

Aromatherapy essay



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This research is devoted to Aromatherapy. This topic was chosen due to the fact that out of diverse complimentary and alternative medicines (CAM) aromatherapy is claimed to have become “ the consumer buzzword of the 21st century” (Warda, 2002). The goals of the paper are to review and analyze the existing body of knowledge on advantages and disadvantages of aromatherapy, to study relevant publications and researches and to evaluate how credible and useful each piece of information analyzed was to researchers. Aromatherapy is rapidly being accepted in the general population rather than in the medical community.

In the course of this research the following thesis will argumentatively be proved or disproved. While marketers widely promote the usefulness and harmlessness of aromatherapy, medical schools still argue that it may have some dramatically negative effects on users. The Definition of Aromatherapy Aromatherapy has been defined as a holistic treatment based on the external use of essential aromatic plant oils to maintain and promote physical, physiological, and spiritual wellbeing. It is generally regarded as a useful complimentary treatment used for overall bodily relaxation.

It is also thought to relieve anxiety, depression, panic, insomnia and other stress-related physical disorders such as gastrointestinal complaints, dementia and menstrual cramps (Pelletier, 2002). Aromatherapy has also been defined as an ancient healing art that aims to enhance well-being through the pure essential oils of aromatic plants. The use of essential oils has been described as liquid sun energy, which is carefully extracted from plants and is used in a variety of treatments like mental, physical and emotional disorders to increase indulgence (Warda, 2002).

Researchers have found that this and the previously mentioned definition of aromatherapy are both very similar and clear in explaining the basic concepts of this type of therapy. The Main Aromatherapy Techniques One of the most important pieces of information on the practical use of aromatherapy was found in Price (1994). He describes eight key techniques used in aromatherapy. These techniques are: massage, hand/footbath, full body bath, diffusion, inhalation, compression, internal methods, and salves. It is claimed that they treat such things as skin ailments, muscle soreness, emotional disorders, menstrual cramps, sprains, and burns.

Precautions and Risks It is not recommended to do aromatherapy at home without consulting an aroma therapist or a family doctor. The US Food and Drug Administration do not regulate the production of essential plant oils. The aroma market is reported to be overwhelmed with frauds such as substitutions of natural oils with synthetic compounds that are much cheaper to market. Another huge precaution is seen in avoiding the internal use of essential oils without proper dosage and oil type consultation. There have also been several reports of dissociative episodes caused by use of aromatherapy for treatment of traumatic cases (Pelletier, 2002).

According to Warda (2002), most of products marketed as “ aromatherapy” should be labeled as “ aromachology”, which deals primarily with short-term effects. Her reasoning for this is do to the fact that aromatherapy does not offer natural essential oils used for healing disorders. In its effort to secure and regulate the use of true essential oils the National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy came up with a list of True Aromatherapy Products

that list genuine essentials from mass-marketed products (Warda, 2002). In response to this list some companies launch lines of nature-identical aromas.

They tend to invent essentials that would embrace the main healing properties of natural oils. However, these initiatives usually neglect the fact that natural oils cannot be effectively reproduced by imitating a certain set of components. Research on Aromatherapy During the labor and post-labor periods, midwives from Glasgow Southern General Hospital Maternity Unit reported achieving better positive effects when using aromatherapy as apposed to those provided by conventional painkillers. Such oils as geranium and lavender were said to better sooth labor pains and post-natal discomfort.

Aromatherapy was also found to be more than 80% effective when treating hemorrhoids (Mallon, 2000). Since this claim is based on observations researchers do not consider it to be very credible. If clinical testing were done on the claim researchers may become more excepting of it. Because of the fact that there is such a limited amount of empirical studies conducted the effectiveness of aromatherapy is hard to determine. However, few studies have indicated the painkilling, bacteria killing, and mood improvement properties of the essential oils (Price, 1994).

Conclusions

The brief analysis of the relevant literature allowed the researcher to make the following conclusions: an extended clinical research on the effectiveness of aromatherapy is needed to determine the key risks and side effects associated with this type of CAM. Furthermore, until the key risks and side effects are identified it is impossible to accurately identify the effectiveness

of such treatments. Any opinions about aromatherapy that this time is based merely on opinion and treatment preferences as apposed to findings based on clinical research.

Also, an issue that needs to be addressed in order to lend credence to aromatherapy is the act of claiming natural essentials when the product is actually of a synthetic nature. Drawn from these conclusions is the following opinion: the researcher would use and recommend the use of only those essentials that are listed in the True Aromatherapies Products. It is also recommended that individuals consult a qualified aroma therapist prior to using any aromatherapy product. This research shows that, even though aromatherapy may be catching on as a public use, it still lacks the credence to be used in a clinical setting.

Researches and professionals alike do not place aromatherapy in the same category with those therapies that have been researched and defined as medical treatments. It is very apparent, however, that this form of treatment is gaining popularity among the general public. Once proper studies and research is conducted on the methods used in aromatherapy, it will become possible to accept and recognize this form of treatment, not just from a public prospective, but also within the medical community, as an effective means of treatment and healing.