

Commentary

# Aromatherapy and Psychosocial Use: A Growing Field of Research

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Aromatherapy is the therapeutic use of essential oils from plants to treat ill health and promote physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. It is one of the most widely used natural therapies reported by consumers in Western countries, and it has a long history of medicinal use in ancient Egyptian and Chinese cultures. However, the term aromatherapy was coined only in the 20th century by a French chemist who experimented with essential oils for wound healing during World War I.

Since then, aromatherapy has developed as a serious discipline, especially in Europe and Japan, where it is taught in medical schools, prescribed by physicians, reimbursed by health insurers, and used in factories to enhance worker productivity and prevent the spread of airborne infectious diseases. Aromatherapy is also gaining popularity in other parts of the world, including Brazil, where the Brazilian Journal of Aromatherapy and Essential Oils was launched in 2023 to disseminate scientific knowledge and promote research in this field.

One of the main areas of interest for aromatherapy research is its psychosocial use, that is, how aromatherapy can affect the emotions, mood, cognition, behavior, and social interactions of individuals and groups. Aromatherapy works by stimulating the olfactory system, which is directly connected to the limbic system, the brain region responsible for emotions, memory, and learning. The aroma molecules of essential oils are transmitted to the brain and affect the neurotransmitters, hormones, and immune system, which in turn influence the psychological and physiological states of the body and mind. There is growing evidence that aromatherapy can be beneficial for a variety of psychosocial conditions, such as stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, pain, fatigue, dementia, and autism. Aromatherapy can also enhance the quality of life, well-being, and social support of healthy individuals, as well as patients with chronic or terminal illnesses. Aromatherapy can be delivered by different modes, such as inhalation, massage, diffusion, or topical application, depending on the purpose and preference of the user.

However, there are also challenges and limitations in the field of aromatherapy research, such as the lack of standardized methods, the variability of essential oils, the difficulty of blinding and placebo control, the ethical and safety issues, and the need for more rigorous and robust studies. Therefore, more research is needed to establish the effectiveness, mechanisms, and optimal protocols of aromatherapy for psychosocial use, as well as to explore its potential synergies with other complementary and conventional therapies.

The Brazilian Journal of Aromatherapy and Essential Oils (BJAEO) aims to provide a platform for researchers, practitioners, educators, and enthusiasts of aromatherapy to share their findings, experiences, and perspectives on this fascinating and promising field. We welcome submissions of original research articles, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, case reports, clinical trials, and theoretical or methodological papers that address any

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aspect of aromatherapy and psychosocial use. We also encourage submissions of letters, commentaries, editorials, and book reviews that contribute to the advancement and dissemination of aromatherapy knowledge and practice.

We hope that this journal will serve as a valuable resource and a catalyst for the development and recognition of aromatherapy as a scientific and clinical discipline, as well as a holistic and humanistic art. We invite you to join us in this endeavor and to publicize your studies in the Brazilian Journal of Aromatherapy and Essential Oils.

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