

The Power of Lavender: Clinical Aromatherapy Reduces Anxiousness in Behavioral Health Unit

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The Path to Elequil Aromatabs Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy dates back thousands of years to ancient civilizations. Essential oils such as rose, frankincense, and myrrh as well as lavender, ginger, and orange blossom were common. These essential oils were used for medicinal as well as beauty and spiritual purposes. Essential oils remain in use today and have been gaining popularity in the United States. In recent years, hospitals started using specific essential oils to alleviate patient anxiousness. In the project discussed here, nurses were interested in using essential oils to alleviate anxiousness in a behavioral health setting.

Early in an inpatient's stay, patients are often at their highest level of acuity. In some cases, patients have already received all their prescribed medications, or the medications administered do not sufficiently reduce their anxiousness. These patients frequently require additional supportive interventions. Members of the nursing staff at Silver Hill Hospital were looking specifically for non-pharmacological adjunctive interventions to help reduce patient anxiousness.

After learning about Elequil Aromatabs® aromatherapy at a medical conference and already being familiar with essential oils and the benefits of lavender specifically, the nurses developed a pilot study as part of a larger quality improvement project. This study aimed to determine whether Elequil Aromatabs would be an acceptable adjunctive intervention to reduce anxiousness and to complement existing programs such as yoga, sound baths, mindful meditation, and massage therapy.

"Elequil Aromatabs are another tool in our toolkit, particularly when staff feels that they cannot offer more medication or alternatives to comfort patients."

Key Findings from Silver Hill Hospital Clinical Aromatherapy Project

- **70%** of participants reported a positive change in their level of anxiousness after using Elequil Aromatabs aromatherapy
- **33%** of participants wanted to continue using Elequil Aromatabs after their study period concluded

Lavender Aromatherapy in the Literature

Lavender essential oil is known to be one of the most effective essential oils for relieving anxiety and is considered an accessible and safe option compared with anti-psychotic medications.¹ Although aromatherapy is widely used in both the general population and healthcare settings, the number of academic studies with evidence to support the efficacy of essential oils in treating anxiety, depression, or insomnia remains limited.² As interest in aromatherapy as an alternative non-pharmacological treatment grows, more studies may become available.

Summarized below are three randomized clinical trials on the use of inhaled lavender to reduce anxiety. While not a complete list, these three studies illustrate the range of settings in which lavender aromatherapy has been shown to be effective:

- Randomized clinical trial included 126 patients undergoing oral surgery (wisdom tooth removal) who reported baseline anxiety: Patients who inhaled lavender essential oil reported a reduction in anxiety, said they enjoyed the scent, were satisfied with their experience, and would prefer the same protocol be used again, if needed.³
- Randomized placebo-controlled study included 58 patients with hypertension: Immediately after the first 15-minute lavender inhalation session, the aroma group demonstrated a significantly greater reduction in anxiety scores compared to the placebo group. This effect persisted after seven consecutive days of inhalation sessions.⁴
- Randomized placebo-controlled trial included 62 women undergoing intrauterine insemination: Women who inhaled lavender essential oil experienced a reduction in anxiety during the procedure and reported high satisfaction with the aromatherapy.⁵

Silver Hill Hospital Quality Improvement Project: Methods

The study was conducted in a general adult behavioral health unit at Silver Hill Hospital in New Canaan, CT, between August 18 and October 9, 2025. The study was led by Peggy A. Sawyer, PMHCNS-BC, APRN, MSN, MBA; Immacula Cann, DNP, RN-BC; and Bethany Zaro, MPH, RN, GSP.

The aromatherapy product used in the study was Elequil Aromatabs® Lavender-Sandalwood. Combining sandalwood with lavender extends the duration of the aroma from 8 hours to 24 hours. The Lavender-Sandalwood aroma was selected for this study because of the added longevity.

The Aromatabs were offered to patients within 24 hours of their admission. Of the 49 patients who were offered Elequil Aromatabs, 30 accepted and 19 declined. The 30 participating patients were between the ages of 21 and 71. There were 12 males and 18 females.







How Does Aromatherapy Work?

Essential oils are hydrophobic plant-derived liquids containing aromatic compounds. Aromatherapy is the practice of inhaling these plant-derived essential oils to support physiological and psychological well-being. The inhaled molecules induce physical and emotional responses by stimulating olfactory receptors that transmit signals to the limbic system, a complex system of nerves and networks in the brain that controls basic emotions and behavior.

Lavender is an essential oil with a wide range of applications and few reported sensitivities.⁶ It is known for its sedative and relaxing effects. By relaxing the autonomic nervous system, inhalation of lavender essential oil may result in decreased symptoms of anxiety.⁷

Participants were given an informational sheet as well as a consent document which asked about any known allergies to essential oils or specifically to lavender or sandalwood. An Aromatabs was placed on each participant’s clothing and they were educated on its use.

Prior to the placement of the Aromatabs, participants were asked to rate their level of anxiousness using a visual facial anxiety scale⁸ (see figure below). Fifteen minutes after placement, the patients were again asked to rate their level of anxiousness using the same scale.

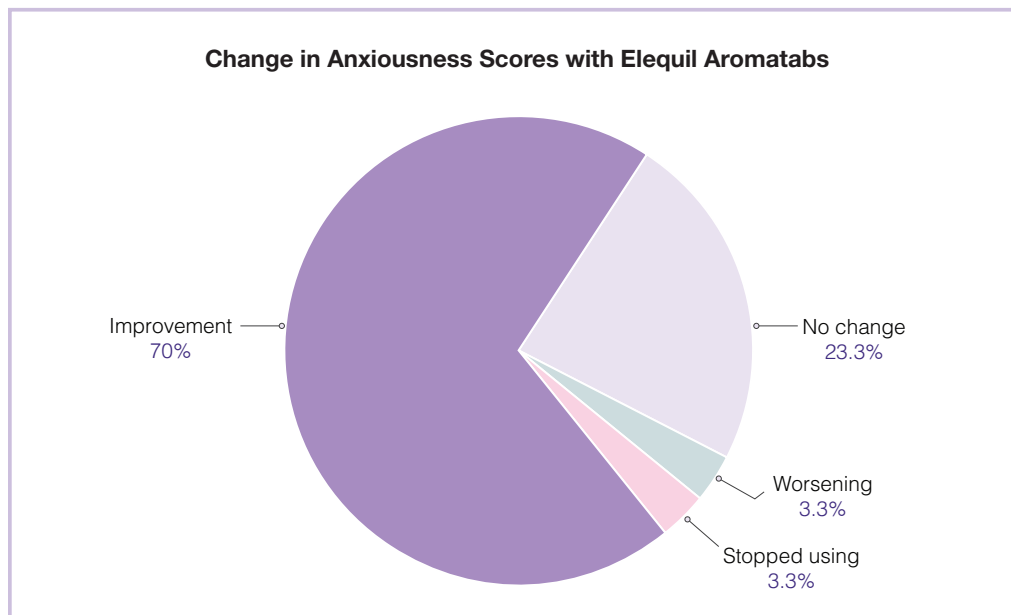
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Anxiousness Level	None	Mild	Mild-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	Highest
Faces						

Visual Facial Anxiety Scale

Silver Hill Hospital Quality Improvement Project: Clinical Aromatherapy Results

Of the 30 patients who used an Aromatabs, 21 (70%) reported a positive change in their level of anxiousness, 7 (23%) reported no improvement in their level of anxiousness, 1 (3%) reported a worsening of their level of anxiousness, and 1 (3%) did not care for the aroma and discontinued use.

Ten of the 30 participants (33%) requested another Aromatabs the following day after the conclusion of their study period. Three patients (10%) who were transferred to Residential Treatment after their inpatient stay also asked for additional Aromatabs.



Nurses Appreciated the Benefits of Elequil Aromatabs®

Nurses participating in the project appreciated the opportunity to offer a non-pharmacological solution and commented on how it helped them engage with their patients:

“I observed that most patients were receptive to the Aromatabs intervention and often appeared calmer following its use. It served as a simple, non-pharmacological approach to reduce anxiousness, promote emotional well-being, and foster meaningful nurse-patient interactions throughout their admission.”

“The Aromatabs provided a simple yet meaningful way to engage with new patients and open up conversations about how they were feeling. Many patients arrive on the unit feeling anxious or uncertain, and offering the Aromatabs created an approachable way to connect with them while also providing a calming effect. I noticed that for several patients, the Aromatabs appeared to help ease their anxiousness and many even requested another one the following day. I would love to see this project done on other units as well!”

“I think using the Aromatabs made patients feel more empowered in their well-being while offering relief and a strategy that did not involve PRN medication. It also seemed to provide an opportunity for self-reflection that was especially helpful in the middle of the day between goals and wrap-up group.”

“While long-term effects need more examination, immediate effects seemed to be a pleasant distraction that can make all the difference, particularly at the time of admission.”



Further Evidence on the Efficacy of Elequil Aromatabs Aromatherapy

Numerous independent peer-reviewed studies on Elequil Aromatabs across diverse clinical settings have been published. Described below are some of the studies that focused on anxiety:

- Study on 51 ambulatory surgery patients: 73% of participants reported a decrease in their anxiety after using a lavender Elequil Aromatabs, with the most drastic change seen in patients in the “Severe” category pre-intervention.⁹
- Study on 100 patients admitted for ambulatory surgery: Patients in the experimental group were provided a lavender Elequil Aromatabs in the preoperative waiting area. The mean reduction in anxiety was statistically greater in the experimental group than the control group.¹⁰
- Randomized, placebo-controlled study included 87 women: There was a statistically significant reduction in self-reported anxiety with the use of the lavender-sandalwood Elequil Aromatabs.¹¹
- Prospective, single-blind study included 144 patients undergoing spinal procedures: Post-treatment anxiety scores of participants using lavender Elequil Aromatabs had a statistically significant reduction in anxiety scores.¹²

Conclusions

The pilot study conducted at Silver Hill Hospital showed that the use of Elequil Aromatabs® Lavender-Sandalwood aromatherapy reduced self-reported anxiousness in a large majority (70%) of study participants. Additionally, nursing staff appreciated the ability to offer a non-pharmacological solution to ease anxiousness, and the process of offering Elequil Aromatabs helped nurses engage and connect with their patients. Furthermore, using aromatherapy empowered patients to be more involved in their well-being.

Independent peer-reviewed studies show that lavender aromatherapy is a non-pharmacological solution that can safely be used to effectively reduce anxiety and improve the well-being of patients in many different clinical settings. These studies also demonstrate the benefits of aromatherapy as an alternative treatment and complement to traditional care.

Elequil Aromatabs aromatherapy is a practical, noninvasive, easy-to-use intervention for nurses and other healthcare professionals seeking to improve patient comfort and can serve as a valuable adjunct for situations where patients are experiencing anxiousness.

About the Authors



Peggy Sawyer, PMHCNS-BC, APRN, MSN, MBA, is the Director of Nursing Practice Excellence at Silver Hill Hospital (SHH). Ms. Sawyer has over 45 years of experience including 20 years of international management consulting work at leading management consulting firms; work in academia including adjunct faculty at the Yale School of Nursing, where she has taught graduate and undergraduate nurse practitioner students for over 10 years; and nursing leadership work at Yale New Haven Health Psychiatric

Hospital. Her prior executive leadership positions include Director of Nursing Finance at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, CNO at Alfred J. Solnit Children's Hospital, Associate CNO for Behavioral Health at Cambridge Health Alliance, and Chief Nurse Executive at Connecticut Valley Hospital. Ms. Sawyer also served as a hospital surveyor for The Joint Commission's Psychiatric Hospital group.

Ms. Sawyer earned baccalaureate degrees in Biology and Nursing, as well as an MSN, from Vanderbilt University and an MBA from New York University. She was a Commonwealth Fund Fellow early in her career, working with like-minded nurse leaders to bring business knowledge to clinical settings. In business school, Ms. Sawyer was a student of W. Edwards Deming, an international statistical process control expert. Under Dr. Deming's tutelage, she honed her quality work, which she later used to improve data-driven administrative and clinical processes. She is trained in Six Sigma and LEAN to support her quality improvement work and strengthen clinical outcomes. Ms. Sawyer also currently serves on the advisory board for Goodwin University's School of Nursing.



Immacula Cann, DNP, RN-BC, is the Chief Nursing Officer for Silver Hill Hospital (SHH). She is a board-certified Psychiatric and Mental Health Registered Nurse with a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree from Northeastern University. Dr. Cann has also served as a Lecturer/Preceptor for Yale University's Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing Graduate Entry Specialty in Nursing (GEPN) program. She has extensive nursing experience in leadership roles with a focus on improving the mental and physical well-

being of staff, leading to higher quality patient care. Dr. Cann's responsibilities at SHH include building trust among all nursing staff and fostering a cohesive team committed to delivering an exceptional, seamless, high-quality patient experience. She is attuned to organizational dynamics and has partnered with academic institutions, colleagues, and industry leaders to elevate nursing standards.

Dr. Cann's doctoral study focused on presenteeism, recognizing that employees' mental and physical health are key factors in workplace quality, productivity, and patient engagement in optimized clinical outcomes. Her goal at SHH is to foster an environment that supports shared governance. She is a member of several nursing associations and currently serves on the Government Relations Committee and the Nominations Committee of the Connecticut Nurses Association. Dr. Cann is a lifelong advocate for social justice for families and children and has both local and international experience developing and implementing education-focused policies and programs.

Elequil Aromatabs® Aromatherapy

Elequil Aromatabs aromatherapy is a simple non-pharmacological intervention that uses 100% pure essential oils. Elequil Aromatabs aromatherapy has a unique controlled delivery system with easy hands-free application, adheres to the patient's gown or clothing, and allows minimum and maximum aroma exposure.



Lavender-Peppermint
Lasts up to 8 hours

Lavender-Peppermint promotes relaxation during pain, helps comfort and calm anxiousness, and soothes queasiness



Lavender
Lasts up to 8 hours

Lavender-Sandalwood
Lasts up to 24 hours

Lavender and Lavender-Sandalwood promote relaxation during pain, help comfort and calm anxiousness



Orange-Peppermint
Lasts up to 8 hours

Orange-Ginger
Lasts up to 8 hours

Orange-Peppermint and Orange-Ginger uplift and can soothe queasiness

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