

REFLEXATION THERAPY

Reflexology - Soft Tissue Therapy - Massage

Dr Chloë Cyrus-Kent

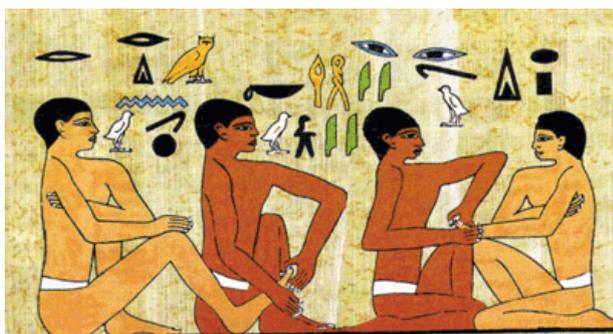
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Origins and History of Reflexology

Since the times of the Ancient Egyptians and Chinese traditional medicine, more than 5000 years ago, evidence is recorded of a connection between foot and hand therapy and healing of the whole body. Some sources claim that Chinese traditional medicine, with its emphasis on balancing vital 'chi' energy, has included foot-based pressure-point therapy as early as 4000 BC. Most sources state that earliest acceptable documented evidence of foot- and hand-based healing therapy comes from the Ancient Egyptians,



who saw the body as a 'symphony of vibrations' that could be played (*sensu* healed) by stimulating points on the hands and feet. Interestingly, the feet were seen as a gateway for and reflection of the soul; before mummification the soles of the feet were removed to allow the eternal soul to be freed from the mortal body. In decorations of 5th and 6th dynasty tombs noble figures (e.g. vizier Ptahhotep, pharaoh Niuserre) were depicted having their hands and feet treated and beautified. In the 6th dynasty (2345 - 2181 BC)



EGYPTIAN REFLEXOLOGY TREATMENT

Early sixth dynasty, about 2,330 B.C. wall painting in tomb of Ankhmahor (highest official - after the king) at Saqqara, and is known as the physicians tomb. Translation reads: "Don't hurt me." The practitioner's reply: "I shall act so you praise me."

'Tomb of the Physician' or tomb of Ankhmahor at Saqqara, two men are depicted having feet and hands treated. In the accompanying hieroglyphics one patient pleads "Do not let it be painful", while the practitioner answers "I do it so that you will praise it, King". While the meaning of the scene is debated it is consistent with reflexology-like therapy, as surgery does not appear to be involved.

As well as the Egyptians and Chinese, Indian civilisation has a long history of reflex therapy, as part of Ayurvedic medicine and the



balancing of *dosa* energetic flow. Japan also inherited a form of reflexology from Chinese medicine and Native Americans are known to have used pressure-point therapy for pain relief in their ancient cultures.

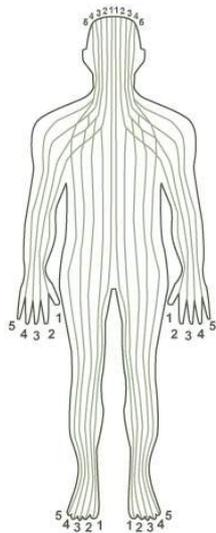
The word 'reflex' was first used with regard to motor reactions by the German physiologist Johann August **Unzer** in 1771. In 1883 **Marshall Hall**, an English physiologist introduced the concept of a 'reflex action'. In the late 1880s neurology as a branch of science became a field of its own and an article entitled "*Reflex Action as a Cause of Disease and Means of Cure*" by Dr. T. **Lauter Brunton** (in *Brain: A Journal of Neurology*) discussed the beneficial use of inducing blisters on the skin to heal internal problems.

Sir Henry Head, an English neuro-physiologist charted areas of the body according to which spinal segment they related to. He established Head Zones known today as 'dermatomes'. Head's work proved a neurological relationship between the skin and the internal organs. He died of debilitating Parkinson's disease in 1940 and is remembered as a wise and brilliant teacher who was inspired by his extraordinary wife and empowered to research and publish in partnership with his colleague the psychiatrist W. Rivers.

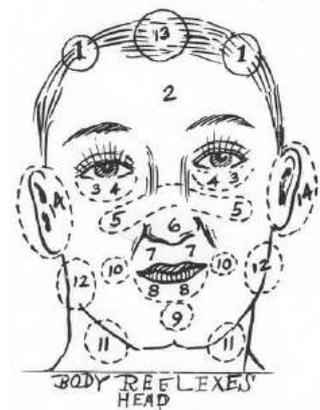
In Russia in the late 1890's and early 1900's scientists such as Ivan **Pavlov** studied reflex neurology. Pavlov earned his Nobel prize for work on conditioned reflexes, where stimuli can be directly linked to a reflex response (Pavlov's dogs were trained to salivate when a bell rang). Vladimir **Bekhtrev** coined the term 'reflexology' and published *Objective Psychology* in 1907, translated in 1932 as *General Principles of Human Reflexology*. He defined reflexology intriguingly, as "*a new doctrine, [...] the science of human personality studied from the strictly objective, bio-social standpoint.*" In Germany 'reflex massage' was developed, with Dr Alfons **Cornelius** in 1902 publishing "*Pressure Points, Their Origin and Significance*". Cornelius observed how massage of specific points affects body tissue temperature, circulation and muscle properties as well as affecting the mental state. Describing how he thought reflex massage works, he stated: "*(It is) a purely mechanical hindering of the sensitive neurons, the neurons of the sympathetic nerve system.*" In 1911, another German physician Dr. **Barczewski** introduced the term 'reflexmassage'. This term was then used by different systems which applied pressure as a method of healing.

Sir Charles Sherrington (1861-1952) proved that reflex responses were more complex than Pavlov had described; that the whole nervous system adjusts to a stimulus during the generation of a reflex. He termed this adjustment ***proprioceptive action***, with connotations of achieving a new balance in the entire nervous system. Sherrington earned the Nobel Prize in 1932, shared with **Dr Edgar Adrian**. Adrian discovered that the electrical intensity of a nerve impulse (or response) depends on the size of the nerve rather than upon the strength of the stimulus. In reflexology this is important to understand as it means that applying ***light pressure can be just as effective as heavy pressure***.

Dr William Fitzgerald (1872 - 1942) was a key pioneer of modern reflexology. Fitzgerald was an American laryngologist who trained in London Vienna in the 1890's and may have learned of reflexology from a Dr d'Arsonval there. He also had an awareness of Native American usage of pressure point therapy to relieve pain and on his return to America he found out, partly by chance, that applying pressure to different parts of the face, hands and feet could induce numbness and hence remove pain sensation. Fitzgerald was the first to describe **longitudinal zones** in the context of reflexes, dividing the body into ten zones, five on each side of the sagittal plane. Greatly preceding him, the Chinese practice of acupuncture divided the body into longitudinal meridians around 2500 BC, but it did not refer directly to reflex correspondences. Fitzgerald used '**zone therapy**' to provide specific pain relief for minor surgery, instead of using anaesthesia. Some doctors and dentists of the time welcomed his approach but once general anaesthetics became popular his methods were left behind by the medical community. In 1915 an article entitled "To stop that toothache, squeeze your toe" was published in "Everybody's Magazine" by **Dr Edwin Bowers**, bringing Dr Fitzgerald's work on Zone Therapy before the public. In 1917, Dr Fitzgerald wrote "Zone Therapy or Relieving Pain in the Home". Two years later, **Fitzgerald & Bowers** enlarged this book and published it under a second title "Zone Therapy or Curing Pain and Disease". This publication paved the way for further exploration of how different areas of the body connect and the idea of working one area to affect change in another.



Dr **Joseph Shelby Riley** (1856 - 1947) of Washington strongly credited Fitzgerald's work on zone therapy and helped bring it to the attention of the public. Riley was trained by Fitzgerald and developed zone therapy by adding eight horizontal zones to the longitudinal zones of the feet and hands, as well as devising reflexes for the ears and head. Riley developed a 'hooking' pressure technique using the thumb or fingers and his work represents the beginning of modern reflexology as he mapped many specific areas of the feet and hands that correspond to specific parts of the body.



Eunice Ingham (1889 - 1974) was a physiotherapist who worked with Jo Riley and became a pioneer of the 'Ingham Method' that is the basis of modern reflexology. Ingham extended the zone work of Fitzgerald and Riley, mapping the feet in detail to show areas relating to all the organs and glands of the body. She developed a method of treating the feet called the *Ingham compression technique*, which involves thumb-walking or finger-walking, maintaining constant pressure across an area while the thumb or finger bends and straightens in a caterpillar-like walk. Eunice Ingham's research and methods



highlighted a new facet of reflexology, showing that treating feet as mirrors of the body and applying her Ingham compression technique, did not have a numbing effect (as Fitzgerald had focussed on achieving), but rather stimulated healing. Ingham's motivation was to help people help themselves through skilfully applying reflexology in a holistic manner. She published two accessible and influential books, *Stories the Feet Can Tell* (1938) and *Stories the Feet Have Told* (1963). Eunice Ingham travelled the world, teaching, lecturing and healing thousands of people. In 1947 her nephew **Dwight Byers** joined her. From then on they worked a team and established the International Institute of

Reflexology. Dwight Byers took over when Ingham retired and is the current President of the Institute of Reflexology, continuing to research and develop Ingham's techniques.

As an aside to history of foot and hand reflexology, it is worth noting at this point that in the 1950's a French medical doctor called **Paul Nogier** developed charts mapping reflex points on the outer ears. Nogier's ear reflexes have since been used in the healing therapy known as **auriculotherapy**.

Doreen Bayly of England trained with Eunice Ingham in the US in the late 1950's and was the first reflexologist to teach the Ingham Method in Europe. Bayly authored *Reflexology Today* in 1984. In 1958, **Hanne Marquardt** was working in a German hospital when she first read Eunice Ingham's book, *Stories the Feet Can Tell*. Marquardt studied with Ingham in the USA in the 1970's and then took the Ingham Method to Germany, calling it Reflex Zone Therapy. Marquardt had a 50 year long career in reflexology and taught many future reflexology teachers throughout Europe. In 1969, **Mildred Carter**, who had studied with Ingham, wrote *Helping Yourself with Reflexology*. It was the first major publication in the US with sales of over 500,000 copies. Carter's book created greater public awareness of reflexology and paved the way for the success of the many reflexology self-help books that are widely available today.

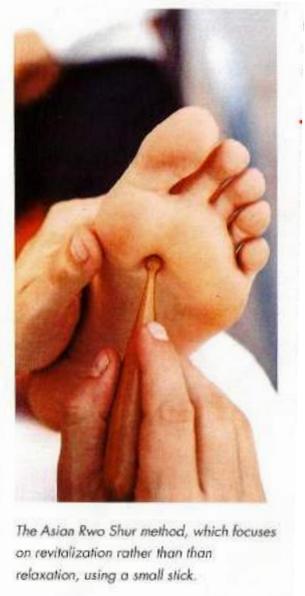
Following the likes of Marquardt and Carter, pioneering reflexologists influencing the current practice of reflexology include **Joseph Corvo**, **Laura Norman**, **Ann Gillanders**, **Anthony Porter**, **Nico Pauly** and **Griet Rondel**. Joseph Corvo has worked with very high profile clients, apparently including Princess Diana, and he authored seven zone therapy books including 'Healing with Color Zone Therapy'. Laura Norman teaches her own form of reflexology in the US very successfully, Ann Gillanders established her own *School of Reflexology* in 1985 and Anthony Porter now teaches advanced reflexology techniques internationally; his techniques have been medically acknowledged as being extremely effective.



Interestingly, what Eunice Ingham did for reflexology in America and Europe, a Swiss priest, serving as a missionary in Taiwan, did for reflexology in Asia. In 1977 the priest **Father Josef Eugster** was told, at the age of 37, that he had incurable arthritis in his knee. A Taiwanese friend told him of reflexology and Eugster became a self-taught practitioner (studying for example, *Good Health for the Future*, by Swiss nurse Heidi Masafret). He

treated himself using a deliberately intense pressure that initially causes a great deal of pain and found himself cured within two weeks. His method spread in Taiwan, China and Japan and involves the use of thumbs, knuckles and short sticks in a painful, invigorating and astonishingly effective healing method, even for cases that the medical community had abandoned as “hopeless”. The Taiwanese government struggled to contain Eugster and his teachers, eventually granting them a hospital setting. The Church pressurised Eugster to focus on his calling as a priest instead of a healer. As a result, in the 1980’s Eugster retreated from practice and teaching his technique. He feared that some practitioners were thinking more of money than healing suffering; he also realised that every reflexologist must first take care of themselves. He humbly said, *“We can only do as much work for others as the amount of good health we are in.”* Finally he decided to hand over the future of his method to others, and it became publicised and known in Asia and the wider world as the **Rwo Shur Health Method**, or **Taiwanese-style Reflexology**.

Christine Issel, first president of the International Council of Reflexologists said of Father Eugster: *“Through his humility and compassionate love, he has brought help to thousands and thousands of people who cannot afford Western health care. [...] If I were to make a list of those who have had the greatest influence on the growth and development of reflexology, his name would be right under Eunice Ingham’s. What Eunice did in America, he has done in Asia and around the world.*



The Asian Rwo Shur method, which focuses on revitalization rather than than relaxation, using a small stick.

In the 1980’s the era of **Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)** gained momentum all around the world. Along with developments in the CAM movement came the **professionalism of reflexology**. Associations were founded on national and international levels to ensure abiding Codes of Ethics, Conduct and Practice. These Codes serve to standardise and regulate the public practice of reflexology in order to protect clients and improve services.

New developments in reflexology research and practice continue to emerge. Nico Pauly and Griet Rondel of the Netherlands recently devised 'Nerve Reflexology', combining reflexology and manual physiotherapy to effectively treat chronic pain. Research into the neurobiology of treating body organs through pressure therapy is ongoing, especially in China and North America. In 1955 Harry Bond Bressler published his first pressure therapy book *Zonotherapy* and only 5 years ago he co-authored with T.M. Schippell another review entitled *Zone therapy: pressure reflex and hook work*. More is no doubt to come.

While reflexology is a young and growing profession, it is well placed to be of immense value to all sections of society in this generation and those future generations who will inherit its challenges.

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