

Essential Oils - Why I use them. Why I believe doctors should know about them.



There are a small but growing number of physicians and other health professionals who accept and use essential oils. It is particularly difficult for me, having benefited so much from the use of therapeutic essential oils, to accept the resistance of conventional medicine to them.

As a physician and scientist, I was very skeptical about essential oils and their ability to heal. I had tried them before and was unimpressed. As far as I was concerned they smelled good and that was as far as it went. However, when traditional medicines and treatments could not help me, but rather caused many side effects when I had significant health problems, I tried essential oils. The results were amazing, hard to believe but they happened and I could not ignore them.

My first use of oils was for months of postmenopausal bleeding not responsive to all the best gynecologic medical care including hormones and a D&C (uterus scraping), and a hysterectomy had been suggested. Within hours of applying the oils topically and diffusing them in the room, I felt much better, and within 2 days the bleeding stopped. Subsequent checkups confirmed I was fine, and I still have all my parts.

I also suffered severe chronic pain due to a spinal condition, despite surgery. The pain medications left me in a brain fog and made functioning difficult. Using natural remedies including therapeutic essential oils, acupuncture and meditation, I was able to get off the medications, enjoy a clear head again, and experienced significant pain relief. *Read an article about Dr Barice "Dealing with relentless pain" in Fort Myers Florida Weekly September 20, 2007

Because of these results, I began to look for the scientific reasons these oils worked. I found there is a lot of research out there, much of it basic science research but the numbers of clinical studies were increasing. These studies suggest that oils are safe and effective for a wide range of symptoms and conditions, including infections, burns, pain, nausea, insomnia, stress, GI symptoms and many more, and I have found this to be true for myself and for others. In addition essential oils have been used for many hundreds of years as a folk medicine and have a long track record of safety.

MRSA - Aromatherapy essential oils an adjunct or alternative treatment for superbugs?

I have been studying and using essential oils for over 5 years. The problem of superbugs such as MRSA is growing. Adequate infection control and prevention are a must. In my opinion, therapeutic essential oils may have something important to offer medicine when it comes to preventing, suppressing or eradicating infections due to resistant microorganisms (Superbugs) including MRSA.

Essential oils (aromatherapy) are considered a complementary therapy. They have been used for centuries by doctors and laypeople alike to treat symptoms. According to Dr Jane Buckle, they are the fastest growing complementary therapy today. There is already a wealth of research that suggests the effectiveness of therapeutic essential oils against superbugs resistant to all antibiotics. We need more controlled clinical studies on effectiveness and safety before oils can be accepted widely for use in medicine, because we need to use research evidence-based treatments whenever possible. Standards are good to have. However, the most recent surveys show that we now use evidence-based treatment only about 30% of the time in conventional medicine, even if there is research evidence available.

As a physician, one concern I have about using essential oils is the lack of standards and quality control in the US. The purity and quality is very important to their effectiveness and safety. This is one of the reasons I use Young Living oils - because I know they use strict quality control and meet AFNOR and ISO standards used in Europe. Most physicians in America don't know much if anything about therapeutic essential oils. Doctors can't recommend a treatment we do not know about. We need to follow the standard of care, and if we have a treatment that's known to be effective, we must use it, unless the informed patient refuses it. When there is no effective treatment, as can happen with superbugs, when the standard of care does not work, complementary adjunctive treatments may be used if there is justification to do so. Why would we not want to use an available alternative treatment if nothing else works and the alternative offers a relatively safe and possibly effective option?

Essential oils appear to have a long track record of safety. They are inexpensive, and they have been shown to be effective against a number of superbugs in the laboratory, in animals and in some patients. One patient with chronic osteomyelitis who failed all the antibiotic treatments was successfully treated with essential oils and avoided an amputation that had been considered. (Sherry et al, BMC Surgery, 2001, 1:1) There is evidence supporting their use for prevention, such as for hand cleansing, cleaning surfaces and equipment, purifying air, decreasing the indiscriminate use of antibiotics, and for treating drug-resistant infections. They appear to be effective against MRSA (methicillin resistant staph aureus infections), herpes, anthrax, drug resistant TB, toxic mold and more. It has been reported that so far no resistant organism tested has been able to survive exposure to some combination of pure good quality essential oils.

Drs need to learn about essential oils, since drug-resistant infections are sky-rocketing, we are having difficulty preventing, and we cannot now effectively treat some drug-resistant infections with antibiotics. Good quality essential oils used early and appropriately may have the potential to save lives.

Joan Barice MD, MPH

Who Am I?

I'm Dr Joan Barice. If you are interested in staying healthy naturally, if you love aromatherapy or natural medicine, if you are interested in acupuncture, or energy healing, or public health or preventive medicine, please stay tuned. I'm interested in helping inform people so they can stay healthy as naturally as possible. I received my MD from Stanford, MPH from Harvard, and honorary doctorate in Humanities from Northwood University. I am board certified in internal medicine, preventive medicine and public health and ASAM certified in addiction medicine. I'm on the adjunct faculty of 3 medical schools. I teach med students and doctors. I believe in prevention first and a healthy lifestyle, and have given many classes to help people make changes which are difficult but worth it. It's never too late to get some benefit from prevention. I cannot give anyone medical advice here. Anything I say here should not be taken as medical advice, and will not substitute for proper medical care. I wrote the Palm Beach Long-Life Diet, published by Simon & Schuster years ago - basically good nutrition under the cover of a popular diet book. I try to practice what I preach. I set up and ran a chronic pain management program which used integrative medicine, including acupuncture, exercise, meditation, and conventional treatments. I have made 250 skydives, love the outdoors, lived in China where I studied qigong, survived a plane crash in the arctic wilderness, and have otherwise had a wonderful life.

My favorite quote is "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all." by Helen Keller.

Wishing you health,
Joan