

Aromatherapy in Korea  
-A direction of research and developmental program-  
Hong Keun Oh, M.D, Ph.D, N.D

I. Preface

It is known for us that aromatherapy was beginning to evolve in Europe and through out the world, but historically old china and other Asian countries also trade aromatic oils and products as a folk medicine from early era too.

In Korea, many old medical books describe aromatherapy and herb scents are known and are used by old Korean doctor Huh Jun and other many herbalists.

One of Korean traditional aromatherapy was also originated from Korean buddist temple. They classified aromatic oils more precisely in the base of human five senses, yin and yang and five elements.

Those facts are known as the root of Korean aromatherapy.

Modern medicine is not being satisfied in the aspect of prevention and health promotion because of its treatment principle medicine rather than prevention.

In contrast to modern medicine, complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is better model for the purpose of holistic approaches.

CAM is now increasing in Korea and oriental medicine is a main alternative medicine also belonging to the legal system with western medicine in Korea.

Alternative medicine has been traditionally given to many patients and having advantages of painless and convenience.

People are interested in alternative medicine but there is not enough scientific proof and is needed in order for its use.

In Korea, aromatherapy is one of a model of CAM among medical doctors, oriental medical doctor, acupuncturists, herbalists, chiropractics , nutritionists and estheticians.

The general population is gaining the knowledge of alternative medicines with not only aromatherapy but also other complementary modalities.

II. The present of Korean Aromatherapy and the plans of developmental programs.

It is not much long time for Koreans to use aromatherapy especially among Korean medical doctors.

Since 1994, the author introduced aromatherapy and taught it to several doctors firstly.

Before the year, aroma skin massage and aromatic general care were overly popular in Korea rather than medical aromatherapy.

The Korean Association of Complementary and Alternative Medicine(KCAM), composed of over 200 medical specialists was established in 1997 and aromatherapy became major subspecial section.

The reason why the aromatherapy in Korea is mainly activated among medical doctors is most members of the association actively study and research the aromatherapy firstly. Also they have monthly seminars and yearly workshop and forum regularly. Now public is safely using aromatherapy because KCAM supports and promotes medically and scientifically it, so they believe and trust the use of the therapy. Aromatherapy oil can be bought by consumers in almost every location in Korea, only a couple of year ago it could not be beyond imagination.

A) The Korean Aromatherapy Association(KAA)

The KAA, established in 1997, is a non profit organization.

The members of the KAA are composed of medical doctors, oriental medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, skin care taker, herb farmer, cosmetic researchers, and general.

The followings are the general information about KAA.

**Objects:**

1. promote the usage of aromatherapy in a living life
2. provide the professional informations and scientific forums
3. cultivate mutual friendship among the members
4. contribute to the public health and establish the educational system
5. research and develop projects in the aromatherapy field

**Number of members :**

Their are about 250 members and the distribution of their jobs are:

medical professionals 30%

beauty estheticians 50%

life scientists, researchers, herbalists, horticulturists, cometic ferfumers 20%

**Membership fees:**

The KAA opens everyone to join as member from both individuals and corperations

interested in aromatherapy

	registration fee	annual fee
individual member	100,000won	50,000won
corperation member	200,000won	100,000won

**Privileges of Members :**

Members are entitled to attend KAA activities and functions at discount rates and

are given priority with regard to KAA publications

**Related corperations in Korea :**

The Korea Facific R&D Institute

The Korean Association of Complementary and Alternative Medicine  
The Korean Stress Research Society  
The Korean French Cosmetics  
The Korean Academy and Institute of Science and Technology  
The Korean Institute of Naturopathic Medicine

### **Board Members :**

Chairman 1  
Inspector 1  
Senior directors 5  
Directors 6

### **The activities of the association :**

1. Issues of monthly newsletter
2. Monthly conferences of aromatherapy cases
3. Annual symposium of aromatherapy
4. Information exchanges with the foreign aromatherapy associations
5. Arrangement of the educational programmes of aromatherapy

### **The projects of the association :**

1. The preliminary arrangement of the licensure system of aromatherapist in Korea
2. The establishment of the safety guideline of an essential oil and the inspection of the quality of the essential oils
3. The development of a curriculum for the aromatherapy school to meet the needs of the general public and also of the professionals
4. The preparation of publication of the academic magazine
5. The planning of the cooperative relationship with the international aromatherapy organizations

### **The past activities of the association :**

1. The 1st symposium of the annual congress of the association (October, 1997)
  - The scientific backgrounds of the aromatherapy
  - The relation between Chinese medicine and the aromatherapy
  - The safety problems of the aromatherapy
  - The present state of the British aromatherapy
2. The 2nd symposium of the annual congress of the association (August, 1998)
  - The effectiveness of the essential oils related to the asthma induced factors
  - The study of the efficacy of the antistress essential oils
  - The influence of the essential oils upon the electromagnetic field
  - The meridian stimulating method of aromatherapy

3. The 3rd symposium of the annual congress of the association(July, 1999)
  - The study of anti-inflammatory effect of the essential oils
  - The experimental study of memory improvement and antistress effect of the essential oils
  - The research for the quantum energy effect of the essential oils
  - Antiaging effect of the natural substances
  - Workshop : Aromatic immune massage of Mr.Hishasi Matsuda
4. The 1st monthly case conference(April, 1999)
  - The aromatic massage for a case of the poor venous circulation
  - The aromatic application to the cases of the postmenopausal women
  - The aromatherapy for the case of a pregnant woman
  - The cases of the aromatherapy for the pediatric patients
5. The 2nd monthly case conference(May, 1999)
  - The cases of the aromatherapy in a private clinic
  - The cases of the aromatic massage in a esthetic shop
  - The child and adolescent cases of the aromatherapy in the pharmatheutic store
  - The aromatherapeutic cases in the family doctor's clinic

#### B) Research and clinical programmes of aromatherapy in Korea

There are several research and clinical projects of aromatherapy in Korea.

1. Neuropsychiatric illness : researches and clinical applications on depression, insomnia, stress disorders, migraine, dementia and others with using of psychological tests, cognitive function tests, EEG, hormonal studies, infrared dermal temperature imaging, etc.  
Some studies revealed excellent and safe effects of aromatherapy in those sections and better results than antidepressant, hypnotics, analgesics and sedatives, but not sure the maintenance of the effects.
2. Skin problems : atopic dermatitis, eczema and allergic dermatitis are the target symptoms and diseases of the aromatherapy.  
Aromatherapy is more safer and less side effect than steroid.  
Aromatic meridian point massage and aromatic hydrotherapy are characteristically used in skin disorders.
3. Respiratory disorders : Aromatherapy is radically used for the control of flue and influenza also bronchitis in the base of antibacterial and antiviral effects of aromatic essential oils.
4. Women's diseases : premenstrual syndrome, cystitis, vaginitis, postmenopausal syndrome are mostly applied to aromatherapy and much effective in the regulation of endocrine systems and emotional dysharmonies.
5. others : Cardiovascular disorders, pain disorders and musculoskeletal problems are

also in the clinical trial of aromatherapy.

The author is particularly interesting to the vibrational energy pattern of aromatic essential oils and serial experimental studies done by the use of EAV, Quantum Fractal Analyzer, ABR which are scientifically approved apparatus for the evaluation of bioelectromagnetic or subtle energy level.

Some of interesting results of the author's studies are 84% of successful aromatherapeutic response for the abnormal functionings of each organ and 75.54% of statistically significant effects on the organs by the measurement of EAV.

The author also analyzed each essential oil which functions respond according to the internal organs.

For example, gallbladder, small intestine, and large intestine are related to lavender. Lymphatic system is related to fennel. Articular system to citronella, circulation & nervous systems related to clary sage.

Very recently, the author did classify vibrational energy level of each essential oil and clarified the relationship to homeopathic remedies.

### C) Aromatherapy and community health promotion plans

Aromatherapy became a special program for community health promotion.

The KAA and department of preventive medicine, medical school of Young Nam university were corporated for the adaptation of aromatherapy to the community health program and received the government burget over a hundred million won for 3 years from 1999 to 2002.

The main expectations of the community aromatherapy programs are the advantage of practical and convenient uses of aromatherapy for community residents and prevention of disease and general health promotion in every day life.

And also more variable applications of aromatherapy to multiple symptoms and disease conditions without serious side effects.

The community aromatherapy program has been practised at the Kyung Joo community health center by the endeavor and constant effort of the KAA and medical aromatherapists.

Some medical doctors who studied aromatherapy did apply aromatherapy continuously to pain disorders, arthritis, insomnia, and other stress disorders .

These efforts influenced the public health administrators and policy planners.

Aromatherapy education was lessoned to the staffs of Kyung Joo community health center and being operated to the community dwellers.

The main appraisals of the program in community are stress evaluation scale, HPLC estimation, EEG, general biological functioning tests and others

The followings are the effects of community aromatherapy :

- a) Estimate the prevalence rate of the community through the aromatherapy practice to migraine, backache, cardiovascular diseases, and etc.
- b) Prevent psychosomatic disorders, stress disorders and chronic degenerative diseases by convenient and costless procedures
- c) Create a model of community alternative medical modalities
- d) Opportunity to harmonize and unified western and eastern medicine in Korean medical system
- e) To develop clinically and experimentally scientific proving of alternative medicine including aromatherapy
- f) Introduce the self care system in the community health program.

Conclusively aromatherapy was the first introduction model to the public health system in Korea and there will be established a new model of community aromatherapy and others like community aromatic air system, economic production of aromatic essential oil, develop aromatic herb farm and increase income of the community economy, and etc.

D) The developmental planning of the Korean aromatherapy.

Aromatherapy is now developing in very fast pace in Korea.

But as an old Korean proverb, early heated steel is cooling clown earlier, it is necessary to lay down a solid scientific aromatherapy foundation for the future of the Korean aromatherapy.

There should be also a precaution of side effects, abusements, exaggerative advertisements about aromatherapy.

Many adjacent knowledges like medicine, skin esthetics, herbalology, pharmacology, chinese medicine, horticultural, cosmetics are the good resources for the applications of aromatherapy.

In Korea, Aromatherapy will be flourished by the activities of the KAA in future.

And more aroma research centers, aromatherapy clinics, aroma schools, and aroma business are success.

### III. Conclusion

There are many burden in progression of the Korean aromatherapy.

In that situation, professionals in aromatherapy should be harmonized with other scientific organizations and information systems.

The author emphasize the organization of Asian Pacific Network of Aromatherapy for the advancement of the aromatherapy and also the exchanges

of informations for each country.

First of all, Japan and Korea will be the idealistic partnership and leading countries for those purposes.

The author will try to accomplish that project preferentially in the part of academic and clinical exchanges between two countries.

Finally the author thanks to all of persons concerned the Japanese aromatherapy forum, Dr. Matsuda, the Japanese aromatherapy association and every body to be here for my speech.

Thank you very much, God bless all of you !