

The efficacy of reflexology : A systematic review

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摘要

Abstract

Aim. This paper is a report of a systematic review to evaluate the efficacy of reflexology in any condition.

Background. Anecdotal evidence has shown potential benefits of reflexology in a variety of health conditions. However, the efficacy of reflexology has yet to be determined.

Data sources. Cochrane library, PubMed, MEDLINE, EBM review, ProQuest Medical Bundle and SCOPUS databases were searched using the following medical subject headings or key words: reflexology, foot reflexotherapy, reflexological treatment, foot massage and zone therapy. Chinese articles were searched through the Chinese electronic periodical services and Wangfane database. The publication date was limited from 1996 to 2007.

Review methods. Studies were selected if they were written in English or Chinese, used a controlled clinical trial design, used reflexology as a stand-alone modality, and reported such outcomes as symptoms relief, quality of life and patients' perceptions of reflexology. Study quality was reviewed based on the evidence rating system of the United States Preventive Services Task Force, and studies with the evidence rating of II-2 fair or above were included in this review.

Results. Among the five studies suitable for review, there was only one report of a statistically significant treatment effect. Among the 12 outcome variables examined, the treatment effect size for urinary symptoms was large, whereas the effect size for other conditions was negligible.

Conclusion. There is no evidence for any specific effect of reflexology in any conditions, with the exception of urinary symptoms associated with multiple sclerosis. Routine provision of reflexology is therefore not recommended.