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Effects of Wet Cupping on Chronic Pain: A Retrospective Study

Abstract

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Abstract

Introduction

Pain is considered a major clinical problem and is a source of social and economic burden for many people. Problem Statement: Many patients experiencing pain find conventional treatments to be moderately effective; however, they often experience adverse side effects, leaving them to seek complementary and alternative therapeutic approaches. The aim of this study was to assess the effects of wet-cupping therapy (WCT) for the treatment of several chronic pain conditions and additionally to evaluate whether these effects differ according to the time of application during any lunar month in the Islamic lunar calendar. Material and Methods: A retrospective review was conducted using data from the records of patients who attended the Hijama Clinic of King Abdulaziz University Hospital from January 2017 to December 2017. In total, 347 patients visited the clinic during 2017; 231 of these patients experienced pain, and 117 of these patients met the inclusion criteria for participation. Scores from the Visual Analog Scale (VAS) were used to evaluate the effect of wet cupping on pain intensity. Results: A Wilcoxon signed-rank test demonstrated that the median (Mdn) VAS scores at 1 month postintervention (Mdn = 5) were significantly lower than the Mdn VAS scores at baseline (Mdn = 7, $P = 0.000$). Results from a Mann-Whitney U-test revealed that the difference in Mdn VAS scores of patients with headaches and migraines who received WCT during the second half of the lunar month (Mdn = 3) was significantly higher than the difference in Mdn in VAS scores of patients who received WCT during the first half of the lunar month (Mdn = 0, $P = 0.005$).

Conclusion

A single application of WCT appeared to effectively treat several chronic pain-related conditions for at least 4 weeks. In addition, the improvement in pain severity may be enhanced when WCT is performed during the second half of the lunar month.

Keywords

Complementary, Hijama, lunar month, pain, wet cupping

