



## Service Priorities and Programmes Electronic Presentations

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### **The Effectiveness of Aromatherapy in Stress Management and Sleep Promotion in Older People with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) or Depression**

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#### **Introduction**

Because of the age-related stressors including declined sensory and functional capacities, increased dependency, loss of life-long partners/ friends (grief), retirement and worries about ill-health or death, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and depression are prevalent in the older age group. Aromatherapy is the one commonly applied to promote and maintain both physical and mental well-being (Mojay, 1996). There are many studies in recent decades supporting the efficacy of aromatherapy for its anxiolytic property (Morris, Birtwistle & Toms, 1995; Stevensen 1994; Dunn, Sleep & Collett, 1995). In Hong Kong, there have been some reviews about the efficacy of aromatherapy for people with anxiety or depressive symptoms (Yim, et al., 2009; Lee, et al., 2011; Lee, et al., 2012). They agree that aromatherapy could be applied as a complementary and alternative therapy for people with anxiety and depressive symptoms.

#### **Objectives**

The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of aromatherapy in the treatment of GAD and depression in people aged 65 or above and helps to promote sleep and to maximize ones' functional and health status through body stretching and relaxation exercise.

#### **Methodology**

A stress management program comprises of twelve 1.5 hr-sessions, will be organised on consecutive Thursday mornings. Each session will start with a stretching exercise, to be followed by the following categories of activities: (a) Three sessions of psycho-education and health promotion programme conducted by psychiatric nurses to give the general introduction of the program, and the related health education. (b) Five sessions of social and recreational program include tea gathering, calligraphy exercise, music therapy, outing, etc. (c) Two fitness stretching exercise sessions will

be conducted by physiotherapist and two sessions of Qigong by occupational therapist. At the end of each session, participants will practice the relaxation exercise during which the essential oils will be diffused to scent an entire room.

### **Result**

Assessment include 12-item short form survey (SF-12), Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) and sleep domain of Hamilton Depression Rating Scale. Measures will be administered to the participants before and after these 12 session programs for evaluation. Total participants were 43 and only 12 participants (28%) completed the program with the pre and post assessments done. In which the pre mean score of GDS was 5.67 while the post mean score was 3.33, it showed obviously improvement in depressive mood. For the SF-12, pre generally health mean score was 3.58 while the post general health mean score was 3.25 which indicated the participants improved their quality of life. For the sleep domain, pre and post score were the same (2.58) which showed no improvement in sleep. After completion of the program they could relieve their anxiety and improved in sleep hygiene management.