Foot Reflexology–Adjunct to Mental Health Care

INTRODUCTION

Foot reflexology involves the application of manual pressure to the specific points or the areas of the feet called “reflex points” that are believed to correspond to other parts of the body. A reflex is an involuntary response to stimulus. More practically, it is the reflex action of an organ, gland, or muscle reached by the energy current initiated by a stimulus. The reflex zones are our body’s reflex points. They select the corresponding organs due to illness. From an external stimulus, the impulse causes a response from the organ to increase protoplasm activities and normalize its function. Purposes, indication, and steps of foot reflexology have been described in this article.

PRINCIPLE

The theory is based on the knowledge of the complicated stimulus response mechanism in our body which in itself is a tiny universe, whose processes are orderly and harmonious and whose internal system is constantly communicating, cooperating and coordinating with each other. Energy currents generated by blood and nerves help it along.

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THEORY OF CIRCULATION

When an obstacle is placed in an energy channel like uric acid, waster and unused calcium deposits, the energy flow and blood circulation are impeded and the organ itself is then affected adversely. The reflex zones are nerve endings and because of the centre of gravity, deposits are easily accumulated at such zones. Therefore, through the massage of the reflex zones, we are able to get rid of those deposits through the excretory system and regain proper blood circulation and functioning of the organs.

Purposes

- Improve blood circulation
- Remove congestion and blockages from energy pathway
- Normalize organ and gland functions and improve the coordination among organs
- Improve the balance of the functions of the gland and to relax a tense body system

Indications

- Relaxation
- Pain reduction
- Rejuvenation of tired foot
- Beneficial for post operative recovery and pain reduction
- Enhancement of medical care (e.g. cancer, phantom limb pain)
- Adjunct to mental health care (e.g. depression, anxiety post traumatic stress disorders)
- Complement to cancer care (Pain, nausea, vomiting, anxiety) (Barbara and Kevin, 2010)

Myths about foot reflexology

The Zone theory is the basis of reflexology. Zones are a system for formulating relationships between various parts of the body. They can be thought of as guidelines or markers that link one part of the body to the other. There are 10 equal longitudinal zones and 4 lateral zones. The main purpose of the zone is to help fix the image of the body on to the feet in the proper perspective and location.

The reactions of the body to reflex zones therapy can be classified into three categories.

Local reactions are those which are produced on all organs that happen to lie in the same zone as the toe that is stimulated.

General reactions to reflux zone therapy are those which are produced on the mind and the entire body. General reactions can be further subdivided in to 1) Immediate Reaction: In this, the patient experiences a feeling of wellbeing, pleasant warmth and relaxation. He may fall asleep and feel much refreshed. He is eased of his tension. 2) Intermediate reactions: Two or three days after the commencement of treatment, the client may experience an increase in the activity of the skin with perspiration, an increase in the bulk and frequency of stools, an increase in the secretions from the mucous membranes of nose, pharynx, and bronchi, signifying a cleansing process, occasionally, a feeling of mild pain and general malaise.

Delayed reactions commence after the body has rendered reasonably free of toxins. These comprise a restoration of homeostasis and an increase in the body’s immune.

Practical hints for treatment

Before starting a session, you should thoroughly prepare yourself both physically and mentally.

1. Always keep nails well trimmed. This will help to avoid injury to the skin.
2. Usually, the reflex zone therapy is given with the thumb or finger. Since more pressure needs to be applied on the key spots of sole, the thumb soon gets tired. This however can be avoided by performing some simple exercise to strengthen the hands. They area keep in Namaskarapose. Firmly press the palms against each other for 10 counts. Repeat this 10 times. (b) keep the finger tips and thumb tips of the two hands in contact. Exert pressure against each other repeat this 10 times, (c) Forcefully bend the fingers of a hand backwards for a few seconds and repeat this 10 times. Repeat it on other hand.
3. As a part of mental preparation, try to gather about factors that derange health. However, believe in holistic approach. So concentrate on the whole foot. The session should start 1 hour after meals. Ask the client to drink more water to clear toxins. Allow the client to take rest for 5–10 min.

Steps in Foot Reflexology Procedure

Assessment

Assessment is used by the therapist to find out what the client is going through and to gain any other information that he/she may wish to find out about the client. Assessment of anxiety and depression is done in this phase. In this phase, the therapist will be examining the foot of the client for fungal infection, broken skin (or) any other trauma.

Establishing Therapeutic Relationships

1. The therapists establish therapeutic relationships by building rapport and gaining the confidence of the samples.
2. The therapists will explain about the foot reflexology and doubts raised by the clients will be clarified.
**Reflexology Procedure**

**Preliminary Session**

Self Preparation: Keep your nails trimmed to avoid injury to the skin. A therapist is to prepare himself with “Namaskara” pose Fig (A) and finger exercises before doing a session. Fig (B & C) Washing the foot of the patient with soap and water.

**Session**

**Warm up exercise:** Foot reflexology should always start by doing warming up exercise. Ask the patient to rotate the foot in clockwise and anticlockwise, 5 times each.

**Alternating Pressure:** Therapist will be placing his thumb flat on the skin, then slowly he will bend it until the portion of the thumb from the tip to the first joint reaches a vertical position in relation to the foot surface. In this position the therapist will be applying firm pressure, straighten the thumb and at the same time will be moving it forward by 1/4th of a centimeter.

Then he will bend it again so that the tips come in contact with an adjoining part of concerned area. The whole foot is covered using this technique.

**Circular Pressure:** After employing thumb-walking technique to the whole foot, the therapist will be giving circular pressure to the tissues lying beneath the skin over ankle.

**Constant Pressure:** The therapist will be employing unrelenting pressure over the area of lung in the foot. Finally oil will be used to close the session. 20-45 min of pressure has to be given continuously for each foot. For cancer patients the duration will be 10 min for each foot.

**Post Session**

- Advising to take rest on bed for 5–20 min.
- Encouraging to take more water.
- Hand washing for therapist.

**CONCLUSION**

Foot reflexology is an adjunct therapy that helps in reducing pain, relaxation, and enhancement of medical and mental health care.

**PRACTICAL HINTS FOR FOOT REFLEXOLOGY PROCEDURE**

Fig. 2 Exercises to strengthen the thumbs and the fingers.
REFERENCES


Fig. 3 Thumb walking technique.