



What is Reflexology Research?

By Tracey Smith, UK and Leila Eriksen, DK

Research can mean many things to different people. Often in reflexology books the term over used and refers to a collection of data. In science it has very clear boundaries.

A definition of scientific research is;

'A systematic investigation and collection of data using the most fitting methodology, with correct monitoring systems and statistical analysis, the results of which are then peer reviewed and published in a respected journal.'

Peer review is an important concept which is critical to the acceptance of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) research. This is the criticism of the work in the planning or publication stage by others of the same status (peers).

This is the type of research that a medical doctor would be expecting and would assume they could track down using a reference.

A reference can look like this and again, is very specific:

A randomised, controlled trial of the psychological effects of reflexology in early breast cancer.
Donald M. Sharp, Mary B. Walker, Amulya Chaturvedi, Sunil Upadhyay, Abdel Hamid, Andrew A. Walker, Julie S. Bateman, Fiona Braid, Karen Ellwood, Claire Hebblewhite, Teresa Hope, Michael Lines, Leslie G. Walker.
European Journal of cancer. 2010 VOL 46; NUMBER 2, page(s) 312-322

This breaks down so the publication can be found like this:

Title of the paper, describing the content of the research	A randomised, controlled trial of the psychological effects of reflexology in early breast cancer
Authors – who was involved in the research	Donald M. Sharp, Mary B. Walker, Amulya Chaturvedi, Sunil Upadhyay, Abdel Hamid, Andrew A. Walker, Julie S. Bateman, Fiona Braid, Karen Ellwood, Claire Hebblewhite, Teresa Hope, Michael Lines, Leslie G. Walker.
Journal – where the research will be found	European Journal of cancer
What year	2010
What issue and what pages	VOL 46; NUMBER 2, page(s) 312-322

Scientific research references should always have similar content.

The research document itself will usually follow a recognisable pattern of construction. Usually below the title, they start with an **abstract** that is about 300 words, and it describes in short form what the research contains (see schedule on page 2). Sometimes these abstracts can be found on medical search engines on the internet like **Pubmed** or **Science direct** (more about these in the next RiEN newsletter) but occasionally these are shortened and you cannot always see the results.

Abstracts are useful to see if the research is what you are after but you should always try to read the research before quoting it, because of their size abstracts sometimes miss out important information.

Next is the **introduction/background**, why the research was carried out. Then the **methodology** or how the research was carried out. This is very important as the key foundation of research is *reproduction* and *reliability*.

Reproduction: Can a different researcher achieve the same results using the same methods?

Reliability: Can the same results be obtained every time?

This is actually where we could increase the understanding of research, by repeating some of the research already carried out in other European countries.

Finally there will be results and discussion. This is important as the findings of the study are explained here and it is where further research may be discussed.

At the very end there should be a **list of references** used so the research quoted in the publication can be tracked down and read if needed.

If you are not using the specific definition of research then please try to use the terms “pilot study” and ‘data collection’ this is a smaller less rigorous type of evidence collection.

Abstract (about 300 words)

Introduction/background	Why the research was carried out
Method	How the research was carried out
Results	Findings of the research study
Discussion	Important for further research
References	Articles and literature used in the study

Read about examples of different types of studies in the next RiEN newsletter.
Examples as pilot study, clinical efficacy study, study of mechanisms and user survey.

References – examples of medical search engines:

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/>

<http://www.pubmed.com/>