

Public Awareness Towards Cupping Therapy in Karachi

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ABSTRACT

Background: Cupping therapy is a type of alternative medicine that is gaining popularity among people during last few years but the extent of its use and awareness of public towards it has not been widely studied.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to assess the opinion and attitude about cupping therapy among general population of Karachi.

Methods: A descriptive cross sectional study with ample size of 400 individuals from general population. Data was collected using non probability convenience sampling technique thru structured and self-administered questionnaire from April to June 2013. Data was analyzed by using SPSS version 19.

Results: Out of total study participants, 58% were females. Among them 48.7% said that they have used alternative medicine and out of them 23% opt for it as it is natural and effective. 59.6% of the respondent agreed that the cupping therapy helps in treatment; 59% said that it has fewer side effects and 57.8% said it is cost effective.

Conclusion: There is increased public interest to know more about cupping therapy. A positive attitude towards cupping therapy was observed, yet most people are reluctant to discuss it with their physicians. Campaigns should be organized to increase the level of awareness towards the alternatives for treatment of ailments.

KEY WORDS: *Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Cupping Therapy, Awareness.*

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INTRODUCTION

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.¹ In some cases due to religious beliefs, lack of resources or the failure of nontraditional the 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.² Complementary and alternative medicine covers wide range of over 100 healing approaches, philosophies and modalities³ and are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine.⁴ National Centre for complementary and alternative medicine has listed five types of alternative medicine: natural products, mind and body medicine, manipulative and body practices.⁵ 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.⁶ Known as Al Hijama meaning release of bad blood, the therapy is a well known alternative treatment in Asia and Middle East⁷ and also getting reputation in many European countries and America as well.⁸ 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.^{8, 9} A survey by Korean medical doctors revealed cupping is sought for the treatment of musculoskeletal diseases (96%) with the frequent points of cupping being the neck and shoulders (94%).^{10, 11}

There exist studies where the perceptions of general population regarding alternative

medicine have been assessed, however none exists specifically for cupping therapy. This study was conducted to determine the perception and attitude of general population regarding cupping therapy.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive, cross sectional study was conducted from April to June 2013 among general adult population of Karachi. Data for this study was collected from professional institutes, work places and public places using non probability, convenience sampling technique. Sample size was calculated by WHO sample size estimation calculator. For sample size calculation anticipated population proportion was taken as 50%, at 95% confidence level and keeping 0.05 margin of error. The minimum number of participants required for inclusion in the sample was calculated as 385 but to avoid data wastage 400 participants were included in the study.

Individuals more than 18 years age and of any gender, who have not experienced cupping were included in the study and those who did not give consent were not the part of this study. Data was collected by pretested and structured questionnaire that comprised of two parts; part one was about demography while part had questions regarding opinion and attitude about cupping therapy. Self-administered method was used to collect information after informed consent from study participants. Data was analyzed by SPSS version 19. Quantitative variables were presented as means and standard deviation while qualitative variables were presented as frequency and percentage. Data was checked for normality and Chi-square test was applied taking p-value less than 0.05 as significant.

RESULTS

A total of 400 participants were included in this study among them 167 (42%) were males and 233 (58%) were females with 315 (79%) from age group of 18-29 years. Among them 285 (71%) were single, 104 (26%) were married and 11 (3%) were either separated or divorced. Regarding education 252 (63%) were graduates, 140 (35%) postgraduates and remaining had diplomas or certificate courses. Of all 228 (57%) were working professionals, 138 (34.5%) were

students and 34 (8.5%) were non working people.

The preferable choice of treatment was allopathic for 312 (78%) participants, homeopathic 47 (12%) and alternative 23 (6%). Of total participants 195 (48.7%) have used alternative medicine because it is natural and effective [92 (23%)], has fewer side effects [63 (15.8%)], cost effective [14 (3.5%)] and personal liking [26 (6.1%)].

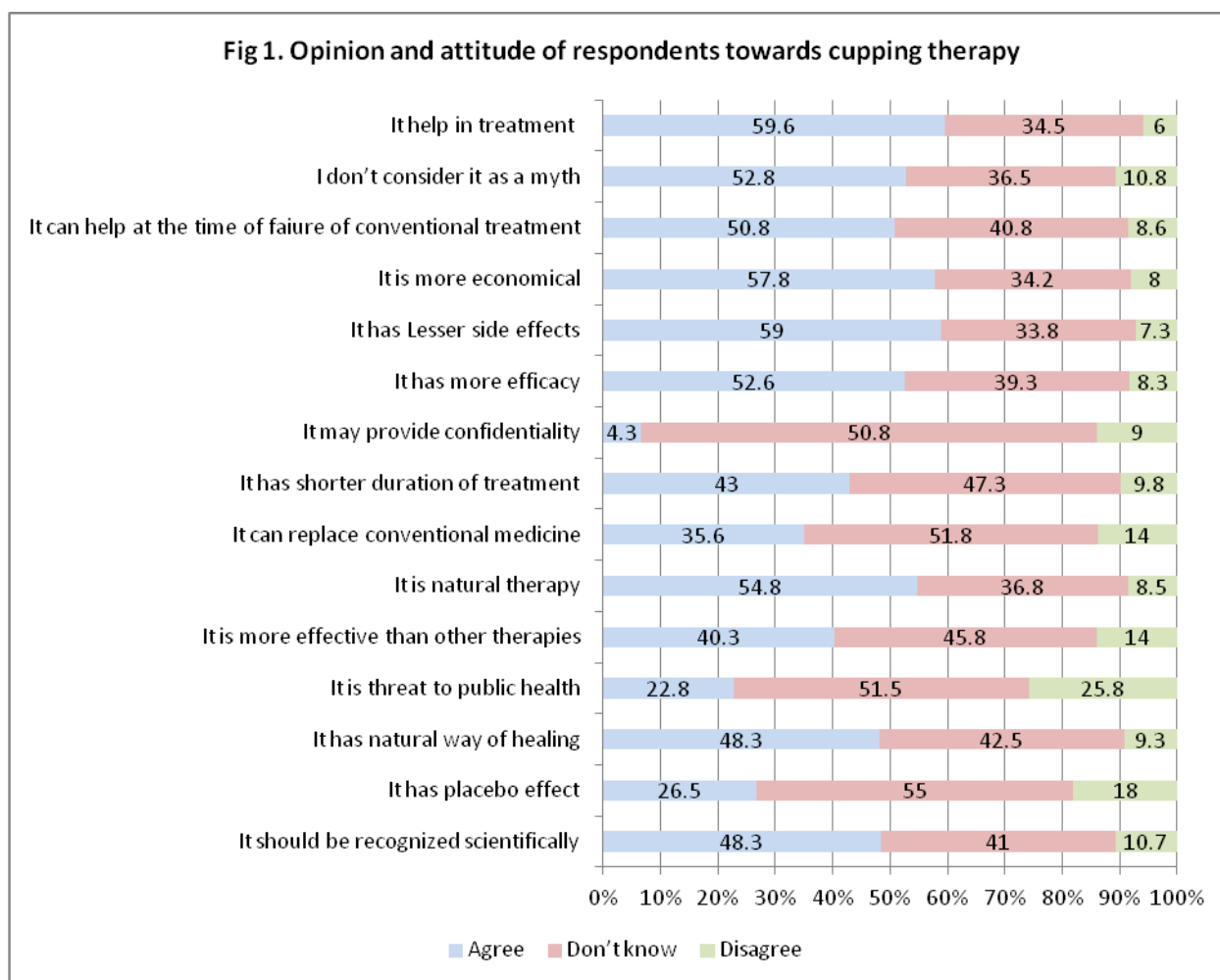
Study participants were then inquired about cupping therapy and 211 (53%) had heard about it while 163 (41%) said that they would opt for it

in future. Opinion and attitude of study population was assessed by number of questions and the answers were recorded on a range of agree, disagree and don't know. The responses are highlighted in fig. 1. Association of various demographic factors with practices of cupping therapy was also analyzed. Table.1 showed the tabulations of different responses along with highlighted significant p-values. At the end of the questionnaire participants were also asked if they ever discuss cupping therapy with their physician and out of the whole study population only 59 (15%) agreed while 306 (76.5%) were interested in knowing regarding cupping therapy.

Table 1: Relation of Demographic Factors with Cupping Practice

		Cupping is the Preferable Choice of Medicine		Heard about Cupping Therapy		Prefer Cupping Therapy in Future		Interested to know more about Cupping	
	n	Yes	(%)	Yes	(%)	Yes	(%)	Yes	(%)
AGE									
18- 29 years	315	148	(47)	162	(51)	126	(40)	234	(74)
30 – 39 years	68	36	(53)	38	(56)	58	(85)	58	(85)
40-59	17	10	(59)	11	(65)	13	(76)	13	(76)
p-value		0.46		0.48		0.001		0.15	
GENDER									
Male	167	84	(50)	76	(46)	67	(40)	121	(72)
Female	233	110	(47)	135	(58)	95	(41)	184	(79)
p-value		0.54		0.01		0.89		0.13	
MARITAL STATUS									
Single	285	133	(47)	142	(50)	115	(40)	212	(74)
Married	104	56	(54)	64	(62)	45	(43)	86	(83)
Divorced/Separated	11	5	(45)	5	(45)	2	(18)	7	(64)
p-value		0.45		0.11		0.27		0.14	
EDUCATION									
Graduate	252	134	(53)	132	(52)	102	(40)	187	(74)
Post graduate	140	72	(51)	76	(54)	58	(41)	112	(80)
Others	8	0	(0)	3	(38)	2	(25)	6	(75)
p-value		0.01		0.64		0.65		0.43	

Figure 1: Opinion and Attitude of Respondents Towards Cupping Therapy



DISCUSSION

In the field of biomedical health care, more people are turning towards complementary and alternative medicine that is gaining credibility among them not only as cure but also as a cost effective and cost saving treatment. Cupping therapy is one of recently most popular therapies in alternative medicine. In our research study, the aim was to assess the knowledge and practices regarding cupping therapy in our population. During the study, a total 400 participants were included. Demographic characteristics of study sample were typical for general educated population. Proportions of female patients were slightly higher (58%) as compared to male in our study. Other studies also showed that females were more inclined towards alternative therapy as in

Egypt with the proportion of females 41.1%¹³ and in Sudan where it was 62%.¹⁴

Majority of participants were in the younger age bracket (79%) and most of them were graduates (63%). In other study done in Egypt 69.3% of the participants opted for alternative medicine were in age group 40 – 70 years while in Sudan it was 61% in age group of 21 – 40 years.^{13, 14} Research was performed employing an educated population because of time constraint as data collection methodology was self administered that is not suitable for respondents with limited or no education.

It was noticed that 42% of those who considered cupping therapy a myth themselves wanted to use cupping therapy in future. The prevalence of using alternative medicine was reported by World Health Organization (WHO) as 50%-80% while some studies showed it as 33% in Egypt

and 42% in Saudi Arabia.^{13, 15} Forty eight % participants agreed that cupping therapy helps conventional medicine in treatment while 51% participants agreed that it treated those diseases that were failed to be treated by conventional medicine and offer shorter duration of treatment and 58% agreed that it has lower costs than conventional medicine. Literature revealed that the common reasons for an inclination towards alternative medicine include its effectiveness, accessibility and reduced cost.¹³ Findings of the study reflect a positive attitude of Karachi population towards cupping therapy. It was found that patient may seek alternative medicine due to higher cost of allopathic medicine and long waiting time to meet doctors.

A study was conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on complementary and alternative medicine 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.¹⁶ In a Turkey based study conducted in 2010 study 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.¹⁷

During a Taiwanese study among patients with depression 50% of participants stated that complementary and alternative medicine assisted them to improve their health and live a more contented life. However, 66% of participants stated that they had insufficient knowledge regarding complementary and alternative medicine. Those persons with a more religious beliefs higher income, and longer depression duration showed additional

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encouraging attitudes toward complementary and alternative medicine.¹⁸

This is the first study of its type conducted in Pakistan capturing cupping therapy as a standalone 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. Time restriction was faced as the project was conducted as a course work and the research article is extracted from the research course report. Due to these limiting factors, only certain aspects about cupping therapy have been highlighted in the study. The study however provides a foundation for future research avenues regarding in depth study of this class of alternative medicine.

CONCLUSION

Complementary and alternative medicine is gaining popularity all over the world and people are shifting towards alternative medicine because of less adverse effects and low cost. Many research studies were conducted regarding cupping therapy in different countries but no such study has been conducted in Pakistan. There is high public interest to know more about cupping therapy so there must be some awareness campaigns organized to increase the level of awareness and to provide more alternatives for treatment of ailments. There is positive attitude towards cupping therapy, yet most participants are reluctant to discuss it with their physicians.

Acknowledgment: We are highly thankful to Dr. Asima Zahid, Dr. Humaira Abidi and Department of Health Management - Institute of Business Management for providing a platform and enabling us to conduct this study.

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