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Lavender essential oil in the treatment of migraine headache: a placebo-controlled clinical trial

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Abstract

Lavender essential oil has been used as an anxiolytic drug, a mood stabilizer, a sedative, spasmolytic, antihypertensive, antimicrobial, analgesic agent as well as a wound healing accelerator. We have studied for the first time the efficacy of lavender essential oil inhalation for the treatment of migraine in a placebo-controlled clinical trial.

Methods: Forty-seven patients with definite diagnosis of migraine headache were divided into cases and controls. Cases inhaled lavender essential oil for 15 min, whereas the control group used liquid paraffin for the same time period. Patients were asked to record their headache severity and associated symptoms in 30-min intervals for a total of 2 h. We matched the two groups for key confounding factors.

Results: The mean reduction of headache severity in cases was 3.6 ± 2.8 based on Visual Analogue Scale score. The reduction was 1.6 ± 1.6 in controls. This difference between the controls and cases was statistically significant with $p < 0.0001$. From 129 headache attacks in cases, 92 responded entirely or partially to lavender. In the control group, 32 out of 68 recorded headache attacks responded to placebo. The percentage of responders was significantly higher in the lavender group than the placebo group ($p = 0.001$).

Conclusion: The present study suggests that inhalation of lavender essential oil may be an effective and safe treatment modality in acute management of migraine headaches.

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