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Effect of reflexology as a new trend in nursing practice for reducing anxiety and pain of preoperative and post-operative patients

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Objective: This study aimed at finding out the effect of reflexology on pain, anxiety levels for pre and postoperative patients. To determine whether reflexology therapy the application of manual pressure to reflex points on the feet, hands, and ears that topically correspond to specific areas of the body can significantly reduce anxiety and pain for pre and postoperative patients. The most observed complaints after surgery are pain and fatigue, including the postoperative period. Touch and massage therapy have been used in pain treatment for centuries. Massage, integrated with pharmacologic treatment, has been found to be helpful in the treatment of acute postoperative pain and relieve anxiety before and after surgery. Touch therapy has always been a part of nursing care and now reflexology has become another part of it. Reflexology which is defined as a holistic healing technique, it is an ancient art involving various techniques and philosophical approaches. The pictures in the Egyptian tombs show that foot massage was used as a treatment 5000 years ago. Reflexology is said to be introduced to the West only around years ago, although it has been long known in Egypt and China.

Design & Methods: The study was performed on males and females hospitalized in the intensive care unit, Qasr EL-Eyni Teaching Hospital, Cairo University. This study was designed and conducted as a randomized controlled trial. The study sample consisted of 63 patients: 32 in the experimental group and 31 in the control group. The postoperative daily monitoring sheet, Spielberger State Anxiety Inventory (SAI), was employed to collect research data and “visual analog scale” to evaluate pain levels.

Results: The three-day monitoring showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of average pain levels and anxiety scores after reflexology ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Foot reflexology may serve as an effective nursing intervention to increase the well-being and decrease the pain of postoperative patients and nurses should be aware of the benefits of reflexology.