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The contribution of alchemical floral therapy in a digital integrative medicine outpatient clinic: an experience report

Abstract

This article aims to share an experience of introducing Alchemical Flower Essences into an Integrative Medicine and Integrative and Complementary Health Practices outpatient clinic at a hospital in the municipality of São Paulo. Method: This experience report is a qualitative, descriptive study. The experience began in 2019 and continued through 2026. The first consultations took place in person at the outpatient clinic and, after August 2020, exclusively online, which allowed the digital outpatient clinic to become established. Final considerations: The incorporation of Alchemical Flower Essences into the Integrative Medicine and Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (MI-PICS) outpatient clinic became established as a viable therapeutic strategy in both in-person and online modalities and demonstrated flexibility in care delivery and an ability to adapt to contemporary health needs, ensuring continuity of the therapeutic relationship. The practice transcends the relief of isolated symptoms and acts as a catalyst for individuals to critically reflect on their own processes of health and illness, promoting autonomy and self-care. The combination of the traditional hospital approach and the holistic perspective of Alchemical Flower Essences strengthened the comprehensive care model, enriching the scope of integrative and complementary health practices within the public healthcare system.

Keywords: floral therapy, alchemy, integrative and complementary health practices, integrative medicine, internet use

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Abbreviations: MI-PICS, integrative medicine and integrative and complementary health practices; PICS, integrative and complementary health practices; COVID-19, coronavirus disease 2019; HSPM, São Paulo municipal public servant hospital

Introduction

The therapeutic use of plants dates back to the time when humans began cultivating the land. Their use has been documented at various points in history among Egyptians, Chinese peoples, African peoples, Australian Aboriginal peoples, and many other populations.[1]

However, the emergence of alchemy—an ancient practice combining mysticism, science, philosophy, religion, and magic, whose primary aim was the transmutation of metals—profoundly transformed medical practice. Many figures disseminated these ideas, including the sixteenth-century physician Paracelsus, a rebellious thinker who rejected dogmatic medical training rooted in the teachings of Greek authorities such as Hippocrates and Galen. His work presents and develops a view of the four foundations of medicine: philosophy, astronomy, alchemy, and virtue. He believed that the organism possessed the capacity to heal itself and that the physician's task was to stimulate the body's resistance through natural remedies.[2–4]

In the twentieth century, Edward Bach, the founder of the well-known Bach Flower Remedy System, maintained that understanding the nature of illness required acknowledging fundamental truths about human nature: that human beings have a soul and that, during their lifetime, they should acquire knowledge and experience, develop virtues, eliminate evil within themselves, and progress toward perfection. He argued that life is transient and death is not the end; peace, happiness, and health are attained when the soul and personality are in harmony, whereas deviation from this path creates a conflict that causes illness and unhappiness.[5]

Alchemical Flower Essences revive these perspectives, understanding flower essences as essences of the field of consciousness, whose mechanism of action is based on subtle phenomena. They bring the "soul of plants," which carries quantum information and stimulates deep levels of human perception. Viewed as a complex, nonlinear system, they integrate emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects with the physical dimension in the pursuit of balance and self-healing.

Quantum theory plays an important role in explaining the mechanism of action of flower essences as a message available in the quantum field, a frequency of wave energy that carries information and activates cell membranes, triggering biochemical responses capable of altering the biological response that coordinates neurotransmitters, neuropeptides, and hormones, resulting in changes in the human body.[6,7]

Modern medicine has proven that the information contained in quantum flower essences is transmitted to our cells through the cell membrane, which emits and receives energetic biophotons from other cells or photons originating from vibrational medicines.[8]

Clearly, the immaterial nature of human beings and the interaction among all forms of energy can be perceived. It is through this powerful self-healing energy that quantum flower essences act to stimulate the therapeutic process of each organism.

This article aims to report on the implementation of Alchemical Flower Essences in the Integrative Medicine and Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (MI-PICS) outpatient clinic of a public hospital in the municipality of São Paulo. This type of study describes an innovative experience involving a therapy that applies alchemical concepts to the preparation of flower essences, including

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the energetic vibration attributed to each plant and considerations of harmony with the climate, soil, and planting and harvesting methods.

The approach is based on the premise that the human body is not merely a chemical machine but a dynamic electromagnetic system, and that, beyond physical elements, there is a dimension concerned with inner development, purity of mind, and transformation of the soul. Considering these nonmaterial dimensions of life is understood to broaden one's worldview and awaken consciousness.[6]

Incorporating this therapy into the outpatient clinic is consistent with a proposed new understanding of reality and science: a quiet revolution advanced by scientists and thinkers who have been replacing the classical, deterministic worldview with concepts of probability, interconnectedness, and complexity. This pioneering perspective considers invisible energy systems that interact and shape matter.[8] Consequently, health is understood as extending beyond biology and as directly related to all facets of being, personal choices, and life purpose.

Alchemical flower essences

Since ancient times, the healing arts have been marked by mystical, magical, and ritual practices. There was a time when, according to alchemical and occult beliefs, mastery of the magical properties of the plant kingdom resided in the spirits of plants. The preparation of potions, ointments, and unguents believed to possess magical powers continues in folk medicine today, alongside the belief that such preparations can act upon the astral body, produce paranormal phenomena, and expand consciousness.

The mystical conception of nature has long been a subject of debate. Plato, whose thought inspired innovative ideas that continue to influence science, proposed a cosmology in which the world we know is a material entity containing immaterial elements.[9] Later, alchemists did not conceive of preparing remedies without uniting science and religion. They understood health in terms of the body's energetic balance, the importance of faith in recovery, and the interrelationship between human beings and their surroundings.[10]

The alchemical perspective informing the preparation of flower essences offers an interpretation of the relationship between matter and spirit and proposes restoring organic balance and harmony by incorporating subtle-frequency energetic vibrations into Alchemical Flower Essences.[11]

Floral Therapy seeks to support individuals in the process of self-knowledge and the expansion of consciousness. With the aid of flower essences, individuals begin to perceive subtle changes in their emotional state; as they come to understand the origin of their distress, they move toward recovery.

Reports such as those by Guerrini and Domene[6] state that flower essences act on the individual's consciousness, allowing access to personal patterns through a quantum connection between the individual's consciousness and the information ("consciousness of the plant").

Floral Therapy is based on the premise that subtle vibrational patterns interact with the cellular field to promote the comprehensive restoration of health balance. The use of flower essences encourages self-exploration, with the intention of expanding consciousness and awakening qualities considered necessary for the individual's dynamic equilibrium. It therefore encourages recognition of the truths associated with each person's existence, the path they have followed, and the need to change course in order to rediscover their natural essence through self-knowledge and the pursuit of self-healing.[6]

According to Alchemy, we create an energetic memory of everything we experience throughout life. While subtle flower essences act on our memory, bringing behavioral patterns that need to be transmuted into consciousness, compound flower essences support the individual during this process. They act on emotional symptoms and the physical body, strengthening the person so that they can change attitudes through awareness of the imbalances brought to light by the subtle flower essence.

These preparations include flowers, herbs, gemstones, crystals, and grain alcohol, diluted in mineralized water and enriched with propolis, pollen, and royal jelly.[12]

Floral Therapy thus proposes a process of transmutation akin to the alchemical ideal: progressing through every stage of transformation and ultimately reaching the "mountaintop" by expanding consciousness and attaining wisdom, aligning thought, feeling, and action, moving closer to the essence of being, and developing greater awareness of each process.

Description of the experience

The Integrative Medicine and Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (MI-PICS) outpatient clinic introduced in-person Alchemical Floral Therapy in August 2019, initially with one volunteer. Beginning in August 2020, however, the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the establishment of an online model, which attracted numerous additional volunteer therapists through a partnership with an alchemy school.[i]

The possibility of audio and video access provided by the platform allowed patients and therapists to establish a trusting and effective relationship, an unquestionable and definitive advance in the implementation of the digital model.

At that time, the Digital Outpatient Clinic was launched and progressively incorporated several other therapies. Since then, it has been responsible for treating approximately 50% of all those who sought integrative and complementary health practices. Good patient acceptance and the high effectiveness of this type of care led it to become the only modality of Alchemical Floral Therapy available through 2026.

Over these seven years, the outpatient clinic registered 30 volunteers and conducted approximately 600 consultations. In 2020, when in-person care was restricted by the COVID-19 pandemic, from March to July all patients seeking care completed a form containing their health information and were provided with a single standardized preparation. This aromatherapy product contained plant extracts and essential oils selected with the intention of supporting immunity and promoting physical, mental, and emotional well-being.[13]

Following this period, the restrictions on in-person consultations imposed by the pandemic made it necessary to find a way to continue providing care. The online platform-based service was then consolidated, and individualized consultations resumed remotely.

Offering the therapy online made it possible to reach people who were afraid to visit the hospital during that period of uncertainty, those who lived far away, and those who did not have time to travel from their workplaces to the hospital. Therapists' flexible schedules also made evening and weekend consultations possible. Technology did

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not present a major obstacle to care, as few technical resources were required and internet connectivity facilitated access.

The main challenge of online consultations lies in the therapist's need to adapt, because the visible image is largely limited to the patient's face. Whereas therapists could previously observe body language, they now had to pay closer attention to changes in facial expression, tone of voice, and even camera movement. Some individuals found it difficult to remain engaged solely in conversation with the therapist for extended periods and began moving around their surroundings or performing other tasks simultaneously. Such observations provided relevant information about symptoms.

The experiences arising from this clinical follow-up demonstrated that favorable outcomes did not result solely from the pharmacological properties of botanical essences. The subjectivity of care, embodied in the quality of the dialogical interaction established, proved inseparable from the process, acting as a mediating element in the alleviation of psychosomatic symptoms, stress, and anxiety.

Patients generally accessed the service on their own initiative after learning about it through hospital notice boards and the hospital website. Many also sought care following recommendations from previously treated patients or referrals from physicians, psychologists, and social workers.

The reasons for seeking care varied widely and included anxiety, stress, fear, sadness, pain, musculoskeletal complaints, insomnia, gastrointestinal disorders, worry, and feelings of being overwhelmed.

All patients received individual consultations from volunteer therapists, except during the five-month period in 2020 when a standardized preparation was distributed after patients completed a health history form.

At the first consultation, patients were assessed holistically, taking into account their life history, family circumstances, relationships, experiences, daily routine, and current situation. Therapists explored the reasons for seeking care, the main difficulties experienced, associated feelings, and emotional and behavioral patterns in daily life. This process aimed to identify the primary issues to address, establish priorities, and develop the initial flower essence prescription.

Following an assessment of each patient's complaints and clinical condition based on alchemical concepts, prescriptions were individualized and patients were followed up for varying periods according to their interest and requests. Follow-up consultations were important for identifying new needs and establishing which aspects should be addressed next. Care progressed in a personalized manner, respecting each individual's pace, timing, and particular circumstances, with formulations adjusted according to the needs identified at each stage.

The process aims to foster self-knowledge and enhance individuals' awareness of their feelings, reactions, and behavioral patterns, encouraging reflection on how these manifest in different everyday situations.

Final considerations

The incorporation of Alchemical Flower Essences into the Integrative Medicine and Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (MI-PICS) outpatient clinic became a feasible therapeutic approach in both in-person and online settings. It demonstrated flexibility in care delivery and the capacity to adapt to contemporary healthcare needs while maintaining continuity of the therapeutic relationship.

The combination of conventional hospital-based care and the holistic perspective of Alchemical Flower Essences strengthened the comprehensive care model and broadened the scope of integrative and complementary practices in the public healthcare system.

As this is a descriptive, qualitative experience report, its findings underscore the importance of valuing subjectivity and individuality in the outpatient setting.

The practice extends beyond the relief of isolated symptoms, serving as a catalyst for individuals to critically reflect on their experiences of health and illness and encouraging autonomy and self-care. The therapeutic process relies not only on the administration of botanical essences but also on the quality of the professional–patient relationship, with the aim of modulating psychosomatic responses, stress, and anxiety.

The contribution of the alchemical perspective, reborn from the ashes after a period of darkness, comes to show that the answers to all human questions are not outside but within the individual. This perspective aligned with the work developed at the outpatient clinic, whose central goal is self-knowledge and self-responsibility.

The consolidation of years of daily practice within Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (PICS) evokes the understanding that the origins of psychophysical experiences lie in the higher dimensions of human consciousness. From this integrative perspective, the process of illness comes to be interpreted not as a purely biological event but as the epiphenomenon of persistent, unresolved internal conflicts. When these internal demands cannot be subjectively and psychologically processed, disharmony manifests somatically, transferring the repercussions of this subjective conflict to the external existential and organic plane.

In conclusion, the consolidation of this practice within the institution not only legitimizes the role of complementary therapies (PICS) in the public healthcare system but also encourages new healthcare services to implement and systematically evaluate similar initiatives, aiming for increasingly humanized and integrative care.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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