

Literature search – Sophrology

Definition (source Internet)

Sophrology was founded in 1960 by Professor and neuro-psychiatrist Alfonso Caycedo who opened the first clinical Sophrology department at Madrid University Hospital. His aim was to find a gentle but effective practice to harmonize consciousness, decrease stress and address mental health issues. His studies led him to combine elements of Eastern practices (such as Buddhism and Zen meditation and Yoga) with phenomenology (a branch of psychiatry), psychology and relaxation as a way to balance and positively influence states of consciousness.

The technique is a unique blend of relaxation, breathing, gentle movement, visualization and sound of the voice to help individuals reach a dynamic relaxation state, where they can unlock their full potential, address specific issues or simply increase their level of serenity and happiness in daily life.

Sophrology has been available in hospitals in Spain, France, Switzerland and Belgium for several decades to support patients with sleep problems, anxiety, depression or prepare them for surgery or cancer treatments. In France and Switzerland, in particular, it is recommended to everyone from expectant mothers to prepare for birth, to athletes competing in sporting events and in offices to increase productivity and reduce sick leave. Swiss health insurance companies have also been reimbursing Sophrology treatments since the Nineties, which shows the popularity and credibility the method has in Continental Europe since its creation. Sophrology has recently reached new audiences in the UK and the US and been named the “biggest wellness trend of 2019” by several prominent UK media titles.

Sophrology can be practiced either in a group or on a one-to-one basis. For individual sessions, there is no set rule with regards to how many sessions you will attend because, at the initial consultation, you agree with your practitioner on what your goals are. In other words, Sophrology sessions are personalized and tailored to your specific needs.

Search criteria

- Databases Pubmed and Cochrane Library
- Search terms “Sophrology” AND “ Cancer”
- Time from the last 10 years

Search results

Pubmed (publications)

The search yielded 4 records of which one record was not concerning oncology patients.

Well-being treatments in cancer care: patient benefits (Buiret and Lantheaume 2022)

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The article is available for purchase and therefore only limited information is available on-line.

Three hundred and seventy-four patients with cancer were offered a well-being treatment and agreed to evaluate the type of treatment received, the benefits felt as a result, and numerical evaluation scales for pain and well-being before and after the session. Sophrology was part of different well-being treatment (foot reflexology, socio-aesthetics and singing) and represented 6.7% of the treatment provided to patient. The authors concluded that the well-being treatments studied provided significant pain relief and increased well-being in patients with cancer after their completion.

Sophrology for developing strategies to help patients adapt to cancer treatments (Gaide, Surdej et al. 2017)

The article is available for purchase and therefore only limited information is available on-line. This is a narrative of one caregiver using sophrology to relieve the anxiety resulting from the wearing of a mask in radiotherapy.

Sophrology for patients in oncology (Barré, Falcou et al. 2015)

The article is available for purchase and therefore only limited information is available on-line.

The article discusses sophrological techniques help patients to find calm, lessen their fears and offer them the opportunity to work on themselves through simple easily reproducible exercises. This observation has been verified by a study carried out at the Institut Curie with patients undergoing chemotherapy.

Cochrane (trials)

The search yielded 3 records of which one record was not concerning sophrology.

Psychological Impact of a Sophrological Accompaniment During the Announcement of Thyroid Cancer Compared With Usual Initial Management: Multicenter Randomized Prospective Study (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/study/NCT03639662>). This study plans to enroll 232 participants and is taking place in France.

Impact of Virtual Reality in Pediatric Hematology and Oncology (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT05275881>). Virtual reality (VR) will be assessed if it can be effective on pain and anxiety in children and adolescents; this device uses distraction and hypnosis techniques by establishing a state of hypnosedation and mediation through the work of breathing and sophrology. This study plans to enroll 60 participants and is taking place in France.

Search of the Internet

Below are few web sites dedicated to sophrology

- <https://alfonsocaycedo.com/bibliographie/>
- <https://www.efds-sophrologie.fr/sophrologie-en-oncologie/>
- <https://www.actusoins.com/307639/la-sophrologie-un-accompagnement-pour-les-patients-en-cancerologie.html>
- <https://institut-curie.org/page/sophrology>
- <https://www.cairn.info/revue-cancers-et-psys-2016-1-page-63.htm>

Conclusion

The search on sophrology yielded very few records despite the large period of 10 years. Although sophrology seems to be used in different areas of patient care its usage and benefit is not supported by clinical evidence. It seems that its usage is mostly in Europe (in particular in France) where 2 randomized clinical trials could be identified.