Relaxing the Muscles Improves Blood and Nerve Supply

What happens when a person sits all day? The pressure on the hips reduces blood and nerve supply. The same occurs from sustained muscle tension from using a computer or immobilization from an injury.

Reflexology improves the flow of blood and nerve supply. Blood brings fresh oxygen and nutrients to muscle tissue and carries away waste products. This invigorates muscles with life force and slows the aging process.

CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE

**Reflexology Reduces Pain, Improves Sleep in Fibromyalgic Patients**

Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a nervous system dysfunction that is a collection of symptoms most commonly including chronic pain, fatigue, and sleep disturbances. Standard care includes anti-inflammatory drugs, local analgesics, and sedatives.

Recent studies support the benefits of a multidisciplinary approach to address the myriad of problems associated with FMS. Holistic, noninvasive approaches, including foot reflexology, have been shown to be effective at reducing pain and sleep disorders associated with FMS.

The objective of therapeutic foot reflexology on the fibromyalgia patient is to facilitate a body-wide relaxation response thus promoting a parasympathetic effect. The result is a reduction in the patient's present level of pain perception.

Reflexology pressure techniques applied to the feet provoke a response from the body based on the physiologic science of reflexive influences via the neural system of the body and the autonomic/somatic integration that takes place when the internal organs adjust to sensory input.

A sequence of reflexology protocol explored and proposed for fibromyalgia is based on the current research theories. One states that the fibromyalgia patient experiences abnormal pain processing resulting from imbalances in the central nervous system and neuroendocrine system.

The following foot reflexology protocol of specific technique, pressure and duration would be applied bilaterally to reflexes in both feet and monitored at intervals for evaluation purposes:

- **General Relaxation** (solar plexus reflex, muscular system reflexes)
- **Nervous System** (spinal reflexes, brain reflexes with emphasis on the pituitary/hypothalamic/pineal/frontal cortex reflexes)
- **Endocrine System** (adrenal gland reflex, thyroid reflex)

Linda Chollar, HHP, LMT, AAEEd, Pain Management Therapist, conducted a private study at Pain Free Path Wellness Center that included the above protocol given to 16 female clients, aged 40 to 59, presenting with a physician diagnosis of fibromyalgia. The objective was to investigate the effects of foot reflexology to (1) reduce pain perception and (2) improve sleep in adult women with fibromyalgia after receiving a total of six reflexology treatments over a three-week period (two sessions per week). None of the clients made any changes to existing medications.

Subjective reporting by the clients was done using a Visual Analog Scale (VAS), a Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire (FIQ) and a XY/Axis Pain Graph. The graph allowed monitoring of pain perception changes from level 10 to zero during a 30-minute reflexology protocol. A medical student recorded the changes at 5-minute intervals as they were reported in real time by the client participants. Consistently, pain levels reduced at each interval. At the conclusion of each protocol, client graphs indicated a reduction from their beginning pain levels to a pain level of zero.

Findings support the use of a consistent, predefined protocol of foot reflexology as a treatment for the body-wide pain experienced with fibromyalgia.

*Note: Fibromyalgia is featured as a clinical perspective for the muscular system because chronic muscular pain is a dominant characteristic.*

References:


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