

**THE OPINION AND ATTITUDE ABOUT CUPPING THERAPY AMONG GENERAL
POPULATION OF NORTHERN REGION OF SAUDI ARABIA**

Amir Mohammed Alshamri and Md. Ali Mujtaba*

Department of Pharmaceutics, Faculty of Pharmacy, Northern Border University, Rafha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Md. Ali Mujtaba

Department of Pharmaceutics, Faculty of Pharmacy, Northern Border University, Rafha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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ABSTRACT

Objectives of the study: The primary objective was to assess the opinion and attitude about cupping therapy among general population of Saudi Arabia and secondary objective was to assess prevalence and causes of cupping therapy use. **Methodology:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted during the period of three months from January 2017 to March 2017 in Northern border area of Saudi Arabia. The Inclusion criteria for this study was: Saudi People (both gender), older than the age of eighteen, living in northern border area and agree to answer the questionnaire after being informed about the main purpose of the study. Data were collected by using online structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to describe all variables using the software Microsoft Excel program. **Results:** The total number of subjects enrolled for this study was one hundred twenty three. Males represent 76% of the study subjects, more than half of study subjects (64%) aged between 19 - 25 years. There were one hundred and twenty (98%) heard about cupping therapy, 43% didn't know that cupping therapy has different types, 59% of study subjects agreed that cupping is contraindicated in patients suffering from certain diseases, 35% think that cupping therapy can be alternative to medical therapy. 39% agree that cupping therapy can shorten duration of treatment, 73% would advise friends and relatives with cupping therapy and 37% would get cupping therapy soon. only 25% got cupping therapy previously. **Conclusion:** There is positive attitude towards cupping therapy, high percent of participants recommend cupping therapy to their friends and relatives and intend to use it soon but Majority of them hadn't experience cupping therapy. The preliminary results of this study call for further research with a larger sample in academic settings across the nation.

KEYWORDS: Cupping therapy, Awareness, Knowledge, Participants, Saudi Arabia.**1. INTRODUCTION**

Cupping has become increasingly available to the public in the recent years. "Cupping therapy is an ancient medical treatment that relies upon creating a local suction to mobilize blood flow in order to promote healing".^[1-3] It is still practiced in rural areas as it was practiced thousands of years ago, but recently has been acknowledged in the western society. The most interesting fact is that it was recommended by the prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him (PBUH)] many thousand years ago, however, the western countries were unaware of its effects until recently.^[4]

A person with ailing health seeks treatment options depending on the resources available at disposal with the first approach usually being traditional medicine. According to WHO, traditional medicine is the aggregation of knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, used to maintain, diagnose, prevent and treat ailments.^[5] In some cases due to religious beliefs, lack of resources or the failure of nontraditional

secondary approach is of complementary and alternative medicine is taken. Complementary and alternative medicine have centered around a holistic approach to healthcare taking into account alternative healing systems, beliefs and individual modalities of treatment not usually offered in a traditional Western healthcare system.^[6] Complementary and alternative medicine covers wide range of over 100 healing approaches, philosophies and modalities^[7] and are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine.^[8] National Centre for complementary and alternative medicine has listed five types of alternative medicine: natural products, mind and body medicine, manipulative and body practices.^[9] There are also some other subtypes of alternative medicine like acupuncture, acupressure, aromatherapy, psychotherapy, hypnotherapy, hydrotherapy and cupping.

Cupping Therapy is an ancient medical treatment that relies upon creating a local suction to mobilize blood flow in order to promote healing known as Al Hijama meaning release of bad blood, the therapy is a well known alternative treatment in Asia and Middle East^[10,11]

and also getting reputation in many European countries and America as well.^[12] It is found effective for blood disorders, pain relief, musculoskeletal disorders, inflammatory conditions, mental and physical relaxation, depression, insomnia and other psychological problems in various researches.^[12-13] Cupping can be wet or dry. In dry cupping cups are placed on intact skin and the aim is to simply remove blood and fluid from the site of inflammation to the surface of the skin. Wet cupping also known as bloodletting, when an incision of about 1.5 ml deep and 1.5ml wide is made with a special type of lancet on the region of the skin where the cup is applied. The aim is to remove superficial blood that flows into the cup which is thought to be full of toxic chemicals.^[14] Cupping is performed by creating a vacuum in the cup placed on the skin by either applying a heated cup on the skin which consumes the air within it (fire cupping) or by using a suction pump (suction cupping).

There have been many studies that have given evidence of the effectiveness of cupping in medical health problems. Therefore, the primary objective of this study to assess the opinion and attitude about cupping therapy among general population of northern region of Saudi Arabia and secondly to assess the prevalence and causes of cupping therapy use.

2. METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey was conducted among a convenient sample of adult population (>18 years old) enrolled in Northern border area of Saudi Arabia, during the period from January to March 2017. During the study period Saudi people were invited to participate in the study and participation was optional. The Inclusion criteria for this study was: Saudi People (both gender), Older than the age of eighteen, living in northern border area, agree to answer the questionnaire after being informed about the main purpose of the study. Each participant responded to an anonymous validated self-administered questionnaire requesting information about his/her age, gender, educational level, as well as their knowledge, attitude, and perceptions of cupping therapy. Data was collected by using online structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was thoroughly revised by the research team for validity, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness to collect the required information from the targeted population. Descriptive statistics were used to describe all variables using the software Microsoft Excel program for calculating frequency and percentage for all the questionnaire variables.

3. RESULT

After exclusion the number of study subjects was one hundred twenty three. More than half of study subjects (64%) aged between 19 to 25 years. About three quarters of the study subjects were university graduate. They were all Saudi in nationality and reside in northern border area of Saudi Arabia (Table 1). Among the one hundred twenty three subjects who participated in the survey, there were one hundred and twenty (98%) heard

about cupping therapy, 43% didn't know that cupping therapy has different types, the diseases reported by study subjects to be treated with cupping therapy are headache (41%), Lower back pain (11%), Skin diseases (4%), Gastrointestinal disorders (2%), Osteoarthritis (10%), Sleep disorders (1%) and Neuritis (1%). 59% of study subjects agree that cupping is contraindicated in patients suffering from certain diseases and 37% neither agree nor disagree, 35% think that cupping therapy can be alternative to medical therapy. Nearly half of study subjects (48%) think that cupping therapy can be alternative medication. 17% agree that cupping therapy can be beneficial for all diseases. 53% agree that cupping therapy can lead to side effects. 96% agree that cupping therapy must be done by specialized persons in specialized centers. 39% agreed that cupping therapy can shorten duration of treatment. 90% agreed that educational degree and experience are important factors in choosing who perform cupping therapy. 73% would advise friends and relatives with cupping therapy. 37% would get cupping therapy soon (Table 2). only twenty five (20%) got cupping therapy previously, among them there were nine (36%) who got cupping therapy only once and seven (28%) who got cupping therapy twice. Ten (40%) got cupping therapy because it is Sunnah, eight (32%) got cupping therapy because it help in treatment, seven (28%) got cupping therapy because of failure of traditional treatment and six (24%) got it because it is more economical (Table 3). Suggestions by study subjects to decrease infections and transmission caused by cupping therapy are due to hygiene and using sterile utensils (42%), specialized centers for cupping therapy under supervision of ministry of health (7%), Increase public awareness about cupping therapy (2%), specialized persons for the cupping therapy (8%). (Table.4).

Table 1: Distribution of the study sample according to their socio-demographic characters (N=123).

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	94	76%
	Female	29	24%
Age	19-25 years	79	64%
	26-35 years	19	15%
	36-45 years	16	13%
	46-55 years	8	7%
	55-65 years	1	1%
Educational status	Doctorate degree	1	1%
	Master degree	4	3%
	University education	90	73%
	Diploma	8	7%
	Secondary Education	19	15%
	Not completed Secondary Education	1	1%
Residence in Saudi Arabia	Northern border region	123	100%
Nationality	Saudi	123	100%

Table 2: Awareness and knowledge about cupping therapy.

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Did you hear about cupping therapy?	Yes	120	98%
	No	3	2%
Cupping has different types?	Yes	59	48%
	No	11	9%
	I don't know	53	43%
Diseases treated by cupping therapy	Headache	50	41%
	Lower back pain	14	11%
	Skin diseases	5	4%
	Gastrointestinal disorders	3	2%
	Osteoarthritis	12	10%
	Sleep disorders	1	1%
	Neuritis	1	1%
Cupping is contraindicated in patients suffering from certain diseases	Strongly agree	38	31%
	agree	35	28%
	Neither agree nor disagree	46	37%
	disagree	2	2%
	Strongly disagree	2	2%
Do you think that cupping therapy can be alternative to medical therapy?	Yes	43	35%
	No	35	28%
	Don't know	45	37%
Cupping therapy can be alternative to medications?	Strongly agree	12	10%
	agree	45	37%
	Neither agree nor disagree	47	38%
	disagree	14	11%
	Strongly disagree	5	4%
Cupping therapy can be beneficial for all diseases	Strongly agree	7	6%
	agree	13	11%
	Neither agree nor disagree	51	41%
	disagree	40	32%
	Strongly disagree	12	10%
Cupping therapy can lead to side effects	Strongly agree	13	11%
	agree	52	42%
	Neither agree nor disagree	44	36%
	disagree	4	3%
	Strongly disagree	10	8%
Cupping therapy must be done by specialized persons in specialized centers	Strongly agree	89	72%
	agree	29	24%
	Neither agree nor disagree	4	3%

	disagree	1	1%
Cupping therapy can shorten duration of treatment	Strongly agree	9	7%
	agree	40	32%
	Neither agree nor disagree	70	57%
	disagree	4	3%
	Strongly disagree	1	1%
Educational degree and experience are important factors in choosing who perform cupping therapy	Strongly agree	75	61%
	agree	35	29%
	Neither agree nor disagree	3	2%
	disagree	7	6%
	Strongly disagree	3	2%
Would you advise your friends and relatives with cupping therapy	Yes	90	73%
	No	33	27%
Would you get cupping therapy soon?	Yes	46	37%
	No	29	24%
	May be	48	39%

Table 3: Previous experience with cupping therapy (n=123).

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Did you get cupping therapy previously?	Yes	25	20%
	No	98	80%
Times of previous cupping (n=25)	Once	9	36%
	Twice	7	28%
	Three times	2	8%
	four times	1	4%
	More than four times	6	24%
Causes for cupping therapy? (n=25)	It help in treatment	8	32%
	It is sunnah	10	40%
	Failure of traditional treatment	7	28%
	It is more economical	6	24%

Table 4: Study subjects suggestions to decrease infections which may be caused by cupping therapy.

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Suggestions to decrease infections, disease transmission caused by cupping therapy	Hygiene and using sterile utensils	52	42%
	Specialized centers for cupping therapy under supervision of ministry of health	9	7%
	Increase public awareness about cupping therapy	3	2%
	Specialized persons for practicing the cupping therapy	10	8%

4. DISCUSSION

Cupping therapy is a very common nonconventional therapy in the Arabic societies, which has been used in the treatment of a wide range of conditions, such as hypertension, rheumatic conditions, migraine, anxiety, and general physical and mental well-being.^[15-16] This study investigated the general knowledge and perception of cupping therapy among a convenient sample of adult population from both genders in northern border region of Saudi Arabia. In this study, 98% of the participants were aware about cupping therapy as a known form of alternative medicine but 80% of them didn't get cupping therapy previously which is not consistent with the relatively high attitude and practice observed in this current study. The prevalence of cupping therapy use in the current study sample is 20% which is lower than the prevalence of using alternative medicine which was reported by World Health Organization (WHO) as 50%-80% while some studies showed it was 33% in Egypt

and 42% in Saudi Arabia.^[17-18] 35% of participants agreed that cupping therapy can be alternative to medical therapy while 47% participants agreed that it can be alternative to medications, 39% think that it offers shorter duration of treatment. The causes for using cupping therapy among study subjects are it help in treatment (32%), it is sunnah (40%), failure of traditional treatment (28%) and it is more economical (24%). Literature revealed that the common reasons for an inclination towards alternative medicine include its effectiveness; accessibility and reduced cost.^[19] patient may seek alternative medicine due to higher cost of allopathic medicine and long waiting time to meet doctors.

In a previous study, which was conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), it was found that 80% of those who consider alternative medicine a myth themselves had

used alternative medicine while 72% of participants agreed alternative medicine helps conventional medicine. It treated those diseases which remained untreated despite the use of allopathic medicine. 27% patients thought that alternative medicine has replaced conventional medicine.^[19] In a Turkey based study conducted in 2010 among medical student, it was found out that the female students had more knowledge with the most known methods in the study group and had more positive attitudes toward CAM as compared to males.^[20] Here in the current study the males show higher use for cupping study than females. 76% of study subjects intend to get cupping therapy soon. They think that cupping therapy is beneficial in treating lower back pain, skin diseases, osteoarthritis, sleep disorders and neuritis. During a Taiwanese study among patients with depression of participants (50%) stated that CAM assisted them to improve their health and live a more contented life. However, 66% of participants stated that they had insufficient knowledge regarding CAM. Those persons with a more religious beliefs higher income, and longer depression duration showed additional encouraging attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicine.^[21]

5. CONCLUSION

This is the first study of its type conducted in northern border area capturing cupping therapy as a subject of interest whereas most of the studies conducted previously were about alternative medicine with limited coverage on cupping therapy. There were certain limitations during the study especially at the time of data collection tool designing due to scarce literature on this topic. In conclusion, the knowledge and attitude of Saudi population in northern border area toward cupping therapy (Hijamah) is insufficient in some aspects. However, there is a need for training of persons who practicing Hijamah. The study however provides a foundation for future research avenues regarding in depth study of this class of alternative medicine.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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