CMAC211

Session 2
Introduction to ba guan
(cupping)
Chinese Medicine Department
Pre Readings


- Both are handouts on the LMS
Pre Readings - Safety


Cupping

- Cupping is where cups or vessels are placed on the skin to create suction. The cups can be made of a variety of materials including:
  - Glass
  - Bamboo
  - Animal horns
  - Plastic
  - Silicone
  - Rubber

webmd, 2015, Chirali, 2007
Image quatro.sinko, 2008
History of Cupping

- Ancient Egyptians used cupping around 1550BC.
- Hippocrates and Galen were great advocates of cupping therapy.
- In the early days, it was bleeding and cupping that was used to “bleed the disease away.”
- The Middle East has a long history of Hajama with bleeding.

Chirali, 2007, pp1-3
History of Cupping

- Cases of TB were recorded in the Wei Tai May Yao in 755AD
- Chronic cough and poisonous snakebites are recorded in Susen Liang Fang circa 1055AD all treated with cupping therapy
Instruments Used

- Traditionally:
  - Hollowed out horns or gourds with a small hole at the top plugged by the mouth of the cupper
  - Cattle horns still used in some cultures even now
  - Glass cups became more popular around the 1800’s as the manufacturing process improved
  - In the 1860’s European and American doctors and surgeons were using cupping therapy for a variety of conditions
  - After 1860 the use of wet cupping (bleeding cupping) declined

Chirali, 2007, pp6-8
Traditional Photos
Bamboo Cups

- Commonly used even today especially in China
- Easily available, cheap and durable
- Disadvantages: sharp edges, you can't see inside the cup to monitor the level of cupping
- Can’t be sterilised and are according to the CMBA guidelines not suitable for reuse
- You could use them for personal use

WikiMedia Commons, 2013
Glass Cups

- Introduced soon after glass was invented circa 2500BC
- Drawn on one of the walls at Luxor shows a cupping set
- Thicker edges not as sharp as bamboo
- Available in different sizes
- Ease of suction
- See through and can see inside the cup
- Check the inner edges of the cup before use
- Can break easily

Chirali, 2007, p26
Just check before you cup

- Just make sure that the inner edge or lip is rounded and not perpendicular as sometimes the inner lip can scratch the tissue as it pulls up the skin.
- Look for the rounding as this feels better for the patient.

Grand Canyon National Park, 2011
Pistol Handle Valve Cups

- Usually made from toughened glass or plastic and has a valve attached to the top and a pistol handle fits over the valve to create the negative pressure.
- There is much greater control over the level of suction.
- Different sizes and shapes are available for various regions of the body.
- Cleaning is much easier.

Chirali, 2007, p23
Images Mannix, 2015
Silicone Cups

- They are food grade silicone no odour, durable and significantly softer making them easy to apply
- Flame free operation – ideal for sliding or flash cupping
- Flexible cup feels more like an extension of the hand and doesn’t lose contact with the skin

Bentley, 2013, p9, Image: Bentley, 2013, p4
Silicone Cups

- Comfortable for the patient to receive myofascial stretching
- Can be heated by immersing them in hot water before use
- Able to perform gentle to deep levels of treatment
- Can be cleaned with boiling water
- Compact and unbreakable

Bentley, 2013, p9-10

Natural News Network, 2015
Rationale for Usage

- Influencing the Qi and Blood
- From a western point of view, this means blood vessels, veins, arteries, the nervous system and connective tissue
- According to TCM this is the channels, collaterals and Qi and Blood
- Fascia – it's crucial and not just have a role in holding the other tissues in place
- The connective tissue (extracellular matrix) contains interfibrillar proteins commonly known as ‘ground substance’ – this allows smooth movement and communication, and can spread disease through the body

Chirali, 2007, p29, Myers, 2009, p15
Importance of Fascia

- “The truth is the body is not assembled like a machine, but grown like a plant from a single seed spinning a single manifold membrane.
- This image of the body as a machine is a limited one and blinds us to the synergistic aspects of whole system functioning.” – Thomas Myers

Myers, 2009, p15
‘The network of acupuncture points and meridians can be viewed as a representation of the network formed by interstitial connective tissue.’

‘Traditional Chinese medicine is based on the premise that a network of “meridians” exists within the “fat greasy membranes” extending throughout the body and this network functionally connects all parts of the body one another.’
How to Cup

- According to Chirali, 2007 p77 there are 11 methods of cupping therapy.
- These are:
  - Weak (light cupping)
  - Medium Cupping
  - Strong Cupping
  - Moving Cupping
  - Light-moving Cupping
  - Needle Cupping
  - Moxa (hot needle cupping)
  - Empty (flash) Cupping
  - Bleeding/Wet Cupping
  - Herbal Cupping
  - Water Cupping

Chirali, 2007, p15
Equipment Set Up
Play the DVD

- Demonstrate all of the Different Cupping Techniques from
- Or the online version of the third edition

Chirali, 2007
Mechanics of Technique

- According to Chirali, 2007 there are 11 methods of cupping
  - Weak Cupping
  - Medium Cupping
  - Strong Cupping
  - Moving Cupping
  - Light-moving Cupping
  - Needle Cupping
  - Moxa Cupping
  - Empty (flash) Cupping
  - Wet Cupping
  - Herbal Cupping
  - Water Cupping

Chirali, 2007, p77
Image: Chirali 2015, p322
Mechanics of Technique

- Bentley 2013 states:
  - ‘We can presume therefore that the suction effect and the drawing out and elevation of these tissues facilitates an increase of local blood supply to the immediate area, which in turns implies an enhanced metabolic uptake of oxygen and feed of nutrients to those parts.
  - It therefore relaxes and reduces pain due to congestion and contracture.’
Clinical Usages of Cupping

- Abdominal pain
- Anaemia
- Asthma
- Atrophy Syndrome
- Back pain
- Bedwetting
- Boil/carbuncle*
- Chest pain
- Common cold/ flu
- Constipation
- Cough
- Dysmenorrhoea
- Fevers
- Lymphatic drainage
- Hypertension
- Musculoskeletal pain (Bi)
- Skin complaints
- Stroke/ facial paralysis
- Tiredness
- Veins (Varicose/broken)

* Single use cup and bleeding may be required

Chirali, 2007, p105
Chirali also covers these:

- Poor appetite
- Diarrhoea
- Restlessness and hyperactivity
- Allergic rhinitis
- Chronic fatigue
- Conjunctivitis
- Depression
- Hangover
- Headache/migraine
- Hiccups
- Infertility
- Insomnia
- Lacrimation
- Prolapse of bladder/uterus
- Spondylosis
- Toothache
- Torticollis

Chirali, 2007, p187
Sports Injuries

- Sprains and strains
- Muscle injuries
- Bone injuries (stress fractures)
- Lower limb protocols
- Upper limb protocols
- Using cupping for Myofascial Trigger Points (MTrPs) and stretching
- Much of this information will be in next sessions class

Chirali, 2007, p211
Image Chirali 2015, Plate 38
Is It a Bruise?

- No – bruise is from trauma, by definition a bruise occurs as a result of a blow that does not break the skin
- Even the term discolouration has a negative connotation
- Focus on the benefit of the cupping and how the cupping will help the patient with their main complaint or issue
- Get used to using the word “cupping mark.”
- Tissue samples have been taken from dark cupping marks and the finding was “old blood.”
- If blood stops moving and becomes stagnant and will be detrimental to health

Bentley, 2015, p14-6
Image: Paul Holloway
Plausible Theory

- Becker quoted in Bentley 2015 adds:
  - “If the muscles are chronically tight in an area, the muscle contraction could restrict blood vessels slowing down blood flow which could thicken blood through platelet activity. Cupping could draw stagnant blood and toxins through the muscle to restore blood flow in these areas of chronic myospasm.
  - The act of cupping would also bring phagocytic activity to the area thus cleaning it up.”

Bentley, 2015, p16
Image: DonkeyHotey, 2014
Cupping Marks

Light, Medium and Strong cupping marks

Empty Cupping marks

Chirali, 2007, p74
Cupping is Diagnostic

- Cupping tells the location of the problem.
- Usually, the area cupped is larger than the pain area.
- Within that area, some will colour and some will not, even within the same cup mark.
- Also tells the nature of the problem, e.g., toxin build-up, or muscle spasm will cause the skin to colour.
- Nerve and bone problems will not colour.
- Thirdly severity of the problem – darker the colour more stagnation.
- If no colour has appeared within the first 60-90 seconds, it won't appear. Move to another area.

Johnson, 2015
Image: David Murphy, 2009
## Diagnostic Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh red</td>
<td>Recent traumatic injury with heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, deep purple or deep blue</td>
<td>Blood stagnation usually a chronic ongoing condition or a strong pathogen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light pink or pale blue mark</td>
<td>Indicates mild coldness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pale or white mark that fades quickly</td>
<td>Qi Xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mottled presentation with crimson red and white or lighter elements</td>
<td>Qi Xu with Blood stagnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red dotting (called sha). This presentation is typical with sliding (moving) cupping as the cups draw from the superficial areas</td>
<td>Presence of heat toxin due to blockage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bentley, 2015, p17
## Diagnostic Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of mark</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protrusion (an elevation above regular skin level) of tight black or purple knot of tissue</td>
<td>Clotted dormant blood, this can look like a varicose lump. Source of stabbing long-term pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the absence of a cupping mark, sometimes droplets of clear fluid can appear. On occasions, a mucosal type of residue can appear*</td>
<td>Clear water – dampness in the skin levels Thicker mucous – phlegm with some congealing of the fluids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rare occasions blisters can appear (more with a stationary cup)*</td>
<td>Dampness, care needs to be taken to maintain infection control. Also, the cup has been on to firmly and for over 20 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Dispose of the cup as per [CMBA guidelines](#), this can't be sterilised without an autoclave

Bentley, 2015, p18
How often to cup?

- Apart from some acute conditions of cold/flu that may require treatment daily
- Use the cupping mark to tell you
- While a cupping mark remains visible, the treatment is still active and in progress. Its presence is being maintained by the ongoing elimination of the pathogen
- Even strong coloured marks will ease within 24 hours
- Most cases marks will last seven days
- Sometimes up to 10 days is very strong cupping was chosen

Bentley, 2015, p19
Cautions and Contraindications

- Cupping is contraindicated on an empty stomach and periods of fasting and people suspected of haemorrhage of any kind.
- Don’t cup over the eyes, sunburn or burns in general open wounds or recent trauma.
- During pregnancy avoid cupping the abdomen. The lower back can be cupped after 6th month – only use light or medium cupping.
- Lethargic or exhausted patients short cupping times and empty cupping.
- If bleeding cupping check the medication.

Chirali, 2007, p209
Image: One Way Stock, 2013
Moles, Skin Tags and raised bits

- Don’t use sliding cupping technique over moles, skin tags.
- Go around them if possible, if the mole or large freckle isn’t raised you should be ok
- If in doubt don’t do the technique in the area

Images: WikiMedia Commons, 2013
Stephanie GA, 2005
OH&S

- Let's face it using traditional cupping, oil, fire, methylated spirits, glass and human flesh could become dangerous
- Don’t over soak the cotton wool ball before lighting
- Once metho is applied place it away from the flame
- Have a dish of water to put out the flame
- Make sure you check the inner lip for imperfections in the glass
- Appropriate cleaning technique must be applied as per CMBA guidelines
Aftercare

- As the cupping process draws the blood to the surface and also opens the pores, The Wind (cold) can enter, so it is important to get the patient to cover up and not to do things that will leave them exposed to cold.
- You can even go as far as sending them home with a hand towel wrapped around their neck.
- This is only for 24 hours after the cupping process.

Johnson, 2013
Image: lucathegalga, 2008
Before you do cupping, you must gain this and explain to the patient what is going to happen

Kevin Krejci, 2008
Practical

- Lecturer to demonstrate different cupping techniques
- Practice different styles of cupping
  - Static cupping – weak medium and strong
  - Sliding cupping
  - Flash cupping
- Try these over different locations

Images: Chirali, 2015, plate 37, plate 46A
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