

Hijama (Cupping): A Timeless Mode of Revelation

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Background

Cupping (Hijama) is a widely used ancient therapy in many countries. It is an emerging non-pharmacological option for various ailments including pain management. The aim of cupping is to extract blood that is believed to be harmful from the body which in turn rids the body of potential harm from symptoms leading to a reduction in well-being. It is also named as Prophetic medicine because Hijama has been mentioned in several Hadiths. **Objectives:** This literature review describes the history of cupping, historical definition and its potential application in Unani system of medicine with the focus on the Islamic perspective of this technique. **Materials and Method:** In order to obtain as much information as possible about cupping therapy, we conducted a comprehensive literature review of related journals and textbooks and also conducted manual searches and references to published articles. **Conclusion:** This paper is all about the general ideas behind cupping therapy in Unani medicine in relation with Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and other ancient systems of medicine and the flaws and limitations of the studies that have been published so far.

Keywords: *Hijama, Cupping, Prophetic medicine,*

Introduction

The Unani System of Medicine uses the word Hijama for cupping. This is the application of suction cups the skin draws out stagnant congested blood and vital powers and other deformed or morbid humours (Akhlāt). Cups are usually made of glass, but they can also be made of bamboo, bone, horn or metal. Another classic way to create suction in a cup is to use fire that consumes the air in it. But lately squeezable cups with rubber lids or cups emptied with suction pumps are also used.

Unani System of Medicine is the traditional indigenous holistic healing system of western civilization. It was first codified and systematized by the Greek Philosopher & Physician, Buqrāt (Hippocrates) in the 4th century BC and subsequently developed and expanded by other physicians most notably Jalinoos (Galen), Dioscorides and Ibn-e-Sina (Avicenna). The term Unani System of Medicine or Unani Tib is used in Islamic world from ancient time and is also known as Greek Medicine.

There isn't a single therapeutic approach used in modern medicine that can remove harmful compounds from interstitial fluids and blood that cause or contribute to disease development. The American Journal of Medical and Biological Research listed 47 disorders that can cause blood chemistry and physiological homeostasis to be disrupted which include high serum iron and ferritin in iron overload conditions (such as thalassemia, hemochromatosis, and bronze diabetes), high serum cholesterol, triglycerides, low density lipoproteins (LDL) in hyperlipidaemia and atherosclerosis, high serum uric acid in gout, high interstitial fluid urate in gouty arthritis, among others. These are just a few examples of the substances that can cause disruptions to blood chemistry and physiological homeostasis. It is believed that Prophetic medicine's Al-Hijama (cupping treatment) eliminates all of the toxic compounds listed above [1]. Consequently, Al-Hijama may carry therapeutic benefits for treating each of the aforementioned illnesses collectively. When addressing medical conditions in humans that are not improving with existing treatments, Al-Hijama is desperately needed.

Historical Perspective

Hijama is one of the oldest method of treatment which has been discussed in the Misri Tib (Ebers Papyrus), one of the oldest medical textbook in the world (1550 BC) [2]. Nonetheless, it's said to have originated from 3000 B.C. Galen and Hippocrates also strongly supported cupping. In the Egyptian era the cupping was not only an effective treatment for all the diseases, but also used for the preservation of health. Cupping has also been practiced for a long time in China. This approach became popular

across all of Asia and European civilization. There are two primary types of hijamas: wet and dry. European and Italian doctors preferred dry cupping although Wet cupping is a procedure used by American doctors that was popularly utilized until 1832 in hospitals in the West. The animal horns were employed as the original cupping tool. They are swapped out for contemporary high-tech electrical, mechanical, and electronic vacuum-formed cups. Over the course of European history, the majority of the local lay physicians treated patients, charging less and might be available for informal consultation than physician. Cross-cultural studies indicate that in many countries women particularly female heads of household represent the primary source of therapeutic help. It has been confirmed by numerous trustworthy sources that women did cupping in Greece, New Holland, Russia, and Turkey. Until the later half of the 19th century, doctors in the west expected to understand and use cupping therapy as part of their core clinical skill set. The medical community harshly condemned it in the middle to late 1800s. In the 20th century it entirely disappeared. The introduction of several antibiotics and antipyretics was the cause of that [3]. Antibiotics and contemporary medications have become less common due to their high cost, toxicity, and resistance. People started again using the complementary and alternative medicine system for treatment. As a result, Hijama began to gain popularity on a global scale once more. At the moment nations including China, Germany, the US, Australia, and Vietnam use it.

Prophetic Medicine: An Islamic perspective

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a mercy to humanity, and through his Sunnah Allah has provided us with avenues to heal, sustain ourselves and thrive. Hijama is a great way to incorporate the Sunnah in our lives, as well as reset and refresh our mind, body, and spirit. It is extensively reported in a wide collection of authentic hadith. Its practice is strongly recommended and emphasized in a number of narrations. The practice of Hijama forms an integral part of Islamic Prophetic Medicine. The Prophet Muhammad recommended many forms of therapies including cupping therapy and honey. He also recommended cautery (cauterization) as a last choice of treatment [4,5] Prophetic medicine also recommended a variety of herbs and foods such as *Nigella sativa* and dates [6] as well as applied therapy such as hydrotherapy [7]. Many arabic companions of the Prophet have reported his hadiths concerning Cupping therapies. Al-Hijama is an Arabic word for cupping which is derived from the word “hajm” which means “to suck”. In Holy book, Quran, it states: “And whatsoever the messenger gives you take it and whatsoever he forbids abstain”. [Qur’an] [8]. This verse tells the Muslims that they should

follow the ways of the prophet and the prophet Mohammed (PBUH) recommended cupping and advised people to use it. Narrated Ibn Abbas: (The Prophet (PBUH) said), “Healing is in three things: A sip of honey, cupping, and branding with fire (cauterizing). But I forbid my followers to use (cauterization) branding with fire” (Sahih Al-Bukhari) [9]. He also said “The best medicine with which you treat yourselves is cupping or it is one of the best of your medicines” or “the best treatment you can use is cupping.” The prophet has mentioned cupping in approximately 28 holy narrations (hadith) [9].

Hijama’s Significance in divine guidance

The following hadith that are sufficient to demonstrate the importance of Hijama.

▶ “Indeed, the best of remedies you have is Hijama (cupping)”. – Saheeh Al Bukhari.

▶ The importance of Hijama in the divine guidance can further be stressed by the following words which were related to the Prophet SAW on the night of Israa (ascension to the heaven) by angles: “O Mohammed, order your ummah (people) with Hijama (cupping)”. – Saheeh, Sunan Tirmidhi.

▶ “Hijama is the most helpful procedure for human beings to cure themselves”. – Saheeh Al Bukhari and Saheel Muslim.

▶ “Indeed in Hijama (cupping) there is a cure”. – Saheeh Muslim

▶ The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have had Hijama performed on his head for migraine [Bukhari] on his foot after a sprain [Ibn Majah] on his neck [Abu Dawud], on his hip for hip pain [Abu Dawud] and between his shoulders for detoxification [Ahmed].

▶ “Cupping is the most helpful procedure for human beings to cure themselves.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

▶ “The best medicine with which you treat yourselves is cupping or it is one of the best of your medicines.” Or “The treatment you can use is cupping.” [Bukhari: 5371].

Types of Cupping

The cupping is basically of two types:

- ▶ Dry Cupping / Hijama bila shart
- ▶ Wet Cupping / Hijama bil shart

Dry Cupping/ Hijama bila shart

Hijama bila Shart (Dry cupping) is a traditional procedure of regiminal therapy that works on the principle of imala-e-mawad (diversion of morbid humours) [10]. It is a method of relieving local congestion by applying a partial vacuum that is created in cup by manual suction pump [11]. In this method skin is not incised and is also known as cupping without

scarification [12].

Wet Cupping / Hijama bil shart

In wet cupping skin of that part is cut superficially and deeply by scalpel before applying the instrument. Blood is sucked from the capillaries. This method is done for the local evacuation. It is also known as cupping with scarification [12]. This procedure actually starts with the procedure of dry cupping after appearance of congestion at the site, small scratches or incision are made with the lancet. Then blood is sucked after applying cups to the incised area [11]. Wet cupping has a complex procedure and is generally performed by experienced practitioners (Bayfield, 1823) [13]. It works on the principle of Istifragh (Evacuation) [10].

Timing of Cupping

The best time for performing cupping is morning hours but Al-Masihi (1935) has advised that the best time for application of the cup is afternoon [14]. Besides it should be avoided at the first and last few days of a lunar month, it is difficult to activate the humours. They are not on move or agitated; nor it is advised at the end of lunar month [12].

According to the Sunnah (The ways of the prophet) the best days to perform cupping are the 17th, 19th and 21st of the Islamic month. Anas bin Malik R.A (May God be pleased with them) stated: "the Prophet used the treatment of cupping on both sides of his blessed head and shoulders and generally this treatment was done on the 17th, 19th and 21st of the Islamic lunar month". (Cited from Tirmidhi by simply Hijama) Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger (saw) said, "Hijama on an empty stomach is best and it is a cure and a Blessing". It improves the intellect and the memory. So use Hijama with the Blessing of Allah. For the therapeutic purpose Hijama can be performed at any time on any date and day of months [3,15].

Mechanism of cupping

Although the exact mechanism underlying cupping therapy is unknown, some researchers propose that applying cups to specific skin accu points causes haemostasis or hyperaemia, which in turn has a therapeutic effect [16].

A minor surgical excretory procedure called hijama applied suction force or negative pressure [17] to the skin's surface using cups results in lifting of the skin that (gradually increase in size because of the skin's viscoelastic properties). Increased capillary filtration and localized gathering of interstitial and lymphatic fluids, filtered fluids, and their uplifting proper-

ties within the skin. This lessens the chemical, mediators of inflammation, nociceptive substances, breaks tissue and covers nerve endings in gathered fluids adhesions reducing discomfort as soon as the cups are removed a sharp rise blood flow occurs in the skin (reactive hyperaemia). Skin barrier is opened by scarification of the skin's surface. for the removal of fluids containing pathogenic compounds and stops venous capillary absorption of them last [18]. The first section of the hijama is this, we occasionally stop the process up to this point. The choice is based on the patient's need, the indication, the contraindication, and difficulties.

After performing first step of Hijama, immediate second cupping pressure is transmitted through skin incisions to create a traction force and pressure gradient across the capillaries and skin that cause the excretion of accumulated lymph and other interstitial fluids with causal pathological materials, capillary fluid filtration carrying pathogenic causing agents, bleeding at puncture sites and elevated endogenous opioid release (relieving impact) [18]. Cupping therapy boosts both acquired and innate immunity (skin wounding effect) improves natural excretory functions and haemolyses aged RBCs against high pressure gradients [18].

Conclusion

Although the literature indicates that cupping has a bright future. I believe cupping works well for a wide variety of illnesses, as the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has stated "The best medicine with which you treat yourselves is cupping" at the moment private clinics perform wet cupping on a large number of patients have observed its advantages even in cases where traditional medicine has fallen short of meeting their needs for medical care, given that it possesses a People who have a religious connection accept it more easily without more than traditional medicine, but it doesn't imply that it's ineffective. Right now it's not under what conditions that are necessary for conventional medicine to work for it to be approved possibly with additional study more individuals will accept it. Still one could contend that Given the religious connection it is more likely to have a placebo effect. Efforts should be made to promote research collaboration between developing countries and Western countries, particularly countries where wet cupping is still used as a traditional treatment.

Discussion

The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have had Hijama performed on his head for migraine [Bukhari] on his foot after a sprain [Ibn Majah] on his neck [Abu Dawud] on his hip for hip pain [Abu Dawud] and between his

shoulders for detoxification [Ahmed] with correlation of modern aspect it is mention in our Unani classical textbook, Site of cupping if cups applied between shoulder blades, benefits of cupping on this area is similar to that of venesection from the basilic vein. It relieves the pain of shoulder, cupping over calves has a similar effect, it purifies the blood and helps to induce menstruation. Cupping over the occiput or top of head, is supposed to benefit mental confusion and vertigo. Cupping over the loins is good for boils and abscess of thigh, gout, piles elephantiasis and pruritis of back, cupping behind the knees benefit inflammatory conditions of buttocks [12].

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