

Reflexology

fMRI initial findings

2024 Update



The background

2024 has been an exciting year for reflexology. After 3 years of planning, in April 2024 an initial pilot to study reflexology during MRI scans took place

Kevin and Barbara Kunz, Dr Stefan Posse (Department of Neurology) and radiologist Dr Essa Yacoub at the University of New Mexico were all involved in the research



Summary of what happened

During the study, several specific reflex points were treated while the person receiving the therapy was also having a functional MRI

The study involved two groups: people who had experienced a stroke and also healthy participants



How they carried it out

Thousands of brain scans were taken during the study: 800 scans within 5 minute rounds

Pressure was applied in a specified order for 8 seconds each

There was then a 12 second rest

Each person had reflexology for a total of 5 minutes



What they looked at

Scans also took place before and after the reflexology, to observe changes in the brain

Researchers mapped the brain activity to determine the relationship with stimulated reflex points

Brain patterns were then analysed to assess any potential therapeutic benefit



What happened?

Interestingly for neuroscientists, specific parts of the brain were stimulated by the reflexology movements being used

The same areas were also shown to be stimulated with different participants



Conclusion

It has been agreed preliminary fMRI research results are showing proof of concept about the therapy

Much more research will be required to understand and explore reflexology further

