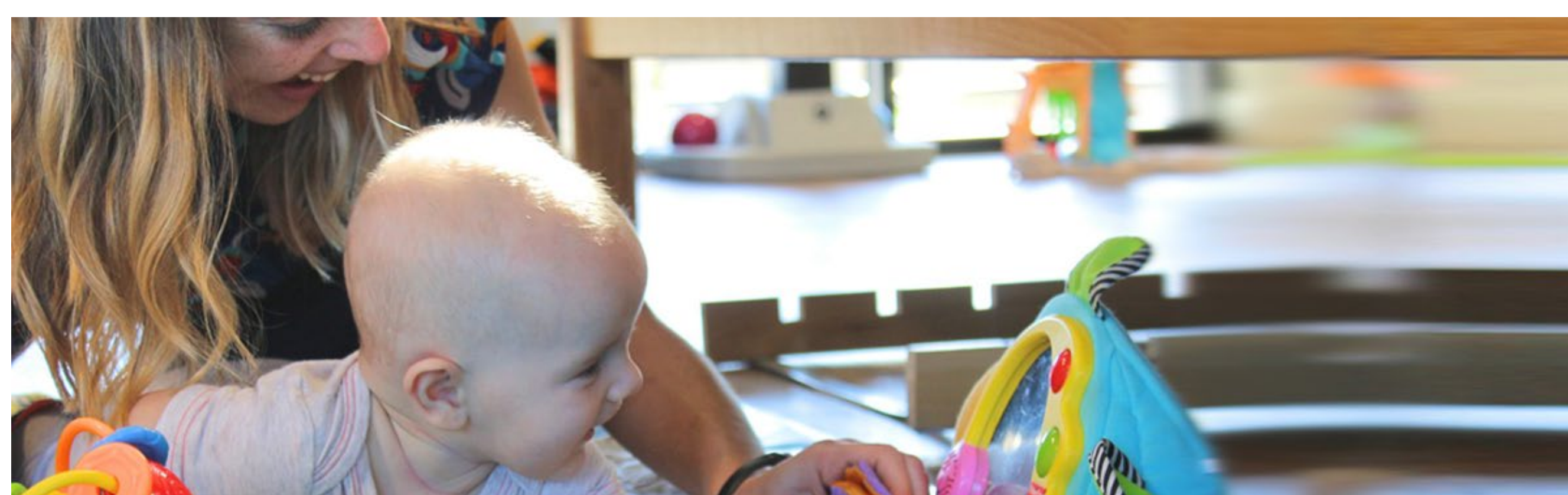


## Abstract

Everyday individuals engage in activities such as brushing their teeth, scooping ice cream, or typing on a computer. These activities are simple tasks that are meaningful to the individual. When individuals are unable to complete these, or other, meaningful tasks, it can create undue burdens on them and their families. Occupational therapists work with the patient and their family to create treatment plans to allow individuals to perform the tasks that are meaningful to them. One subfield of occupational therapy, called hippotherapy, incorporates horses into a patient's care plan. This form of therapy can help patients gain the ability to have proper posture, gain self-control, learn to walk, and more. The bond that patients share with a horse can also be a beneficial factor in treatment. The project aims to provide education on occupational therapy and hippotherapy, as well as create a research proposal to better understand how different types of occupational therapy—including hippotherapy—impact enjoyment levels for patients and therapists. Education for the public and further research into treatment effectiveness will help occupational therapy continue to provide life-changing treatment to allow patients to engage in activities that mean the most to them.

## Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy (OT) is a profession that helps people of all ages to perform the activities they want and need to do. OT is an evidence-based, holistic treatment that treats patients using daily tasks or occupations.



## Hippotherapy

Hippotherapy is an evidence-based practice where occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech-pathologists use equine movement to facilitate sensory, motor, and cognitive pathways in patients to help patients reach their treatment goals.



## Future Research

My future research proposal aims to study differing levels of enjoyment for patients and therapists in traditional occupational therapy sessions compared to occupational therapy sessions. Research has shown that enjoyment plays an important role in participation in physical activity as well as in learning (Gao, Zhang, & Podlog, 2013; Lumby, 2011). Understanding various enjoyment levels could help therapists direct treatment in a more effective manner and allow patients to reach their goals faster and more efficiently.



## Why hippotherapy?

One of the major benefits of hippotherapy is the use of horses in treatment. Major benefits including increased enjoyment, ability to control negative emotions and enhanced wellbeing have been found for those who spend time around horses (Davis et al., 2014). The benefit of human-animal relationships being healing has been noted for centuries and partially explains the new therapy programs which utilize animals (David et al., 2014). Interaction with some animals, including horses, has been suggested to be a natural antidepressant (David et al., 2014). These are just some of the healing properties that horses can have on humans. Incorporating a horse into therapy can help bring these benefits to the patient and practitioner.

## References

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