# Nurse-Delivered Aromatherapy in a Large Healthcare System

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#### BACKGROUND

- Clinical aromatherapy is the controlled and therapeutic use of essential oils in the clinical setting for specific outcomes that are measurable.
- In 2012, a large healthcare system in Minnesota initiated a nurse-delivered aromatherapy program at ten hospitals.
- Nurse-delivered aromatherapy is within a nurse's scope of practice in the state of Minnesota and is an independent nursing function that does not require a physician order.
- The foundation for the aromatherapy program was holistic nursing, which takes into account the whole person: body, mind, spirit and emotions.
- The goal of the program was to create and maintain a safe and effective clinical aromatherapy program for patients and clients through partnership, education and research.

#### **PURPOSE**

To describe the status of aromatherapy program to date and to quantify pain, anxiety, and nausea patient outcomes across the healthcare system (excluding maternity care patients).

#### METHODS

- Two nurses, who are certified aromatherapists, created the aromatherapy program.
- Four essential oils were chosen based on peer-reviewed scientific research: ginger, lavender, mandarin and sweet marjoram.
- Nurses were required to take a 68 minute e-learning module to learn about essential oils and their properties before offering aromatherapy to patients.
- Nurses assessed their patients for appropriateness of aromatherapy, determined which essential oil to use and provided patient education.
- Following the intervention, nurses documented the essential oil that was used and the patient outcome in the electronic health record.
- Patients self-reported pre- and post-scores on a 0-10 scale for pain, nausea and anxiety.

### RESULTS

Between February 1, 2012 and June 30, 2014 there were 3,357 nurses trained in aromatherapy who provided 10,372 aromatherapy interventions to patients.

TABLE 1: NURSES TRAINED IN AROMATHERAPY BY HOSPITAL LOCATION AND YEAR

Location		2012	2013	2014	Total
Metropolitan Acute Care Hospitals	Abbott Northwestern Hospital (631 Beds)	393	233	104	730
	United Hospital (392 Beds)		19	42	1,046
	Mercy Hospital (254 Beds)		143	107	580
	Unity Hospital (175 Beds)	402	40	29	471
Regional Acute Care Hospitals	Cambridge Medical Center (75 Beds)	78	10	5	93
	St. Francis Regional Medical Center (53 Beds)	118	26	13	157
	Owatonna Hospital (43 Beds)	41	10	3	54
	New Ulm Medical Center (35 Beds)	76	8	1	85
	Buffalo Hospital (32 beds)	1	53	32	86
	River Falls Area Hospital (7 Beds)		7	5	55
Total		2,467	549	341	3,357

# FIGURE 1: AVERAGE CHANGE SCORES AND 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVALS BY ESSENTIAL OIL AND OUTCOME

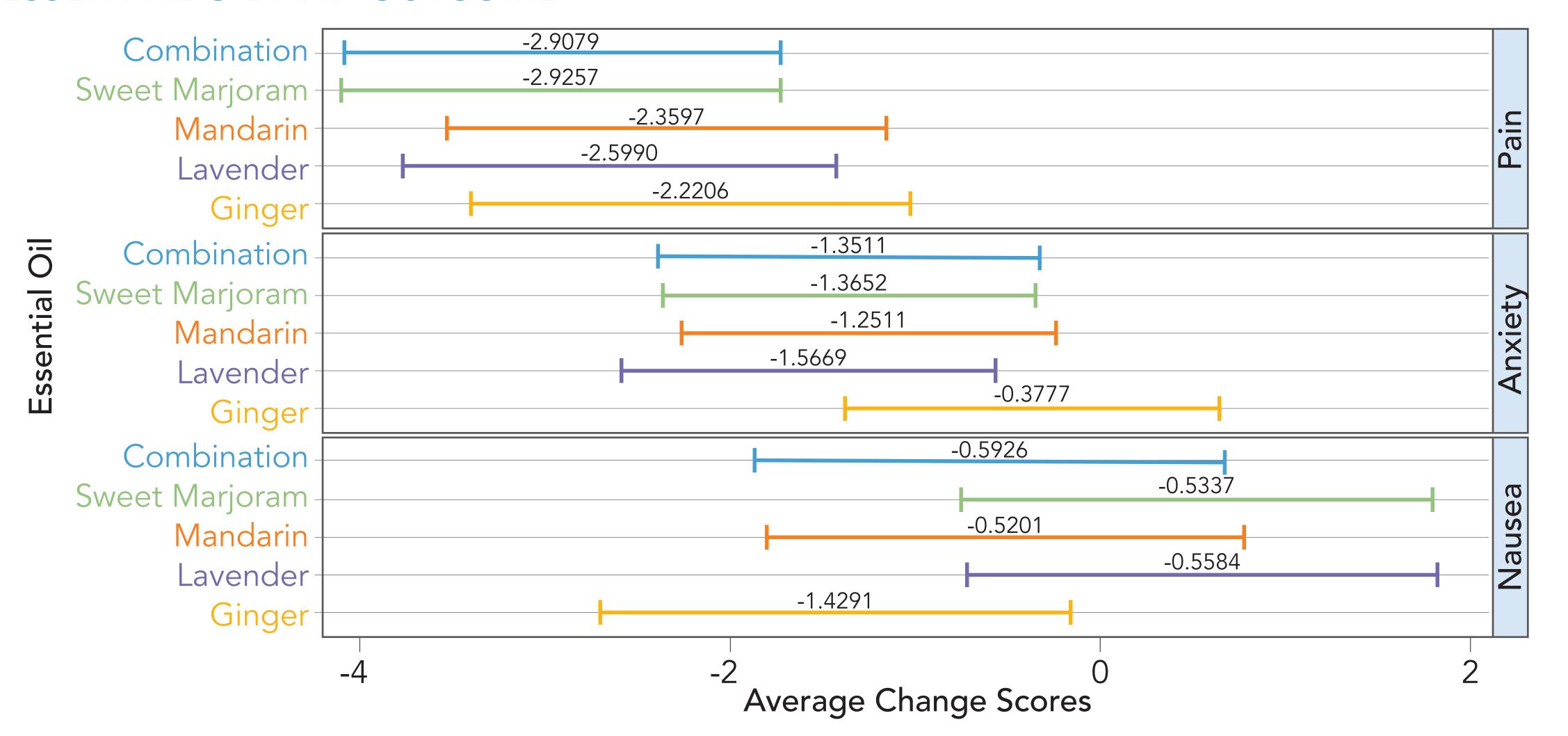


TABLE 2: FREQUENCY OF ESSENTIAL OIL DELIVERY BY MODE OF ADMINISTRATION

Delivery Method	Ginger (N=2,196)	Lavender (N=5,132)	Mandarin (N=975)	Sweet Marjoram (N=1,280)	Combination (N=789)	Total (N=10,372)
Inhaled	1,933 (88.0%)	3,776 (73.6%)	815 (83.6%)	888 (69.4%)	640 (81.1%)	8,052 (77.6%)
Topical	227 (10.3%)	1,194 (23.3%)	147 (15.1%)	359 (28.0%)	47 (6.0%)	1,974 (19.0%)
Inhaled and Topical	36 (1.6%)	162 (3.2%)	13 (1.3%)	33 (2.6%)	102 (12.9%)	346 (3.3%)
All Sessions	2,196 (21.2%)	5,132 (49.5%)	975 (9.4%)	1,280 (12.3%)	789 (7.6%)	10,372 (100%)

#### Aromatherapy Stories

"I really like the addition of aromatherapy in my practice. I feel like, often times, patients are surprised that we, as a hospital, would offer something like this. I also think that they are often surprised by their body's reaction to it. As a nurse, who was used to only having medication to give to patients to relieve their symptoms, it is wonderful to have aromatherapy as another tool to use; one that doesn't require another couple medications to reverse the side effects of the original medication. It's something the patient can use without the nurse having to be there; as we often have limited time to spend with patients the way it is."

"I had a patient that tried every kind of medication for nausea, and the medications weren't helping. The ONLY thing that helped was the Ginger. It took the nausea away instantly. Amazing."

"Aromatherapy has been integrated in the patient's pain and comfort plan. The patients and nursing staff work together to select the type of aromatherapy to provide health and healing. It is truly an essential benefit for the patient's comfort and healing."

"The ability to offer aromatherapy as an adjunct to medications in the perioperative area greatly enhances patient satisfaction. I have seen a decrease in preop anxiety and less anti-nausea medication being used postoperatively. The patients love it."

## CONCLUSIONS

- Our healthcare system has successfully incorporated the use of essential oils as a holistic approach to healthcare that is also safe, low-cost and non-pharmacologic.
- Nurse-delivered aromatherapy reduces pain, nausea and anxiety when provided as an adjunct to standard medical care.
- Nurses have commented that aromatherapy is an important adjunct to their nursing practice; they cite ease of use, patient empowerment, patient satisfaction and symptom reduction as common themes.

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