

Integrative care for Covid-19

FLOWER ESSENCE THERAPY: BALANCE FOR EMOTIONS IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

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DATASHEET

ObservaPICS & Covid-19 Special

Number 1 - Floral Therapy

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Presentation

The challenges during and after the pandemic of the new coronavirus require the integration of different coping strategies and health care for populations in the world. In the current scenario, PICS can be an important resource in the preservation of self-care, for the relief of stressful conditions associated with social isolation, as a complementary strategy to strengthen the immune system or even as a way of caring for people in recovery.

To promote reflection and discussion around evidence about the potential of PICS in the context of the pandemic, the National Observatory of Traditional, Integrative and Complementary Health Knowledge and Practices launches the Integrative Care collection at Covid-19, which addresses different practices. The invited authors are researchers, some from Brazilian universities, with academic and practical experience in the subject. The first booklet reviews flower essence therapy and suggests how it can be applied in mental health care during this time of dealing with the new coronavirus.

The collection is part of the special PICS & Covid-19 page of the ObservaPICS website, which brings together articles, interviews, essays and multimedia content on the subject. The space promotes the dissemination of scientific works, experiences, protocols and repositories that can expand the repertoire of knowledge in this challenging time. After all, all knowledge generated, efforts made by professionals, managers and researchers in the construction of comprehensive health help to strengthen the SUS with answers to the challenges that need to be overcome. Read, discuss, collect and share!



Observa **PICS**

How do flower essences work?

Those who work with Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (PICS) understand that we cannot deny the many dimensions of the human being. Nobody takes care of just one body! We take care of the physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual expressions of each being! A difficult task! It requires centering; it requires self-care; it requires the understanding that our presence is fundamental. By presence we understand the whole being for which we are caring. We understand that we are also the medicine.

We know that the challenge of contemporary education is in learning a broader way of understanding and relating to the human being, therefore, we must learn to take care of our existing and fundamental dimensions: emotional, mental, social and spiritual, in addition to the physical. This training, in our way of perceiving, must encompass aspects of production of subjectivity, production of technical and thinking skills, in addition to adequate knowledge of the Unified Health System (SUS). And, one of the challenges for the use of Flower Essence Therapy (TF) is that it is still fairly unknown to the health professionals themselves. Their lack of knowledge prevents or hinders the adequate use of this instrument to reduce fear, anxiety, stress, feelings of isolation, among other feelings that are very present in the social context during a pandemic.

PICS use a personalized holistic approach, based on individual needs considering the physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional aspects. These practices collaborate to increase well-being, promote support in social relationships and encourage self-care among people undergoing treatment (Araújo et al., 2015)).

Salles and Silva (2014)) found that, of the 209 public institutions surveyed, that teach nursing, medicine and physiotherapy, only 43 (32.3%) offered disciplines related to PICS. Among the three courses, nursing courses were the ones that offered the most subjects (26.4%), followed by medicine (17.5%) and physiotherapy (14.6%).

Fortunately, SUS currently offers 29 PICS procedures to the population, including Flower Essence Therapy (TF). It was recognized by the WHO in 1956 for addressing issues related to emotional well-being and, consequently, to the health of all of us.

In "Heal Thyself," Dr. Edward Bach, the forerunner of this type of therapy, describes that no matter the nature or name of the physical illness, illness is the result of disharmony between the soul and the mind or personality. The disease is only nature's way found to draw the individual's attention to the wrong actions; the most effective method to harmonize the personality with the soul (Bach, 2006).

Bach (2006) considers every human being to be a vibrating field of forces with intense energetic circulation. This perspective has been strengthened by quantum physics research, as pointed out by Amin Goswami, in his recent book *Quantum Consciousness: a New View on Love, Death and the Meaning of Life*. It recalls that awareness can be understood as the individual's ability to be in contact with his own existence, realizing what is happening around him and within him. It involves physical, mental, sensory and emotional experiences (Goswami, 2018).

It seems to us that this is a good time to use the flower essences with knowledge and prudence, recording the data for future research, in addition to the main objective: to improve people's well-being. It is the time to value science, its achievements and discoveries, expanding the way of taking care of patients and oneself. Taking care in such new ways liberates within us the mythological figure of Chiron, the wounded healer, who is healed while healing others. This connects us with our own limitations and suffering when dealing with human suffering.

The pandemic reminds us (Portuguese: *recorder re-cordis*: go back through the heart) of this fundamental principal:



If we have in our nature sufficient love of all things, then we can do no harm; because that love would stay our hand in any action, our mind at any thought which might hurt another. (Dr. Edward Bach)

Contextualizing the flower essences in the pandemic: search for evidence

At the end of 2019, a new coronavirus emerged and was named SARS-CoV-2. This new coronavirus produces the disease classified as Covid-19, and was a causative agent of a series of pneumonia cases in the city of Wuhan, China (Brazil, 2020).

According to the protocol for the clinical management of coronavirus (Covid-19) in primary health care, from the Ministry of Health, full information on virus's natural history is lacking, as are unquestionable effectiveness measures for the clinical management of cases of human infection by SARS-CoV-2, with many details left to clarify. However, it is known that the virus has a high degree of transmissibility and causes an acute respiratory syndrome that varies from mild cases—about 80%—to very severe cases with respiratory failure—from 5% to 10% of cases. Its lethality varies, mainly, according to the age group and associated clinical conditions (BRASIL, 2020).

In the current context, facing the COVID-19 pandemic, we look to the teachings of Dr. Bach as encouragement and inspiration for how to reduce the suffering of the general population and, in particular, of health professionals who are facing this pandemic. We know that depressed people have a weakened immune system and, consequently, are more susceptible to the spread of disease. In this sense, flower essences can contribute to relief in our current situation, as they act on thoughts and feelings, harmonizing them. It is in the mind that negative thoughts accumulate, which in turn provoke a variety of unbalanced emotions, such as anxiety, fear, sadness, phobias, depressions, anger, guilt, low self-esteem and many others.

In order to search for scientific evidence on the subject, in order to move forward in the process of generating new knowledge, an integrative literature review was developed by conducting a survey of databases. This review involved six steps: identification of the theme and selection of the research question, establishment of criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies, evaluation of the studies included in the integrative review, definition of the information to be extracted from the selected studies, interpretation of the results, and presentation and dissemination of results (Mendes et al., 2008).

The theme of this search for evidence was based on the question, "What is the scientific evidence about Flower Essence Therapy associated with anxiety, depression, panic, fear and psychological stress? "

In order to summarize the material selection process for analysis, the following inclusion criteria were used:

- » results of a scientific study;
- » available in full, available in the form of articles, dissertations and / or theses;
- » available in Portuguese, Spanish or English;
- » available for access in electronic format.

Studies included from the last 14 years (2006-2020) were included in the review. This time frame took into account the National Policy of Integrative and Complementary Practices (PNPIC) implemented in SUS, in 2006.

For proper sample refinement, studies that did not contain results (previous note) and duplicate articles were excluded from the investigation. The Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS), from the Virtual Health Library (VHL), selected for the search were: "Flower Essences", "Anxiety", "Depression", "Panic", "Fear" and "Psychological stress". These descriptors were searched in English, Portuguese and Spanish, combined two by two with a Boolean operator *AND*.

Through an electronic search, carried out in March 2020, at the Bank of Theses and Dissertations from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes), using the term "Flower Essences," four studies were found. After reading all abstracts to select those that fit the inclusion criteria and correlated with the terms "Anxiety", "Depression", "Panic", "Fear" and "Psychological Stress.", One study was excluded from the review because it was duplicated .

Then, an electronic search was carried out in March 2020, with the application of the year (2006 to 2020) and language (Portuguese, English and Spanish) filters in the following information sources: VHL in Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicines (VHL MTIC); Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS); Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE); Public Medline (PubMed); Nursing Database (BDENF).

Selected studies

By searching the information sources, 16 studies were found. Of these, five were outside the pre-established time frame, having been removed. The remaining 11 studies were submitted to analysis of the titles, abstracts and descriptors, seven of which were removed because they were duplicates and / or did not address the research questions. The four studies selected for reading the full text were included in the corpus of this integrative review (Figure 1).

In order to characterize the articles included in the review, two summary tables (Chart 1 and Chart 2) were developed for organizing the information obtained from the studies, as described below:

Lang (2020) also carried out an integrative review of the literature on the effectiveness of TF and 44 articles were selected for this review, the result of experimental studies. We noted that the first indexed article on the topic was in 1999 and the predominant language was Spanish.

The most published topics were, in decreasing order, menopause, anxiety, stress, attention disorder, arterial hypertension, cancer, among others. Ninety percent of the articles show effectiveness in the treatment; the rest achieved partial effectiveness. The data indicate a concern with reporting evidence-based research papers, following models that meet internationally accepted research standards.

In Brazil, one of the experimental studies investigated the positive effects of flower essences Impatiens, Cherry Plum, White Chestnut and Beech in people with anxiety. At the end of two months, the decrease in anxiety in the experimental group was proven to be greater than in the control group. Eighty percent said that, even in the face of stressful events, they managed to remain calm, with clear ideas and concentration; 60% mentioned less irritation and impatience with situations that normally bothered them; 40% improved their sleep pattern (Salles, Silva, 2012).



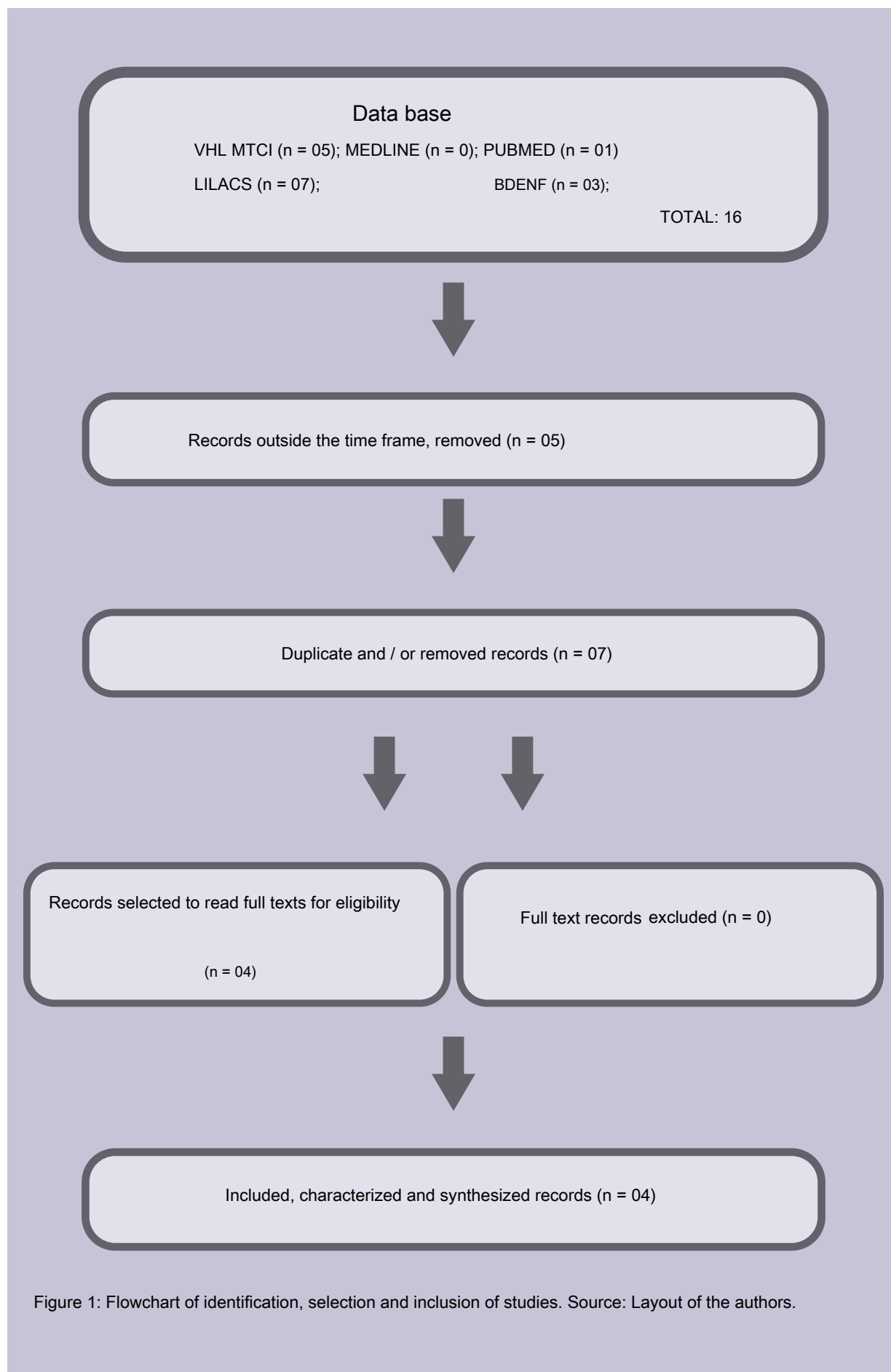


Figure 1: Flowchart of identification, selection and inclusion of studies. Source: Layout of the authors.

Table 1: Characteristics of the studies included following the title, database, journal, year, type of study / sample, of the references included in the integrative review, published between 2006 to 2020, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2020.

Title	Basis of Data	Periodical - Year	Type of study - Sample
Experience of women in labor with the use of flower essences.	LILACS	Rev Pesq. Cuidado Fundamental 2020	Exploratory description 30 women in labor
Effect of flower essences on anxious individuals.	LILACS	Acta Paul Enferm 2012	Randomized clinical trial 34 workers
Floral therapy in the context of the psychological effects of intrafamily violence.	LILACS	Revista Médica Electronica 2007	Exploratory description 20 patients
Complementary therapies in the reduction of menopausal symptoms: clinical trial.	MTCI	Cad Naturol. Terap. Complem. 2015	Randomized clinical trial 118 women

Table 2: Characterization of the objectives and conclusions, of the references included in the integrative review, published between 2006 to 2020, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2020.

Goals	Conclusions
Describe the experience of women using flower essences as a non-pharmacological therapy for the relief of pain and anxiety during labor.	The use of flower essence during labor provided calm, relaxation, concentration and courage to women, emotions that allowed for better control of pain and anxiety. Flower essence used: Five Flower (Bach's emergency compound).
Investigate the effects of the flower essences Impatiens, Cherry Plum, White Chestnut and Beech with anxious patients	The flower essences had a positive effect in reducing anxiety.
Use flower essence therapy as an alternative to treatment in people who suffer from psychological effects resulting from family violence.	Effective use of flower essence therapy, mainly with the most relevant symptoms related to intrafamily violence. The most used essences were Vervain (90%), Scleranthus (70%) and Agrimony (60%).
Analyze the effectiveness of flower essence therapy, auriculotherapy and therapeutic touch in controlling menopausal symptoms.	The three therapies studied showed efficacy in reducing the symptoms of menopause (without statistical difference between them).

Any negative emotion experienced for a long period changes and influences our way of living, the way we face life situations and our responses to those situations. When the feeling is not expressed, whether by speaking or crying, it ends up concentrating in the body, becoming the only way to express these pains and conflicts. The pain felt in the soul has a direct expression in the physical body. This understanding becomes easier as we view the human being as a unique universal being, without dissociating mind from body.

Flower Essence Therapy is a therapeutic approach that uses flower essences to prevent, treat and maintain a person's emotional and psychological balance. It facilitates and enables the restoration of peace, harmony and balance of the human being.

The human body works through physical and chemical bonds. In fact, it is an energy absorber and receiver. The organism also emits energy depending on how it functions: if we are sad, we emit one type of energy; if we are happy we generate another type. Flowers, like every living thing, also have their energetic configurations. So, when the person takes a flower essence, that energy received from the flowers to address a certain problem or emotional difficulty, interacts with the person's own energy enabling them to have a greater emotional balance.

Flower essences have no direct impact on the biochemistry of the body, as do food, pharmaceuticals or psychoactive drugs. They are not medicines, nor do they do replace or interfere with their action, as they do not have active ingredients of a material nature.



They act in the morphic fields and although they are used primarily in the form of drops to be ingested, their indication to clients is not given as a medical prescription. Therefore any health professional can dispense them, provided they are professionally trained (ARAÚJO, 2012) .

Flower essences assist in balancing emotions and facilitate better judgment for decision making. In this way, Bach flower essences contribute to the harmony, integration, individuality and integrity of the being. It is worth mentioning that there are many flower essence systems in the world. However, we have used the Bach System as a basic reference, as it is the one with the greatest record of evidence so far.

The following are the essences that each person can choose to take for self-care and self-knowledge, regardless of one's situation, but always attentive to one's own feelings. The Bach Flowers deal with people who, due to any problem, are out of balance and who have mental states as described in the column in the table below "Feelings". These symptoms may be present in health professionals and in the general population. The use of essences seeks to return us to balance and reduce states of suffering, including both physical and mental exhaustion. There is disagreement among the authors about the total number of flowers that can be placed in a formulation. Dr. Bach proposed that everyone choose the issue they would like to work on, without aiming for perfection in one's emotional state.

Pay attention to your goal. That is the focus; that is the intention of the choice of flower essence

Guidance on the use of Bach Flower essences

Each person must choose the essences they will use after reflecting the feelings they are experiencing ("feelings" and "goals" in Chart 3). After choosing the essences, the flower essence combination is put in a preservative solution (brandy or glycerin). Take four drops, four times a day, daily, orally, with the drops being dripped directly into the mouth, taking care not to touch the lips or tongue (Monari, 2009). The formulation of essences must be individualized for each person.



Table 3: Indication of Bach Flower essences in the context of the new Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Essence	Feelings	Goals
Mimulus (<i>Mimulus guttatus</i>)	Fears of everyday life (of becoming ill, of darkness, of being alone, of misfortune). Concrete fears.	Daring to face my fears. Gain courage to face life's misfortunes.
Rock Rose (<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>)	Scared and terrified. There seems to be no hope.	Courage and mental clarity. Commitment to life.
Olive (<i>European oil</i>)	Exhausted and worn out.	Regaining strength, with energy and peace.
Cherry Plum (<i>Prunus cerasifera</i>)	Desperate and afraid of losing control of oneself. Feeling on the edge.	Restoration of balance, calm and positive mind control.
Walnut (<i>Juglans regia</i>)	Feeling vulnerable to external influences and changes.	Strengthen one's individuality. Constancy and protection from external influences.
White Chestnut (<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>)	Tormented by repetitive thoughts and undesirable reasoning.	Peaceful mind to relieve any mental stress.
Star of Bethlehem (<i>Ornithogalum umbellatum</i>)	I can't get over my traumas and losses.	Feeling comfort and peace to relieve my anguish.
Sweet Chestnut (<i>Castanea sativa</i>)	Anguish is so great that I can't stand it.	Faith and trust in rebirth and transformation.
Red Chestnut (<i>Aesculus carnea</i>)	Fear that something bad will happen to the people I love.	Belief in the well-being of others. Trust in the safety of others.
Rescue Remedy	Acute suffering due to emergencies.	Enhancing one's life force to react and recover from the emergency situation.

The Bach Flower essences indicated in Table 3 follow the indicative descriptions based on the book *Participating in life with the Bach Flowers: a Mythological View and Practice* (Monari, 2009).

Concluding this reflection, we can take care of fear, anguish, pessimism, being light with our serenity, peace and hope. This is the time to have courage, because as Dr. Bach said, regarding to fear:



.. it is possible (to have courage) when we recognize our divinity. [...] as children of the creator, sparks of divine life, we are invincible, indestructible and unconquerable.

Let us have the courage to take care of the diverse dimensions of the human being. Starting with, and including ourselves.



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