Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) for Physiological Symptoms, Pain, Anxiety Disorders and Depression: a Systematic Review

Alwan Revai, Muhammad Amin, Makhfudli

1Master Student Faculty of Nursing, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia
2Lecturer Faculty of Nursing, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia
3Lecturer Faculty of Medicine, Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia

alwan.revai9891@gmail.com

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Abstract: Introduction: All the emotions and mind is a form of energy, both positive and negative energy, has an influence on body functions. While the human body has the potential of natural healing, stress and other emotional problems can impede the healing process. Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) is a form of psychological acupressure, based on the same energy meridians in traditional acupuncture to treat physical and emotional illness. Through this systematic review, researchers will discuss about the effectiveness of EFT as a therapy that can affect the improvement of the physiological and psychological.

Methods: Search of journal articles was used PECOT framework in the database; Ebscho, Science Direct, Elsevier, Sage Journals, Scopus, ProQuest, and Pub Med with limitations of publication time is in the last 5 years (2013-2017). There was 17 International journals and researchers conducted review to all of those journals.

Results: The overall stated that the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) as a therapy that may influence physiological symptoms, pain, anxiety disorders and depression.

Conclusion: This systematic review strongly recommends the application of EFT as a method of cleansing the mind, focusing (such as meditation) and improving attitudes so as to have a better chance of coping with emotional problems.

1 INTRODUCTION

Various problems that interfere with physical and emotional health can be suffered by everyone. The occurrence of prolonged physical and emotional problems without treatment can create an imbalance of serotonin, an important chemical substance in the brain that is responsible for making someone happy and sociable (Rokade, 2011). Physical and emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, mood problems and confidence related to chronic diseases can be solved by non-pharmacological treatment.

Nonpharmacological treatment has many advantages, besides having no side effects, its use is relatively easy, even can be without cost or minimal cost. One is the therapy Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). EFT was introduced by Gary Craig in the 90s, a brief exposure therapy that combines cognitive and somatic elements, based on the discovery that emotional trauma contributes greatly to physical illness. It is based on a developing revolution in conventional psychological convictions that explains that "all the negative emotions that arise can damage the energy systems in the body" (Bougea et al., 2013).

EFT is one of the therapies "energy psychology" safer (without the use of needles), using only beat lightly with a fingertip (tapping) on certain body areas (Bougea et al., 2013). EFT can be done everybody, in the right way EFT effectively overcomes physical and emotional complaints. EFT works addressing individual complaints, freeing users from the pain both physical and emotional (Church, 2013). Through this systematic review the researchers wanted to know the effectiveness of EFT as a therapy that can affect the improvement of physiological symptoms, pain, anxiety disorders and depression.
2 METHODS


![PECOT framework diagram]

Search through the boolean Logic in the database; Ebscho, Science direct, Elseiver, Sage Journals, Scopus, ProQuest, Pub Med

Journals found (N = 38)

Journal according to criteria (N = 17)

Systematic Review

Figure 1: Algorithm search journal

3 RESULTS

Study Design

Systematic review of the journal is reviewing 17 selected, the whole coming from international journals. The designs are used include: 4 journals using pre-test control group design, 2 journals using randomized controlled study, 4 journals using pilot study, 5 journals using randomized controlled trial, 2 journals using feasibility study.

Characteristics of Participant

Of the 17 Journal conducted a review sample of respondents varied between 20-238.

Sensitivity and Specificity

EFT for physiological symptoms

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) as a new therapeutic technique in energy psychology has a positive effect on psychological and physiological symptoms, and quality of life. Research conducted by Babamahmoodi et al. (2015) studied the effect of EFT on immunological and psychological factors on male veterans with pulmonary injury. The results showed that EFT improved mental health (F = 79.24, p = 0) and health-related quality of life (F = 13.89, p = 0.001), decreased somatic symptoms (F = 5.81, p = 0.02 ), anxiety / insomnia (F = 24.03, p <0.001), social dysfunction (F = 21.59, p <0.001), frequency and severity of respiratory symptoms (F = 20.38, p <0.001), and increased proliferation lymphocytes with specific nonspecific mythologies concanavalin A (F = 14.32, p = 0.001) and Phytohemagglutinin (PHA) (F = 12.35, p = 0.002), and peripheral blood IL-17 (F = 9.11, p = 0.006).

The study gives results that EFT can improve immune function and individual health. It can also improve psychological function and decrease the severity and frequency of symptoms of chronic disease (respiratory symptoms), and overall quality of life (Babamahmoodi et al., 2015).

Research Baker and Hoffman (2015) EFT showed potential as an independent tool for managing the side effects associated with hormonal therapy, especially mood swings, hot flushes / night sweats and fatigue, in women with breast cancer. EFT is also effective in controlling blood glucose levels in diabetic patients (Hajloo et al., 2014).

Kalla's research (2016) EFT is accepted by patients with chronic diseases for self-care, maintaining a positive mood, and for general health. Additionally, EFT is offered to the elderly in group form, as an independent tool. They can effectively learn to overcome insomnia and improve their mental health and quality of life. EFT is more effective than Sleep Hygiene Education (Lee, Chung and Kim, 2015).

EFT for pain

Research (Church and Brooks, 2014) pain decreased significantly during the intervention period (-41%, p <.0001). Subjects were evaluated three and six months later, the results showed a significant association between PTSD, depression, and anxiety at some assessment points. At follow-up, the pain remained much lower than in the pretest. The results of this study are consistent with other reports indicating that, due to reduced PTSD symptoms, mental health generally improved, and the pain level down.

Ortner et al. (2014) pain was measured using Pain Catastrophizing Scale (PCS) and Multidimensional Pain Inventory (MPI) instruments before and after treatment followed by 1 month and
6 months. Significant decreases were found in each PCS item score (rumination, magnification, and helplessness) and the total score of PCS (-43%, p <.001). In MPI, significant improvements were observed in the severity of pain, disturbance, life control, affective disorder, and dysfunctional composites. At 6 months follow up, the reduction was maintained at PCS (-42%, p <.001) but only on live control items for MPI. The findings indicate that EFT helps reduce the severity of pain immediately and also improve participants’ ability to live with pain.

Stapleton et al. (2016) paired sample test showed a significant reduction in the severity (-12.04%, p = 0.044) and impact (-17.62%, p = 0.008) of participants pretest to posttest pain.

EFT for anxiety disorders

Research Aremu and Taiwo (2014) to the reducing mathematics anxiety among students with pseudo-dyscalculia there are significant main effects; F (1, 109 = 21.00, p <.01); interactive effects of F (2, 109 = 6.116, p <.01 on mathematical effectiveness and mathematical anxiety treatment to participants. Both packages are effective in reducing mathematical anxiety among participants.

Research Boath et al. (2012) were assessed using Subjective Units of Distress (SUDs) and Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) before and after EFT. Twenty-one of the total sample of 25 students (84%) participated in the study. There was a significant decrease in SUDS (p = 0.002), HAD (p = 0.048) and HAD Anxiety Subscale (p = 0.037). There is no difference in HAD Depression Subscale (p = 0.719).

According to Irgens et al. (2017) Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Thought Field Therapy (TFT) showed better results than Wait-list Condition (WLC) (p <0.001) during the treatment. Post-treatment and at follow-up of 12 months, there was no significant difference between CBT and TFT.

Research Patterson (2016) shows that nurse students experience a decrease in stress and anxiety feelings including somatic symptom degradation. Overall, the findings suggest that EFT can be an effective tool for stress management and anxiety in nursing students.

Research Gaesser and Karan (2017) states EFT participants (n = 20; M = 52.16, SD = 9.23) showed a significant decrease in anxiety levels compared with the control group with a medium to large effect sizes. Participants CBT (n = 21; M = 54.82, SD = 5.81) showed a decrease in anxiety but did not differ significantly from the EFT or control.

EFT for depression

Chatwin et al. (2016) suggest that the CBT and EFT treatment approach resulted in significant reduction of depressive symptoms. CBT group reported a significant reduction post intervention, which does not depend on time. The EFT group reported a delayed effect involving significantly reducing the symptoms at follow-up was only 3 and 6 months. Individual case examinations showed clinically significant improvement in anxiety in both interventions.

Stapleton et al. (2014) suggest an overall improvement for the treatment group in the reduction of depressive symptoms. Stapleton et al. (2013) reported significant reductions found in depression measures, interpersonal sensitivity, obsessive compulsive, paranoid, and somatization (p <0.05). A significant decrease in pre-treatment for up to 12 months of follow-up was found for depression, interpersonal sensitivity, psychotism, and hostility. Overall the results indicate the role of depression, and other health conditions play a role in the successful maintenance of weight loss.

Church et al. (2012) EFT group experienced significantly less depression than in the control group on posttest, with mean score in “not depressed” range (P = .001; EFT BDI mean = 6.08, SE = 1.8 versus BDI control mean = 18.04, SE = 1.8). Cohen’s d is 2.28, showing a very strong effect size. These results are consistent with those noted in other EFT studies that include assessment of depression and demonstrate the clinical usefulness of EFT as a short, cost-effective, and potent treatment.

4 DISCUSSION

The Energy Psychology theory assumes that every human being has an energy system that governs all physical and psychical systems of man. The energy system consists of life force or commonly called acupoint as a center of energy generation and energy supply to human body cells. The basic principle of EFT is that all emotions and thoughts are forms of energy (Banerjee, Puri and Luqman, 2015). Positive and negative energy, has a very real physical manifestations that can affect all the body functions.
EFT is an energy meridian therapy as well as acupuncture, principally working directly on the body's meridian system. Analogy, meridian like a river. In emotional or physical problems as well as to impede the course of the river. Tapping on the meridian points sends kinetic energy to the system and liberate energy barriers that cover the energy flow thus restoring the balance of mind and body (Church, 2013).

Tapping made will stimulate the "electrically active cells" as the active centers consisting of a collection of active cells that exist on the surface of the body. Tapping in the EFT will cause the excitement of the transduction signals occurring in the biological process due to the stimulation at the main point of EFT. Signal transduction will then be stimulated the pituitary gland to secrete hormones endorphine (Rokade, 2011), these hormones would provide a calming effect and cause feelings of happiness. It is very influential in reducing the level of anxiety. Many clinical trials have proven that EFT reduces the emotional impact of memory and incidents that trigger emotional distress that leads to balancing the body quickly and speeds up healing (Banerjee, Puri and Luqman, 2015).

All studies show that EFT can affect psychological and physiological functions, making them cost-effective interventions. EFT can simultaneously overcome general physical and psychological symptoms, such as pain, anxiety, depression, and mood. EFT research to date is often done with a limited sample size. Fortunately, an increasing number of studies are now conducted using randomized group designs in some samples and problems, so that it can be seen published research results with generalizable data.

5 CONCLUSION

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) is a therapy that can affect the psychological and physiological conditions, through this method of physical and emotional problems can be prevented and handled appropriately.

The data presented here illustrates how EFT can relieve these symptoms in individuals and groups. The more research results available, EFT shows as a tool that can be used to overcome anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress, as well as pain.

REFERENCES


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