

Care farming – using the farm environment for rehabilitation

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Green care includes a diversity of interventions and is based on the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between nature and health. The concept includes therapeutic horticulture, animal-assisted therapy, care farming, green exercise, ecotherapy, wilderness therapy, e.g. In care farming (also called social farming or green care farming) commercial farms and farms connected to health institutions serves as an arena for rehabilitation, vocational training or pedagogical interventions through participation in normal farm activity. In Norway, approximately 1000 ordinary family-based commercial farms offer services to a variety of user groups. The farm and its surroundings arena offer a diversity of possible activities such as horticulture, animal interactions, ordinary work tasks, social interaction with others, and natural environments for recreation. There is a limited amount of studies investigating the effect of care farming, but a few studies on patients with dementia, depression, and other psychiatric diagnoses have been published. The results from these studies show moderate positive effect on activity levels and nutrient intake in pa-

tients with dementia, positive effects on depression, coping ability, quality of life and mental distress among patients that engaged in an animal-assisted intervention with farm animals. Therapeutic horticulture in farm environments has been shown to decrease depression severity and improve perceived attentional capacity in patients with clinical depression. The positive mechanisms and active components of different care farming interventions might be several, and involves the feeling of being away and fascination, the high variation of different work tasks, and the possibility to engage in adapted work tasks. The high flexibility on a farm makes it possible to switch between different tasks and activities according to the symptomatology of patients. The proposed presentation will give an overview of the research on care farming in Norway.

