

Aroma Acupoint Therapy™

Using Essential Oils in Chinese Medicine

Peter Holmes LAc, MH

Aroma Acupoint Therapy is a gentle, completely safe and yet profoundly effective treatment modality that utilizes the energetic **qualities or Qi** within pure essential oils. Treatment involves placing particular oils on specific acupuncture points on the body in order to trigger **therapeutic** changes in the individual that will **heal symptoms** and bring the patient back to a state of balance. Aroma Acupoint Therapy works on the basis of mutual resonance through the intentional combination of essential oils and acupuncture points, resulting in a more significant clinical effect than the use of either oils or acupuncture points by themselves.

How Aroma Acupoint Therapy Works

The basic premise of Aroma Acupoint Therapy is that essential oils are **energetically active and can stimulate acupuncture points in a similar way as needles**. However, essential oils are also able to **convey specific** information to a point for promoting a particular therapeutic action, unlike needles which act more purely by mechanical stimulation. This information is based on the electrochemical nature **or Qi** of an essential oil, as expressed by its particular fragrance.

The basic aim is **to create a synergistic effect by selecting** an essential oil that possesses the same function as an acupuncture point; an oil that will activate a particular point function. Geranium oil (*Pelargonium capitatum*), for instance, is a *female hormonal regulator* in women with reproductive weakness that is a perfect match for points such as SP-6 and CV-4, as these points have the same function. In Chinese medicine, this oil-point combination nourishes the Blood and regulates menstruation. However, Geranium is also a *mucostatic* agent that has the effect of helping dry up vaginal discharges, and as such is appropriate for application onto points such as CV-6 and SP-10 in women with a damp or congestive condition in the pelvis. This oil-point combination resolves damp in the lower warmer and reduces discharges.

Conversely, because each acupuncture point has more than one action, there are several oils that could potentially be used with it, as the situation would demand. An important acupuncture point such as CV-17 at the center of the chest, for instance, may be oiled with a *nervous sedative* oil to settle the Heart and calm the spirit, such as **Marjoram** (*Origanum maiorana*) or Helichrysum (*Helichrysum angustifolium*), as this point has a good

calming effect on the whole **body and mind**. It is often used in states of acute anxiety and agitation when there is an emotional component present. Equally however, CV-17 can be oiled with *respiratory restoratives* and *stimulants* that deeply tonify Lung Qi, such as Siberian fir (*Abies sibirica*), Scotch pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and Black spruce (*Picea mariana*), to enhance the point's excellent strengthening effect on the lungs and bronchi. This type of combination is highly beneficial, for instance, in individuals with constitutional lung weakness, for chronic respiratory infections and for states of grief. These are all conditions where lung energy is weakened and will benefit from this powerful oil-point synergy. In all these cases, the essential oil is able to effectively and safely engage and amplify a particular acupuncture point function.

The mechanism of action at work here is unproven, as Aroma Acupoint Therapy is a relatively new treatment modality. **Currently** there are several theories that would help explain the often immediate **therapeutic** response to oil-point treatment, as well as this therapy's long-term effectiveness. One theory **proposes** that the oils are able to activate peptides connected with the points that **transmit the suggested therapeutic action** through the meridian pathways to specific target tissues and organs. **Another explanation** draws on the universal principle of mutual resonance, **which** is also present in homeopathy. **Oils and points** possessing a similar quality and function will energetically resonate with each other, creating a particular vibratory micro-frequency to achieve a therapeutic effect.

The Fragrance Energetics of Essential Oils

Essential oils exhibit the quality of their Qi mainly through their fragrance, just as plants and foods exhibit the quality of their Qi mainly through their taste – this is the key to their **energetic nature**. The basic framework for using essential oils in Aroma Acupoint Therapy is a clinical, empirical model of the energetic properties of essential oils based on their aromatic qualities. Essential oils are broadly divided into high, middle and base tones, corresponding to their rising, circulating and sinking energetic movements, respectively. Knowing the fragrance qualities of oils allows the practitioner to track their energetic or Qi movements in the body from the head down to the feet. The main fragrance qualities are the Pungent, Lemony, Sweet, Green, Woody and Rooty, and within these lie specific types of fragrance qualities, such as Fresh-Pungent, Spicy-Pungent, Sweet-Green, Lemony-Green, and so on.

Rosemary oil (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), for instance, is a Fresh-Pungent oil with secondary Sweet and Green qualities. Every fragrance category has specific energetic and functional properties that all oils belonging to it have in common. Fresh-Pungent oils are generally stimulating, energizing, uplifting, awakening, and warming. They tonify, warm

and dry, so they are used in weak, cold and damp conditions with their typical symptoms of fatigue, weakness, cold extremities, aches and pains, etc. The specific actions of Fresh-Pungent oils in Chinese medicine include tonifying the Qi, strengthening the spirit, resolving damp, and dispersing external wind, damp and cold.

Roman camomile (*Anthemis nobilis*), for another example, belongs to the Sweet-Green fragrance category and is usually chosen for its relaxing, cooling and pain-relieving effects that are typical of this category. It is indicated for tense and hot conditions characterized by irritability, nervous tension, pain, and a tight, rapid pulse, etc. The Chinese medicine functions of Sweet-Green oils are to relax constrained Qi, activate stagnant Blood and Qi, clear heat and calm the spirit. Each fragrance quality has a general function, with every essential oil in this category expressing its own energetic signature and specific physiological, psychological and spiritual functions. Any of these may be engaged during treatment at the appropriate time.

The Technique and Treatment Protocols

Aroma Acupoint Therapy consists of lightly applying just one drop of an essential oil to an acupuncture point with a finger and holding it in place for a short length of time. The practitioner can select one or more established treatment protocols that typically involve activating between three to eight points with oils. In the context of acupuncture, this may be combined with needling other points. In the context of body work, this may be followed and/or preceded by massage, osteopathy, craniosacral work, reflexology, etc. Although Aroma Acupoint Therapy is easily integrated with these other treatment modalities, it does not rely on these for its effectiveness and successfully stands alone as a method of treatment.

The practitioner can choose to perform one or more treatment protocols per session. These protocols are named after the most prominent symptom in the pattern, e.g. Racing Mind, Neck and Shoulder Tension, Heat PMS, Emotional Withdrawal, and so on. Treatment protocols are organized according to an underlying pattern of energetic or functional imbalance. They are specific to modern-day patients, their health concerns and address what is seen every day in a clinical setting. Once the practitioner gains greater experience using the treatment protocols and better knowledge of both the oils and the acupuncture points, he/she will know when to modify the oil-point combinations to give a more individualized treatment.

The Diagnostic Evaluation

The symptoms the client presents can be evaluated using the Six-Condition Diagnostic Assessment. This is a diagnostic model developed by Peter Holmes over many years of

clinical practice and research into the diagnostic systems of traditional Chinese, Greek and Ayurvedic medicine – the three extant world systems of energetic medicine. Symptoms may be mental, emotional or purely physical; together they form [patterns of energetic or functional imbalance](#). The main axis of imbalance seen today in Western societies is the axis of Tense-Weak conditions, which is based on hyper- and hypo-functioning of the nervous system, respectively. Also commonly seen are symptoms of imbalance on the Hot-Cold axis, based on hyper- and hypo-functioning of the body's warmth-circulatory system; and the Dry-Damp axis, based on tissue hydration and fluid balance.

The symptom evaluation itself includes not only what the patient reports but also an assessment of his/her facial complexion, skin quality, muscle tone, breathing, voice, pulse quality, physical movement, likes and dislikes as regards food, drink, climate, and so on. These all together tell the practitioner the nature of the imbalance in terms of the Six Conditions and will point to possible treatment [protocols](#). Once treatment is underway, the practitioner will monitor its effectiveness by looking for positive signs of change in the client's complexion, the brightness of the eyes, sound of the voice and improvement of the pulse quality, as well as improvement of actual symptoms. It is not unusual to find improvement in many of these diagnostic parameters by the end of a successful treatment and, in some cases, very soon after all the oils have been placed on points. The pulse in particular responds quickly to the rebalancing effect of oils applied to a judicious selection of points; this is probably because the pulse registers the functional changes taking place in the vascular autonomic system.

The Origins of AromAcupression Therapy

The origins of Aroma Acupoint Therapy go back to Peter's acupuncture training in Paris at *l'Ecole Européenne d'Acupuncture* and in England at the *College of Traditional Chinese Acupuncture*. While in clinical practice during the 1980s, Peter became exposed to British aromatherapy as it developed in England at that time. Realizing that essential oils were just as powerful as acupuncture needles, he began experimenting on patients by placing a drop of oil on a point before needling and sometimes instead of needling. Many years of experimentation and observation led to the development of the experiential model of fragrance energetics for the essential oils, [as described in this article](#). This model was first presented at the international Aroma '95 conference in England.

The foundation for Peter's understanding of the energetic nature of essential oils and their effects on [the body and mind](#) began with his earlier studies at the College of Consultant Herbalists and his apprenticeship with Christopher Hedley; these immersed him in the Western herbal medicine tradition. However, from the very beginning he was

motivated to understand the use of Western herbs from the same perspective as Chinese herbal medicine. Spending several years researching the lost tradition of Greek-Galenic medicine in the West gave him deep insights into the energetic properties of plants and essential oils. He also realised that essential oils had been an important preparation form among practitioners since the 1400s. To complete his training, Peter also undertook a mentorship in the medical use of essential oils in the French tradition with pharmacist Henri Verdier in Paris.

Today, Peter's highly developed model of fragrance energetics is the cornerstone of the energetic approach to using the oils in Aroma Acupoint Therapy. [Seminars on Aroma Acupoint Therapy techniques and treatment protocols](#) are held several times a year throughout the United States. In 2018, Aroma Acupoint Therapy seminars will be presented in Europe for the first time in Frankfurt at ABZ Mitte.