



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Unani Medicine

EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL CUPPING THERAPY: AN OBSERVATION

KEY WORDS: Cupping therapy, Sciatica, Post stroke rehabilitation, IBS

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ABSTRACT

Cupping therapy has been used since antiquity in the treatment of various diseases. In this study, it was observed effect of traditional cupping therapy on sciatica, menopausal syndrome, Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and post stroke rehabilitation cases. The aim of this observational study was to test the efficacy of traditional cupping treatment in patients with above cases. These assigned patients treated with cupping therapy showed significant improvements in their symptoms in all cases, a significant decline in pain ratings already on the day after cupping in case of sciatica and improved physical functioning as well as the physical component score. Application of traditional cupping might be effective in the treatment of sciatica, menopausal syndrome, IBS and post stroke rehabilitation cases.

INTRODUCTION

Cupping Therapy (CT) is an ancient form of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) that has been practiced in most cultures for many conditions such as high blood pressure, infections, pains, mental disorders, gastrointestinal diseases, heart diseases and a variety of circularly diseases, and skin disorders [1,2]. CT is done by creating a negative pressure inside cups either by suction or fire, which are applied to the affected skin area [3]. There are various types of cupping therapy, which include dry cupping, flash cupping, moving or massage cupping, wet cupping, and medicinal cupping [4].

METHODOLOGY

Four diagnosed cases were identified and selected for observation. One case of them sciatica, one of menopausal syndrome, one of IBS and one of post stroke rehabilitation respectively. In this study, the observation was done 2 times before giving therapy, and then observed again after giving therapy.

DISCUSSION

Case 1: A female patient aged 38 had chronic pain from her lower back and both legs since 5 months. She had suffered pain, then severe pain and could not walk or lie down. The affected areas were the lower lumbar, sacral area, hips, both legs through the thigh, lower legs and feet.

Diagnosis was made Sciatica by physical examination on basis of posture, range of motion, and physical condition, noting movements that cause pain.



Photo: Dry Cupping

Wet cupping over lumbosacral region and dry cupping was administered on painful sites and unani medicine Habbe Hudar 2 pills BD with Sharbat Bazoori Mutadil 4 TSF was prescribed for 2 months. After the first session of wet cupping cum dry cupping the pain was relieved by about 50%, and she could walk, sit and lie down. She was advised to maintain correct posture when standing, walking and sitting, to practice safe lifting techniques when lifting bend the knees and keep the back straight. By doing this, the strain is taken by the hips and legs, not the back. Hold the object close to the body. The further away from the body the object is, the more stress is put onto the lower back as this may injure her back again and maintain a healthy body weight. After four consecutive sessions of wet cupping cum dry cupping with an interval of 15 days the patient's condition was nearly cured.

Case 2: A 48 year old female teacher suffered from irritability, hot flushes, night sweating, accompanied by poor circulation, sleep problems, difficulty concentrating, dizziness, lower back pain and heavy irregular periods with few clots for 6 months. She was diagnosed as being menopausal.



Photo: Fire Cupping

Wet cupping therapy was administered once a week on points 1,55 and fire cupping therapy over back and calf muscles. After two sessions she felt much better but continued to have mild night sweats. After three session of cupping her condition was stable and the night sweats stopped. She continued having cupping therapy every two month and dietary precautions, exercise such as walking, dancing, tennis, aerobics to maintain the stabilisation.

Case 3: A 26 year old female student had suffered with Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) since she was 19. She experienced extremely frequent diarrhoea, with bloating and cramping pain in her stomach, feeling that the bowels have not been emptied properly and felt tired and cold all the time, a lack of energy, backaches and nausea.

Dry cupping therapy was advised in this case as cupping works to stimulate the abdominal organs and raise the peristaltic or pulsating processes to move food along. The intestines secrete the appropriate digestive fluids and bile so that they can draw in the nutrients from the food and the fluids needed. Thus, the entire digestive system heals and raises the metabolism levels so body cells are nourished properly.

Dry cupping once a week over umbilicus and arq kasini 4 tsf twice daily was prescribed, after two cupping sessions her bowel movements were much less frequent, although still loose, she had more energy and no bloating or cramping. After 4 sessions her bowel movements were normal and reduced to 2-3 times per day and she no longer felt cold. After 10 sessions she was fully recovered but continued cupping session once a month and dietary changes as avoid coffee, tea, include more fiber in diet with foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains for maintenance.

Case 4: Post stroke rehabilitation

A 66 year old man was one-sided weakness (hemiparesis) on his

Left side, uncomfortable numbness, Pain often described as a mixture of sensations, including heat and cold, burning, tingling, numbness, sharp stabbing and underlying aching pain following a stroke. He was also having history of hypertension >15 years, diabetes with very poorly controlled blood sugar, alcoholic and tobacco chewing. This patient came for treatment about 5 months after the stroke. At that time he was also receiving anti-diabetic and antihypertensive treatment.

There are many known factors that may increase risk of a stroke. A number of these factors are:

Age: People 55 or older are more susceptible to developing atherosclerotic plaques and hardening of blood vessels.

High blood pressure and diabetes: It is well known that people with primary or essential hypertension (i.e. hypertension without a known cause) and type II diabetes are at higher risk of stroke.

High cholesterol: Contributes to the development of plaques in the blood vessels, thereby increasing the risk of a stroke.

Cigarette smoking or exposure to second hand smoke: Increases the risk factors associated with strokes.

Although stroke is a disease of the brain, it can affect the entire body. A common disability that results from stroke is paralysis to one side of the body, called hemiplegia. A related disability that is not as debilitating as paralysis is one-sided weakness or hemiparesis. Stroke induced paralysis or weakness may affect only the face, an arm, or a leg or one entire side of the body and face.

In Unani system of medicine uses cupping with positive outcomes for patients who have suffered a stroke. Cupping therapy stimulates the organs directly under the site being cupped. It serves to regulate the function of organs by assisting in the elimination of waste products. In the incidence of post stroke disability, the elimination of excess and abnormal toxins are removed by way of bringing these toxins up to the surface of the skin. These toxins are then eliminated naturally through the skin surface or via small, superficial incisions made with a surgical blade or lancet device.

This patient received about 5 cupping sessions (Wet cupping, Gliding cupping) as part of his rehabilitation program. He was about 70% improved overall after 5 cupping sessions. He regained sensation and movement in the left affected arm, wrist, and leg. Cupping therapy helped clear up his weakness and helped stabilize his blood sugar.



Photo: Wet Cupping

However, Cupping is not used as an isolated therapy in the treatment of post stroke disability. It is advisable practitioners adopt a holistic approach on all facets of lifestyle including diet, exercise and emotional health.

Following rehabilitation stroke, patient was advised of lifestyle changes that can help to prevent a further vascular event. These include smoking cessation, weight reduction, reducing dietary salt intake, taking regular exercise and avoiding excess alcohol. He was also considered for drug therapy, such as antiplatelets, a statin and antihypertensives, to prevent further vascular events.

CONCLUSION

Application of traditional cupping might be effective in the treatment of sciatica, menopausal syndrome, IBS and post stroke rehabilitation cases. Overall, cupping therapy is a relatively safe traditional therapy with good effects and used in various common chronic diseases worldwide. However, the results of this study and the patient's experiences with cupping therapy support the assumption that cupping might be a safe and effective treatment for above assigned cases. Therefore, more rigorous studies are required before the effectiveness of cupping for the treatment of above mentioned diseases can be determined.

CONSENT

It is not applicable.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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