Melissa aroma therapy
Aroma therapy

Author: CG Ballard*, JT O’Brien, K Reichelt, & EK Perry
Year: 2002
Country: United Kingdom
Email*: c.g.ballard@ncl.ac.uk

Objective: To determine the value of aroma therapy with Melissa officinalis (lemon balm) for agitation in people with severe dementia.

Setting: National Health Service care facilities

Participants: People with severe dementia and clinically significant agitation.
Mean age: E: 77.2 (±7.6); C: 79.6 (±8.5)
Gender: E: 20 female (56%); C: 23 (64%)
MMSE

Design: Double blind, placebo-controlled trial, with two conditions (Melissa essential oil vs. sunflower oil)
Sample size: n_E=36, n_C=36
Follow-up: 4 weeks

Intervention: Application of the oil to patients’ faces and arms. Ten percent (per weight) Melissa oil was combined with base lotion. The lotion was topically applied to the face and arms of residents (total 200 mg oil per day).
Frequency: twice a day
Duration: 1 to 2 minutes, for 4 weeks
Facilitator: care assistant

Outcome measures:
- Behaviour: Cohen-Mansfield Agitation Inventory (CMAI; Cohen-Mansfield, 1989)
- Neuropsychiatric Inventory (NPI; Cummings et al., 1994)
- Barthel Scale (Mahoney & Barthel, 1965)
- Dementia Care Mapping (DCM; Kitwood & Bredin, 1997)

Results: Though both the lemon balm group and sunflower oil (placebo) group experienced significant reductions of agitation (CMAI), greater reductions were found for the treatment with lemon balm (resp. 35% vs. 11%). More subjects in the lemon balm group had clinically significant less behavioural symptoms (60% vs. 14%). People with dementia in the lemon balm group were socially withdrawn less frequently and spent more time on constructive activities than the sunflower oil group.

Implementation material: Melissa essential oil concentrations of terpenes: citronellal (22%), caryophyllene (18%), neral (7%), geranyl acetate (3%), citronallal (4%). The base lotion contained Prunus dulcis oil, glycerine, stearic acid, cetearyl alcohol, tocopheryl acetate.

E = experimental group; C = control group
* Corresponding author

Information Desk Effective Care and Treatment in Dementia
http://www.vumc.com/afdelingen/psychosocial-support-dementia-care/