



TITLE: The Emotional Freedom Technique for the Treatment of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, or Anxiety: Clinical Evidence

DATE: 29 May 2013

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the clinical effectiveness of the emotional freedom technique for the treatment of adults with post-traumatic stress disorder?
2. What is the clinical effectiveness of the emotional freedom technique for the treatment of adults with generalized anxiety disorder?
3. What is the clinical effectiveness of the emotional freedom technique for the treatment of adults with depression?

KEY MESSAGE

Three randomized controlled trials and three non-randomized studies were identified regarding the emotional freedom technique for the treatment of adults with post-traumatic stress disorder or depression. No studies were identified regarding the use of the technique for generalized anxiety disorder.

METHODS

A limited literature search was conducted on key resources including PubMed, OVID MEDLINE, OVID PsycINFO, The Cochrane Library (2013, Issue 4), University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused Internet search. No filters were applied to limit the retrieval by study type. Where possible, retrieval was limited to the human population. The search was also limited to English language documents published between January 1, 2009 and May 17, 2013.

The summary of findings was prepared from the abstracts of the relevant information. Please note that data contained in abstracts may not always be an accurate reflection of the data contained within the full article.

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RESULTS

Rapid Response reports are organized so that the higher quality evidence is presented first. Therefore, health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses are presented first. These are followed by randomized controlled trials and non-randomized studies.

Three randomized controlled trials and three non-randomized studies were identified regarding the emotional freedom technique (EFT) for the treatment of adults with post-traumatic stress disorder or depression. No studies were identified regarding the use of the technique for generalized anxiety disorder. No relevant health technology assessments, systematic reviews, or meta-analyses were identified. Additional references of potential interest are provided in the appendix.

OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In one randomized controlled trial (RCT),¹ veterans meeting criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were randomized to receive EFT or standard of care waitlist. There was a significant reduction in psychological distress and PTSD symptom levels in the EFT group following the intervention. After six EFT sessions, 90% of participants no longer met the criteria for PTSD. In two non-randomized studies,^{4,6} a significant improvement in symptom and severity checklist scores was recorded after EFT therapy, and participants no longer met the criteria for PTSD. One RCT³ compared eye movement desensitization and reprocessing with EFT for PTSD. The authors reported there were significant improvements recorded in both groups following treatment.

College students meeting criteria for moderate to severe depression were randomized to treatment with EFT or no treatment.² Following the treatment period, and after controlling for differences between groups at baseline, significantly less depression was recorded in the EFT treatment group, with the mean score falling into the 'non-depressed' category. A non-randomized study⁵ examined the effects of self-administered EFT on anxiety and depression in health care workers. Participants' scale scores for psychological distress, self-rated pain, emotional distress and craving were significantly improved following self-administered EFT.⁵

No studies were identified regarding the use of the EFT for generalized anxiety disorder.

REFERENCES SUMMARIZED

Health Technology Assessments

No literature identified.

Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses

No literature identified.

Randomized Controlled Trials

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Non-Randomized Studies

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APPENDIX – FURTHER INFORMATION:**Randomized Controlled Trials***Adolescents*

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Other Indications

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Non-Randomized Studies – Adolescents

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Evidence-Based Guidelines

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See: 7.7 Other Complementary and Alternative Therapies, page 15

Review Articles

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Additional References

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