

Brachialgia paraesthetica nocturna relieved by cupping Results of a randomised pilot study.

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BACKGROUND: Centuries ago cupping was one of the most used medical therapies worldwide but it is now regarded as an antiquated and unsafe treatment. Nevertheless it is widely used especially in Germany and China.

OBJECTIVE: To investigate the effectiveness of "wet cupping" of a defined connective tissue area (over the Musculus trapezius) in patients suffering from brachialgia paresthetica nocturna.

DESIGN: Monocenter, randomised, controlled, sequential clinical trial.

SETTING: Section of pain management at the District Hospital of Rüdersdorf, Germany.

PATIENTS: Brachialgia-patients of both sexes without age restrictions were eligible if they suffered from chronic tonsillar irritations and showed pathologic indurations of the connective tissue area.

INTERVENTIONS: The active group was "wet cupped" once, i.e. the skin first was scarified and then blood was drawn by applying vacuum cupping glasses. The control group was left untreated.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURE: Pre- to post-treatment change of brachialgia severeness, calculated from 1-week averages of the means of three subscales (pain, tingling and numbness), each assessed on a -10 numeric analogue scale.

RESULTS: N=20 patients were randomised (13 women, median age 47 years). Treatment effects can be found in the active (-2.3+/-1.9 score points) but not in the control group (+.5+/-1. points; p= .002; triangle test). The results are supported by secondary outcome criteria. Adverse events were not documented in any patient.

CONCLUSIONS: This study suggests short-term effects of a single wet cupping therapy, which remain at least for 1 week. As the trial lacks of an adequate and blinded placebo therapy the findings are potentially biased.

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