

CUPPING (HIJAMAH): A UNIQUE REGIMENAL THERAPY

*¹Dr. Ehsan Rauf, ²Dr. M. A. Khan, ³Dr. Z. H. Siddiqui, ⁴Dr. Jamal Akhtar,
⁵Dr. Mohammad Azam

¹Research Associate (Unani), Central Research Institute of Unani Medicine (CRIUM),
Lucknow, U.P.

²Deputy Director, CRIUM, Lucknow, U.P.

³RO (Unani), CRIUM, Lucknow, U.P.

⁴RO (Unani), CCRUM, New Delhi.

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of Jarahat, Faculty of Unani Medicine, Aligarh Muslim
University, Aligarh, UP.

Article Received on
20 Feb. 2019,

Revised on 10 March 2019,
Accepted on 31 March 2019

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20195-14759

***Corresponding Author**

Dr. Ehsan Rauf

Research Associate (Unani),
Central Research Institute of
Unani Medicine (CRIUM),
Lucknow, U.P.

ABSTRACT

In Unani system of medicine patients are treated with three types of therapy. These are Ilaj bit tadbeer wa Ilaj Bil Ghiza (Regimenal and Dietotherapy), Ilaj Bil Advia (Pharmacotherapy), Ilaj Bil Yad (Surgery). Cupping (Hijamah) is one of the oldest and frequently practiced regimenal therapy. It is of two types one is Hijamah bila shurt (Non invasive cupping or Dry Cupping) and second is Hijamah Bil shurt (Invasive cupping or wet Cupping). It is indicated in various diseases like Osteoarthritis, Frozen shoulder dysmenorrhoea, backache, headache etc. The most dramatic effect of cupping is upon the skin & the body fluid flow in the arteries & veins increases, thus resulting in

to detoxification. It helps in reduction of pain by increasing the blood supply in the affected area which causes the secretion of natural analgesics such as endorphins & Cortisol. The benefits of cupping are Regulating & betterment of Autonomic nervous system, Removal of pain, Relaxation of stiff muscles & tendons. The efficacy and safety of cupping therapy in different diseases as indicated by Unani Physicians can be evaluated on modern parameters and can be used single or as an adjuvant with other therapies especially in Arthritis so that the therapy becomes more commonly used for the treatment of various diseases.

KEYWORDS: Cupping, Unani Medicine, Hijamah, Regimenal Therapy.

INTRODUCTION

Hijamah Dates back thousands of years for the treatment of diseases and pain. The ancient Unani physicians were the first to use hijamah systemically. Eberus Papyrus, thought to be the oldest medical textbook, written in approximately 1550 BC in Egypt, mentions bleeding by hijamah in order to remove the foreign matter from the body. Initially, hollow animal horns were used for the purpose of hijamah, which further evolved in to bamboo cups, which were eventually replaced by glass or plastic cups. The ancient cultures including the early Greeks and Egyptians embraced the therapeutic value of Hijamah. Initially its applications were primarily for the treatment of diseases and pain, but clinical experience over the years has advanced its application to many chronic ailments.^[13]

Hijamah is an Arabic word which has different meanings such as

- Process of Scalp hair removal
- Application of cups (Seenghi)

In English language Hijamah is termed as Cupping. Several scholars of the Unani Medicine have defined Hijamah (Cupping) in their own words such as.

Razi states that Hijamah is a process by which blood is oozing through the superficial small vessels located in muscles to get rid of the problem of local congestion (Imtala) in the body.^[9]

Shaikh has described the process of making incision (Pachna) is known as Hijamah which is more useful to excrete the noxious matter, accumulated close to the skin.^[5] Jurjani clarified that Hijamah is a process by which superficial bleeding is initiated from the smaller vessels or their branches situated within the muscles to lower down the local congestion without producing weakness in the power of the vital organs.^[6] Ibn-e-Hubal Baghdadi has defined Hijamah as a process which helps in istefragh-e-dam from the small vessels of the skin & muscles and reduce the congestion at the part applied or the surrounding area.^[4] Allama Kabeer uddin says that Hijamah at lower extremities especially at ankle joint is similar to Fasd (venesection) because normally blood and noxious matter move in the downward direction and hijamah also attracts them, so when hijamah bil shurt is indicated at ankle joints the oozing of the blood is higher than in venesection.^[7]

According to the Concise Medical Dictionary, Cupping is the former practice of applying a heated cup to the skin and allowing it to cool, which causes swelling of the tissues beneath it

and an increase in the flow of blood in that area. This is thought to draw out the harmful excessive blood from diseased organs nearby and thus promotes healing. In wet cupping cuts are made at the skin before cupping and the cups collect the oozed blood which can be removed easily. Tabers dictionary reveals that the application of a glass vessel to the skin, from which air can be exhausted by heat or by a special suction apparatus, is known as cupping.^[10]

Cupping Apparatus (Ala-e- Hijamah)

The process of Hijamah is also locally known as applying seenghi because in the ancient period hijamah was done by using cow horns (seengh) or other hollow animal horns. The apparatus for hijamah was termed as Mahjama which was either of horn shaped or cup-shaped (Aab Khorah) or pumpkin shaped (Qara).^[7]

Classification of Cupping

Depending upon the method of the application of *hijamah* it is classified in to two types.

1. Hijamah bila shurt (Non invasive cupping or Dry Cupping)
2. Hijamah Bil shurt (Invasive cupping or wet Cupping or cupping with scarification).^[2,4]

Non Invasive cupping is characterized by application of cups without making an incision (Pachna). Invasive cupping is indicated after making an incision on the included area.

Both of these types are further classified in to two types.

(A) Mahjama Nari (Cupping with fire)

(B) Mahjama Ghair Nari (Cupping without fire).^[1,8,11]

Such type of cupping in which any inflammable thing is placed in the cup to produce fire which creates negative pressure and thus helps in attachment of the cups at the surface of the included area is known as Mahjama Nari. In Mahjama Ghair Nari flame is not used to create the negative pressure, i.e. vacuum is created by any means other than flame (mostly by vacuum pressure pumps).^[1,2,3,4,7,11]

Sites and Indications Of Cupping

Different eminent Unani scholars have described following areas and indication for the induction of *hijamah*

1. **Hijamah Naqrah:** It means cupping at the back or neck, which is beneficial in various ophthalmic and nervous problems.^[5]

2. **Hijamah Kawahil:** It is done at inter scapular region especially in cases of Palpitation, Neck pain and shoulder joint pain etc.^[6]
3. **Hijamah Akhda-ain:** It is done on either of the Akhda (right and left carotid) or the lateral side of the neck. It is effective in Amraz-e-Raas (the disease of the head eg disease of the ear nose and throat and teeth etc.)
4. **Hijamah Qamahduwa and Yafookh:** Hijamah Qamahduwa is done on the protuberance behind the ear and the Hijamah-e Yafookh is done on the middle and crown of the head. According to some Unani Physicians these types of hijamah is beneficial in case of confusion, anxiety and Migraine while some others say that it is beneficial for eye diseases.^[7]
5. **Hijamah Tahtul-Zaqan:** It is done on the chin and is beneficial in the recurrent attack of stomatitis and other problems of gums and cheeks.^[9]
6. **Hijamah Qutun:** It is done on the folds of thighs and is effective in gout, hemorrhoids, elephantiasis, Urinary bladder diseases and uterine diseases.
7. **Hijamah Fakhzaain:** It is done on the thighs. Cupping on the anterior aspect of thigh is beneficial for Orchitis and lower limb abscess, while cupping on the posterior aspect of thighs is beneficial in coxalgia, hemorrhoids and anal fissure etc.^[7]
8. **Hijamah Tahtul Rakbain:** When Hijamah is done at the lower aspect of knee joints. It is beneficial in the knee joint pain which is due to accumulation of the noxious matter (Akhlat-e-fasidah). It is also beneficial in the abscess and chronic ulcers of lower limbs.^[7]
9. **Hijamah Ka'abaain:** It is done on ankle joints and is beneficial in case of sciatica, gout and early menopause etc.
10. **Hijamah Pistaan:** Cupping at breast, which is effective in Epistaxis and Menstrual problems.^[7]
11. **Hijamah Warikaain:** It means cupping on hips or buttocks. It is beneficial in the management of piles, proctitis, hematuria, epistaxis, burning micturition and other diseases of the kidney and the urinary bladder.^[7]
12. **Hijamah Maq'ad:** It is cupping on the anal area and is effective in cases of Anal fistula^[7]
13. **Hijamah Rusug:** It is done on wrist joints and is much beneficial in scabies, itching and ulceration of hands.^[7]
14. **Hijamah Uzn:** When cupping is done on the tragus of ears. It is beneficial in heaviness and pain in the eyelids.^[7]
15. **Hijamah Manakib:** It means cupping on shoulder joints. Cupping on the right shoulder is beneficial in liver diseases and on the left shoulder in spleen diseases.

Ahadees Regarding The Sites of Hijamah^[16]

1. Anas Bin Malik (May Allah be pleased with him) said “The Prophet (PBUH) used the treatment of Hijamah on both sides of his neck and between the shoulders.
2. Hadhrat Abu Kabsha (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Prophet (PBUH) used to undergo Hijamah on the head and between his shoulders and he used to say “Whatsoever removes this blood, it will not harm that he does not take any other medical treatment”.

Contraindications of Cupping

The following are the contraindications for Hijamah as described by various eminent scholars of the Unani system of medicine:

- ✚ Jalinoos (Galen 129-200 AD) stated that Hijamah should not be performed during early stages of inflammatory condition because Hijamah when done at this stage will not extract the morbid material completely leaving behind the residue, thus laying the foundation for chronic destructive disease.^[16]
- ✚ Before two years and after 60 years of age
- ✚ Just after Hammam except if the blood is more viscous
- ✚ More Obese patients
- ✚ In excessive accumulation of morbid matter
- ✚ In patients having weak muscle tone
- ✚ Just after sexual intercourse and some heavy exercise.^[1,6,11]
- ✚ Immunocompromised patients.^[16]

Precautions Before Wet Cupping^[16,17]

Before performing the wet cupping following precautions should be taken for safe and effective wet cupping.

- ✚ Detail medical and drug history of the patient especially for anticoagulant drugs like aspirin and warfarin etc should be taken.
- ✚ Make the patient comfortable either make him sit or lie down as per the region to be cupped.
- ✚ Hemoglobin, Bleeding Time, Clotting Time, Random Blood Sugar, HBsAg, HIV, HCV may be performed before wet cupping.
- ✚ First aid kit should be ready to deal any emergency.

- ✚ Patient must be advised to fast for a minimum of three hours before Hijamah as patient may vomit during of after the therapy.
- ✚ All the instruments should be sterile
- ✚ Suitable size of cups should be used for the area being treated
- ✚ On the face strong cupping should be avoided
- ✚ Cupping should not be performed on inflamed or cut skin
- ✚ Patient is advised to take rest at least for one hour after Hijamah
- ✚ The cupper must wear gloves and be immunized for Hepatitis B.

Procedure For Wet Cupping^[16,17]

Materials Following material should be available for performing wet cupping Sterilised Cupping sets, 11 no surgical blades, Antiseptic lotions, Disposable gloves, Cotton swab, Kidney tray, Herbal anticoagulant powder and medical emergency kit. Consent of the individual: It is necessary to ask the individual to fill and sign the consent form after explaining the procedure to him/her.

Method: Each wet cupping procedure usually takes about 25 minutes and is performed in the following steps.

1. First of all make the patient comfortable
2. Sunnah point is selected at the back or any specific point is selected
3. Disinfect the cupping area by Sprit
4. Primary sucking: Place the cup on the selected site and rarify the air inside the cup via manual suction. The cup clings to skin, keep it for a period of 10 minutes or till the appearance of erythema and congestion. At this point the dry cupping is over, now remove the cup.
5. Scarification for wet cupping therapy: Make superficial incisions on the selected site of the skin using the multiple superficial technique with sterile surgical blade no 11. Take incision along the length of muscle fibers to avoid cutting of the muscle fibers. The length of the incision will be 2-3 mm and the depth will be 0.5 to 1 mm depending upon consistency of the skin.
6. Blood letting: The cup is once again placed at the site with incisions. Blood is sucked with instrument.

7. Removal of cup: Remove the cup after 10 minutes (normal bleeding time by Duke's method is 2-6 minutes and normal clotting time by Wright's method is 3-7 minutes in adult). Now clean the site with betadine and sprinkle it with herbal anticoagulant powder.
8. Dispose the used material in appropriate manner.



Duration of Application of Cupping^[17]

Dry Cupping 3-5 min (4 Min)

Wet Cupping 3-7 min (5 Min)

Complications of Cupping^[16]

Usually complications are not seen. However occasionally the following complications may occur

1. Fear and anxiety: Some patients may feel fear and anxiety especially for the first time undergoing wet cupping
2. Hypotension and circulatory collapse can be observed in few patients mainly in wet cupping.
3. White scars if Hijamah is performed correctly and with all aseptic precautions white scar do not appear at Hijamah site
4. Vomiting: Patient may vomit if Hijamah is performed on full stomach
5. Blisters: These may be seen in some cases. If blisters appear at the site of Hijamah before incisions, do not take incisions and cover the area with antiseptic cream and dressing.
6. Bruises: Bruises may appear at the cupping site especially when excess negative pressure is applied in the cups. Bruises are usually fade away within one week.

Precautions after Cupping Induciton

1. One should not take eggs just after cupping
2. Heavy meal intake should be avoided just after cupping
3. If the patient is weak and of hot temperament then after hijamah, the types of drugs which empower the vital organs should be used eg. Tiryaaq-e-Farooq and Dawaul-Misk etc.
4. If the patient is cold temperament then chicken curry or pigeon curry should be advised after cupping
5. It is better to use sour things for eating after cupping.
6. Patients should be advised to take Arq Gulab, Arq kasni and Sharbat Anar etc in case of choleric temperament.

Mechanism of Action of Cupping^[18]

Mechanism of action of cupping is explained by

Taiba theory

A novel scientific theory explaining the medical effects of Hijamah was proposed by Salah Mohamed El Sayed from the Department of Medical Biochemistry of the Suhag university in Egypt. This theory, termed Taiba theory, described in the May 2013 edition of the journal Alternative and Integrated Medicine is currently the most accurate scientific explanation of Hijamah's curative properties.

Salah named this theory "Taibah" theory after the city of the Nabi (SAW), Madinah Munawwara in present day Saudi Arabia. Taibah is one of the names of this peaceful and blessed city and it means "clean", "pure" or "excellent". It also refers the ability of Madinah to purify its inhabitants and because it removes from it those that are impure and of illintention. In summary, Taibah theory explains that Hijamah is a minor surgical excretory procedure and its effect is similar to the mechanism of excretory function via glomerular filtration of the kidney, as well as abscess drainage, by which pathological (disease causing) substances are removed from the body. This theory will be described in more detail below as presented by Salah in his paper.

There are a few stages in the Hijamah procedure; first a cup is applied with suction before any piercing of the skin is performed. The cup is then removed after which the skin is pierced and the cup reapplied in order to draw blood from the resulting incisions.

1. When negative pressure is applied to the skin surface the first time a cup (or horn) is applied, the skin surface is lifted up into the cup due to its viscoelastic nature. The local pressure around the capillaries present inside this pocket lifted into the cup decreases and causes increased capillary filtration and thereby collection of filtered fluids which include causative pathogenic substances (CPS), old and damaged red blood cells, in addition to lymph and interstitial fluid in the interstitial space of this pocket. Chemical substances, inflammatory mediators and nociceptive substances released bathe the nerve endings present in the pocket resulting in analgesia, while any tissue adhesions are broken adding to the pain relieving effect of Hijamah.
2. When the cups are removed, a dramatic local increase in blood flow occurs, termed reactive hyperemia.
3. At the next stage incisions are made, before the cup is reapplied. The incisions allow removal of the CPS and collected fluids mentioned above and prevent their reabsorption into the venous system. It also causes release of endogenous opioids that add to the analgesic effect.
4. The second application of the cup and resultant negative pressure is transmitted through the incisions and creates a pressure gradient that causes excretion of the collected fluids that contains the CPS into the cup. Aged blood cellular fragments, and molecules and particles smaller than the capillary pore sizes selectively pass through the capillary pores under the negative pressure effect, while intact blood cells (larger than the size of pores and fenestrate of skin capillaries) do not. This explains the preponderance of unhealthy RBC's in Hijamah blood. The negative pressure suction and also release of nitric oxide, helps to dilate local blood capillaries. Salah explains this improves microcirculation, increases capillary permeability, increases drainage of excess fluids, increases lymph clearance and flow, decreases absorption at the venous end of capillaries, increases fluid filtration at both arterial and venous capillary ends, and increases fluid excretion (filtered fluids and interstitial fluids) which acts to treat blood congestion, improve blood and lymphatic capillary circulation and resolve tissue swelling (due to removal of CPS, noxious substances, prostaglandins and inflammatory mediators).

The positive effects of this include:

1. Improving oxygen supply,
2. Enhancing tissue perfusion and cellular metabolism
3. Preserving underlying tissue structure

4. Modulating angiogenesis
5. Relieving muscle spasm
6. Restoring balance of the neuro-endocrine system
7. Improving neurotransmission
8. Exerting pharmacological potentiation
9. Restoring physiological homeostasis.

Salah advises that Hijamah should be done whenever excess CPS or fluids are to be excreted. This can be determined either by applying Hijamah in strength for the person whose constitution allows it or by using the principles of Hijamah in illness by assessing the patient through differential diagnosis.

Benefits of Cupping

1. Improvement of circulatory function.^[14]
2. Regulating & betterment of automatic nervous system.^[14]
3. Removal of pain.^[14]
4. Relaxation of stiff muscles & tendons.^[14]
5. Facilitates the flow of the lymph.^[14]
6. Improves the flow of Blood within the joints.^[14]
7. Improves the secretion of the Digestive fluids.^[14]
8. The most dramatic effect is upon the skin & the body fluid flow in the arteries & veins increases, Thus resulting into detoxification.^[14]
9. It helps open up the chest & benefits the lungs. Therefore useful in respiratory problems.^[14]
10. It is useful in diseases of eye and conjunctivitis.^[15]
11. It is beneficial in allergy.^[15]
12. It has been found to be effective in Tension headache, essential hypertension (wet cupping), Frozen shoulder, sciatica, ankle pain, Migraine ,Knee joint pain, vitiligo.^[15]

CONCLUSION

Cupping (Hijamah) is one of the integral regimen of Ilaj Bit Tadbeer (Regimenal therapy). Many clinical studies have been done on the Hijamah is Musculoskeletal disorders. Various clinical studies have shown significant results of Hijamah in the patients of Low Backache, Osteoarthritis, Sciatica.^[18] Today it is the need of hour for preparation of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Hijamah (Cupping). Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine

(An Autonomous body under Ministry of AYUSH, Govt of India) may play a pivotal role in the preparation of SOP for Hijamah. Now a days malpractice of Hijamah has been observed, so it is important to avoid the malpractice of hijamah. Injudicious intervention of Hijamah should also be avoided.

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