

# Use of Aromatherapy in Recent History and Today

Ahmet Ulvi ZEYBEK<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Pharmaceutical Botany, School of Pharmacy, Istanbul Medipol University, Istanbul, Türkiye

Aromatherapy, as a special field of Phytotherapy, is accepted by scientific authorities as protecting health with the controlled use of essential oils, supporting treatment in some diseases (adjuvant), and generally as one of the fields of 'Complementary Medicine'. Aromatherapy was most accurately defined literally by the Frenchman René-Maurice Gattefossé in the early 20th century. In ancient Greek, he combined the words *therapeia* = care and *aroma* = scent substance, expressed it in a short and concise way, and ensured that this definition was adopted in a very short time. He shared his knowledge and experiences on certain essential oils that he studied sufficiently, with physicians because of the difficulty about finding or even unavailability of antibiotics during the World War I and II, led to the usage of essential oils for the treatment. His book 'Essential Antiseptics' in 1937 attracted physicians' interest in this field. From the same school, Dr. Jean Valnet published his book 'Aromathérapie -Traitement de maladies par essences des plantes' (1964), and due to the interest of physicians working in the field of Complementary Medicine in the medical community, it was translated into other languages. Dr. Paul Belaiche's three-volume work titled 'Traité de Phytothérapie et d'Aromathérapie' is mainly on the antibacterial and antiviral effects of essential oils (1979). In the following years, Dr Daniel Pénoel, who is also a homeopath, and Dr Pierre Franchomme published their standard, comprehensive and treatment-oriented book called 'L'Aromathérapie Exactament' in 1990. In Austria, Prof. Wolfgang Steflitsch from the Chest Diseases Clinic of Otto Wagner Hospital, Vienna, published his comprehensive book titled 'Aromatherapie: Wissenschaft-Klinik-Praxis', which gives clinical practices together with case reports, in 2007. He is also the long-time president of the Austrian Aromatherapy Association.

---

\*Corresponding Author: E-mail: [ulvi.zeybek@medipol.edu.tr](mailto:ulvi.zeybek@medipol.edu.tr)

Aromatherapy, by making use of the effects of different active substance groups of essential oils, is used as a field that supports the treatment of physiological diseases and psychic problems, as well as in combating stress, anxiety, insomnia, hyperactivity and certain pediatric diseases. It is also used in bronchopulmonary diseases and as an immune system stimulant. In addition, it is also widely used in geriatrics for the treatment of certain dermatological problems such as acne and dermatitis. It is a part of modern phytotherapy, due to its antimicrobial effects, which is one of the main effects of essential oils. Aromatherapy has also been successfully applied during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are professional associations and organizations, including physicians, pharmacists and academicians working in these fields, established for the purpose of carrying out scientific studies and practices in this field in an orderly and ethical manner. The top supervisory authority is the Ministry of Health.

SGMP (Swiss Association of Physicians Practicing Phytotherapy) (Swiss Medical Society for Phytotherapy)

GAMED (Austria-Vienna University, Faculty of Medicine Natural Medicine Association) (Vienna International Academy of Holistic Medicine)

ÖGwA -Österreichische Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche Aromatherapie & Aromapflege- (Austrian Society for Scientific Aromatherapy and Aromatherapy) can be given as an example of professional organizations established for this purpose in Central Europe.

In the treatment of symptomatic diseases, appropriate essential oils with monographs are selected for the treatment area to be used and they are prepared alone or in mixtures with other essential oils that have similar effects. For inhalation, in the diffuser, for application to the skin with a massage technique, use a compatible massage oil (fixed oils), or by dropping 1-2 drops of Tea Tree or Eucalyptus essential oil into half a glass of water, gargling, hot or cold compresses, or half/full baths. They are used in recommended doses and durations. Essential oils listed for use in essential oil monographs for children can be administered in low doses. Even in some difficult-to-treat diseases, it is used in a way that is compatible with classical medical units and supports each other in treatment, and in relevant clinics under the supervision of physicians who are trained in aromatherapy and are experienced and competent in their fields.

### **Administration and Route of Action of Essential Oils**

**Orally:** The essential oil, which has a monograph and is free from mono-ketone components such as thujone and has been standardized, has been prepared

in hard or soft capsules as appropriate for the purpose and in the form of preparations of 80, 160, 300 and 500 mg. It is used according to the physicians' prescription until the symptoms disappear.

**By massage:** Essential oils have a lipophilic structure. Small molecules can easily penetrate the lower layers of the skin through hair follicles. Applying essential oils to the skin should be in fixed oils and in certain concentrations.

In normal skin, the essential oil spreads throughout the body in approximately 20-25 minutes, depending on the applied area and the structure of the essential oil and fixed oil used (small molecule size). As a result, essential oils are obtained completely naturally from botanically correctly identified medicinal plants. Nature-identical and synthetic substances are never used in aromatherapy applications and their use is strictly prohibited within the framework of the relevant regulations.

As a result, Aromatherapy is just the beginning to be recognized among Complementary Medical Practices in Türkiye. In addition to presentations at scientific congresses, clinical studies approved by ethics committees will ensure that this treatment field is recognized and implemented more quickly and according to scientific facts. It should not be forgotten that this field of treatment should be handled within the triangle of physician-pharmacist and patient and applied in accordance with ethical rules. It should also be known that the application of aromatherapy can be very risky and cannot be used in epilepsy, where drug interactions are common.

**Keywords:** Aromatheraphy, essential oil