

<https://tisserandinstitute.org/frankincense-oil-and-cancer-in-perspective/>

by Robert Tisserand

If you wanted something to keep you awake, and I offered you a choice of caffeinated coffee or decaffeinated coffee, which would you choose? It's not a trick question. And if you wanted something to treat cancer, and I offered you a choice of frankincense A that contains 50% of an antitumoral substance, and frankincense B that contains 0% of that same antitumoral substance, which would you choose? If it was me, I would go for A. But here's the interesting thing: most people choose B. Most people go for the essential oil, instead of the extract.

Why do they do this? One reason at least is because they are being told, in videos and blog posts, that frankincense *oil* contains boswellic acid – the antitumoral active ingredient in frankincense *gum resin*. But it doesn't, and the simple reason is that boswellic acid is much too heavy a molecule to be volatile. There are several boswellic acids

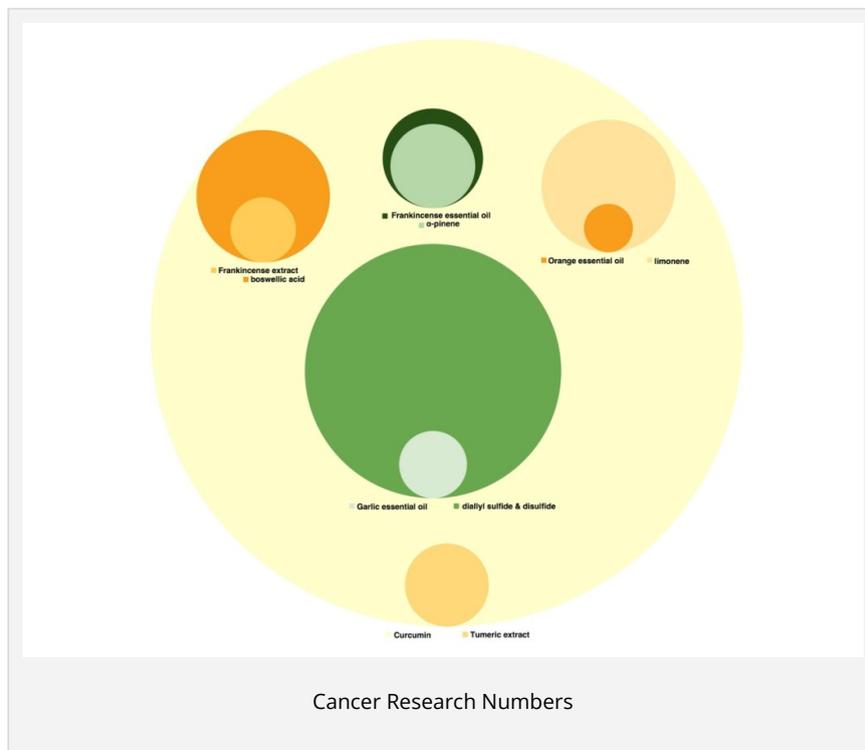
found in frankincense gum resin, and they have molecular weights in the 450 – 500 range. However, volatile molecules – those capable of evaporation – all have molecular weights below 300.

This is a myth of truly biblical proportions. So many people believe that frankincense oil is a proven treatment for cancer, that I receive messages every day asking me how it should be used for all kinds of malignancies. The fact is, there is no clinical research. There is not one single study published in a peer-reviewed journal, in which frankincense essential oil was successfully used to treat any kind of cancer. There is just one published anecdotal case report of a successful treatment for skin cancer. This does not mean that frankincense oil could not possibly be useful in treating cancer, but as we will see, the evidence to support this idea is vanishingly small.

The purpose of this particular blog post is not to explain what the reasons might be for the active perpetuation of this myth. My purpose here is to give you a perspective on the research for frankincense by comparing it to other aromatic plants or their extracts. This is also not intended to be a resource on how to treat cancer, though I may address this in later posts.

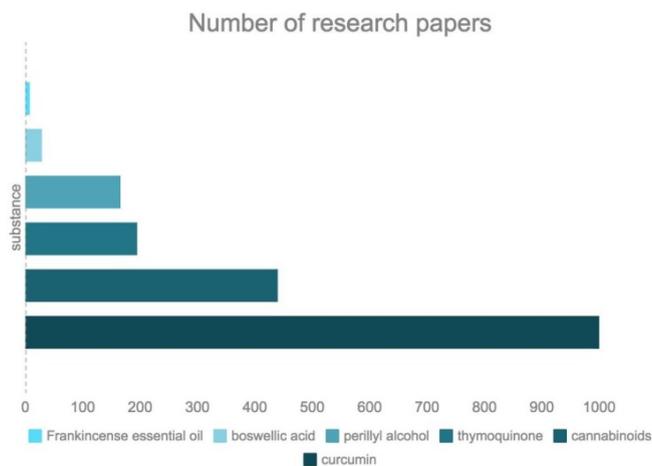
The research

There are 7 research studies published on frankincense oil and cancer, shown in the Table below. As you can see, almost all of this evidence is *in vitro* research, meaning that the essential oil was found to kill cancer cells in a petri dish. For many reasons, this does not equate to a cancer cure. It's interesting for sure, but a handful of *in vitro* studies is a very long way from an all-round "cancer cure", if such a thing even exists.



It bears repeating that cancer is not a single disease. There are many types of cancer – brain, breast, prostate, lung, liver, colorectal etc. For each type of cancer there are several subtypes, and for each subtype there are stages of disease that may require different treatment. In fact, each individual cancer is unique. In addition, cancer cells have an unfortunate tendency to mutate, and to develop resistance to whatever you try to use against them.

Even if we put all breast cancers, for example, into one category, to find an effective treatment you would expect to see a couple of hundred research papers including *in vitro*, *in vivo* and clinical.



And so, to put frankincense oil as a cancer treatment into perspective, I have compared simply the total number of research studies with some other natural substances. To kick off, there is twice as much research on garlic oil – 14 studies compared to 7 for frankincense oil. (And, unlike frankincense, there is just one type of garlic oil.) If we also throw into the mix the major constituent of many frankincense oils, alpha-pinene, this gives us 5 more antitumoral studies, giving a grand total of 12. I should also add that the anticancer properties of alpha-pinene are actually very weak. If we then toss into the mix the two major constituents of garlic oil, diallyl sulfide and diallyl disulfide, this gives a whopping 200 research papers for garlic, and I'm not even talking about garlic extracts – just the essential oil and its constituents. Why so much research on these two sulfur compounds? Because, unlike with alpha-pinene, their effects against many cancers are seriously impressive. Even so, there is almost no clinical research.

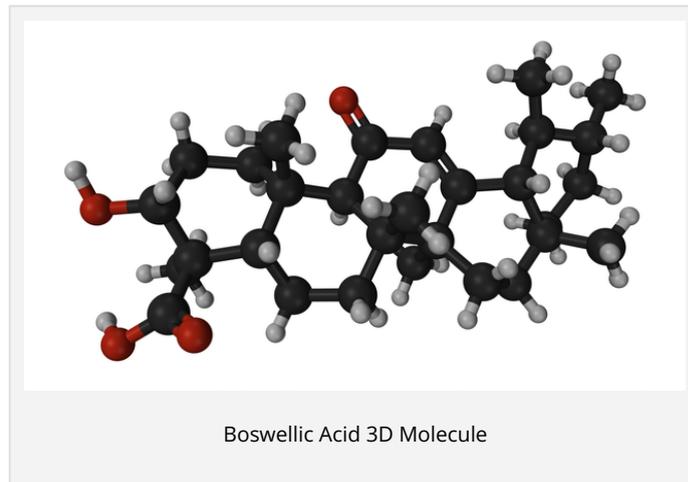
Table

All original research on frankincense oils as cancer treatments as of the end of 2015

<i>Type of cancer</i>	<i>Type of study</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Citation</i>
Bladder	In vitro	No analysis given. a-Pinene chemotype implied.	Dozmorov et al 2014
Bladder	In vitro	No analysis given	Frank et al 2009
Breast	In vitro	a-Pinene chemotype	Suhail et al 2011
Colorectal	In vitro	Essential oil used was unlike any oil actually produced	Ahmed et al 2015
Various	In vitro	Octyl acetate chemotype	Chen et al 2013

Pancreas	In vitro & in vivo	a-Pinene chemotype	Ni et al 2012
Skin	Case report	No analysis given	Fung et al 2013

If we really want to look at big numbers, there is one natural compound that meets expectation



s – curcumin, an active constituent of turmeric (*Curcuma longa*). It's not found in turmeric oil though. Other natural compounds that look promising as general cancer treatments include cannabinoids and cannabis, perillyl alcohol and *Perilla frutescens* oil (notably for brain cancer), and thymoquinone and *Nigella sativa* oil. Unfortunately, these last two are not easy to find. Finally, there's boswellic acid and frankincense extract, and this grouping does look promising, certainly more so than the essential oil.

To return to my earlier statement, frankincense oils (and there are several species, as well as several chemotypes within species) do not contain boswellic acid, in spite of assertions to the contrary. In fact two of the cited research papers claim to have distilled frankincense oil containing, 0.1% – 3% boswellic acids (Ni et al 2012, Suhail et al 2011). Even if this was true, it only happened in the lab – there is no commercially produced frankincense oil that contains any boswellic acid. And it is not listed in a comprehensive review of the many possible constituents of all frankincense oils (Hussain et al 2013). Even if you could produce a frankincense oil with about 1% boswellic

acid, this would not compare well with frankincense extracts, which contain 40-60% boswellic acid.

So, if you are looking for a natural substance to help prevent or treat cancer, frankincense oil should not be your first choice. Look instead to turmeric/curcumin, to cannabis/cannabinoids, to garlic/garlic oil, and to frankincense extract, which is sold in capsule form. Following that, I would consider essential oils of cinnamon bark, lemongrass, citronella, turmeric, orange, lemon and bergamot. I have not discussed them all here but these have, in my opinion, a better shot than frankincense oil. Then again, different oils apply to different cancers, and I'm not addressing that here.

If you have had success treating cancer with any essential oils I would be delighted to hear from you. Please email me at robert@tisserandinstitute.org. If you want to know how to treat your own cancer, or that of a close relative, using plant medicines, I urge you to find a practitioner who will help you.

References

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Author

Robert Tisserand

Robert Tisserand is a speaker, educator and consultant on the science and benefits of essential oils and their safe and effective application, and in 1977 he wrote the first English language book on aromatherapy. In addition to teaching online courses, in recent years he has inspired live audiences in Europe, Asia, North America and South America. He was privileged to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the AIA in Denver in 2007, and in 2014 he co-authored the second edition of *Essential Oil Safety*, which has helped set industry safety standards. Robert is the principal of The Tisserand Institute.

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67 Comments

Trish on January 15, 2016 at 10:26 pm

Thank you so much for speaking to this issue. So often I am hearing of mothers who refuse to listen to reason and are feeding this to their children. This will help clear up a few misconceptions, myths and outright damaging information that seems to be all over the place these days.

REPLY

Kay on January 16, 2016 at 7:27 pm

Thank you for an interesting read. I have a friend with kidney cancer. How would one go about finding a practitioner who uses plant medicines, who knows their stuff?

Thanks.

REPLY

Cherie on January 16, 2016 at 8:04 pm

So where do you suggest purchasing frankincense extract?

REPLY

Laura Allen on January 16, 2016 at 8:08 pm

Thank you a thousand times. Last year as my husband was being treated for Stage IV cancer of the tonsils, people (usually massage therapists or others selling MLM oils) were advising him to take frankincense oil internally, rub it directly on his soft palate, gargle with it, and all manner of idiocy. I'd like to think people have good intentions, but the fact is, they're selling something and not bothering to learn the science - most of them just buy into whatever hype the oil companies tell them.

R E P L Y

Robert Tisserand on January 17, 2016 at 8:13 pm

This is good for frankincense extract, and has 65% boswellic acids

<http://superiorlabssupplements.com/product/boswellia-extract/>

This is good for turmeric: <http://mefirstliving.com/products/turmeric-curcumin-with-black-pepper>

R E P L Y

Robert Tisserand on January 17, 2016 at 8:17 pm

Hi Kay, where does your friend live?

R E P L Y

Jon Leatherwood on January 18, 2016 at 3:32 pm

Several years ago I attended a Young Living program at which Gary Young claimed to have cured a man's enormous neck tumor with direct injection of frankincense essential oil. FWIW

Best Regards

R E P L Y

Janice Osborn on July 31, 2020 at 5:58 am

I'm with you Jon, and however much of what I just read is true, I'm a Young Living believer. Thank you for speaking up even if Gary never pulled his own chain..

R E P L Y

Kafilah on December 24, 2020 at 11:59 pm

Nigella sativa oil, you stated is not easy to find. Was it deliberate? You haven't been patronising Muslim businesses or manufacturers. There are plenty. Apparently nestle (company) even tried patenting the stuff

R E P L Y

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on January 13, 2021 at 1:54 pm

Nigella sativa fatty oil is very easy to find, but the essential oil is not.

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on January 19, 2016 at 10:42 pm

Thank you Jon, and if this is true there does not seem to be any public record of it. I think it's quite telling that there is only one published case report (skin cancer) for frankincense oil, even though hundreds of people at least, try using it in cancer treatment.

REPLY

Gabriele on September 17, 2020 at 7:59 am

Thank you for this article! I use frankincense oil regularly and i got rid of a big mothersmark with it (applying topically). it just `fell off` my skin within few weeks and I had new,regular skin underneath. No experience with cancer though.

REPLY

Eve Doyle on February 1, 2016 at 12:40 pm

Great article. Thank you so much Robert.

REPLY

cindy aguilar on February 9, 2016 at 3:13 am

I am a breast cancer survivor and I wonder which essential oils would be best for me? also the frankincense extract – where would I find the best quality? And what would the oils help me with, I understand they won't cure cancer but what are the benefits? Thank You for this info on oils it was very helpful!!!!

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 8:46 pm

Hi Cindy,

And congratulations! You may find this article interesting and relevant: <https://tisserandinstitute.org/citrus-oils-and-breast-health/> and you can also try this preventative formulation <http://tinyurl.com/j4c332x>

For more specific answers about your case you should consult a qualified practitioner. You can find useful directories here: <https://tisserandinstitute.org/resources/>

Robert

REPLY

Christy on February 11, 2016 at 6:23 am

Hello Robert! Thank you so much for all you have done and keep doing to make sure we're thoroughly educated and safe in our use of EOs. My niece is 8 years old and was diagnosed with a form of rheumatoid arthritis when she was 4 years old. The arthritis went into remission for a while but has come back with a vengeance. She is on a couple of very strong and very dangerous medications just to help her get by. Both of these also carry a very real risk of causing cancer but the risk is considered better than not treating her with them. So my question is: are the Boswellia and turmeric/curcumin extracts safe for children too? I'm sending my brother and sister-in-law some of the KidSafe roll-on EOs from Plant Therapy to help her rest better, but it would be great if this would help her too.

REPLY

A.E. on February 13, 2016 at 2:11 pm

This article has had me thinking for quite awhile, and I didn't see any mention of the CO2 extract, and where or how it fits into this. I'd really like to hear your opinions on if the CO2 contains the beneficial compounds that the extracts do.

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on February 14, 2016 at 3:40 am

Great question AE. Boswellia serrata CO2 extract contains less than 0.1% boswellic acid, and Boswellia carteri CO2 extract contains none at all.

R E P L Y

Robert Tisserand on February 14, 2016 at 4:02 am

Hi Christy, I'm sorry to hear about your niece! I don't think there's anything known about frankincense extract and children, but turmeric/curcumin has been used, for example <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3701433/>. Here is some information about safety and dosage <http://www.livestrong.com/article/281550-is-turmeric-safe-for-children/>. The only caution would be a possible interaction with the medication she is taking. If you need to know more, email robert@tisserandinstitute.org.

R E P L Y

Lisa on February 19, 2016 at 2:26 pm

Thanks for the extensive report about it! And considering, there are different types of cancer out there. Anyway, I always look at essential oils as something that can help cancer patients, not cure or treat them.

R E P L Y

Kate on March 24, 2016 at 2:44 pm

Thank you for article and your research. Not sure if you research lavender, but I have used lavender oil on a skin mole that had mishaped edges. Started shrinking it. I'd like to try frankincense, or other natural means, just not sure which type to use.

R E P L Y

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 8:39 pm

Hi Kate,

If lavender is helping you then there is no need to try anything else.

Robert

REPLY

Sandra Shumaker on April 19, 2016 at 2:15 am

I was recently diagnosed with a meningioma in a difficult place to reach surgically. I think it's been slow growing for 7-8 years, it's benign they say and want to recheck MRI in July. Until then, I'm doing a lot of Boswellic Acid research. I just ordered some of the supplements you recommended that is 65% BA, I also have some salve that contains some of Dr. Pappas Boswellic Acid in it, and have ordered some Frankincense resin to make into a tea. I have about 3 months to expose my brain to the BA. If there's anything else that I've missed, I'm certainly open. I'm a 68 year young woman, that rides motorcycles, goes to the gym regularly, has beautiful grand children and a zest for quality life. They want to do radiation....I'm still thinking about that.

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 8:36 pm

Hi Sandra,

There is nothing else I would add to your regime.

Robert

REPLY

Marge Clark on April 19, 2016 at 11:48 pm

Robert, although the distilled Turmeric essential oil contains no curcumins, the CO2 extract contains close to 80% Curcuma xanthorrhiza, from Indonesia:

Composition of the volatile compounds in extract: GCMS, 100 %

Method

ar-Curcumene 27,5 %

beta-Curcumene 25,0 %

Xanthorrhizol (Hydroxy-ar-Curcumene) 18 – 28 27,3 %

Sum of Curcumenes s. 79,7 %

Stuff doesn't smell nearly as good as the distilled oil, though 😊

R E P L Y

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 8:35 pm

Hi Marge,

The constituents you mention are also in the essential oils. However, they are not curcumins, but curcumenes. While curcumenes are terpenes and volatile, curcumin is not. They are two completely different types of molecules.

Robert

R E P L Y

Deborah Snowden on April 22, 2016 at 2:38 pm

Hi this is Debbie Snowden and I have been diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer and currently taking radiation and I'm looking for anything possible to help treat or cure it. Any ideas would be greatly appreciated thank u

R E P L Y

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 8:33 pm

Hi Debbie,

I cannot help you with any cure or treatment, but there is a strong evidence on preventative effect of citrus essential oils:

<https://tisserandinstitute.org/citrus-oils-and-breast-health/>

You can try this formulation, it may help to prevent future recurrence: <http://tinyurl.com/j4c332x>

Robert

R E P L Y

mindy green on April 28, 2016 at 10:55 pm

Excellent review, Robert. Thank you.

REPLY

Nancy on May 1, 2016 at 6:36 pm

Hi Robert,

Thank you for your article. Very interesting. Have you looked into the testimonials from the documentary The Truth About Cancer? There were testimonials about healing skin cancer and brain cancer using frankincense essential oil. Would like to know your take on this.

Thank you

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 8:30 pm

Hello Nancy,

I have watched the documentary and yes, there is one documented case study for skin cancer and it is possible that frankincense essential oil may potentially help with that. Rob Guba used it in his formulation, see here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqlMUeVzKkl>

In the case of brain cancer in The Truth About Cancer, both frankincense and clove essential oils were used and so we cannot say for sure what worked and how. There is a slightly stronger scientific evidence for clove.

Robert

REPLY

KB on May 9, 2016 at 10:50 pm

Many thanks for an excellent article. Since there are many stories about the frankincense oil working, do you think instead of the the boswellic acid, that it is really the a-Pinene or a combination of something like a-Pinene and Limonene that is working synergistically instead?

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 8:27 pm

Dear KB,

You are right, there are many stories, but no documented clinical case studies. If you can find a single documented case, I would be very interested to hear about it. To be honest, I don't think anything much is happening with frankincense essential oil, with maybe the exception of skin cancer.

Robert

REPLY

Donna on May 19, 2016 at 2:56 am

Thanks so much for the information. After being diagnosed with CLL I was bombarded by family telling me that if I would take frankincense I would be cured, and that studies had shown it would cure cancer, so I love all the information please keep it coming, especially letting people know cancer is not one disease. This is usually told by MLM companies and consultants who have no real understanding of what they are selling not to mention their lack of understanding cancer.

REPLY

Kim on May 27, 2016 at 1:38 am

Can I ask if there is any harm in trying frankincense for skin cancer? It's helping reduce the size of a mole that I have. As long as there are no interactions with other treatments, can it be harmful for an adult to use it topically?

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 8:24 pm

Hello Kim,

Are you talking about frankincense essential oil? There is no harm in applying it and if it is working, you can continue doing so.

Robert

REPLY

Cindy Guida on May 28, 2016 at 4:29 pm

Thank you for this article. I just purchased my 2nd bottle of Aura Cacia Frankincense Oil....can't return it, but just like you said, it has no Boswellia Acid.....it says Boswellia sacra. Sigh. As a breast cancer survivor, I want to do what I can to prevent it from returning. Lesson learned. I do take Turmeric Caps from Life Extension and put the fresh Spice on whatever I can tolerate. It is a taste one learns to like. Thank you for your Research and for sharing it with us.

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 8:21 pm

Hello Cindy,

Thank you for your comment. You can look at this article for more information about breast cancer prevention:

<https://tisserandinstitute.org/citrus-oils-and-breast-health/>

There is a recipe that you can use as well for prevention:

<http://tinyurl.com/j4c332x>

Robert

REPLY

Joanne Chambers on July 7, 2016 at 9:57 pm

Thank you for providing this information to the public. I've taken boswellia extract for about 2 years dealing with cancer. I was persuaded to try frankincense oil internally in January, and a couple of days of a few drops gave me an enlarged liver and elevated liver enzymes. Went away gradually after a couple of weeks, but it is clearly not something to mess with. Which is why I have come to love actual pertinent research on herbs and supplements that provides real information about how, why and when they work, for what.

REPLY

JEANNE PRESLAR on July 30, 2016 at 2:07 am

my husband has prostate cancer that has spread to his spine. What type of Frankincense should we use. I have been searching for months, but am afraid to buy anything with false hope. thank you so much. He takes Lupron now. Could he stop after using Frankincense? Also, How does one know it has worked...who in the Bremerton, Washington area can monitor us? Thank you sooo much

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 6:47 pm

Hello Jeanne,

I cannot give you an expert opinion on your husband's health here, for that you should always consult a qualified practitioner. You can find useful directories here:

<https://tisserandinstitute.org/resources/>

Robert

REPLY

Nic Allums on August 10, 2016 at 4:15 pm

How are you determining if the essential oil truly has boswellic acid or not when the label claims that it has a 60% concentration, as the doTerra frankincense oil claims to have? This information does not seem to be readily available. I would like to understand the methodology you're using to validate or invalidate any claims like this.

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on August 15, 2016 at 6:25 pm

Hello Nic,

To see chemical composition of any essential oil, you need a GS/MS analysis. There are hundreds of published analyses of various frankincense essential oils and none of them show boswellic acid. It is not surprising, as the boswellic acid

molecule is too heavy to carry over in distillation. It would be interesting to see the label you mention.

Robert

REPLY

Carrie on August 20, 2016 at 3:08 pm

Is there a way that frankincense extract or curcumin can be applied topically for a very small patch of skin cancer? Or would they not work topically and need to be taken internally?

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on October 6, 2016 at 2:49 pm

You could use a mix of 5% Frankincense oil and 5% Sandalwood oil on the skin. There is some good evidence for Sandalwood oil and skin cancer:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4172370/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9370104>. Also look at

this post <http://roberttisserand.com/2011/07/ron-guba-on-essential-oils-and-skin-cancer/>

REPLY

Karen Bissonette on August 25, 2016 at 8:57 pm

I must ask you Robert – if Boswellic acid does not carry over into distillation of Frankincense essential oil what makes the oil anti-inflammatory? Wouldn't the anti-inflammatory aspects of the oil also work in fighting cancer? I have been using the oil topically for lower back and stomach pain and it works surprisingly well.

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on October 6, 2016 at 4:25 pm

I think this may answer your question about inflammation, Karen <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26721216>. An anti-inflammatory effect may possibly help some in cancer prevention, but not significantly in treatment.

REPLY

HK Lin on September 9, 2016 at 7:13 pm

Thank you Robert for citing many of our publications on frankincense.

I would like to add a recent paper published on August 16, 2016 on a bladder cancer case to the collection (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27531547>).

Thank you.

HK

REPLY

Lyn on September 21, 2016 at 7:27 am

Thanks Robert for this easy to understand and referenced article
With all the info out there I was looking at taking frankincense for low grade bladder cancer . Trying to throw everything at it ! I am taking Kyolic and medicinal mushrooms so think ill just stay with that !

REPLY

Sammy on October 2, 2016 at 1:18 pm

Well, I put Frankincense oil on a bump under my arm and within a week, it's almost gone. So, I don't believe a word you are saying.

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on October 6, 2016 at 2:19 pm

Was your bump a malignant tumor? I absolutely believe what you are saying, but this is not evidence that Frankincense oil can "cure cancer".

REPLY

Barb on July 10, 2017 at 8:28 pm

Interesting how using EO's topically works for some and not for others. I have applied frankincense essential oil on a few places (sun damage) on my skin for months, with 0 improvements. I love essential oils and will continue using them, but as far as 'curing' anything, I am skeptical. I love your articles.

REPLY

mike on October 5, 2016 at 5:46 pm

Hi Robert,

Thanks for the article... May i ask you about Frankincense Resin, If we eat the resin then does it contain boswellic acid?

Thanks once again

REPLY

Robert Tisserand on October 6, 2016 at 4:29 pm

Eating the raw resin is not a great idea, as your body won't be able to absorb much of the boswellic acid. I suggest either buying capsules that contain Frankincense extract, and these usually have about 60% boswellic acid, or making your own extract or tea:

<https://apothecarysgarden.com/a-recipe-for-a-frankincense-tea/>

<https://apothecarysgarden.com/2015/12/03/how-to-extract-the-resin-and-boswellic-acids-from-frankincense-an-improved-method/>

REPLY

martin watt on November 23, 2016 at 11:10 pm

The major problem with all these reports on Frankincense for cancer is that it is almost impossible to ascertain the varieties used. The trees are still mostly wild growing and there are dozens of sub varieties all with differing chemical compositions. You may see suppliers offering about three named varieties but that is like saying 'lavender is lavender'. I know that Frankincense resin was chewed in

Arabia and surrounding areas for mouth and stomach cancer. However, we have no idea on the varieties used and so to assume that any Frankincense resin will do the same job is unreliable. Top that off by the discovery that there are high levels of toluene (carcinogenic) in some suppliers oils including those on which in vitro trials have been conducted. If I had cancer there is no way I would use the essential oil, herbs possibly. Sorry for any spelling errors this grey is to much for my old eyes!!

R E P L Y

Robert Tisserand on December 9, 2016 at 1:42 pm

Hi Martin, I agree with your comments on Frankincense and compositional variation. It has been a problem for some time and continues to be so. As for toluene, it does crop up in quite a few essential oils, generally at 0.01-0.08%, and does seem to be naturally-occurring

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/764639060290026/permalink/116857760656283>

To what extent this presents a material risk is a whole other question.

R E P L Y

Tera on December 22, 2016 at 2:25 am

Hello Robert,

Can you please explain to me the results of this research study:

<http://bmccomplementalternmed.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6882-9-6>. They claim to be using Frankincense oil.

“Due to the contribution of boswellic acids, it is possible that frankincense oil also holds anti-cancer and anti-neoplastic properties. In this study, we demonstrated that a commercial source of frankincense oil can discriminate bladder cancer J82 cells from normal bladder urothelial UROtsa cells and suppress cancer cell viability. Based on gene expression analysis, frankincense oil activated several anti-proliferative and pro-apoptotic pathways that might be responsible for frankincense oil-induced cell death in J82 cells.”

Appreciatively,

Tera

Robert Tisserand on December 22, 2016 at 11:55 am

Yes, for sure. You will notice that in the previous paragraph, discussing boswellic acid, there is no mention of the essential oil, only ethanol and methanol extracts:

“In search of the active medicinal ingredients of frankincense resins, Chevrier et al. reported that ethanol extract of *Boswellia carteri* resin comprises 7 boswellic acids [4]. Akihisa et al. reported that methanol extract of *Boswellia carteri* resin consists of 15 triterpene acids, including boswellic acids, and 2 cembrane-type diterpenes [12]. 11-keto- β -boswellic acid, the most potent anti-inflammatory component of the resin, selectively blocks leukotriene biosynthesis through inhibiting 5-lipoxygenase activity in rat neutrophilic granulocytes [13] and provides protective effects in a chemically induced mouse ulcerative colitis model [14]...”

This is because Frankincense oil does not contain boswellic acid. The article also has this about frankincense oil and its composition:

“There has been considerable work done on the composition of frankincense oil from different species and commercial brands; and the constituents of frankincense oil differ according to the climate, harvest conditions, and geographical sources of frankincense resins [21].” This paper lists many possible constituents of Frankincense oil, but boswellic acid is not mentioned, nor is it listed in this analysis of *Boswellia sacra* oil <http://www.mdpi.com/1420-3049/13/9/2181>, nor has it ever been found in any commercially produced Frankincense oil, from any species of *Boswellia*.

This does not of course invalidate the results of the bladder cancer study, only the assumption that boswellic acid might have played a part in the effects seen. And this was an in vitro test, not a clinical trial.

Jennifer K on February 1, 2017 at 8:47 pm

I love, love the article, and replies you have to all the comments, (along with the links!) I love reading your articles, you are my new found "go-to Guru" You Rock. ~~ Thanks for sharing Robert!

REPLY

Susan Miller on March 3, 2017 at 7:37 pm

Thank you Tisserand! I am doing a research paper on Frankincense oil. This was very helpful, as I have seen those studies on other websites. this clears it up, and saved me some time!

Susan Miller

REPLY

ceri dunwell on April 9, 2017 at 4:17 pm

A balanced evidence based critical analysis which gives me faith in exploring complimentary practices rather than sifting through ridiculous claims!

REPLY

H. Simmer on July 31, 2017 at 3:19 pm

Thank you for this beautiful research! I want to endorse frankincense oil for treating HPV-related abnormal cervical cells. I was scheduled for a LEEP procedure and I had a month to prepare. I took frankincense oil internally three times a day during that time. I had the procedure. My OB called it a miracle, ALL my tissues came back NORMAL! Two years later the HPV cleared too. Be warned that the oil is hard on the stomach lining and can cause nausea and aching. For me, it was worth it. It worked for me!

REPLY

Katie on August 14, 2017 at 1:57 am

Boswellia Sacra and Carteri oils DO have boswellic acid in them! You have to use the HPLC (liquid chromatograph) machine to find it because the JCMS machine that most labs use don't detect those

constituents! The boswellic acid molecules are too heavy to be detected by the JCMS.

Ferreana does not test to have any boswellic acid, but Sacra and Carteri oils do.

REPLY

Hana Belikova on November 27, 2017 at 3:29 pm

Hi Katie, what are the percentages of boswellic acid found in those essential oils, if you can share that information?

REPLY

Joyce on August 16, 2017 at 9:21 pm

Thank you for this critical clarification.

REPLY

Cecília de Sousa Melo on August 29, 2020 at 3:34 pm

Very interesting article, that gives a totally different perspective of Frankinsense. I been looking for essencial oils to suport by husband that was diagnose with a GIST cancer. DoTerra GIVE ME A PROTOCOL OF fRANKINSENCE (DROPS MOUTH), mYRR, IEMON AND ddr PRIME. i BEEN TRYING TO LOOK THERS SOURCES BECAUSE THERE OILS ARE EXTRELY EXPENSIVE.

REPLY

Michelle Touchstone on March 4, 2021 at 3:56 pm

This is such a helpful article On Frankincense and constituents! I appreciate it so much. I am so glad to know I had the opportunity & privilege to study with The Tisserand institute for aromatherapy and essential oil Skin application, cancer, and safety. I learned so much about ingestion and the problems that arise. I am fascinated by the other things that you mentioned that are far better for cancer such as curcumin and orange. I personally like the idea of eating more of the foods that have these things as a preventative, Thank you for

making this your lifelong study so I can come to a trusted resource and help educate through my own brand. Big hug to you and Hana!

REPLY

Trackbacks/Pingbacks

1. What is the environmental cost of essential oils? Anna's Musings - [...] but much of it determines it is not the essential oil that can help. Please read the article at...

2. Cáncer y aromaterapia ¿Los aceites esenciales son anticancerígenos? - Aceites esenciales - [...] Mi admirado Robert Tisserand tiene un artículo excelente y muy completo, donde puede verse toda la información al respecto...

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