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A Randomized Clinical Trial of Caregiver-Delivered Reflexology for Symptom Management During Breast Cancer Treatment

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Abstract

Purpose

The objective of this study was to determine the effects of a home-based reflexology intervention delivered by a friend/family caregiver compared with attention control on health-related quality of life of women with advanced breast cancer undergoing chemotherapy, targeted and/or hormonal therapy.

Methods

Patient-caregiver dyads ($N = 256$) were randomized to four weekly reflexology sessions or attention control. Caregivers in the intervention group were trained in a 30-minute protocol. During the four weeks, both groups had telephone symptom assessments, and intervention group had fidelity assessments. The intervention effects were assessed using linear mixed-effects models at weeks 5 and 11 for symptom severity and interference with daily activities, functioning, social support, quality of patient-caregiver relationship, and satisfaction with life.

Results

Significant reductions in average symptom severity ($P = 0.02$) and interference ($P < 0.01$) over 11 weeks were found in the reflexology group compared with control, with no group differences in functioning, social support, quality of relationship, or satisfaction with life at weeks 5 and 11. Stronger quality of relationship was associated with lower symptom interference in the entire sample ($P = 0.02$), but controlling for it did not diminish the effect of intervention on symptoms. Significant reductions in symptom severity in the reflexology group compared with attention control were seen during weeks 2–5 but were reduced at Week 11.

Discussion

Efficacy findings of caregiver-delivered reflexology with respect to symptom reduction open a new evidence-based avenue for home-based symptom management.

Key Words:

[Symptom management](#), [breast cancer](#), [home-based](#), [intervention](#), [lay caregivers](#), [reflexology](#)

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