

# Review of: "Effect of Animal-Assisted Activities on Symptoms and Emotions of Children with Neoplastic Disease: A Systematic Review with Meta-Analysis"

Abdurraouf mokhtar saleh Mahmoud<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Eastern Piedmont

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

## Reviewer Comments

### Title and Abstract

**Title:** The title accurately reflects the content of the paper and clearly states the intervention, population, and outcome measures.

**Abstract:** The abstract is concise and provides a clear overview of the study's background, objectives, methods, results, and conclusions. However, it would benefit from specifying the exact databases searched and the date range of the search.

### Introduction

**Context and Rationale:** The introduction effectively sets the context by discussing the significance of animal-assisted activities (AAAs) in pediatric oncology and the gap in the existing literature, particularly the lack of meta-analyses focusing solely on RCTs.

**Objective Statement:** The objective is clearly stated and aligns well with the identified gap in the literature.

### Methods

**Search Strategy:** The search strategy is broadly described, but it would benefit from more detail. Specify the databases searched, search terms used, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and the date range of the search.

**Risk of Bias Assessment:** The use of the RoB 2 tool is appropriate and strengthens the validity of the findings. Including a brief description of how bias was assessed would add clarity.

**Data Analysis:** The statistical methods, including the use of random-effects meta-analyses and forest plots, are appropriate.

### Results

**Study Characteristics:** The description of included studies is adequate, but a table summarizing the key characteristics (e.g., sample size, interventions, outcomes measured) of each included study would be helpful.

**Effect Sizes and Interpretation:** The presentation of effect sizes with confidence intervals is clear. However, the narrative could better explain the clinical relevance of the findings, despite the lack of statistical significance.

**Certainty of Evidence:** The rating of evidence quality as low to very low is appropriately noted. Providing specific reasons for these ratings (e.g., small sample sizes, heterogeneity) would add depth.

## Discussion

**Interpretation of Findings:** The discussion appropriately interprets the results, highlighting the potential benefits of AAAs. However, it should more critically examine why the observed effects were not statistically significant and discuss potential biases and limitations in greater detail.

**Comparison with Existing Literature:** The discussion briefly compares findings with existing studies but would benefit from a more thorough exploration of how these results align or contrast with prior research.

**Implications for Practice and Research:** The implications for practice are briefly mentioned. The paper should expand on specific recommendations for future research, including suggestions for improving methodological rigor.

## Conclusion

1. **Summary:** The conclusion succinctly summarizes the findings and their implications.

## Additional Comments

**Formatting and Presentation:** The paper is generally well-structured and written. Minor grammatical errors should be corrected for clarity and readability.

**Figures and Tables:** The inclusion of forest plots is helpful. Adding a summary table of included studies and a detailed GRADE evidence profile would enhance the paper's utility.

## Recommendation

- **Minor Revisions:** Address the specified areas for improvement, particularly in the methods and discussion sections, to enhance the paper's clarity and robustness