

REFLEXOLOGY - Depression

by Jan MacRae RMT, DIR, SMTO

INTRODUCTION

Ann is 40 years old, happily married, with two children. She has an active lifestyle looking after her family as well as working part time in two shops in the village where she lives. In her spare time she enjoys taking part in aerobics classes.

MEDICAL HISTORY

At the initial consultation, Ann revealed that she had not suffered any broken bones or been involved in any accidents. She had undergone two operations in 1998 – one for an ingrown toenail on her right big toe and one for varicose veins in her left leg. Furthermore, she had a history of migraine, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, sinusitis, hay fever, dermatitis, depression, premenstrual discomfort in her left breast and low back pain.

About three years ago, Ann began suffering from depression and, around the same time, her periods became irregular (although they subsequently returned to normal over the ensuing months and have not been a problem since) and she frequently experienced stabbing pains in the left side of her abdomen. After a subsequent laparoscopy revealed enlarged veins in her stomach, she was diagnosed with Irritable Bowel Syndrome and was prescribed a heavy dosage of Mebeverine: two tablets to be taken three times a day. This initially helped the condition but, a couple of weeks before she sought help through Reflexology; she experienced severe pain as a result of an enlarged gut and the medication proved to be ineffective. She eliminated coffee and chocolate from her diet and cut down her intake of fresh fruit and vegetables as she felt that these substances were exacerbating the condition.

Before becoming pregnant with her first child 13 years ago, Ann frequently suffered from migraine headaches. During her pregnancy, the attacks ceased and she was not troubled again until two or three years ago, when the problem recurred on an occasional basis. By the middle of this year, however, she was experiencing increasingly frequent attacks which the GP believed were triggered by the IBS medication. She was prescribed painkillers in the form of Pizotifen to be taken every night in order to avoid waking with a migraine in the morning.

Ann has suffered from sinusitis and hay fever for several years and has lived with low back pain since her school days. (The cause of the back pain is unknown, although she thinks it may have stemmed from playing hockey.) She often experiences discomfort in her left breast before a period. In addition, a sensitive skin leads to occasional outbreaks of dermatitis on her hands, the condition being exacerbated by certain types of washing powder and jewelry.

Ann was extremely unhappy at the level of medication she had been prescribed for her migraines and IBS and turned to Reflexology in an attempt to restore her health without the use of drugs.

AIMS OF TREATMENT AND TREATMENT PLAN

The stomach meridian begins under the eye, curves up to the temple and continues down the body to end on the top of the second toe. Its partner, the spleen/pancreas meridian, runs from the tip of the big toe, up the leg, through the pelvis, up the side of the abdomen and ends at the shoulder. An imbalance in a meridian gives rise to symptoms along its path and it was clear from the location of many of Ann's symptoms - both past and present – that the stomach and spleen/pancreas meridians were in need of rebalancing. For this reason, treatment focused on the nervous, endocrine and digestive systems, with particular attention being paid to the stomach reflex and the pads of the second and third toes with a view to alleviating – and ultimately eliminating the migraines and abdominal pain. It was hoped that by concentrating on the stomach and spleen/pancreas meridians, the treatment would have a knock-on effect with regard to the other conditions from which Ann suffered.

FIRST TREATMENT

As both her migraines and sinusitis are predominantly right sided, it was no surprise to find that the toe pads of the right foot were more sensitive than those of the left. The digestive reflexes felt puffy and tender, while discomfort was felt along the spinal reflex - especially at the level of the fourth, fifth and sixth thoracic vertebrae - on both feet. (This, too, was somewhat unsurprising as the spinal nerves at this level feed the gall bladder, liver and stomach respectively.) At the end of the first treatment, Ann felt very relaxed and experienced a tingling sensation in her fingers. I explained the concept of the healing crisis and advised her to drink plenty of water over the next couple of days in order to help combat any side effects resulting from this session.

SECOND TREATMENT (9 DAYS LATER)

Ann reported that she had not taken any painkillers on the night of the first session and, although she awoke with a headache the next day, it felt 'different' from a migraine and she resisted taking any medication. Similarly, she did not take any IBS tablets, as the pains in her stomach were not as severe as normal. For the next couple of days, however, she felt 'terrible' - very tired with aching limbs and a pounding head but found that these symptoms gradually disappeared over the course of the week. Since the first treatment, Ann only needed to take one IBS tablet and she felt much more positive and energetic. During the assessment of her feet at this session, it was clear that the sensitivity in her reflexes had reduced enormously. There was a marked improvement in the texture of the digestive reflexes and the second toe pads, although still very firm, were much less tender than at the previous session. Because of the reduction in discomfort in the reflexes, Ann was able to relax completely during this session and thoroughly enjoyed the treatment. Once again, I advised her to drink plenty of water to combat any side effects though I felt confident that any symptoms she experienced would not be as severe as last time.

THIRD TREATMENT (14 DAYS LATER)

When she returned for her third treatment a fortnight later, Ann reported that she had come down with a stomach bug the previous week, so treatment was focused on the lymphatic system to restore balance and improve immunity and energy levels. Generally, however, she felt much better with the occasional mild headache and very little stomach discomfort.

Even at this early stage, it was apparent that Reflexology was having the desired effect in reducing the severity and regularity of many of Ann's symptoms. She was hugely encouraged by the positive results and, having continued to make good progress over the ensuing weeks, she now requires a simple 'top up' treatment on a monthly basis.

Looking at each of Ann's symptoms in turn, it can be seen that Reflexology has, indeed, achieved the goals it set out to meet. Over the last five months, Ann has received nine treatments in total and, in that time, she has taken no medication other than one IBS tablet (as documented, between the first and second sessions). She has not had a migraine attack since beginning the course of treatment and, although she still experiences headaches from time to time, the pain is mild and of short duration. She has not been bothered greatly by hay fever or sinusitis this year and her left breast, which is usually quite tender before a period, has given her little discomfort.

The pain in her lower back – most often felt when tired or when lifting - has also diminished greatly.

This study demonstrates how important a role Reflexology can play with regard to restoring and maintaining health in a non-invasive, non-chemical way. The client is now drug free and, for the most part, pain free with the result that she is a happier, more energised and positive individual.

About the Author

Jan graduated from Aberdeen University in 1993 with a degree in Law with Options in German. After gaining a Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice, she spent nearly three years working in the oil service industry before undertaking a career change, which led her to study with the Grampian School of Massage in Aberdeen. To date, she holds Diplomas in Swedish Massage, Remedial and Sports Massage and Reflexology and has also attended a seminar in Advanced Reflexology Techniques. She is a Member of the Scottish Massage Therapists' Organisation and practises in Inverurie, Aberdeenshire.

Jan is a firm believer in the power of complementary therapies and is dedicated to providing a friendly, understanding and professional service at all times. In this way, she aims to maximise the benefits gained by her clients from the therapies she practices.

Appointments can be arranged Monday to Friday 8.30am to 7pm by telephoning 01467 624888. Jan is also available for talks and demonstrations to groups and clubs.

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