

Essential Oils, Part Two: Additional Attributes, Guidelines for Use, and Suggested Applications

Mary Elizabeth Wakefield, LAc, Dipl. Ac., MS, MM; MichelAngelo , MFA, CTM

In part one of this series, we introduced the theories of Septimus Piesse, who postulated correspondences between fragrance and musical tone. We also explored a rare neurological condition, synesthesia, which is characterized by a simultaneity of one or more of the senses, a phenomenon originating in the limbic, emotional region of the brain. We drew a parallel between the subjective experience of synesthesia and Piesse's notion of an aromatic "orchestra," which involves a synergy of scent, sound and color in the blending of essential oils. This would appear to lend support to the idea that these combinations of oils are capable of reaching deeper levels of the brain and energetic system than scent alone, and hence have a more profound transformative effect. Finally, we outlined the ways in which plants are "perfect healers," and provided a brief overview of the historical uses of essential oils and some of their general healing properties.

The Use of Essential Oils in Classical Chinese Medicine

Classical Chinese medicine utilized essential oils in the treatment of pathogens, to rectify imbalances in the meridian system, and promote both longevity and beauty. In fact, Li Shen Zhen listed about 20 essential oils in his *Materia Medica*.

According to Jeffrey Yuen, essential oils address three distinct constitutional levels described by Oriental medicine: the *wei*, *ying* and *yuan*.

1. *Wei*: This instinctual level affects the unconscious mind and traverses the terrain of the tendinomuscular meridians. The *wei* functions as a protective shield against encroaching pathogens, whether they exist on the physical, emotional or spiritual level.
2. *Ying*: This level affects the postnatal *qi* and the conscious mind. It governs the *luo* vessels, the 12 regular meridians, and divergent pathology that flows from one set of these vessels to the other.
3. *Yuan*: This constitutional level impacts our ancestral *qi*, intergenerational problems, and the eight extraordinary meridians. Also involved are the source points, the Kidney meridian, and the *shu* and *mu* points.

Carrier Oils

Since essential oils are volatile, and dissipate in the air readily, they require a medium that will anchor them. This is provided by the carrier oil, which not only "earths" the essential oil, but additionally enables the scent to reach the olfactory nerve receptors so as to be detected by our sense of smell. The following is a list of carrier oils commonly included in skin recipes, and that address other conditions:

- Apricot kernel: dry skin; combines with hypericum oil
- Avocado: dry skin and wrinkles; combines with grapeseed or sweet almond oil
- Calendula: mixed and oily skin, scar healing, chronic damaged skin; combines with hazelnut, olive oil, wheat germ, macadamia nut

- Hazelnut: oily skin (regulates sebum), acne, dermatitis, eczema; combines with calendula, hypericum (use alone)
- Hypericum: all skin conditions, especially oily/inflamed skin, damaged skin, eczema; combines with calendula
- Jojoba: similar in structure to human sebum; acne, eczema, psoriasis; combines with calendula, sweet almond, grapeseed, hazelnut
- Lime blossoms (linden blossoms): sensitive, aging skin, small wrinkles; combines with borage oil, jojoba, macadamia, wheat germ
- Macadamia nut: dry, aging skin, aids in sebum balance; combines with apricot kernel, lime blossom, sweet almond (use these for mature skin), borage oil
- Olive: skin inflammations, burns, scars, arteriosclerosis; combines with grapeseed, calendula, hypericum
- Sweet almond: versatile; combines with lime blossom, borage, calendula, macadamia, wheat germ
- Wheat germ: dry skin, eczema, psoriasis, premature aging; combines with apricot kernel, grapeseed, lime blossom, sweet almond

The Doctrine of Signatures

According to the Doctrine of Signatures, the shape, color and structural constituents of plants provide specific "markers," indicating which part of the human body can be addressed most beneficially by a particular essential oil. For example, the following parts of a plant affect the corresponding areas of our anatomy:

- Leaves and flowers - the head
- Branches - the torso
- Roots and seeds - the legs and feet

In other words, the body of the plant mirrors the human body, further underscoring the wondrous and intimate rapport between these perfect healers and human beings.

"Notes," or the Rate of Evaporation

Each essential oil has a unique vibratory signature that dictates the amount of time it takes to evaporate. An essential oil's "note" is distinctive; we might liken it to the timbre of a particular musical instrument. However, on a practical level, the note indicates the frequency of application that is required in effective treatment.

The notes are characterized by a combination of color and sound; hence, it is possible for us, in blending essential oils, to synthesize (as we have said previously) a miniature tone poem of fragrance. In this fashion, oils can be combined to create musical "chords," exactly as Piesse suggested in *The Art of Perfumery*.

The notes of essential oils have three different frequency ranges, which address the *wei*, *ying* and *yuan* constitutional levels. We might think of them as instrumental "sections" in Piesse's aromatic orchestra:

1. Top notes: It is necessary to reapply these oils every two hours, due to their rapid rate of evaporation. These oils are blue or violet in color, and reflect the upper notes on a piano. So, please put the cap back on the lavender essential oil after you use it, or the genie will escape from the bottle!
2. Middle notes: These notes have more moderate evaporative tendencies, and need only be applied every six hours. The colors are yellow and green, mirroring the middle pitches of the piano keyboard. Geranium is an excellent example of a middle note essential oil, and it

blends easily with most other oils.

3. Bass notes: These oils can be applied every two to three days, as they are more stable, and slow to evaporate. The colors are red or orange, and correspond to the lower notes on the piano.

Aroma and Intensity

Each essential oil has a specific effect upon the body, associated with the strength of its aroma. Some oils will disturb the *shen*; others are calming; and some heal and nurture chronic psychospiritual imbalances.

Strong oils, such as peppermint, immediately affect the brain and disturb the *shen*. It is not recommended to give a patient with "hot phlegm misting the mind" a whiff of peppermint. On the other hand, a student "burning the midnight oil" preparing for their acupuncture board exams might well benefit from peppermint's wake-up call, its ability to aid memory, etc.

Moderate oils, such as geranium and lavender, calm the *shen* and help to invigorate the blood. Taking a sniff of lavender can quiet a patient during a facial acupuncture treatment. Better still, place a drop of the oil on their *yintang* or ear *shenmen* points with a Q-Tip for a tranquilizing effect.

Lovely, gentle aromas, such as Bulgarian rose, are extremely effective in ameliorating chronic psychospiritual imbalances, and serve as a gentle palliative to the hypervigilance that is so prevalent in our uncomfortably fast-paced 21 st-century existence.

Application and Guidelines

It is extremely important to pre-test your patients' sensitivity to essential oils. Apply a small amount of the oil to the yin aspect of the arm for at least 12 hours to determine if there is any allergic reaction. Prior to using a custom-blended oil in a facial protocol, test the patient's tolerance for each constituent "note."

Be advised that citrus oils, i.e., orange, lemon, lime, bergamot, etc., can cause photosensitivity. Do not use them if your patient is going to indulge in a bit of sunbathing, as they will most likely burn. Prior to prescribing a citrus oil, inform your patients of the contraindications. Spicy oils and eucalyptus metabolize homeopathic remedies.

Alternate your "repertoire" of essential oils every two weeks, in the same manner as you would use varying acupuncture points in a series of treatments; this will insure that the oils' healing potency will not diminish with too-frequent usage.

Applications

There are three different ways in which you can employ essential oils in your facial treatment protocol; all are considered to be very effective.

- Massage them into the skin.
- Apply them to acupuncture points.
- Diffuse them in the air (recommended for pregnant women).

The French acupuncturist Soulie de Mourant wrote that the use of certain essential oils on the eight extraordinary meridians proved to have a more profound effect on the *jing* level of a patient. Some practitioners use essential oil suppositories, which bypass the liver and are absorbed by the rectal veins. Because the liver is not involved, there is usually no allergic reaction, and the oils are

transported directly into the system. As this is such a direct, powerful application, it is important for the practitioner to be well informed of the qualities and medical properties of the oils selected.

In Europe, essential oils are taken internally to aid the healing process. Often the oils are accompanied with honey or milk, so as to prevent the hydrochloric acid in the stomach from undermining the integrity of the oil and lessening its efficacy. In the United States, this is contraindicated within an acupuncturist's scope of practice.

Children and the elderly often respond better when essential oils are applied to the soles of their feet. This provides more gentle entry into the system, since the rate of absorption is somewhat slower.

Conclusion

As we might discern from the above, the healing properties of essential oils are indeed wide-ranging. Since they represent a distillation of powerful life forces, we need to be mindful of the judicious employment of their healing attributes, and avoid possible detrimental side-effects.

In our next article, we will outline a technique for blending essential oils according to sound, color and fragrance, creating a beneficial "bouquet" that can be used in facial acupuncture treatments. Contraindications, meridian involvement, and specific applications for the face and skin will also be covered.

Reference

1. Piesse GW Septimus. *The Art of Perfumery, and the Methods of Obtaining the Odours of Plants*. Out of print.

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