Context

In the last twenty years, there has been an increase in interest and use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). In 2000, the House of Lords Select Committee identified research priorities for CAM, including research into the effectiveness of these therapies and their specific effects and safety. Reflexology is one of the most popular complementary therapies. It has been defined as a “Chinese and Indian system of diagnosis and treatment dating from 3000 BC ...” based on the belief that the whole body is represented on the foot (mostly on the soles of the feet), and that the internal organs can be stimulated by pressing particular areas of the foot (less commonly the hands). The role of reflexology in hospice care is common but the evidence for use is frequently anecdotal.

Constipation is a common symptom in palliative care patients and and can have significant impact on symptoms and quality of life. It has been suggested that reflexology can be beneficial in the treatment of constipation. Therefore, the rationale for this review is to explore existing evidence on the impact of reflexology on symptoms of constipation on patients quality of life and wellbeing.

Key Findings

We identified 25 papers to review in full-text. However, upon review of the full texts, none of these papers met the objective of this rapid review and all were excluded.

This highlights a need for primary research to investigate the effectiveness of reflexology or massage for the treatment of constipation amongst palliative care and cancer patients.

A. Reliability of evidence
Not applicable

B. Consistency of evidence
Not applicable

C. Relevance of evidence
Not applicable
Evidence Implications:

Clinical:

Policy:

Glossary:
CAM—complementary and alternative medicine

Flow Diagram:

Records identified through database searching (n = 252)

Additional records identified through other sources (n = 20)

Records identified in total (n = 272)

Records screened after duplicates and irrelevant records removed (n = 213)

Records excluded (n = 74)

Title and abstract records screened (n = 139)

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 25)

Full-text excluded, with reasons (n = 25)

Studies included in the rapid review (n = 0)

What is the impact of reflexology on palliative and cancer patients with constipation?

Date 25/03/19
What is the impact of reflexology on palliative and cancer patients with constipation?

Excluded Studies:

Studies were excluded due to various reasons including the following:

- Trial registry data but no published outputs.
- Papers on complementary therapies not specifically reflexology.
- Population not cancer/palliative care.
- Constipation not an outcome under study.

For the complete list of studies excluded at full text reviewing stage please contact PaCERSWCRC@cardiff.ac.uk

Other references:


Additional materials available upon request:

- Critical appraisal / data extraction forms
- Search strategies
- List of excluded studies

This report should be cited as follows: Palliative Care Evidence Review Service. A rapid review: What is the impact of reflexology on palliative and cancer patients with constipation? Cardiff: Palliative Care Evidence Review Service (PaCERS); 2019 March.

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Disclaimer: Palliative Care Evidence Review Service (PaCERS) is an information service for those involved in planning and providing palliative care in Wales. Rapid reviews are based on a limited literature search and are not comprehensive, systematic reviews. This review is current as of the date of the literature search specified in the Review Methods section. PaCERS makes no representation that the literature search captured every publication that was or could be applicable to the subject matter of the report. The aim is to provide an overview of the best available evidence on a specified topic using our documented methodological framework within the agreed timeframe.