

Contact: Steve Seybold
715-253-2125 ext. 151
steves@homme.org
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Educational Program on Essential Oils to be Held at Homme Homes on December 16 Essential Oils Treatment Therapy Shown to Benefit Dementia Patients

(Wittenberg, WI) A new treatment therapy being tested with six dementia patients at Homme Homes in Wittenberg is reducing the need for pain medications and improving the patients' quality of life. The therapy involves the use of essential oils and aromatherapy and is being funded as part of a statewide quality improvement grant involving nine other nursing homes in Wisconsin.

Essential oils are extracted from plants and carry a distinctive scent such as lavender and eucalyptus. They are used today as part of Aromatherapy, a form of alternative medicine that attributes healing effects to the aromatic compounds.

"Essential oils have been used for thousands of years," says Steve Seybold, executive director at Homme Homes. "When used as a supplemental treatment in conjunction with our more traditional and proven medical treatments, our staff has observed that our dementia patients feel better and are less anxious. In fact, we have been able to reduce non-scheduled use of medications for agitation, anxiety, depression and delusions by over 75%."

St. Paul Elder Services, Kaukauna, and Brewster Village, Appleton, first studied the positive effects of essential oils and aromatherapy and submitted their results to the State of Wisconsin. The state approved a grant and Homme Homes was asked to participate based on its involvement with the Wisconsin Alliance of Quality for the Aging and the Wisconsin Association of Homes and Services.

Homme Homes began participating in the program in April of 2011 by topically applying Lavender and other essential oils to a sample of six residents on its dementia unit and by using diffusers to release the fragrances into the air. The residents participating in the study were prone to being agitated or to exhibit negative behaviors in response to the confusion, anxiety and other ailments caused by dementia.

During the past eight months, since the essential oils study began, each of the six residents went from an average of 22 unscheduled medication interventions per month down to less than 4 unscheduled medication interventions per month.

In addition to reducing negative behaviors with fewer unscheduled medication interventions, the essential oils were used to eliminate pain related to sore joints or injuries. While participating in the study, Homme Homes staff discovered other uses for essential oils. Frankincense, Thieves, and Eucalyptus were able to help combat upper respiratory symptoms and reduce high dependence on liquid oxygen.

Although the grant ends December 31, 2011, Seybold says Homme Homes will continue to use essential oils in addition to traditional medical treatments.

“We always strive to provide new therapies that will improve the quality of life for our residents,” he says. “Doing whatever we can to make our residents more comfortable is consistent with the holistic approach we follow.”

To help fund the purchase of essential oils for residents, Homme Homes will sell the products to its employees and anyone else who is interested for a discounted rate. An educational program on the use and benefits of essential oils will be presented by Barbara Fett, RN of St. Paul Elder Services at Homme Homes Wittenberg campus at 1 p.m. on Friday, December 16. The program is open to the general public and the medical community.

Homme Homes is a not-for-profit association offering a variety of affordable senior housing opportunities including independent apartments, assisted living units and skilled nursing accommodations on its two campuses in Wittenberg and Wausau. Homme Homes has been serving the needs of elderly citizens of north central Wisconsin since 1882. Its Wausau campus is located at Forest Park Village on North 7th Street.

For more information about Homme Homes, visit www.homme.org.

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