

WRITING A RESEARCH CASE STUDY

(9/2013)

Research literacy is the ability to find, understand & critically evaluate research. Research on how reflexology affects people living with identifiable disorders can be beneficial to the therapist's personal practice and contribute to the larger body of knowledge that supports the efficacy of the field.

A research case study that follows a common recognizable format can be submitted to meet the 300-hour requirement for membership. You can earn up to 50 credits for this pathway. At the completion of your study, you will be expected to explain what you learned from this activity that you could apply to your practice of reflexology.

NOTE: The case study cannot have been part of your initial training in reflexology; it must be initiated following completion of the course material.

Types of research studies

There are two recognizable methods of research in the United States. The research study that you will be preparing is the first. The second method is very costly, requires outside funding and more time and output than you are being asked to submit.

1. Weaker design. In this model the author:

- generates an idea (ex. How does reflexology affect someone living with asthma?)
- collects anecdotal examples through a case report/study
- writes a paper of his/her findings
- publishes the paper on the internet and/or in a printed publication

2. Stronger design. In this model the author(s):

- generates an idea
- tests the hypothesis through a randomized double blind control study;
- analyzes the test results
- writes a paper of his/her findings
- submits the paper to a peer-reviewed journal; peer experts either accept or reject study

If accepted, the study is published on the internet and/or in a printed publication.

Creating a research case study

Structure

1. Choose a *chronic condition*. This can be a condition that presents often in your practice or personal life, or some imbalance that you are curious about. Consider that you could later use your study as a marketing tool to build a clientele base of people living with this particular condition.

2. Choose a *subject*. This is maybe the most important piece. This individual must be willing and able to make all appointments set for the study. They must be willing to keep a short daily diary/log (which you will supply) between appointments. They cannot receive any other reflexology sessions during the time they are receiving the study sessions. Ideally, they will not receive any other alternative/natural hands-on work either. Subjects should not adjust any medications that they are taking.

3. *Research* any existing literature on the condition. Were studies done before? See **Researching Previous Studies** below.

4. Create a *treatment plan*:

- Techniques used
- Reflexes worked
- Length of session
- Frequency of session
- Time of day of sessions

5. Create a simple "*diary*" for the client to record subjective experiences between sessions. You may want to include such areas as need for medication (time, dosage, and frequency), pain level (1-10, or mild, moderate, severe), sleep patterns, stress levels, change in ADLs (Activities of Daily Living) or lifestyle and anything else pertinent to the situation. You will not submit the diary; instead, you will use the information to write your results of the study.

6. Create a simple *consent and release form*, promising confidentiality and requesting permission to submit your findings as part of your studies in Reflexology. Mention that the case study may be published in a health and/or educational publication, if you think that you might wish to submit your study for publication down the road. Assure them that their personal details will remain confidential; no mention of their name or residency will be released.

7. *Implement* the plan.

8. Write up *results* in both subjective and objective terminology.

9. Discuss the *implications* of the study outcomes and make *recommendations* for future study.

Report Guidelines

1. Minimum of six sessions. You may choose to schedule the sessions once or twice/week. Schedule on the same day(s) and at the same time.
2. Reflexology is the only intervention. Do not add in hydrotherapy, aromatherapy, other hands-on modalities or even a lubricant; just your hands.
3. Subject's confidentiality is maintained. No personal information in report.
4. Repeat the exact same session each time. Same techniques, same order, etc. A research study attempts to remove any variables that might skew the results.

Writing the Report

1. *Title. Asthma, Allergies and Reflexology* (example)

- Subject's gender and age
- Subject's occupation
- Therapist's name
- Therapist's credentials and contact information (website, e-mail)

2. *Introduction.* Site any previous studies with Reflexology and the health issue you are researching and the results of those studies. In narrative form, briefly introduce the subject, including age and gender, and the complaints. State how long the subject has lived with the complaint and past avenues of remedy that were sought. State that the case study is presented from two perspectives: firstly, that of the subject (subjective) and secondly, that of the therapist (objective).

3. Type up the *pre-session interview* with the subject where s/he relates his/her health history and experience with the complaint. You can start with a question as simple as, "Tell me about yourself." Example questions:

- Tell me about your (respiratory) issues.
- How have you attempted to resolve these problems?
- What medications do you take for this issue; when and how often do you need to take these medications?
- What are the dosages?
- How have they helped or made worse the situation?
- How did you hear about Reflexology?
- Have you received any professional Reflexology sessions before, and if yes, what were the results?

4. Describe your *treatment plan*, including a list of the reflexes you are going to focus on, the techniques you will employ, length of sessions, number of sessions, frequency and time of day. Explain your rationale for the above choices.

5. Keep detailed *SOAP notes*, attaching a copy of the subject's diary notes since last session. Ask questions!! Get details!! Be detailed in recording your objective findings. You will not submit the SOAP notes, but will use them to write your results.

6. Write your *results*. This will be from the two perspectives: the subjective from the subject and your objective findings. Remember to write the subject's report in subjective terminology (Client states/reports/complains of/tells me/informs, etc.) and stick to observations for yours (Therapist noted/noticed/felt, etc). Do a post-session interview with the subject before writing this part.

7. Make a *recommendation* for future plans for the subject in terms of care for this health issue.

8. Write your *conclusion* from the study. Make sure to say something about the fact that from one case study it is not possible to generalize as to what results Reflexology would have on the entire population of (asthma/allergy) sufferers. Say something about your study supporting continued exploration of the use of Reflexology in such cases. Cite national statistics of the number of people in this country who suffer from (asthma/allergies), the direct monetary cost of the disease and the cost-effectiveness of vigorous medical research on the use of Reflexology to address the condition described.

Your Internet searches will serve as a reference on how to write your report. You may also read the simply written case studies published by previous students of Reflexology at: <http://www.academyofancientreflexology.com/casestudies/index.html>

Researching previous studies

Here are three ways to find information on the Internet regarding previous studies done with reflexology:

1. Go to a search engine site (Google, Yahoo, Metacrawler, etc.) and type in the subject line what you are searching; i.e. Reflexology and Asthma.

2. Search on a specialized database site:

- www.reflexology-research.com
- www.pubmed.com
- www.google-scholar.com
- www.google.com/translate_s?hi=en

3. Research topic through online medical journals:

- Alternative Therapies in Health & Medicine – www.alternativetherapies.com
 - The Journal of the American Medical Association – www.jama.ama-assn.org/issues
 - British Medical Journal – www.bmj.com
 - The Lancet – www.thelancet.com
 - The New England Journal of Medicine – www.nejm.org
- OR
- other resources:
- International Journal of Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork – www.ijtmb.org
 - American Massage Therapy Foundation – www.amtafoundation.org
 - Canadian Massage Therapy Association – www.cmta.ca
 - Touch Research Institute – www.Miami.edu/touch-research/home/html
 - Rosenthal Center for Complimentary Medicine at Columbia University – www.cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/rosenthal
 - Research Council for Complimentary Medicine – www.rccm-org.uk
 - National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine – www.nccam.nih.gov

Receiving Credit

Submit your written report of the case study, along with a short narrative describing what you learned from this activity that you could apply to your reflexology practice, and how many hours this activity took (maximum of 50 credits given). A report of this nature will print out single-spaced at between three and five pages. Hard copy reports will be retained in the RAA office for 30 days after being approved for credit; at that point they will be discarded. If you wish it returned, please include a stamped self-addressed return envelope.

Submission choices:

Electronic format: Microsoft Word (PC or Mac version) to inforaa@reflexology-usa.org

Hard copies: RAA Administrative Office, PO Box 714, Chepachet, RI 02814

Scanned copies: inforaa@reflexology-usa.org

Fax: 401/568.6449