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The International Federation of Aromatherapists (IFA) established since 1985 is moving onward and upwards. It is a charity organisation which is actively progressing in the education of complementary therapists, nurses, and beauticians, into the world of essential oil therapy and massage with training courses and being supportive to their members. It also publishes the Aromatherapy Times Journal quarterly. The IFA council members work voluntarily to educate and raise public awareness about aromatherapy and its effectiveness.

The IFA have schools in Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Finland, Australia and Taiwan, and are supporting overseas students in their training and development as Aromatherapist.

The IFA's new 'Professional Essential Oil Therapist Qualification'

The 'PEOT' (Professional Essential Oil Therapist) is a new qualification that has been developed and will be for those who do not want to use aromatherapy massage, but never the less would like to be trained in the therapeutic use of essential oils. They could be practitioners of other complementary and/or allopathic disciplines...nurses or homeopaths, for example.

The layout of the syllabus mirrors our main diploma syllabus and includes additional units dedicated to in-depth study of non-massage essential oil application. A couple of examples of units are: 1) aromadermatology; 2) development of one's own brand of aromatherapeutic products.

We trust that this new qualification will help us develop and promote a non-massage form of aromatherapy of the highest standard. We expect this qualification to be introduced later in 2011.

The IFA Education Committee are also developing new bridging course qualifications for those who have studied aromatherapy, but who currently do not meet the criteria for full membership with the IFA. This will enable them to upgrade their skills and knowledge and join the IFA as a full member.

Currently, there is confusion amongst the general public relating to what 'aromatherapy' is and what they might expect from an aromatherapy session. This may be due in part to the variation in levels of training standards. Aromatherapy courses can be anything from 1 day to 2 years in duration. Clearly the standard of the aromatherapist who has gained a qualification after 2 years of

training would be vastly different from one who has trained for just one day. The IFA Aromatherapy Diploma involves an in-depth training (including the study of pathology and essential oil science) followed by theoretical and practical examinations. The syllabus includes and exceeds the prescribed minimum standards of training of the National Occupational Standards (NOS), which is the benchmark for aromatherapy in the UK.

This is what a client can expect from an aromatherapy session with a fully qualified aromatherapist: a consultation will be taken to ascertain the client's medical history and current state of health and well-being; from this information, the aromatherapist will choose an individual blend of essential oils and carrier oils that are appropriate for the client's condition (please note that pre-blended oils are not used in aromatherapy); the aromatherapist will also choose the appropriate method of applying the essential oil blend (e.g. massage, compresses, inhalation); or combination of these methods. Often homecare advice is also given to the client to improve their well-being.

Aromatherapy is used more and more within the NHS and in Doctors' surgeries today as stressful symptoms manifest in the form of headaches, muscle tension and pain, stomach problems and many other conditions. Nurses are being trained in aromatherapy and utilising this training within various fields such as midwifery, premature baby units, head injury and breast cancer units amongst many others.

During the recent tragedy of the tsunami in Japan the need for aromatherapy has risen following the increase in depression. One of our IFA members has opened a Care Group in Japan to promote the well-being for the general public.

The public around the world are moving towards more natural products and natural healing. The IFA is aware of this trend and are dedicated to enlighten the public about the value of natural products, such as essential oils and how to use them. The council members are excited about the trend of natural products and treatments as this has regenerated the aromatherapy profession.

Aromatherapy has been found to aid with balancing and improving the mood and is a great relaxant; some essential oils have uplifting properties that stimulate the senses.

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