AbScent Press Kit

Spring 2020
About AbScent

AbScent is a UK registered charity started in 2018 to help people who are experiencing the distressing effects of smell loss.

AbScent’s vision is a world where smell loss is recognised by the general population as a challenging condition, where patients are fully supported by the medical community and their care circles, and where healing strategies are explored, funded and made available to the world-wide population.

The effects of smell loss can be complex and therefore support is necessary from several areas to suit the biopsychosocial needs of the community.

AbScent consists of Founder Chrissi Kelly, Trustees Miriam Block and ENT Simon Gane, and an advisory board detailed on the website.

AbScent’s Purpose: The relief of suffering for those with smell disorders through the provision of support, education, and practical advice.

To accomplish its mission AbScent currently offers:

- www.abscent.org - A website launched in 2019 and preceded by www.smelltraining.co.uk
- www.facebook.com/groups/smelltraining - a Facebook group. This closed patient forum has over 1500 members from 67 countries. The content is moderated daily to ensure credibility and scientific rigour
- The Sense of Smell Project #SoSP- a research project with smell disorder pioneer Professor Thomas Hummel in Dresden
- Snif - The Smell Training App #Snif - available on the website to members of the AbScent community
- A research project with the University of Reading to explore the molecular basis of parosmia with Dr Jane K Parker and ENT consultant Mr Simon Gane.
Smell loss is a condition that is estimated to affect 5% of the population, which in the UK represents approximately 3.3M people. The number of affected increases in older populations.

The effects of smell loss can be complex and lead to loss in the patient's quality of life.

**Terminology**
- anosmia - a complete lack of smell
- parosmia - a distortion of smells
- phantosmia - phantom smells
- hyposmia - reduced smell

**Smell disorders may occur**
- after an upper respiratory illness
- after a blow to the head
- in conjunction with sinus disease
- as a result of chemotherapy/radiation during cancer treatment
- as a side-effect from certain medications
- without obvious cause, which is called idiopathic

Those born without a sense of smell are called congenital anosmics.

**Ageing**
Smell and taste can also diminish as people age. Smell loss can serve as an early indicator of some neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s.

**Common consequences**
- Anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure) with resulting depression
- Anxiety over safety issues (such as smoke or rotten food going unnoticed) and hygiene
- Loss of intimacy with close family members, and diminished social ties
- An altered relationship with food that may lead to weight changes

Well-known sufferers of smell loss include poet William Wordsworth, actor Bill Pullman, football manager Harry Redknapp and pop star Perrie Edwards.
About Smell Training

Smell training is a supportive technique used by patients with smell loss caused by damage to the olfactory nerve.

The regimen of smell training involves the repeated sniffing of a series of essential oils to stimulate the olfactory complex of the brain. Smell training was first described by Professor Thomas Hummel at the Universitätsklinikum Carl Gustav Carus in Dresden, Germany, in a research paper in 2009. Professor Hummel took four scents - Rose, Lemon, Clove and Eucalyptus and asked patients with post-viral smell loss to sniff them twice daily for a period of four months. Patients who used the technique performed better in the Sniffin' Sticks Smell Test than the cohort who did not use smell training. Since then, other research has supported these findings.

Chrissi Kelly, drawing on Professor Hummel's work, took the experimental regimen and turned it into a teachable practice. She designed smell training kits and methods so people could easily incorporate smell training into their daily routines. Smell training can be thought of as physiotherapy for the nose and, like physio, takes practice and discipline to see positive results.

The arrival of the **Snif Smell Training App**, available through the [AbScent.org](http://AbScent.org) website, brings the practice of smell training to the public in a way that is simple to use and understand. The app demonstrates in real time how training should be done, and also offers users the chance to keep a diary and track their outcomes in a way that can be shared with their practitioners. The Snif app is in its first phase, and the second phase will incorporate a higher level of user interface and experience.

**Why Rose, Lemon, Clove and Eucalyptus?**

Scientific inquiry into smell in the early 1900's determined six categories: floral, fruity, spicy, resinous, putrid, and burned. To settle on four odorants for the original 2009 research, a scent from each of the first four categories was chosen: rose, lemon, clove and eucalyptus. These have remained the "standard" for smell training kits because they have been used in research into smell training since then.

**Who can it help?**

If a patient experiences any kind of smell messages at all - even if they are indistinct, unrecognisable or distorted - it means there is some limited function of the olfactory nerve and smell training may be of use. Patients with acquired anosmia from a virus or brain injury have the best chance of experiencing smell improvement using smell training. Smell training has recently been demonstrated **beneficial to the elderly**. It may also help patients with polyps.
Chrissi lost her sense of smell in 2012 after a sinus infection. In a state of despair, she sought help but found few resources. She made it her mission to provide those resources that were not available to her in her time of need.

“Smell loss changed my life, my personality and my view of the world. It is a unique bereavement, impossible to put into words. I felt untethered from my daily experience.”

She was able to find an ENT who had experience with smell disorders who suggested smell training. In 2012, this supportive technique was relatively new and not widely accepted. Relying on her previous experience in academia, she started reading about the subject and found her way to Professor Hummel. Using his research she undertook rigorous smell training, often experimenting with new techniques on herself.

Chrissi also took a residential perfumery course to learn how professional noses approach olfactory training. Drawing on this experience, and later food and sensory science, she developed a multidisciplinary approach to the helping others in similar circumstances.

Her patient advocacy, through Facebook and her website, has resulted in an increase in the numbers of practitioners understanding smell loss and recommending smell training.

“By the time the patient gets to the doctor, the problem has often spread beyond the nose, altering the quality of the person’s life and relationships. We don’t just need doctors; we need strategies for self-help and self-care.”

Since starting this work, Chrissi has become a sought-after speaker at conferences concerning smell and smell loss. She runs workshops, online events and private sessions to support people with the condition.

Chrissi was born in Germany, raised in the US and has spent the past 30 years living in Kent and Hampshire.

To hear Chrissi’s story in an ITV interview, click here.
Logos and Artwork

AbScent Logos and Artwork
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Logos and Artwork

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Reference articles

- **Regularly Whiffing Essential Oils Can Retrain Lost Sense of Smell**, Kerry Grens
- **Effectiveness of olfactory training on different severities of posttraumatic loss of smell**, Robert Pellegrino et al.
- **Olfactory Training with Older People**, Birte-Antina Wegener et al.

For a more detailed list of research articles, please see https://abscent.org/learn-us/latest-research

Additional video

Chrissi Kelly appears with Professor Thomas Hummel in a BBC Video on smell training.

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