



RAOA Reflexology case study guidelines and Pro Forma

These Case Study Guidelines and Pro Forma have been developed for use by RAOA members who are interested in conducting research into their practice. The RAOA encourages and supports members to undertake research as a means of documenting the work we do, building the field and promoting the benefits of Reflexology to the community.

The Guidelines and Pro Forma are living documents and will be improved over time as we receive feedback on their use.

What is a case study?

A case study describes and analyses your treatment of a particular client (or a number of clients) who may be suffering with a particular condition. It further documents and analyses the results of the treatment. This might be a single treatment, but is more likely to be a course of treatments over a period of time, to enable a better picture of the client/s, her/his condition and the treatment to develop.

A case study goes into a greater level of detail than the client notes you keep in your files. It provides a richer description of the client(s) and her/his treatment, and creates the opportunity for you to reflect on your treatment and the results.

A case study:

- documents the client information ('the case')
- analyses the client's health and presenting issues
- introduces some of the earlier research you have read about treating this problem, and possibly also prevailing western medical opinion on treating this condition
- documents your treatment of the client
- documents the results of the treatment
- reflects on the effectiveness of your treatment, and
- sets out suggestions for future treatment.

So there is 'the case' and the 'case study'?

Yes. The *case* is the client(s) and treatment, which you are writing about. The *case study* is your analysis of the client(s), treatment and results.

The first step in a case study is to write up details of the case. This information is descriptive about the client and might include: personal and demographic information (age, gender, sexuality, domestic arrangements, stress factors, socio-economic factors that may be influencing health [eg

housing issues, poverty...] health conditions, medication...) context of treatment (aged care, clinic, home etc), other forms of treatment being undertaken (acupuncture, surgery, naturopathy, chemotherapy, counselling etc), fluid intake, exercise, alcohol and so on. You may need to develop a detailed participant questionnaire to collect this information.

And what goes in the case study?

- A description of the case(s) (ie. the client/s)
- An outline of the client's health history and presenting conditions
- A summary of other treatment the client is undergoing concurrently (eg chemotherapy, medication, herbs, counselling etc)
- A summary of a handful of articles (or other sources) you have consulted about the use of Reflexology in treating the main presenting condition(s), and your thoughts on how useful you found these articles
- An outline of the course of Reflexology treatment you provided. This will include:
 - Number and spacing of treatments
 - Times (of day, and length of treatments)
 - Setting for treatments (aged care, clinic, hospital ...)
 - Reflex areas worked
 - Feet only, or hands, face, ears or a mixture of these
 - Tools used (if applicable)
 - Other modalities used (eg. crystals, colour therapy, Reiki, counselling techniques...)
- An outline of the results of the treatment. This information may be collected in different ways, such as:
 - by keeping notes in your client file
 - asking the client to keep notes after each treatment
 - asking for feedback on the previous session at each treatment
 - your own assessment of the client's demeanour and the condition of the reflexes at each treatment, and
 - asking the client to complete a short survey at the completion of a specified course of treatment, or interviewing them at the end about their treatment.
- Your reflections on the treatment and client's responses, including how you would treat the condition from here.
- A reference list of all resources consulted, including online sites, articles and individuals who provided you with useful information.

Do clients need to know I am going to write their case up as a case study?

Yes. This is the principle of informed consent. It also focuses the client's attention on their Reflexology care, which may have therapeutic benefits. If you plan to write up your client's story, you ask them to sign a consent form. In this process, you guarantee you will maintain the confidentiality of their health records. An example of a consent form is attached to these Guidelines.

If you would like to include clients and treatments you have provided in the past, towards your current research project, you will need to contact those clients to seek their permission to include their cases in your project.

How would I go about setting up a research project built on case studies?

The first step is to clarify what is your research question is, that is what is the health problem you want to find answers to.

The second step is to find out what has been written or said about the use of Reflexology in addressing this problem.

You may also want to review the western medical responses, or responses from the broader field of complementary medicine, to this condition (eg. antidepressants for depression).

Focus on material written within the last 5 years and from known reliable sources for the most recent thinking (not everything on the internet is equal!).

Write notes on what you are reading. When you have read 4-6 articles or sources, do a summary of the picture you are getting of the way in this problem has been tackled before.

From this you may find someone has already answered the question you asked, and you can put your new learning into practice. Or you can proceed with your project in your setting (which may be different to previous contexts in which this problem has been researched before, or with a different group of clients for instance).

Other questions to ask yourself:

- Do I want to do this alone or find another Reflexologist to work with?
- How do we find people to participate in our study?
- What exactly do we want people to do? (for example, attend 6 x 1 hour weekly Reflexology sessions once a week, and then complete a written survey at the end, on the results they experienced).
- Do we have existing clients we can approach to participate? (note: this may create an ethical issue if an existing client feels obliged to participate)
- Will we charge for it / offer reduced rates / do it pro bono (for no payment)?
- How many people do we need? (Suggestion: 6 may be enough to start, bearing in mind some people may not finish the course of treatment).
- Are my insurance and first aid up to date?!
- If I am working in an institutional setting such as an aged care home or hospital, will I need to get the agreement of the institution to do my study? (Yes. Your study will most likely need to go through the institution's ethics approval process. You can contact the RAoA Research Committee for help in completing this process).

What's the point of a Pro Forma?

You are not obliged to use a Pro Forma but it has a number of benefits. Firstly, it acts as a prompt to help you remember the information you need to record.

In addition, if you use the same or a similar Pro Forma to write up your case studies, it allows you—and colleagues—to look at a number of cases of clients with the same or similar conditions, and their treatments.

In this way, you (and your colleagues) can build a better picture of the health issue under consideration, the treatments offered, and the effectiveness of those treatments. It provides a richer description of the health problem and how Reflexology can help in treating it. This kind of comparison and analysis is much more difficult if we write up our cases in very different ways.

Why bother writing up case studies?

We know Reflexology can be effective in the treatment and management of many conditions, yet we tend not to publicise this fact. Our work is worth documenting and case studies are an accessible way to do that.

Writing up case studies helps you remember your treatments and the results, and builds your own professional practice.

If you publish or share your case studies at a conference or in journals such as *Footprints*, others can learn from your experience and hence we build the profession as a whole.

It also means clients get better treatments.

Writing up case studies helps Reflexologists develop as researchers and expands our professional opportunities.

The field of Reflexology won't develop unless Reflexologists document and share what we do.

Case studies taken together build a stronger research foundation from which to argue the benefits of Reflexology.

Where can I learn more?

The Research Committee of the RAOA is considering developing a short online training program to help members build skills and confidence in writing case studies. Please contact Anita Devos at the email or number below to register your interest in this training.

Prepared by Anita Devos

For further information or to comment on these Guidelines and Pro Forma, email Research Committee member Anita Devos, adevos@liveatease.com.au or call 0418 606 331.

Suggested Pro Forma for case studies

1. A description of the case(s) (ie. the client/s)
2. An outline of the client's health history and presenting conditions
3. A summary of other treatment the client is undergoing concurrently (eg chemotherapy, medication, herbs, counselling etc)
4. A summary of a handful of articles (or other sources) you have consulted about the use of Reflexology in treating the main presenting condition(s), and your thoughts on how useful these articles are in understanding the problem
5. An outline of the course of Reflexology treatment you provided. This will include:
 - a. Number and spacing of treatments
 - b. Times (of day, and length of treatments)
 - c. Setting for treatments (aged care, clinic, hospital ...)
 - d. Reflex areas worked
 - e. Feet only, or hands, face, ears or a mixture of these
 - f. Tools used (if applicable)
 - g. Other modalities used (eg. crystals, colour therapy, Reiki, counselling techniques...)
6. An outline of the results of the treatment. This information may be collected in different ways, such as:
 - a. by keeping notes in your client file
 - b. asking the client to keep notes after each treatment
 - c. asking for feedback on the previous session at each treatment
 - d. your own assessment of the client's demeanour and the condition of the reflexes at each treatment, and
 - e. asking the client to complete a short survey at the completion of a specified course of treatment, or interviewing them at the end about their treatment.
7. Your reflections on the treatment and client's responses, including how you would treat the condition from here.
8. A reference list of all resources consulted, including online sites, articles and individuals who provided you with useful information.

Sample client case study consent form

(NB: modify this form to suit your situation)

Case study/research project title:

Researcher name(s):

I agree to take part in a research project being undertaken by the researcher(s) named above.

I understand that this project will involve *(eg attending 6 x 1 hour weekly Reflexology treatments...)*

I understand that I will/ will not be charged/ will be charged at a reduced fee *(specify)* for the Reflexology treatments.

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher at the end / keep a diary of my treatments / ...

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any data collected on my case may be used in writing up a case study.

I understand that the information I provide will remain confidential and that I will not be able to be identified in any way in any case study or report on the project.

I understand that the researcher(s) are Professional Members of the Reflexology Association of Australia and are bound by the Code of Ethics of the Association, and the Code of Ethics for Unregistered Health Professionals pertaining in their state or territory.

Participants name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____