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Malay Massage and Leech Cupping Treatment For Stroke Patients

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Abstract

Stroke patients are receiving increasing attention in this country. Literature research shows that the demand for traditional and complementary treatments for treating various diseases is rising. Traditional Malay treatments which are Malay massage and leech cupping are considered to be beneficial to be used in the treatment and rehabilitation of stroke patients. However, studies on combination of these treatments are still new, and the report on this approach is almost rare. Therefore, this paper describes the role of combination between traditional Malay massage and leech cupping that are potentially favorable for stroke patients.

Keywords: Malay Massage, Leech Cupping, Stroke Patients, Rehabilitation.

Introduction

Stroke is not a new scary health problem in our life. In fact, it a major health problem that contributes to morbidity and mortality worldwide (Loo & Gan, 2012). In Malaysia, stroke is the third cause of death after ischemic heart disease and pneumonia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). It is estimated that about 40,000 people in Malaysia suffer from stroke each year (Pharmaceutical Services Division Ministry of Health, 2013). And this disease usually affects adults.

A statistic release by WHO in 2003 stated that 15 million people all over the world suffer a stroke every year whereby 5 million peoples die and 5 million suffer from permanent disabilities (WHO, 2003). Usually, the physical disabilities experienced by stroke patients is one-side paralyzed, whereby the opposite side of body from the affected brain becomes weak, numb and stiff (Mendis, 2013). Besides, the disabilities also can cause several complications such as reducing muscle strength and physical fitness where it leads to difficulties for patients to walk and move limbs (Abdul et al., 2015). Thus, stroke patients need helps or support from other to do their daily living activities.

Through a comprehensive stroke rehabilitation, patients may have the opportunity to regain their functional abilities and improve their quality of life. These include seeking treatment from doctors, rehabilitation nurses, and therapists (Abdul et al., 2015). However, there are several patients prefer to use traditional and complementary treatments to cure their illness (Othman & Farooqui, 2015).

Besides, Malay massage also has been one of the traditional and complementary practice that has been used along with the rehabilitation process (Abdul et al., 2015)

Moreover, leech cupping also used in Malaysia as traditional medicine practices where this treatment is accepted to treat various types of diseases with a natural approach. The use of this treatment in the medical field has a positive effect such as reduce blood pressure, improving metabolism in the body and reducing the complications of the disease (Abdullah, Dar, Rashid, & Tewari, 2012).

It has been proven by past researchers where the massage is a type of CAM that is practice among stroke patients (Kadir, Hamid, & Mohammad, 2015). Similar to leech cupping where this treatment has their own benefit through the bioactive substances contain in leech saliva that used for therapeutic purpose (Abdullah et al., 2012). However, the existence of data or evidence documented about traditional Malay medicine is limited especially involving Malay massage and leech cupping as this combination of treatment for stroke patients is new and there is no report on them.

Issues in Malay Massage and Leech Cupping for Stroke Patients

Traditional and complementary medicine (TCM) consists of several modalities such as traditional Malay medicine, traditional Indian medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, Islamic medical practice, homeopathy and complementary practices (Ali et al., 2015). However, this study focuses on Traditional Malay Medicine methods which are Malay massage and leech cupping.

Although, the medical services provided in Malaysia is according to the international standard, patients prefer to use TCM (Traditional and Complementary Medicine) apart from allopathy treatment. This is because, patients believe that TCM treatment has its own therapeutic value that has less side effects (Othman & Farooqui, 2015).

Although there is an increasing number of patients choosing massage for treating illness (Noriah, Farooqui, Azinur, Lamina, & Din, 2012), until now the existence of data or evidence documented about traditional and complementary medicine is limited. Similar to the traditional Malay massage, although patients said there was a positive change after receiving treatment, no evidence could support their statements.

For leech cupping treatment which has its own benefits in medicine, more efforts need to be taken to optimize this treatment method to cure disease. Thus, this study aims to see the role of combination of two treatment methods which are Malay massage and leech cupping for stroke patients.

Traditional Malay Medicine

Traditional Malay medicine is one of the modalities found in Traditional and Complementary Medicine practices. Before the emergence of Islam in Malay states, traditional Malay medicine practice was influenced by beliefs and practices that used the supernatural power to treat illness (Noriah et al., 2012). Practitioners practicing traditional medicine are usually known as *tok bomoh*, *tok pawang*, and *dukun*. Their expertise to cure the disease depends on the knowledge and experience to treat the disease.

Traditional Malay medicine can be defined in two terms, which are, 'medicine' and 'traditional'. Medicine comes from the word 'medicine' which means something that is used to treat the body or cure the disease either by eating or rubbed. While 'traditional' means tradition or society practice

from generation to generation (Ing, 1997). Thus, it concluded that traditional Malay medicine is a set of practices and knowledge used not only to treat disease but to maintain health status.

In Malay medicine practice, healing techniques involve diagnosis and treatment. The diagnosis is performed by practitioner to identify the disease where the practitioner will examine the pulse, check the skin, tongue, eyes, abdomen, ear, and others. Besides, for treatment it consists of several methods such as cupping, massage and the use of herbal to treat the illness (Mohd Balwi, 2003). Therefore, approach in traditional Malay medicine is natural, and becomes attraction for patients to use TCM in treating their illness.

Moreover, WHO (2019) defines "traditional medicine is a total sum of skills, knowledge, and practices based on theories, beliefs and experiences, indigenous from different cultures whether explicable or not, is used to maintain health as well as in the prevention, rehabilitation, diagnosis or treatment of physical and mental illness". Hence, the role of TCM in the country's healthcare system is important to improve the health and quality of life of Malaysians.

Malay Massage

Malay massage is one of the treatment methods in traditional Malay medicine whereby knowledge and practice is usually inherited from generation to generation. Malay massage is a type of massage group similar to Swedish massage from Europe and Thai massage from Thailand (Fadzil, Sallehuddin, Ahmad, & Ghani, 2010). However, each massage technique is differs according to the culture, knowledge, and experience of practitioners in their respective countries.

According to Ernst (2003), massage is a treatment involving manipulation of soft tissue of the body that help to reduce pain and for therapeutic purposes that bring improvement in the body. Besides, Malay massage consists of several techniques such as kneading, rubbing, stroking and pressing using hands (Traditional and Complementary Medicine Division Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2009).

In Malaysia, Malay massage has been practiced long time ago, and this treatment has become the most preferred therapy for Malays in Malaysia as one of the alternative treatments to improve the quality of life. This is because the treatment can reduce pain, improve physical condition and restoring body systems (Noriah et al., 2012). In addition, massage is considered more natural and more acceptable approach because it has a positive impact on health and can be used as a substitute for allopathy treatment.

Besides, Malay massage consists of two types of massage which are either for wellness or therapeutic treatment. (Mahdi, 2008). The benefits of massage for wellness are massage help improving patients sleep disorder, decrease the anxiety problem, boosting immunity in body and reduce the stress. (Shor-Posner et al., 2006). In the other hand, Malay massage for therapeutic treatment helps to increase the specific state of muscular aches and pain. Frequent ailments that used this type of massage are joints ailments, nerves ailments, muscle ailments, sprains, low back pain and others (Traditional and Complementary Medicine Division Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2009).

Malay massage is a whole body massage that the practitioner will massage every inch of the body surface regardless the part of the body that affected by stroke. Massage treatment for stroke patients will be conducted from the feet upward. During treatment, the practitioner will use massage oil to reduce friction. This method of treatment helps to optimize blood circulation and release the winds in the body, which if untreated will cause the veins become stiff (Anuar, Fadzil, Ahmad, & Ghani,

2012). Usually massage treatments will take between 15 minutes to 90 minutes. For example, 15 minutes to 45 minutes for chronic pain and 60 to 90 minutes for stroke disease (Traditional and Complementary Medicine Division Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2009)

Normally, Malay massage treatments must be performed at certain intervals. For example, stroke patients should get treatment for 3 consecutive days after discharge from hospital and followed by once a week. For wellness purpose, patients are advised to seek Malay massage every month. However, it depends on what client can afford (Fadzil et al., 2010).

However, Malay massage may not totally devoid from side effect but the probability is low. Among the effects after treatment are bruising, swelling, discomfort and allergies to massage oil (Traditional and Complementary Medicine Division Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2009). Therefore, Malay massage is seen as an effective treatment method for treating various diseases and at the same time enhancing patients' quality of life.

Leech Cupping

Leech cupping is the oldest medical treatment method. The first treatment of leech cupping was recorded in 1500 BC at Egypt where the treatment was used to treat nosebleeds and gout (Abdullah et al., 2012). The leech cupping also known as hirudotherapy, is a type of complementary and integrative treatment method (Sig, Guney, Uskudar, & Ozmen, 2017). In Malaysia this type of treatment is practiced by traditional practitioners.

Although the leeches are underestimated as parasite animals, scientifically assessments reveal that leeches have a variety of bioactive molecules that provide benefit in treating illness (Jahangir, Akram, & Urooj, 2016). Leeches are said to have 100 bioactive substances available in saliva (Das, 2014), such as Hirudin, Calin, Anesthetic and many more. Among the functions of the bioactive molecule are anti-inflammatory and anti-coagulant that helps to reduce blood pressure, increase immune system in the body, and restore vascular damage (Ahmad, 2012)

During ancient time, physician believed that bloodletting can remove all the toxin in the body that produce by the disease (Ahmad, 2012). Therefore, leeches are used to carry out this treatment method. Treatment of leech cupping is usually performed by placing leeches at affected areas where the leeches will bite the area and suck out the blood. During this process, the leeches will secrete bioactive substances into the body such as anti-coagulant, vasodilators and anesthetics and others as the mainly benefit of leech cupping is from the enzyme contained in leech's salivary gland. (Abdullah et al., 2012)

In conclusion, the leech cupping is a popular therapeutic practice of all time and the benefits from leeches that act as anti-coagulant have become the practice used to treat a variety of diseases. Additionally, the leech cupping treatment helps to reduce the complications arising from the use of excessive synthetic drugs. Thus, leech cupping has various potentials that contribute in medicinal application.

Conceptual Framework for the Study on Malay Massage and Leech Cupping for Stroke Patients

Recently, traditional and complementary medicine is widely used in Malaysia. The increase in this treatment is due to the strong belief that this treatment is very effective in treating various diseases

(Ali et al., 2015). Malay massage and leech cupping are the treatment methods in traditional Malay medicine modalities that both methods have their own benefits and strengths. Malay massage methods are often used as it can give positive effects to patients such as restoring body function, reduce pain, and improving the quality of life while leech cupping have their own specialty that the chemicals found in leech saliva have beneficial clinical effects that can help in the circulatory system.



Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the study

Based on the above conceptual framework for this study, traditional Malay treatment methods such as Malay massage and leech cupping will be used in treating the stroke patients. The combination of this treatment can be used as a rehabilitation therapy in order to restore body function and improve the quality of life. Besides, awareness towards this combination of treatment method can provide holistic approaches towards the management of stroke patients during the rehabilitation process.

Conclusion

Overall, this concept paper aims to explain the role of Malay massage treatment and leech cupping for stroke patients. As both methods of treatment have their own benefit that helps in treating various diseases, thus the combination of the treatment can be used as one of the methods during the rehabilitation of stroke patients. However, further studies are needed to investigate and implement the proposed framework.

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