

FASCIATHERAPY AND REFLEXOLOGY, COMPARED TO HYPNOSIS AND MUSIC THERAPY IN STRESS MANAGEMENT

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BACKGROUND Among the numerous nonpharmacological techniques available for coping with stress, some like hypnosis [1] gave strong evidence of efficiency, some others did not yet. In the field of fasciatherapy and reflexology, the earlier phases of qualitative [2,3], or pilot [4,5,6,7,8] research provided very pertinent information, but quantitative research on a large scale remained to be realized for providing a stronger evidence. The aim of this study is to statistically assess the effectiveness of these two methods in stress reduction, and to compare their performance to hypnosis, music therapy and nonintervention groups.

METHODS 315 outpatients -average age 49- were enrolled in a prospective clinical open trial, carried out in multiple centers and operated by practitioners in the different techniques. According to the center the participants went to, they were exposed to a single session of either fasciatherapy (nb 88), reflexology (nb 79), hypnosis (nb 42), or music therapy (nb 64), or had a 30mn controlled resting condition (nb 42). Stress has been assessed just before (t_0) and after (t_1) each session using the STAI-Y inventory. MANOVA and MANCOVA were performed to assess and compare the effectiveness of each method on stress reduction.

RESULTS A significant decrease of the stress level STAI-Y average was shown with fasciatherapy (40.7 to 26.8, $p < 0.0001$) and reflexology (43.8 to 27.9, $p < 0.0001$). Adjusted on the stress level in t_0 , fasciatherapy and reflexology were as effective as hypnosis, but were more effective than music therapy on the decrease of the stress level. A significant reduction of the stress level was found in the control group (38.1 to 31.7, $p < 0.0001$), but the gain was significantly lower in the control condition than in all other conditions.

CONCLUSION This study provides for the first time statistical evidence of effectiveness of a single session of fasciatherapy and of reflexology in decreasing the stress level. A similar efficiency to hypnosis, grants to fasciatherapy and to reflexology the same rank of performance. Therefore, availability of several equivalent methods offers the opportunity of a tailored response to the stressed patients expecting a relief, as it already was shown for pregnant stressed women with a single session of several complementary therapies [9]. Further studies should investigate effectiveness of fasciatherapy and reflexology in the management of stressful situations, ie. acute pain and especially in induced pain, and of long term treatments in chronic stress disorder, or on high blood pressure.

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