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Original Article
Immunological and Psychological Benefits of Aromatherapy Massage

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Abstract
This preliminary investigation compares peripheral blood cell counts including red blood cells (RBCs), white blood cells (WBCs), neutrophils, peripheral blood lymphocytes (PBLs), CD4+, CD8+ and CD16+ lymphocytes, CD4+/CD8+ ratio, hematocrit, humoral parameters including serum interferon-γ and interleukin-6, salivary secretory immunoglobulin A (sIgA). Psychological measures including the State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) questionnaire and the Self-rating Depression Scale (SDS) between recipients (n = 11) of carrier oil massage and aromatherapy massage, which includes sweet almond oil, lavender oil, cypress oil and sweet marjoram oil. Though both STAI and SDS showed a significant reduction (P < 0.01) after treatment with aromatherapy and carrier massage, no difference between the aromatherapy and control massage was observed for STAI and SDS. Aromatherapy, in contrast to control massage, did not significantly reduce RBC count or hematocrit. However, aromatherapy massage showed a significant (P > 0.05) increase in PBLs, possibly due to an increase in CD8+ and CD16+ lymphocytes, which had significantly increased post-treatment (P < 0.01). Consequently, the CD4+/CD8+ ratio decreased significantly (P < 0.01). The paucity of such differences after carrier oil massage suggests that aromatherapy massage could be beneficial in disease states that require augmentation of CD8+ lymphocytes. While this study identifies the immunological benefits of aromatherapy massage, there is a need to validate the findings prospectively in a larger cohort of patients.