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Aromatherapist Beware!

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How do you know whether you are practicing medicine without a license?

Aromatherapy is not a licensed profession. Practitioners need to practice caution so that they are not infringing on another licensed profession; else, you may be at risk for legal reprimand. This topic can seem overwhelming and scary for holistic practitioners. One thing is for sure; we must never market nor indicate that we are selling a cure; this is important in your language—written and spoken. We offer supportive action such as reducing stress linked to symptoms, a release of anxiety, a less fear-based birth, and other wonderful results from the appropriate use of essential oils.

When speaking to Michael Ford about his Licensed Massage & Esthetician practice, he suggests making sure you are in a safe harbor state. A safe harbor state is a health freedom act state, or they have legislature that protects unlicensed CAM practitioners. According to the National Health Freedom Actions website, “Harbor Exemption laws for practitioners protect consumer

access to the broad range of health care and healing practitioners, such as herbalists, traditional naturopaths, homeopaths, body workers, and culturally specific healing practices, that are not currently regulated by the states and that do not rise to the level of concern requiring state oversight, certification, registration, or licensure” (NHFA, n.d.).

For example, Michael shares that in his state of Louisiana, he can practice aromatherapy without a license as long as he is not infringing on LA’s main licensed practitioners that are in the realm of healthcare:

“I have to make sure I obey laws that are connected to my state laws. In my informed consent, I have to explain my education; any supplements are described as non-prescribed drugs. Outside of that is where we need to be concerned about wording. We cannot diagnose or treat illnesses, so our verbiage has to be correct. For

example, we cannot say you have XYZ condition, but they can provide us with their medical information. We cannot say we are going to cure a condition, but we can assess; what we cannot do is diagnose. If I see a skin condition is concerning, I will have to refer my client out to follow up with a physician. I can explain the traits I am concerned about, but I cannot state my thoughts on what it is. My focus is on supporting the person, organs, and systems we are working with.”

Problems occur when aromatherapy companies overstate product abilities and minimize risk-of-use, thus disregarding safety. With that in mind, here are some tips to help you understand the language of your business so you do not risk practicing medicine without a license:

- ◆ Understand your product labeling requirements
- ◆ Avoid misleading descriptions and results
- ◆ Speak the language of support rather than cure
- ◆ Check with NHFC on your state’s safe harbor laws: <https://nationalhealthfreedom.org/safe-harbor-laws> or <https://nationalhealthfreedomaction.org/>

Labeling

Product labeling can be daunting, and when I started my online shop, it took a while for me to build a template, but with a little practice and help from my friends, I found a process that works. It all began with making a list of what works and what is beyond our scope of practice.

Safe Words

Aromatherapy products may be *supportive, relieving, or restoring* to normal function with regard to:

- ◆ Bad Back
- ◆ Aching Joints
- ◆ Sore, tired muscles
- ◆ Mental fatigue
- ◆ Brain fog
- ◆ Immune support
- ◆ Seasonal stuffiness

- ◆ Stress relief
- ◆ Digestion support or relief
- ◆ Tummy troubles
- ◆ Gas and bloating
- ◆ Got the blues
- ◆ Low frame of mind
- ◆ In a rut, having the blahs, or feeling low

Avoid saying

- ◆ It will handle your anxiety and lower your blood pressure
- ◆ Sleep disorder
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Arthritis
- ◆ Naming any specific disease or medical condition
- ◆ Cold
- ◆ Stomach ache
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Flu
- ◆ Pain Relief
- ◆ Sprain

PRO-TIP: Avoid the misleading “therapeutic grade” terminology. There is no such thing at this time in the essential oil industry.

If you think it would show up on an insurance code, avoid it.

Aromatherapists may not diagnose, treat, nor prescribe, but they may consult, offer support, and formulate. Careful use of language and a solid understanding of your own scope of practice are imperative to practicing aromatherapy legally.

References

NHFA. (n.d.). Safe harbor practitioner exemption laws. Retrieved from: <https://nationalhealthfreedomaction.org/resource-center/safe-harbor-practitioner-exemption-laws/>



Jennifer is an AIA volunteer member of the Research Committee and contributes quarterly to *Aromatics in Action's* research column on behalf of the AIA research committee. Her love of research and science comes from her studies in her Master of Science in Aromatherapy from the American College of Healthcare Sciences. She currently resides in NE Ohio with her two children. She is a small business owner of two holistic businesses, Heaven & Earth Aromatherapy and Women, Yoga & The Moon. Her passion is teaching holistic and yoga education, writing, and creating well-researched and gorgeous smelling aromatherapy products. Learn more at www.heavenandeartharomatherapy.com & www.womenyogamoon.com



Michael Ford is a holistic aromatherapist who has been in the wellness industry for over 20 years. He is a Registered Aromatherapist™ with the Aromatherapy Registration Council, licensed in Louisiana as both an esthetician and massage therapist, and nationally certified by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork. He holds a Master of Science in Aromatherapy and is pursuing a Master of Science in Herbal Medicine from the American College of Healthcare Sciences. He has a Bachelor of Applied Science in Massage Therapy from Siena Heights University and an Associate of Applied Science in Complementary Alternative Medicine with a dual specialization in aromatherapy and herbal studies from the American College of Healthcare Sciences. Michael is a member of the Alliance of International Aromatherapists, the National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy, the International Federation of Professional Aromatherapists, the American Herbalists Guild, and the American Association of Drugless Practitioners.