

**Welcome ...** to the Holistic Cancer Care Centre at The James Cook University Hospital. The aim of this leaflet is to provide you with some general information about your aromatherapy treatment and answer some of the most commonly asked questions. You may find it helpful prior to your first visit, to make a note (on the back of this leaflet) of the things you would like to ask.

### **what is aromatherapy?**

The implications of aromatherapy for people with cancer are to be found in the way we look at the person holistically. So often when people are given a diagnosis the focus is turned to the cancer site and not the person.

Many patients suffering from cancer make use of complementary therapies, with aromatherapy being a popular choice. It can help ease feelings of anxiety and reduce symptoms such as pain, nausea, constipation, insomnia and skin conditions.

The treatment combines massage, structured therapeutic touch and essential oils extracted from flowers, leaves, fruit and seeds of a variety of different plants. The treatment includes a short consultation with the aromatherapist to determine which essential oils are most suitable.

It is not always necessary to remove a lot of clothing to have a massage and a full body massage is not always appropriate; often a hand or foot massage can be sufficient. The room is warm and quiet and patients are encouraged to talk to the practitioner. The effects and touch of massage, the essential oils, individual care, attention and the relaxation music all contribute to the benefits of the treatment.

Using a holistic view of each patient in order to alleviate their stress and discomfort can also be beneficial in reducing the side effects of the person's cancer treatment. Ideally, aromatherapy should be an integral part of the care provided for such individuals.

### **how can aromatherapy help me?**

Many people come to aromatherapy for help with specific symptoms or conditions. These might include anxiety states, arthritis, asthma, back pain, circulatory problems, depression, high blood pressure, indeterminate aches and pains, menstrual problems, headaches and skin conditions.

Aromatherapy can be used alongside conventional medicine in the treatment of both acute and chronic disease. Some people may have aromatherapy as a preventative measure or because

they feel unwell in themselves without being "ill" in the Western sense. As with any therapy, the response to aromatherapy can vary from one person to another.

### **what will happen on my first visit?**

Your first consultation may be longer than subsequent sessions. The aromatherapist needs to assess your general state of health in order to identify the best blend of essential oils for you and also that you are aware of any contraindications.

You will be asked about your current symptoms and what treatment you have received so far, your medical history, your digestive system, sleeping patterns and emotional state and current problems. The appropriate essential oils are then selected and blended with carrier oil. A small amount will be applied to an area of your body as a "patch test" to ensure that you do not have any reaction to the oils. Providing there is no reaction to the test in the next 24 hours then we will proceed with the treatment.

### **how many treatments will I receive?**

Here in the Holistic Cancer Care Centre our patients are usually offered six treatments in the first instance.

