

A phone interview for an aromatherapy journal in the USA in 1997 (Journal name lost)

Reporter: Martin, you have spent many years investigating scientific research related to essential oils and aromatherapy. I wonder if you can help us clear up some ideas which are commonly promoted by certain authors, but on which we can find no evidence.

Martin: Yes, I will tell you what I can, although the subject of essential oils is huge. I can't possibly know everything about them.

Reporter: Is it true as reported by some teachers, that essential oils can increase the oxygen going to the body's tissues?

Martin: That's a strange idea; I always thought it was the hemoglobin in our red blood cells that transports oxygen to the body's cells. I have never seen any research proving that essential oils can increase oxygen uptake of cells. The idea is ludicrous because **the great enemy of essential oils is in fact oxygen**. This is because oxygen tends to destroy the useful chemicals and change them into sensitizing substances.

Reporter: It is claimed by some writers that Dr. Valnet was the first to investigate the clinical uses of essential oils, is that true?

Martin: Certainly not, many essential oils were being used in the UK and the USA long before the turn of the century. Indeed the chief Physician of Guys hospital W. Hale-White wrote a book in 1901, which contained in-depth clinical references to many essential oils. They used essential oils internally for a variety of ailments and also used them externally, mainly for musculo skeletal problems.

Reporter: Is it true that essential oils are very good at killing viruses.

Martin: No this is not correct. Most research into the antimicrobial properties of essential oils has concentrated on their antibacterial and antifungal properties. Very little research has been done on their antiviral effects. A few trials have tested oils in vitro (in lab dishes) and found highly variable effects depending on the oil chosen. However, that work certainly cannot be assumed to have any relevance to their potential to kill viruses once they are in our body. A few trials have been done on the effects of some obscure essential oils given in capsules in massive amounts. However, this has little relevance to the use of these oils in aromatherapy. The vast majority of the reports quoted by aromatherapy authors, are in fact reports of tests conducted on the water-soluble part of the plants. Generally this has nothing whatsoever to do with the essential oil from that same plant. A lot of plants do have antiviral properties, but these are invariably due to the water-soluble portion of the chemicals, not the oil. Hence the use of herbal teas to treat many ailments. If essential oils were antiviral we would have had a cure for the common cold years ago.

Reporter: Have you ever come across any research that says a virus causes scoliosis, and that essential oils can cure it. The reason I ask is because Gary Young says in his book that the neat application of essential oils can cure the problem.

Martin: Well I find such a statement beyond belief. Scoliosis is caused by a misshapen vertebral column, often of congenital origin. Once the individual vertebrae are formed into an irregular shape, nothing short of surgery can correct them. The only other form of treatment that might help a little is osteopathy or chiropractic, but even that will not cure the problem. There is no evidence whatsoever that the condition is caused by a virus. Certainly there is no way that any essential oils have the ability to physically change the shape of bones. To suggest the use of neat essential oils applied down the spinal column flies in the face of all Internationally accepted safety information. To suggest this method of use "burns the virus out of the body" is crazy quack medicine practiced by people who should be in jail for fraud, and it also has the potential to cause severe skin damage.

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