

Changing the Landscape of Memory Care

Using Aromatherapy in care settings
by Jayne Clairmont

Since 1997, English Rose Suites has broken the mold of traditional assisted living/memory care. The beautifully appointed executive style homes are located in real neighborhoods in the southwestern suburbs of Minneapolis. English Rose Suites' owner, Jayne Clairmont, a pioneer of smaller/clustered living environments designed and created Kensington Cottages in the 1990s, believed that smaller environments would truly help create well-being.

For many years, Clairmont struggled to conform to traditional approaches in memory care and recognized the overuse of psychotropic medications as a means to control behavioral expressions. English Rose Suites' model believed that elders should be allowed to live fully with their dementia.

While speaking at national seminars, Clairmont had the opportunity to attend seminars and education forums that were discussing the possible benefits from new holistic approaches in care settings. Jayne took this information and with the help of an Alzheimer's Association staff member, began selecting Essential Oils to be used with the residents at English Rose Suites. The Essential Oils were chosen for their abilities to sooth and calm, increase appetite, aid digestion, diminish pain, boost sleep, encourage alertness, speed healing, and lift the spirits.

The nursing team at English Rose Suites, who had been trained with a more traditional way of thinking, struggled to get on board with Aromatherapy. It was not until Katie Rinehimer came on board in 2003 as a Home Health Aide/Team Mentor and championed the use of Essential Oils with the residents that the rest of the team began to change their frame of mind.

Aromatherapy is the use of volatile plant oils including essential oils for psychological and physical well-being. The main reason to introduce Aromatherapy is to reduce stress so that the rest of the body's functions can fall into a normal, healthy pattern. At English Rose Suites, the most effective oil

has been the use of lavender. Lavender helps with insomnia, helps the body adapt to stress, and may improve mental accuracy and concentration. Lavender is used to reduce anxiety, restlessness, and sleeplessness.

Case Study: Braemar Home

The Braemar home at English Rose Suites was a busy one, specifically in the afternoons. A gentleman named Bob, who typically had the idea at this time of day that there was somewhere he needed to be and the other residents follow suit.

One day when Katie arrived to the Braemar home for work, she decided she would lead the other staff by example. She turned on the diffuser and added Lavender Oil before the afternoon restlessness began. On this particular day, a resident had been watching the TV show *The West Wing*. The resident stood up suddenly asking to go to the West Wing. Katie walked with the resident, attempting to find out what he meant by the West Wing. The Resident looked at Katie and said matter-of-factly, “I want to go to the West Wing.”

Katie told him that they really needed to plan this out before they could go. “We’re in Minnesota and the trip will take us some time. Let’s sit down and plan out how we’re going to get to the West Wing.”

Katie began planning the trip to Washington DC with the resident while applying Essential Oils to him and the other residents who all slowly made their way over and joined in the activity of planning their trip to visit the West Wing.

The rest of the evening was stress-free for both the staff and the residents. Katie’s example was a turning point in getting the nursing team and staff to believe in the power of Essential Oils. As English Rose Suites grew in their knowledge, they developed an individualized Aromatherapy Care Plan for each resident. The key to the effectiveness of the Aromatherapy Care Plans supported accountability. Accountability is achieved through documentation that coincides with the Nursing Treatment Plan. Since applying Essential Oils consistently to the residents, along with extensive training with each staff member, the English Rose Suites model has seen a significant reduction in dosage and usage of medications.-English Rose Suites has witnessed a minimal need for the use of psychotropic medications.

In 2013, Jayne approached Dr. Bret Haake, Assistant Medical Director, Dept. Head Neurology, and Dr. Leah Hanson, Co-Director of Alzheimer's Research Center at HealthPartners Center for Memory and Aging. Drs. Haake and Hanson were immediately intrigued and on board to help facilitate an IRB study on Lavender Essential Oil with improving sleep in residents of a large memory care environment. During the 18 months that the study was conducted, the conclusion proved 42.5 additional minutes of sleep per night while using Lavender Essential Oil.

Currently, Dr. Hanson and her team, along with the English Rose Suites team, are working towards expanding the study for a broader base. They are excited to spread the knowledge and benefits of Essential Oils to memory care throughout the world.