



Implementing aromatherapy in maternity care

Introduction

This course, normally delivered as three full or eight half days, is accredited by the University of Greenwich, London and aims to prepare midwives to develop the relevant knowledge and skills to incorporate aromatherapy into their practice, subject to approval from their employing authority. It is also open to health visitors, antenatal teachers, doulas and obstetricians. Aromatherapists who are not midwives are eligible to attend this course following completion of either Expectancy's course on Caring for Pregnant Clients or the Birth Support Therapist programme.

Students who successfully complete the written assignment following the taught course will be awarded 15 credits at academic level 3, which can be used as Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) towards other undergraduate studies they may be completing. Negotiations are ongoing for midwives who complete the course to obtain indemnity insurance cover to use aromatherapy for pregnant and labouring women in private practice.

Aims of the Course: the course aims to provide students with the opportunity to:

- examine critically the concept of increasing integration of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) into the conventional maternity services
- acquire the knowledge and skills of aromatherapy in order to facilitate appropriate and safe choices for pregnant and childbearing women, including a critical analysis of the risks and benefits
- analyse the feasibility and practicalities of incorporating aromatherapy into their personal professional practice
- reflect on the issues of professional accountability, legal and ethical dilemmas and health and safety when aromatherapy is offered to pregnant and childbearing women in order to act as an advocate for integrated maternity care

Learning outcomes: by the end of the course students will be able to:

- demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of aromatherapy and its application to pregnant, labouring or newly delivered mothers
- account for the popularity of and demand for CAM by the general public and by pregnant women in particular and acknowledge the need for greater integration into the conventional maternity services
- analyse critically the available evidence and demonstrate a wide knowledge of the published literature to support the safety and efficacy of aromatherapy in order to facilitate women to make informed choices according to individual needs

Indicative content:

An overview of the main CAM therapies in use today; complementary medicine in the context of contemporary healthcare, both conventional and alternative; reasons for the increased demand from both consumers and professionals; access to CAM therapies during pregnancy and childbearing

Indications, precautions, contraindications, side-effects, complications, mode of action of aromatherapy with direct application to maternity physiology and potential pathology; research evidence of aromatherapy for both safety and efficacy

Legal, ethical and professional issues related to education, regulation, research and aromatherapy, including registering organisations, indemnity insurance issues, professional standards and boundaries, health and safety factors, communication and multidisciplinary collaboration, record keeping and consent

Teaching and learning activities:

- this course is designed as a taught component of three full study days which provide an opportunity for introduction of the subject within a group environment to facilitate informal lecture-discussions, as well as group work, practical sessions and guided independent study
- reflective exercises and clinical scenarios will also be used to encourage students to apply their developing aromatherapy knowledge to pregnancy and childbirth physiology and delivery of services
- the taught course will be followed by email support for students until the end of the six month period from the point of registration. Guided study in the form of appropriate worksheets will be available online and students will be able to contact the course tutor with queries about application of theory to their own clinical practice and obtain help in preparing the final assignment

Assessment strategy:

This is a 15 credit, level 3 course. Formative assessment aims to prepare students to submit the summative assessment which is submitted six calendar months after the initial registration period, a 2500 word essay debating the risks and benefits of aromatherapy within midwifery practice. Examples of possible assignment subjects include the following, but the subject can be tailored to the student's own interests, in negotiation with the course tutor:

- a risk-benefit assessment of aromatherapy to relieve pain in labour
- a risk-benefit assessment of tea tree oil as an anti-infective agent in pregnancy or the puerperium
- a risk-benefit assessment of essential oils to enhance uterine action in labour

Programme: Implementing Aromatherapy in Maternity Care

DAY 1 0900 – 1030	Introduction to course; Aims and outcomes Introduction to complementary therapies in maternity care
1100– 1300	Introduction to clinical aromatherapy & use in pregnancy, labour & puerperium
1400 – 1600	Simple foot & hand massage skills for using essential oils during pregnancy & childbirth (practical work)
DAY 2 0900 – 1000	The safety of essential oils in pregnancy
1030 – 1230	The implementation process; professional accountability, policies & protocols for aromatherapy in midwifery
1330 – 1600	Massage and manual skills for labour (practical work)
DAY 3 0900 – 1300	Workshop: Applying theory to practice – using essential oils during pregnancy, labour and the puerperium
1400 – 1530	Applying theory to practice continued
1530 - 1600	Discussion, questions, course evaluation Information on course assignment & on-going support End of taught course