

Possibilities of animal-assisted therapy for people with recurrent depressive disorder within an RPK – elaboration of a hypothetical concept

Abstract

Depressive disorders are one of the leading causes of disability and early retirement in Germany. The aim of this paper is to answer to what extent animal-assisted therapy for people with an F33 diagnosis, in the context of an RPK, can contribute to the achievement of rehabilitation goals. To answer the research question, a theory-based hypothetical concept is created. In addition to the current state of research, it is based on current literature as well as therapy goals and treatment methods of the corresponding S3 guideline. The study shows that animal-assisted therapy lacks sufficient evidence-based data on its effectiveness. Nevertheless, there are many animal-assisted interventions that have positive effects on people with depressive symptoms. The concept presented here illustrates the possibilities of integrating animal-assisted therapy into the rehabilitative context of severely mentally ill people. Considering the possibilities and limitations of the concept and its relevance for therapeutic social work, the discussion focuses on whether it can be implemented in reality and in which areas improvements need to be made.