

Session: HELP YOUR ANTI-AGING PRACTICE

Impact of reflexology on nervous system

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BACKGROUND

Reflexology is a science that deals with the principle that there are reflex areas in the feet and hands which correspond to all of the glands, organs and parts of the body. Reflexology relieves stress and tension, improving blood circulation, promoting the unblocking of nerve impulses and helping nature achieve homeostasis. Its history can be traced back to both the Egyptian and Chinese cultures. Modern-day Reflexology was developed in the U.S. by Eunice Ingham in the 1930's based on Dr. Fitzgerald's Zone Therapy work (1).

METHODS

Reflexology is based on the fact that the nerves and organs of the body are connected to specific points (called reflex zones) on the feet, hands and face (2). The link from the feet to the organs and the glands in the body is by longitudinal lines, associated with neural circuits related to somatosympathetic reflexes in the gracile-thalamic-cortex pathways. In general, conscious perception of sensory stimuli requires the involvement of neurons in the thalamus and cerebral cortex. Reflexology uses manual pressure on reflex zones to trigger reflex nerve impulses. Reflexology regulates the vago-sympathetic reflexes (stimulation of the parasympathetic system and inhibition of the sympathetic system). The purpose is to boost the life force (the vital potential) of organs and glands.

RESULTS

Reflexology has calming effects on the nervous system. It's one of the first body systems to be exposed to the harmful effects of stress. Since approximately 75% of today's diseases are attributed to stress and tension, various body systems are affected in different ways and to varying degrees (cardiovascular problems, gastrointestinal upset, anorexia, palpitations, sweating, headaches, anxiety - to mention but a few of the myriad of body reactions to stress).

CONCLUSION

Clinical studies (3,4,5,6,7) have demonstrated the effectiveness of reflexology on chronic stress disorder and the management of pain. One of the clinical studies which enrolled 79 individuals in the reflexology arm (8) provides statistical evidence of the effectiveness of a single session of reflexology in decreasing the stress level. A significant decrease of the stress level STAI-Y average was shown with reflexology (43.8 to 27.9, $p < 0.0001$). Reflexology is a non-pharmacological possibilities in stress management.

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