

Cupping as Sunnah: The Prevalence and Opinion of the First-Year Diploma in Pharmacy Students'

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ABSTRACT

Cupping is a health practice which is recommended by the Prophet Muhammad, Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH) as it is extensively reported in a wide collection of authentic hadith. To date, more people around the world are interested in trying natural or holistic therapies, such as cupping to treat or prevent disease. However, there is lack of report stated on the opinion of health sciences students towards cupping. The objective of this study is to assess the perceptions of first-year diploma in pharmacy students towards cupping. A number of 81 respondents participated in this study and completed the questionnaire that gathered data on their background, and their opinion towards cupping practice. From this study, generally the students shows positive attitudes to know more about cupping.

Keywords: cupping, sunnah, students, prevalence, perception

INTRODUCTION

There are significant increases in the use of traditional complementary alternative medicine (TCAM) around the world as the World Health Organization (WHO) encourage the use of TCAM since many patients especially those suffering from variety of disease whose displeased with the results of modern medicine (Al Zhang, 2002). In many Asian countries, TCAM services are widely used although there are lots of improvements in modern health care system. The reason for TCAM demand were the unsatisfied outcomes after receiving the modern treatments or some patients could not afford to pay the expenses charged for each treatment. In Malaysia, during 1998, an estimated US\$ 500 million is spent annually on TCAM, compared to about US\$ 300 million on allopathic medicine (WHO Policy Perspectives on Medicines, 2002). In 2008,

TCAM were integrated into the health-care systems with the introduction of TCAM services to the public in three government hospitals in Malaysia as a pilot project ("TCM," n.d.).

Primary care providers and pharmacists are among the most trusted health-care professionals, and both are reachable to patients. In most countries, pharmacists are at the forefront of patient interactions by providing information and guidance to patients about safe and effective use of all medicines (Hussain, Malik, Hameed, & Ahmed, 2012). However, pharmacists generally rate their knowledge of TCAM as being inadequate and they are not proactive in answering many patient inquiries (Brown, Barner, & Shah; Naidu, Wilkinson, & Simpson, 2005). Therefore, it is important for pharmacy students to be introduced with sufficient information and aware with TCAM during their study so that they are confident enough to advise and assist TCAM users to make informed decisions in their future practice (Wahab, Ali, Zulkifly, & Aziz, 2014).

Among the entire TCAM around the world, wet cupping or al-hijamah was used to cure several chronic and mild diseases. It is also known as wet-cupping, blood leach or blood-letting therapy. It is a part of traditional Islamic treatment recommended by the Prophet Muhammad, Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH). He stated in the hadith as recorded by Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him), "Indeed the best of remedies you have is cupping (hijama)..." (Saheeh al-Bukhaari). Furthermore, narrated Ibn 'Abbas: (The Prophet (PBUH) said), "Healing is in three things: A gulp of honey, cupping, and branding with fire (cauterizing). But I forbid my followers to use (cauterization) branding with fire" (Sunan Ibn Majah). The Quran, the Muslim holy book states: "And whatsoever the messenger gives you, take it. And whatsoever he forbids, abstain..." (Al-Hashr, 59:7) This verse tells the Muslims that they should follow the ways of the prophet and the prophet Mohammed (PBUH) recommended cupping and advised people to use it.

Cupping is an ancient therapy used all over the world, but it's only a recent phenomenon in the Western part of the world. From previous report, cupping is recommended by several physicians to cure not only chronic illness but also indicated for a whole array of respiratory, gastroenterological, and gynaecological disorders (Tham, Lee, & Lu, 2006). The main purpose of cupping therapy is to remove the toxins and waste from our body. It also may strengthen our immunity system and reduce the potential of infected by any disease. Besides it is used as an alternative to treat eczema, (Al-Shamma & Abdil Razzaq, 2009). Previous study reveals that cupping can reduce pain of acute gouty arthritis (S.-J. Zhang, Liu, & He, 2010), fibrositis (Ahmadi, Schwebel, & Rezaei, 2008), firomyalgia (Cao, Hu, Colagiuri, & Liu, 2011; Cao, Liu, & Lewith, 2010; Jang et al., 2010; Li et al., 2006), persistent nonspecific low back pain (Kim et al., 2011), chronic osteoarthritis (Teut et al., 2012), acute trigeminal neuralgia (Z. Zhang, 1997), headache and migraine (Ahmadi et al., 2008). Cupping is believed to stimulate pain receptors by increasing the frequency of impulses, therefore leading to closure of the pain gates and hence minimize pain (H. Zhang, 2009).

A famous Islamic philosopher and scholar, Ibn Sina or also known as Avicenna wrote the book entitled "The Canon of Medicine" was widely used as a medical reference. In this book, he

recommended to practice cupping at certain times of the year as suggested by the Prophet (PBUH). In this book, he described the main objective of cupping was to take away the inflammation from deep structures in the body to the surface and eliminate the pain from the affected area. Cupping is recommended to be performed during the full moon because he believed that at that time the body fluid is greatly increased hence, the treatment will be more effective (“Canon of Medicine » 21. — The Operation of Cupping,” n.d.). This is correspond with the hadith narrated by Anas bin Malik ra (May God be pleased with them) ‘the Prophet (PBUH) used the treatment of cupping on both sides of his blessed head and shoulders and generally this treatment was done on the 17th, 19th and 21st of the Islamic lunar month. (Cited by Thirmidhi).

The prevalence and perceptions of pharmacy students towards cupping are therefore subject of interest due to the limited studies available at this moment. The main objective of this study is to assess their prevalence towards cupping, their opinion towards integration of cupping modern health-care system and the barriers in order to practice cupping.

METHOD

All first year a Muslim Diploma in Pharmacy students were invited to participate in this research. They have been informed the following parameters related to the study: (1) the criteria for participation, (2) the purpose of this research, and (3) the time commitment related to the research. The survey instruments consists of four main parts; (1) demographic data; the study included questions about the age, gender and medical conditions of participants (2) how they have been introduced to cupping, (3) their opinion regarding cupping practice which questioned the participants about integrating cupping with modern medicine and their opinion if cupping knowledge being introduced during their diploma course and (4) the possible barriers for the participants to perform cupping. For this assessment Likert scale was used. All data were then tabulated and analyzed using SPSS version 16.0 and Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS

3.1 Demographic data

Eighty-one students first year Diploma in Pharmacy students responded the survey by answering the questionnaire as requested. Table 1 shows the characteristics of population under study. The sample consisted of 34.6% (n=28) male respondents and 65.4% (n=53) female respondents. Most of the respondents were 18 years old (85.2%; n=69) followed by 19 years old (12.3%; n=10). Majority of respondents claimed they are free from any illness (92.6%; n=75) and six respondents claimed they are suffering for certain illness. They are suffering from asthma, allergy and chronic acne. The majority of the students know about cupping (98.8%; n=80) and only one student did not know about cupping (Figure 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics	Respondents (<i>n</i>)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	28	34.6
Female	53	65.4
Age (years)		
17	2	2.5
18	69	85.2
19	10	12.3
Have medical problem		
Yes	6	7.4
No	75	92.6

According to the survey, 79% of respondents know that cupping is highly recommended by our prophet Muhammad PBUH as a method of preventing and treat disease, 14 respondents unsure about the answer and 3 respondents do not know the existence of hadith that is related to cupping. (Figure 2). Figure 3 indicates only 3 students practising cupping, however, according to the interview, it is not consistently done. Majority of the respondents do not practising cupping as need some time to review the benefits of cupping.

From this study, 31% ($n=40$) students know about cupping from their parents, followed by reading the scientific articles (29.5%) ($n= 38$), and 30 students gain a knowledge about cupping from their friends, 19 students aware about cupping from the advertisement using pamphlet and media (Figure 4).

Figure 1: Respondents' knowledge about cupping

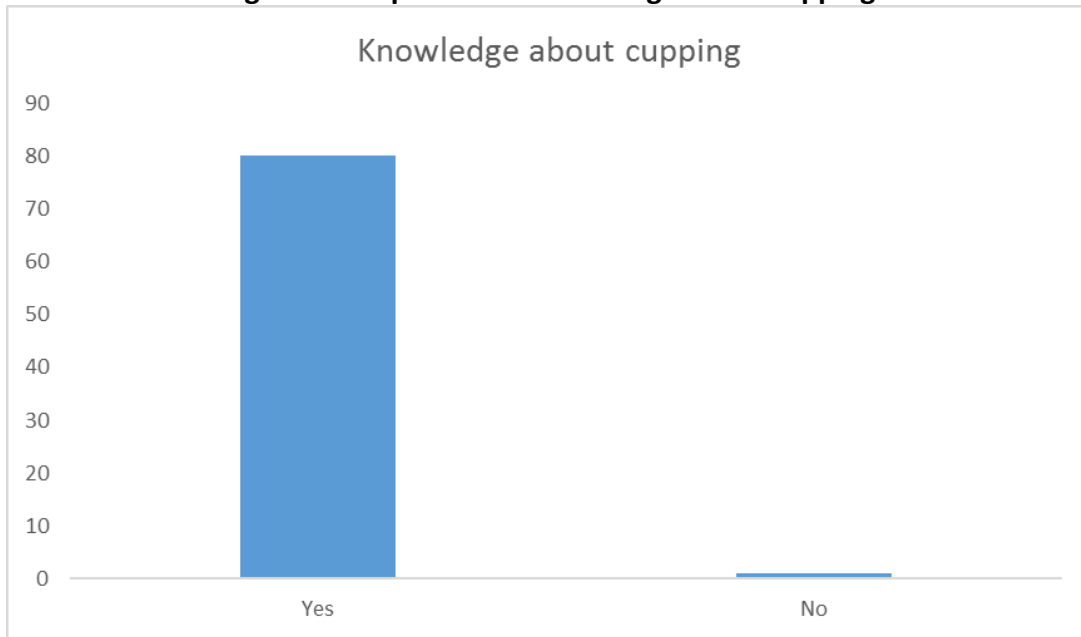


Figure 2: Respondents' awareness on the existence of hadith regarding cupping.

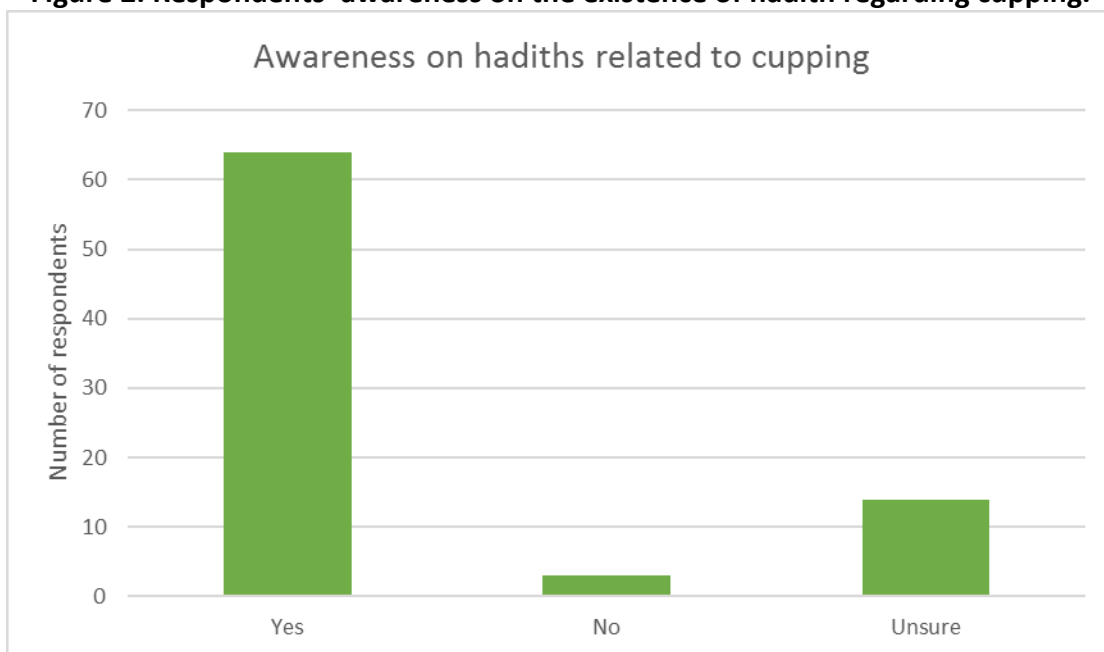


Figure 3. Cupping prevalence amongst respondents

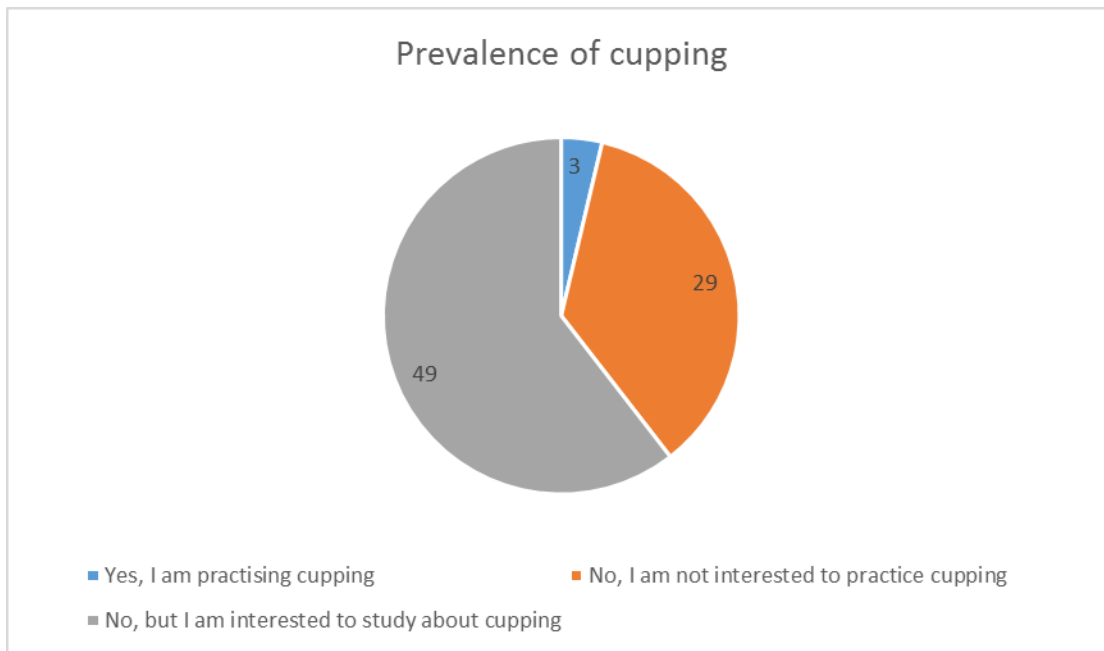
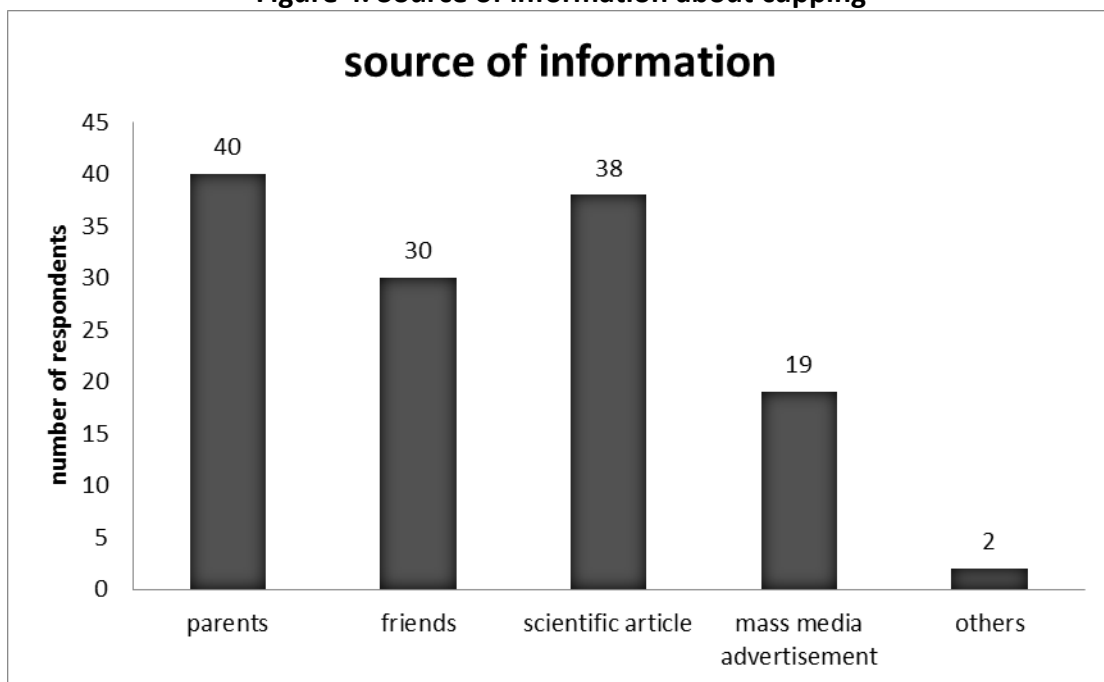


Figure 4. Source of information about cupping



1.2 Opinion on cupping practice

Students were asked about their opinion on the needs to commercialize cupping practice. Most of the students (93% ;n=75) agreed that the practice of cupping should be commercialized to equip them with knowledge related to cupping practice. From this question, the students were

then asked about the suitable media to spread public awareness on cupping. Cupping commercialization by publishing a documentary recorded as the most preferred method of advertising suggested by the students (n=53, 39.6%) followed by advertisement in mass media (n=35; 26.1%). Publishing article in websites and uploading the video regarding cupping practice in social media recorded the same response from the students. However, there are 4 responses stated that they are unsure about the right medium to introduce cupping to the society.

Table 2 shows the respondents opinion on cupping practice. Students were asked on their opinion regarding whether to consider cupping as a treatment method after being diagnose with certain disease. Out of 81 respondents, 59 students (72.8%) feel that it is necessary to adapt cupping to cure certain illness. In contrast, 20 students responded that they were unsure about this. Sixty-eight students agreed that cupping treatment should be offered in healthcare centre in Malaysia. This is corresponding with 84% responses (n=68) which agrees with the statement that cupping practice should be performed by those who graduated in health education.

Forty-nine participants believe that this practice should be introduced in the curriculum as they will be involved in healthcare service after graduated. While 23 respondents uncertain about the inclusion of cupping knowledge in their curriculum. Most of the students (n=72; 88.9%) be in agreement to gain information about cupping because it is sunnah and surely from it has a lot of positive impact to our health.

Figure 3: The proposed medium for cupping commercialization

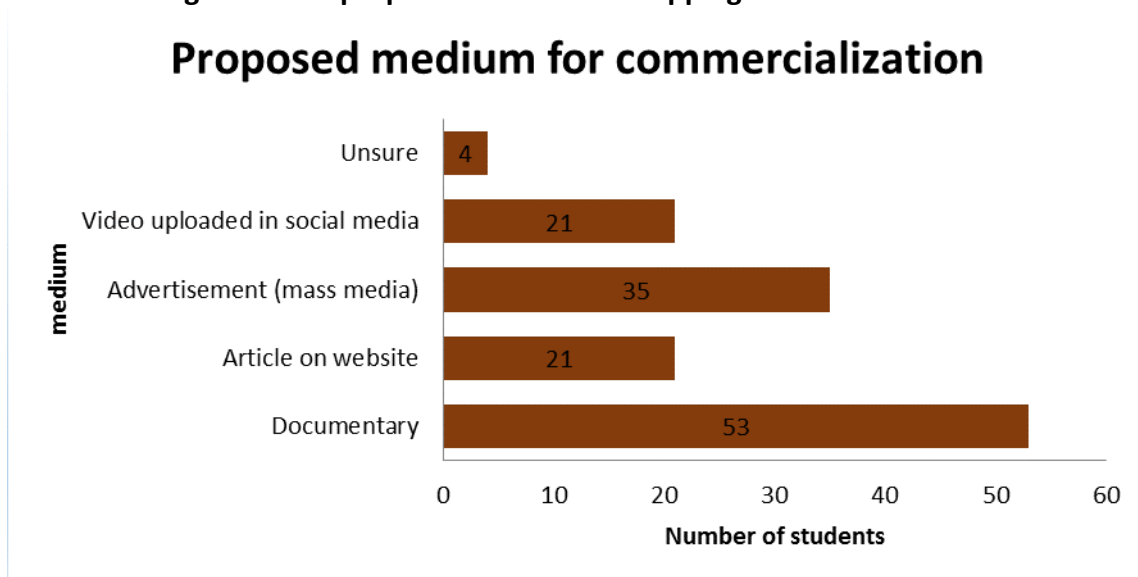


Table2. Respondents’ opinion on cupping practice

Perception	Yes	No	Unsure
Cupping should be considered as a treatment after a person being diagnose with certain disease	59 (72.8%)	2 (2.5%)	20 (24.7%)
Cupping need to be offered in healthcare centre	68 (84%)	0	13 (16%)
Cupping practice should be included in the curricular in diploma level	49 (60.5%)	9 (11.1%)	23 (28.4%)
I have to know about cupping because it is a sunnah	72 (88.9%)	1 (1.2%)	8 (9.9%)
The practice of cupping should be handled by graduates in health studies.	68 (84%)	4 (4.9%)	9 (11.1%)

1.3 Barrier of students to perform cupping

According to Table 3, more than half of the students think that the main barrier to practice cupping is because currently there is no trusted and professional cupping practitioner available in their current location. Following that, 56 students did not know where to get the service. Besides, 49 students aware that they are not confident enough to practice cupping. Forty-three students unclear about the purposes and benefits of cupping. Almost half of the students’ unsure whether long duration of the treatment and cost of the treatment may influence them to try cupping.

Table 3. Means for each statements on students's barriers to practice cupping
(1= Totally agree; 2-Agree; 3=Neutral; 4=Not agree ; 5= Totally disagree)

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of scientific knowledge about cupping	13 (16%)	24 (29.6%)	27 (33.3%)	11 (13.6%)	6 (7.4%)
Lack of trusted and professional cupping practitioner	15 (18.5%)	42 (51.9%)	17 (21%)	5 (6.2%)	2 (2.5%)
Unsure where to do cupping	21 (25.9%)	35 (43.2%)	17 (21.0%)	4 (4.9%)	4 (4.9%)
Long duration of the treatment	6 (7.4%)	15 (18.5%)	41 (50.6%)	13 (16.0%)	6 (7.4%)
Not confident enough to practice cupping	26 (32.1%)	23 (28.4%)	21 (25.9%)	6 (7.4%)	5 (6.2%)
Healing period from the side effect of cupping	19 (23.5%)	23 (28.4%)	29 (35.8%)	6 (7.4%)	4 (4.9%)
Cost of the treatment	5 (6.2%)	19 (23.5%)	40 (49.5%)	13 (16.0%)	4 (4.9%)
Adverse effect will interfere routine activities	4 (4.9%)	15 (18.5%)	35 (43.2%)	24 (29.5%)	3 (3.7%)
Age factor	2 (2.5%)	12 (14.8%)	38 (46.9%)	21 (25.9%)	8 (9.9%)
No support from people around	16 (19.8%)	19 (23.5%)	32 (39.5%)	9 (11.1%)	5 (6.2%)
Unclear about the purpose of cupping	19 (23.5%)	24 (29.6%)	28 (34.6%)	8 (9.9%)	2 (2.5%)

DISCUSSION

According to this study, majority of the junior in Diploma in Pharmacy courses have showed their interest about cupping practice. They are willing to learn more about cupping and most of them agree to integrate cupping in practice of modern medicine. Since the population under study consists all Muslims students, they were asked about their awareness on the existence of hadith from Prophet Muhammad PBUH about cupping or al-hijamah. From this study, majority of the participants know about cupping and aware that this practice had been introduced thousands of years back by our prophet, Muhammad PBUH. The prophet (PBUH) during his life practiced cupping and also strongly advised cupping to his followers although there may lack of research studies to provide a good evidence base to support cupping at the moment.

In general, majority of the students gain some information about cupping from their parents and by reading the scientific articles. The findings were to some extent similar to prior study which focused on CAM practice in Korea (Ock et al., 2009). It can be concluded that, some of them knows about cupping by conversation with someone older so that they will get to know their experience about cupping. Only 19 students know about cupping via the advertisement in mass media. To date, the number of cupping advertisement is quite limited in Malaysia. So, there is a need for the cupping practitioner to find a way to introduce cupping to public especially to the young generation. This respond is agreed with the understanding of the students that cupping practice need to be commercialized.

Majority of students agreed with all statements that being asked in the survey that represents their opinion towards cupping. Nowadays, the rising number of adverse effect reported after receiving the modern treatment make the people explore the potential of TCAM in treating some diseases. The combination of TCAM in many clinical situations offers a lot of advantages, including accelerated recovery from surgery, decreased reliance on medications, and reduction of adverse effects (Enqvist & Fischer, 1997; Somri et al., 2008).

A controlled trial has been conducted to see the effect of wet-cupping for patients with herpes zoster virus. As a result, controlled trials showed that wet cupping was better than medication for patients with herpes zoster virus (Cao, Han, et al., 2010). Previous studies indicate the effects of wet cupping were better when given with conventional medicine for the treatment for rheumatoid arthritis (RA). The conventional medicines such as NSAIDS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) and DMARDS (disease modifying anti-rheumatic drug) do not cure RA and cannot prevent joint destruction. Patients who received combine treatment showed a reduction in CRP (C-reactive protein), RF (rheumatoid factor) and ESR (Erythrocyte sedimentation rate) in patients who had the combined treatment which indicate the early signs of improvement. This study suggests that combined treatment with wet cupping for treatment of RA was much more effective than conventional treatment alone (Ahmed, Madbouly, Maklad, & Abu-Shady, 2005).

To combine this practice with the modern medicine, the knowledge of cupping of all personnel involved in the healthcare setting need to be introduced. This includes knowledge of physicians, nurses and pharmacists. In this case, knowledge on TCAM which includes cupping is important to respondents as future pharmacist. According to a prior study, (Al-Dulaimy, Hassali, & Awaisu, 2012), pharmacists must have a knowledge of issues concerning TCAM in order to provide comprehensive pharmaceutical care.

Majority of students feels that they are unable to trust cupping practitioner and could not find a suitable place to receive the treatment. So, in this case, it is good to equip the future healthcare professionals with the basic of cupping knowledge. Only few students concerned about the side effect after therapy. There have not been many side effects after performing cupping. If the equipment is not sterile, there are some possibilities get infectious diseases. The general side effects are circular ecchymosis lesions as cupping breaks the superficial blood vessels in the papillary dermis (Yoo & Tausk, 2004) and it takes several days to weeks to recover. Some individuals reported a slight discomfort which was technique based rather than the effect of cupping (Al-Rubaye, 2012).

In this study, it reveals that respondents also feel that it is too early to practice cupping. There is no minimum age to start practicing cupping (Manz, 2011). However, this method of therapy should be tailored according to persons' conditions. According to Avicienna, cupping should not be done for infant until they reached three years old. From this study, it can be concluded that

most of the students are interested and willing to learn more about cupping since they will be involved in healthcare system in future. However, certain issues such as the lack of scientific evidence and the availability of trusted cupping practitioners need to be solved from the beginning.

CONCLUSION

The increased use of CAM, in particular cupping indicates that there is a need to integrate this practice into the future health professions education. This study showed that most of the respondents had a positive opinion about cupping practice. However, some consideration need to be measured because students' interest in learning cupping may be influenced by certain conditions such as their prior knowledge, experience with cupping and the evidence on the effectiveness of cupping. The same studies should be conducted in the other institutions in Malaysia to identify and fill in the gaps and barriers of introducing TCAM, particularly cupping, to the students.

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