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Aromatherapy: A systematic approach and a future medicine

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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Aromatherapy is a natural and non-invasive modality designed to influence the person not just the symptoms of disease but for assisting the natural ability of the body to balance, regulate, heal and maintain itself by the correct use of special aroma.

It is an art of science for utilizing naturally aromatic essences from plants to balance, harmonize and endorse the health of body, mind and spirit. It seeks to amalgamate physiological, psychological and spiritual processes to enhance an individual's inherent feelings. As a holistic practice, aromatherapy is both a preventative approach as well as an active method to employ during acute and chronic stages of illness. Several ancient civilizations (Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Chinese and Indian) have used this therapy for their physical and mental well-being. The Aromatherapy Organizations Council (AOC) acts as a sunshade organization for 12 professional aromatherapy associations (Miller, 1999). Various industries are now looking into sources of alternative, more natural and environmentally friendly medicines for diseases like antimicrobials, antibiotics, antioxidants, crop protection agents and so on. The possibility of utilizing volatile oils is now being investigated, although their biological activity has been known for centuries (Svoboda and Deans, 1995). These inactive compounds might influence resorption, rate of reactions and bioavailability of the active compounds. Several active components might have a synergistic effect and add the complexity of volatile oils as well as therapeutic effect. There is evidence that the time of harvest influences the oil composition and consequently the potency of their biological activities is marked (Deans and Svoboda, 1988).

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