

Press Release

COVID-19 and Forest Therapy



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COVID-19 and Forest Therapy as a preventative Public health practice

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PRESS RELEASE

International expert recommendations to alleviate stressful mental and physical COVID-19 effects

Top-level medical executives and advisors to the International Nature and Forest Therapy Alliance (INFTA) like [Won Sop Shin](#) and [Andreas Michalsen](#) recommend **Forest Therapy** as an effective Public health practice **to alleviate stress resulting from the current COVID-19 pandemic.**

“Forest Therapy is good medicine for many of the conditions brought on by living in a pandemic -- stress, mental fatigue, irritability, impatience, impairments in impulse control, stress-related cravings, sleep disruption, and more.” [Ming Kuo](#)

[Samantha Dunn](#) recommends the importance for “people to maintain connection to green spaces and the natural environment. This is very challenging in a locked down scenario where it is far more difficult to access more natural environments.”

[Yoshifumi Miyazaki](#) says that “given the unusual conditions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, we have the opportunity to explore relaxation and stress relief with gardening and indoor forest “bathing” such as the smell of wood, forest images and forest sounds. It is critical to recognize that relaxation may serve to bolster immune function that is typically impaired in a stressed state.”

[Liyun Liu](#) is convinced that “Forest Therapy is helpful to combat COVID-19. Forest environment is well known to have favorable influence on human body and mind, including immunologic function.”

Ming Kuo agrees and advises to “spend time in accessible activities like gardening and walks on tree-lined streets” and having a “green view” when working from home.

[Diana Beresford-Kroeger](#) recommends “taking a daily 20-minute walk amongst the trees and forest aerosols to improve circulation, boost the immune system and improve mood.” She is convinced that “cities of concrete are a friend to COVID-19. Forests are not. Bring the forest back into the cities as recreational park land.”

“The practice of Forest Therapy can be a means to get regular physical activity and exposure to sunlight and Vitamin D to help maintain physical health and natural immunity” says [John Munro](#). “It also gives us the opportunity to connect to nature and helps us to focus on our lived experience rather than the worry of scenarios that may play within our minds.”

[Namyum Kil](#) concurs and recommends to have a “sit spot practice and nature journaling” which provides the “opportunity to get away from daily hectic stressful life situations.”

Referring to one of the well-researched benefits of *phytoncides* (volatile organic compounds emanated by trees and plants), [David Wang](#) highlights that “these have great potential to be ACE2 blockers which can be a likely target for anti-viral intervention. Geranium and lemon essential oils and their derivative compounds are valuable natural anti-viral agents that may contribute to the prevention of the invasion of SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 into the human body.”

Commenting on future research in Forest Therapy as an effective, preventive Public health practice, there is general consensus on the need to “*continue to provide science-based evidence for everything suggested above. We are required to present concrete examples of science-based practices.*” [Yoshifumi Miyazaki](#)

[Diana Beresford-Kroeger](#) proposes that “*future research should focus on the aerosol complexes of trees for their respiratory, anti-viral activity and effects as well as immuno-modulating activity.*”

From an environmental psychology perspective [Namyum Kil](#) states that “*quantitative and qualitative future research should examine what specific natural elements alleviate mental health problems. Spatial mapping should be explored related to health benefits. Also, further studies about the health benefits of forest therapy should be conducted with vulnerable populations from young to old.*”

[Ming Kuo](#) wishes to see more research on “*race/ethnicity and income disparities in access to nature and the impact of those disparities on COVID-19 and health in general. Most certainly more randomized controlled trials of Forest Therapy interventions are needed. Plus, we need a better understanding of the dose-response relationship for different ‘doses’ and forms of forest therapy -- including more urban applications.*”

[Samantha Dunn](#) concludes that future research should address “*how Forest Therapy can assist mental health and wellbeing as a public health response and the social and economic benefit of doing do. A model of how easily Forest Therapy can be rolled out across an urban environment in a city like Melbourne.... it doesn't necessarily mean travelling a long way from home.*”

With a budgeted investment of over USD 100 billion in Forest Therapy in China, it is important for [Liyun Liu](#) to identify “*the optimal duration, frequency and dosage of Forest Therapy to obtain optimal benefits for participants.*” To develop an integrated healthcare model “*studies on the effect of the forest environment in various subjects with different diagnoses and different disease states are also required in future.*”

"Nature and forests are the last reserve of the human herd for their great gift of aerosol medicine. The call to receive this bounty is being heard across the globe today." [Diana Beresford-Kroeger](#)