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Title of presentation: The potential of woodland for promoting health as a specific naturopathic treatment and part of climate therapy: scientific findings

Abstract: Time spent in woodland, in the form of forest bathing or forest therapy, is a naturopathic treatment belonging to the wider category of climate therapy, and is suited to targeted use for preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitative purposes.

Woodland provides a specific climate depending on its type (deciduous, coniferous or mixed). Each climate is characterised by various elements that promote health: for instance, excellent air quality coupled with a reduction in airborne pollutants can alleviate respiratory conditions and also have a systemic effect (in particular for the skin, heart and blood vessels). High humidity is also beneficial for the respiratory tract as it remoistens the airways. Low air temperatures enhance physical performance and toughen the body.

Forest bathing has a long tradition in Japan (shinrin-yoku) and South Korea. Time spent in woodland stimulates all of a person's senses. The eyes are exposed to various light conditions, mainly half-light. The sense of smell picks up new sensations such as the scent of wood. People hear unfamiliar sounds like birdsong, the rustling of leaves and the gurgling of streams. New materials (leaves, bark, etc.) can be felt using the hands and feet. The sense of taste is stimulated by eating berries, for example. A forest's aesthetic improves physical and general well-being.

Numerous international studies have documented the benefits of forest stays for promoting physical and mental health. Time spent in woodland – in particular forest bathing – can be used as a modern stress management procedure to enhance general well-being and alleviate stress.