

## **A.I.D.S. H.I.V. & AROMATHERAPY.**

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### **Note to Overseas readers: This was originally written for UK readers only.**

Massage and aromatherapy can provide valuable supportive care to people suffering from A.I.D.S. related illnesses, or if they are suffering the mental anguish of being pronounced H.I.V. positive. [\(1\)](#) However, people who work with such illnesses do require some specialist training, and there are several organisations which can provide advice and training on the following:

- a. Risks of contracting the disease.
- b. Risks of infection from pathologies associated with the syndrome.
- c. Developing the caring skills necessary when working with people who may be suffering the emotional problems resulting from; anger, despair, isolation and ostracism.

Health authorities, Social Services, etc. can provide further guidance.

### **WAYS TO UTILISE THE HEALING & COMFORTING PROPERTIES OF FRAGRANCES:**

- a. Inhalation of the oil's vapours using room diffusers, oil burners or from warm water.
- b. Adding the oils to baths, footbaths, sitz baths and douches
- c. Direct application (when diluted in a solvent) for skin ailments.
- d. Diluted in a massage medium for use over the whole body, or just for individual areas of the body.

### **PHYSICAL BENEFITS OF MASSAGE:**

Massage alone will tone flaccid muscles, reduce muscle spasm and improve circulation. It has also been demonstrated that massage releases endorphins-the body's natural pain killers [\(2\)](#). The experience of massage can be either stimulating or calming depending on the techniques used. There are contra-indications to massage, for example people being given anti-coagulant drugs (massage causes haemodilution). Therefore, some basic training is essential for anyone massaging people suffering from medical conditions.

### **THE POWER OF ESSENTIAL OILS:**

Essential oils can have potent emotional effects and are ideal mood changers. Some oils uplift the spirits while others relax or calm. The same oil can produce different effects depending upon the emotional state of the individual at the time. Choosing the appropriate oils for an individual does require a certain amount of training in order to optimise results. However, even without training, excellent results can be gained from self-use. Simply adding a few drops of Lavender oil to a bath is, in reality, "Aromatherapy". Some care must be taken with the choice and amount of oils used, but safety information is readily available.

Natural essential oils when given internally as medicines do contain beneficial pharmacological agents. However, they do not represent the full range of therapeutic properties of the plants from which they are extracted. Furthermore, due to the unreliability of their origin, i.e. NATURAL or

SEMI-SYNTHETIC, essential oils should not be used internally except under expert guidance. Aromatherapists in general do not receive detailed training in medical diagnosis or on the suitability of oils for internal use.

### HOW ESSENTIAL OILS WORK:

There is little evidence that most essential oils, when applied to the skin in the amounts used in aromatherapy massage, can be absorbed into the body in sufficient volume to have any systemic medicinal activity. However, there is now a body of evidence indicating that essential oils can gain access to the circulation **via inhalation**. Essential oils are highly volatile substances, and as soon as you can smell an oil you are taking into your body elements of that fragrance. It is well documented that certain drugs can achieve significant systemic absorption via the nasal passages.

In Martin's opinion, H.I.V. positive patients stand more chance of deriving **medicinal benefit** from plants by consulting a Medical Herbalist, who will be able to prescribe a variety of plant extracts internally. Plants contain hundreds to thousands of natural chemicals and many have recorded pharmacological activity. Thousands of these compounds are still unidentified and their activity therefore is unknown to CHEMISTS. The combination of aromatherapy and herbal medicine is ideal treatment for H.I.V. They may not be able to cure it, but will certainly will provide a lot of physical and emotional support enhancing the body's ability to fight disease and possibly delay the onset of symptoms.

### A.I.D.S. ASSOCIATED PATHOLOGIES WITH SOME OILS THAT MAY PROVIDE RELIEF:

#### **Candida of the oesophagus, trachea and lungs.**

Inhalation of the vapours of Tea tree, fennel, cajuput, German chamomile and lavender (amongst others) may help provide some relief.

#### **Vaginal and rectal candida.**

Pessaries or suppositories containing Tea tree oil can be effective.

#### **Oral candida.**

A mouthwash using some of the oils mentioned above, but they **must be well diluted** in a solvent such as full fat milk in order to prevent irritation.

#### **Respiratory tract bacterial infections.**

Certainly are worth attacking by the inhalation of essential oil vapours. Many oils have some degree of anti-bacterial actions and as research has shown that parts of some oils can gain access to the bloodstream via inhalation, a systemic anti-bacterial action is at least feasible.

#### **Bacterial and fungal infections of the skin.**

Blends of oils like lavender, tea tree, fennel, Roman and German chamomile in a cream base, or just diluted in fractionated coconut oil can produce a broad spectrum of healing actions.

#### **Herpes simplex virus.**

Essential oils like tea tree, bergamot, eucalyptus and cajuput should ideally be diluted slightly in alcohol such as gin or vodka. This solution can then be gently applied to blisters, if stinging is too intense then wash the area with cold milk or water. A good herbal remedy is **fresh lemon balm** leaves crushed and applied - research has indicated anti-viral complexes in the water-soluble portion of this plant.

#### **Karposis sarcoma.**

All citrus oils except F.C.F. bergamot (furocoumarin free) should be avoided on skin cancers. terpeneless lavender, F.C.F. bergamot, tea tree, German chamomile are all highly recommended.

#### **Fungating cancers.**

Great emotional relief can result from the use of essential oils. They will enhance the self-image of

severely ill patients by covering unpleasant body smells, and some oils may also provide relief from itching and soreness.

### **Brain tumours.**

Aromatherapy may well help to control vacillating moods; depression; irritability and lethargy.

### **Care of the terminally ill.**

We strongly believe that relief from stress and pain at any cost is paramount, therefore ANY essential oil or other plant extract that can provide relief is worth using, (provided it does not result in further discomfort). Morphine and cannabis remain some of our most potent pain relievers despite the wonders of the pharmaceutical sciences, and we should never forget they were traditional HERBAL MEDICINES.

**The Carers:** Aromatherapy for terminally ill people helps relatives and partners when they realise that 'something is being done' to help their loved ones, rather than just letting them lie in bed slowly dying. Surrounding the patient with the wonderful scent of fragrant plant oils helps everyone cope with emotionally charged situations. Carers may feel 'more involved' if they obtain some education in how to use essential oils for palliative care.

### **TRAINING IN THE CLINICAL USE OF ESSENTIAL OILS:**

Only a few aromatherapy courses provide sufficient training in the **verifiable** adverse or therapeutic effects of essential oils, and few aromatherapists are trained in any of the medical or botanical sciences. It is lamentable that training **of tutors in particular** has not kept pace with the exacting requirements of using of this therapy within a clinical setting.

### **TRADE CODES OF CONDUCT AND PRACTICE:**

We hear a lot about how they "protect the public", but in fact, they are of little real protection. They are not enforceable in law and anyone who watches the B.B.C. television "Watchdog" programme will have seen time and time again how ineffective such trade codes of conduct can be. These codes are there to protect the trades concerned and to hoodwink the public, they give no realistic protection in aromatherapy.

### **BASIC SAFETY ADVICE:**

Many Aromatherapists and some training organisations maintain that essential oils are "only safe in their hands". They use this marketing ploy to promote their often overpriced and inadequate courses. In fact the vast majority of essential oils have been passed as "safe for RETAIL to the public other than in a pharmacy" by the UK Dept. of Health. However, a few oils ARE unsafe and some are still retailed to the public by unscrupulous suppliers without adequate warnings.

- Don't use any citrus oils except F.C.F. Bergamot on skin cancers or on damaged skin.
- Don't use essential oils which could cause photosensitivity on anyone being treated with drugs that also cause this problem.
- Don't use verbena oil on the skin.
- Don't use benzoin on the skin (there is no such essential oil).
- Use all essential oils cautiously and extremely well diluted on anyone who has very thin or fragile skin.

**To summarise:** aromatherapy can have wonderful benefits as a supportive role in the treatment of individuals with H.I.V. **but please be wary of all the hype**, use lots of common sense and study any safety guidelines carefully. If you have just read this and you know someone with an A.I.D.S related illness, or who is H.I.V.+ , buy them a bottle of lavender or geranium oil. Then advise they use 6-10 drops in a bath, or in a room diffuser. Their sense of well being will soon improve, due to the beneficial effects of plant fragrances on the emotions.

1. R1-9 pages 15 & 29 National Aids Manual Centre for disease control and prevention U.S.A.
2. Kaada B. & TorsteinbØ O. 1989. Gen. Pharmac. Vol. 20. No. 4. 487-489.

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