

Complementary therapies

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Contents

1. <i>Introduction</i>	3
- <i>Aromatherapy definition</i>	
2. <i>History of aromatherapy</i>	3
3. <i>Essentials oils</i>	4
- <i>Lavender oil</i>	
- <i>Benefits and side effects of lavender oil</i>	
4. <i>Conclusion</i>	6
5. <i>Reference</i>	7

1. *Introduction*

Complementary therapy and alternative medicine (CAM) are the terms for medical products and practices that are not part of standard medicine. Complementary therapy is used together with standard medicine but is not deemed by itself to be a standard treatment. Aromatherapy, yoga, acupuncture, massage, homeopathic therapy are some of the most popular complementary therapies.

This paper will be about aromatherapy such as complementary therapy. During this presentation, we will talk about the definition of aromatherapy, the history of aromatherapy, essential oils focusing on lavender oil, and the impact of aromatherapy on medical and social life. We will also show the efficacy, benefits, and contraindications of lavender oil.

- *Aromatherapy definition*

Aromatherapy is a holistic healing treatment based on the use of natural herbal extracts, essential oils, either by inhalation or by applying oils on various parts of the body by dripping or massaging, to assist the health and well-being of life. Aromatherapy is also called essential oil therapy because therapeutically it has been medically proven to improve mental and physical health. It is believed that inhaling the aromas of essential oils can stimulate parts of our limbic system, which is a part of the brain that monitors the behavior of emotion and long-term memory (Cronkleton, 2019)

2. *History of aromatherapy*

During ancient times humans were using plants components, oils, resins, balms for medical and religious purposes. The origin of aromatherapy is unclear but the first records of time when civilization started using herbs and plants in order to improve their life and well-being dates more than 6000 years before the birth of Christ. During ancient times humans were using plants components, oils, resins, balms for medical and religious purposes. Egyptians are known for using aromatic essence for embalming in mummification procedure.

The longest history in the use of plants and herbs as medicine is known in China and India. The "Book of the Yellow Emperors of Internal Medicine" is the well-known ancient survivor medical book in China and dates to over 2000 years BC. There has been highlighted healing medicinal methods and practices using plants and natural essence. Sandalwood has been

used by Chinese physicians to help cure cholera.

The traditional Indian medicine Ayurveda in translation "life knowledge" is known as one of the first world practice medicine. Their great experience medical care has been described in "Vedas book which was been written around 2000 BC. The book reveals various uses of 700 plants and substances for both medicinal and religious purposes.

According to Hippocrates (460-377 BC), "Father of Medicine", "The way to health is to take a fragrant bath and a fragrant massage every day."

In ancient Rome, plants were not used only for medicinal and religious purposes by the Romans, body hygiene being particularly important. Due to its geographical size, the Roman Empire had access to a multitude of plants and aromatic substances, the development of hygiene and beauty products taking on a great scope. Oils and aromatic essences have been used in daily base.

During the Middle Ages, the aromatic substance became extremely popular, and the perfume became a very popular product because of antiseptic proprieties been used to cure bubonic plagues. People begin to realize the therapeutic benefit of lavender plants and the German abbess called St Hildegard of Bingen (1098 - 17 September 1179) begins to use lavender and essential oils as she is famous for her healing power using tinctures, plants, and precious stones. (History of Aromatherapy: International Federation of Aromatherapists, 2021)

3. *Essential oils*

Essential oils are used in aromatherapy as complementary therapy to support health and well- being. Essential oils are very fragrant substances found in petals stems, roots, bark leaves, and other parts of plants. In citrus, you will find many of them in the shell, such as grapefruit orange. Essential oils are usually extracted by distillation using steam but can also be extracted by other methods including mechanical expression, solvent extraction, sfumatura, absolute oil extraction, resin tapping, wax embedding, and cold pressing (Andorfer, 2018).

Inhalation is the most common way to use essential oils, either directly from the glass or using a diffuser or humidifier. We can also apply the oils directly to the skin or they can be used in combination with water for body hygiene, bath and shower. The most popular oils are Lavender, Peppermint, Sandalwood, Bergamot, Rose, Chamomile, Ylang-Ylang, Tea Tree, Jasmine, Lemon, and each of these oils have properties that help treat various ailments.

- *Lavender oil*

Lavender is part of the mint family and is found all over the world and is known also as

Lavandula. The lavender oil helps treat anxiety, fungal infections, allergies, depression, insomnia, eczema, nausea menstrual cramps and also help to relax the body. Back in time the lavender oil has proved both its aromatic and medicinal qualities, lavender oil being known as a true antiseptic. During World War II, doctors used lavender oil to heal wounds.

- ***Benefit of lavender oil***

It is well known the lavender oil is one the most know essential oil these days been used not just in alternative medicine but also in the beauty and cleaning product industry

Chemist Rene Maurice Gattefosse is one of the pioneers in discovering the healing benefits of lavender oil. Accidentally, during an experiment in his own laboratory, Maurice suffered severe burns to both hands. He was amazed at the healing and pain-reducing qualities when he immersed his hands in lavender oil.

Although opinions are divided on the efficacy of lavender oil, many studies on human subjects show its effectiveness in various psychological and neurological disorders. It is known that lavender oil can be used successfully as a natural remedy to treat insomnia and improve sleep quality. Clinical studies conducted overtime on masses of human subjects have investigated the effectiveness of lavender oil on sleep quality, showing that lavender has beneficial effects on sleep quality on different samples of patients, patients with neurological and psychological turbulence, ischemic heart disease middle-aged women with symptoms of insomnia and sleep disorders. Some of the subjects participating in the experiment with insomnia with a score of 5 or higher on the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) were treated with the smell of lavender oil.

Lavender oil has also successfully demonstrated its qualities in the treatment of anxiety disorders and related conditions. According to most research, oral administration and aromatherapy are the methods with the best results in reducing anxiety symptoms. Oral administration of supplements containing lavender oil has shown reliable results in the treatment of anxiety symptoms the most effective dose of oil. Used in capsules being 80 ml per day, the oil must be of high quality and not contain other additional substances. Administered in doses of 20-80 ml lavender oil is considered safe as there are no reports to indicate otherwise. In the case of inhalation of lavender oil, the duration of inhalation must be at least 3 minutes to have maximum effectiveness. (Vinall, 2021)

Treating fungal infections, allergies, depression, eczema, nausea, and menstrual cramps, treating minor wounds, stimulating hair growth are also benefit of using lavender oil. Lavender is also widely used today in the cosmetics industry in perfumes, creams, and lotions. Due to its antiseptic properties, lavender is also used in cleaning products as an ecological alternative to chemicals.

- ***Side effect of lavender oil***

Lavender is considered potentially safe for most adults when found in food in amounts that do not exceed medical limits, however oral administration can cause constipation, headaches, and increased appetite. Applying lavender on the skin in the form of oil, lotion, etc. may have side effects causing skin irritations. Lavender oil can interface with the endocrinologic system and can affect the natural body hormones so is not recommended for young boys or pregnant women to be used also. Lavender has the property of slowing down the nervous system so it is recommended to stop any lavender treatment in case of surgery at least 2 weeks before. (Ba, 2021)

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, there is no evidence-based research showing diseases that can be cured by using essential oils or practicing aromatherapy, but essential oils along with standard medicine can help improve life and well-being.

We must also keep in mind that complementary therapies can be a risk factor for certain categories of people and can cause serious side effects, so it is desired to inform the GP at the beginning of any complementary therapy and follow his advice

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