



Histoire d'Aroma

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AT THE RED CROSS WAR MEMORIAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL IN CAPE TOWN,
AROMATHERAPY HELPS TO CALM HOSPITALISED CHILDREN

As a qualified aromatherapist since 2003, Linda-Anne O'Flaherty has devoted more than twenty years of her life to children in the care of the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in South Africa. She has developed an original approach combining aromatherapy and M Technique®, a gentle touch method particularly suited to children who are frail, in pain or anxious. This protocol was recognised and awarded the René-Maurice Gattefossé International Prize in 2021.

The Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital is the only facility in South Africa entirely dedicated to children's healthcare. It provides highly specialised paediatric care and is also a recognised centre of excellence for the training of child healthcare professionals.

This is where Linda-Anne developed a protocol combining the M Technique® with a unique aromatic formulation comprising essential oils of true lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), German chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) and neroli (*Citrus aurantium*), diluted to 1 per cent in grape seed oil.

She was particularly involved with children suffering from burns, for whom pain, anxiety and stress represent daily challenges. In 2012, she published an observational pilot study suggesting the potential benefits of aromatic massage for the relaxation of these young patients¹.

Continuing this evaluation process, she conducted a second observational study² involving children admitted to accident and emergency departments. The results suggest that the combination of therapeutic touch and aromatherapy helps to reduce anxiety and improve the children's experience of hospitalisation.

Among the many children supported by Linda-Anne, some have left a particular mark on her.



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For Linda-Anne, the benefits of the treatment were evident not only in the child's relief but also in her family's renewed sense of well-being:

"As soon as the aromatherapist enters the room, the child begins to relax. But it's not just the children who relax: the parents and even the doctors do too."

Such as this ten-year-old boy who, paralysed by anxiety ahead of a surgical procedure, refused any contact with the healthcare staff. After an aromatherapy massage of his legs and feet, he gradually regained his composure and calmly accepted his anaesthesia. Or this young girl suffering from a severe neurological condition, unable to sleep due to constant involuntary movements. The massage helped her to calm down until she fell asleep, whilst also giving her mother a few moments' respite from a particularly gruelling daily routine.

When Linda-Anne retires in 2023, her programme will have achieved remarkable results: 5,261 children supported and 10,337 treatment sessions carried out. Beyond the figures, her experience has shown how a touch combined with essential oils can help improve the hospital experience for children and their families.

1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22305182/>

2. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9189908/>

Parent's patients at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital share their experiences:

' My son had a kidney transplant and aromatherapy has really helped him manage the pain. It helps him sleep better and feel very calm.'

' My daughter has had aromatherapy massages which have really helped her to relieve her physical pain. '



Watch the video