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## **Lavender Essential Oil to Promote Sleep for People With Mood Disorders: A Qualitative Study**

**Kimberly Ann Moner, DHA**

*College of Health Professions, McAuley School of Nursing, University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit, MI, USA*

**Purpose:** Sleep is important in maintaining both physical and mental health. According to Fisser and Pilkington (2012), a lack of sleep can exacerbate mood disorders, neurocognitive function, cognitive performance, and homeostasis. Several factors, including environmental stimuli, interruptions from nursing staff, inappropriate behaviors of other patients, stressors related to being in a different environment, and programmatic schedules, may result in sleep disruption for individuals who are hospitalized on an inpatient behavioral health unit (Karadag, Samancioglu, Ozden, & Bakir, 2015). According to Gureje et al. (2015), complementary therapies are becoming accepted for the treatment of individuals who are diagnosed with mental health issues. Patients who are hospitalized with mood disorders often experience difficulty sleeping both at home and during their time as an inpatient. A complementary form of treatment for insomnia is the use of aromatherapy with lavender essential oil to achieve restful sleep (Kumar & Ghandi, 2016). Lavender oil has been found to be beneficial in promoting sleep (Ozkaraman, Dügüm, Özen, Usta, 2018), and has additional therapeutic effects, such as instilling a sense of calmness, decreasing anxiety, treating depression, and being used as first aid for burns and cuts (Fibler & Quante, 2014). As with any type of treatment, taking precautions is necessary to watch for any potential side effects from the use of lavender essential oil. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study is to examine perceptions and experiences of patients diagnosed with mood disorders on the use of a patch infused with lavender essential oil to improve sleep quality.

**Methods:** A quasi-experimental case study research study was conducted at one hospital in a large metropolitan area. Ten patients met the inclusion criteria for this study, including a diagnosis of a mood disorder, admittance to an inpatient behavioral health unit, and complaints of sleep disturbances. Data collection included observations of sleep patterns, clinical notes regarding sleep disruptions, and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 10 patients at the end of a three-day intervention using skin patches infused with lavender essential oil as a sleep aid.

**Results:** Three themes emerged from the study: (a) lavender essential oil could be used to promote sleep; (b) lavender was helpful in maintaining sleep throughout the night; and (c) people who used lavender essential oil could be expected to wake feeling rested and refreshed.

**Conclusion:** Using lavender essential oil as a nonpharmaceutical aid for sleep enhancement could be a cost-effective method of increasing patient safety in hospitals. Patients who perceived their sleep was improved following the use of patches infused with lavender essential oil could continue the practice at home. Being able to

experience restful sleep could help patients with mood disorders that could be intensified by insomnia (Harvey et al., 2014).

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**Title:**

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**Keywords:**

aromatherapy, complementary medicine and mood disorders

**Abstract Summary:**

This qualitative exploratory case study examines perceptions and experiences of patients diagnosed with mood disorders on the use of a complementary form of treatment for insomnia, specifically aromatherapy with lavender essential oil to achieve restful sleep.

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First Primary Presenting Author

***Primary Presenting Author***

Kimberly Ann Moner, DHA

University of Detroit Mercy

College of Health Professions, McAuley School of Nursing

Assistant Professor

Detroit, Michigan

USA

**Author Summary:** As a mental health practitioner and educator, I became aware of patients who are admitted to inpatient behavioral health being medicated for sleep. I was aware of the therapeutic effects of lavender infused oils for calming and helping people sleep. I wanted to examine the effects of lavender as a complementary treatment for patients with mood disorders to reduce the number of medications needed by these individuals.