

## Editorial

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## Essential Oils and Cosmetic Aromatherapy

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In the last two decades (1997-2017), use of alternative and complementary therapies along with the mainstream medicine has gained momentum.<sup>1,2</sup>

Aromatherapy uses essential oils, as the main therapeutic agents, which are secondary plant metabolites, aromatic in nature and give distinctive odour or flavour to plants.<sup>3</sup> Chemically, they are complex mixtures comprised of a large number of saturated and unsaturated hydrocarbons, alcohol, aldehydes, esters, ethers, ketones, oxides phenols and terpenes, in variable ratios.<sup>4</sup> These oils are so potent and concentrated that they work on pressure points and rejuvenate. There are various methods by which they are administered in small quantity like inhalation, massage or simple applications on the skin surface and rarely, they are taken internally.<sup>5</sup> Inhalation and the external application of these oils for the treatment of mental and physical balance are the very basics of aromatherapy. The therapy of these oils is known to relieve the stress, rejuvenate and regenerate the individual for a next day's work.<sup>5</sup>

These aroma molecules are very potent organic plant chemicals with a curative potential on the body, mind and spirit. Their versatile character of antibacterial, antiviral, anti-inflammatory nature along with immune booster body with hormonal, glandular, emotional, circulatory, calming effect, memory and alertness enhancer is well documented by many scientists.<sup>5-11</sup>

The stimulation properties of these oils lay in their structure which closely resembles with actual hormones. The penetration potential of these oils to reach the subcutaneous tissues is one of the important characters of this therapy. Their effects are complex and subtle due to their complex structure and chemical properties.<sup>5</sup> The mechanism of their action involves integration of essential oils into a biological signal of the receptor cells in the nose when inhaled. The signal is transmitted to limbic and hypothalamus parts of the brain *via* olfactory bulb.<sup>3</sup> These signals cause brain to release neuro messengers like serotonin, endorphin, etc., to link our nervous and other body systems assuring a desired change and to provide a feeling of relief. Serotonin, endorphin and noradrenalin are released from calming oil, euphoric, and stimulating oil respectively to give expected effect on mind and body.<sup>12</sup>

Cosmetics aromatherapy utilizes certain essential oils for skin, body, face and hair cosmetic products. These products are used for their various effects as cleansing, moisturizing, drying and toning.<sup>3</sup> A healthy skin can be obtained by use of essential oils in facial products. On a personal level, cosmetic aromatherapy of full-body or foot bath will be a simple and an effective way to have an experience.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, few drops of appropriate oil give a rejuvenating and revitalizing experience.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, massage therapy involving the use of grape seed, almond, or jojoba oil in pure vegetable oil during massage has been shown to have wonderful effects.<sup>14</sup>

Further studies on the essential oils are recommended for their potential use in cosmetics aromatherapy.

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