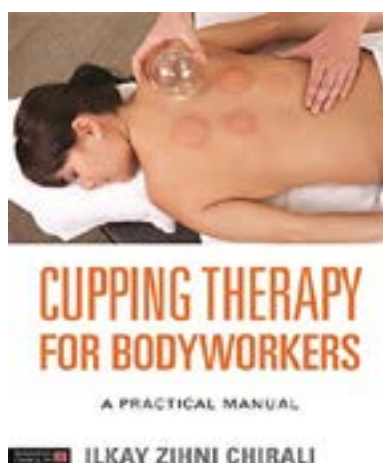




Ilkay Z. Chirali

**Cupping Therapy for bodyworkers
A Practical Manual
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Preface

For centuries, cupping therapy has been traditionally employed as one of the most effective and important tools of the Traditional Chinese Medicine arsenal.¹ As part of folklore medicine, too, many cultures from East to West and from North to South, over many thousands of years, have employed cupping therapy in order to treat a broad range of medical conditions, such as elevated blood pressure, the common cold and joint and musculoskeletal complaints, and to remove pus and infection from the body. Cupping was and still is used today in many Turkish baths (hamams) as a traditional relaxation medium as well as to treat painful and stiff joints and muscles.

Resurrection of cupping therapy

Internationally recognised personalities and celebrities, including Gwyneth Paltrow, David Beckham and, more recently, the swimmer Michael Phelps at the 2016 Rio Olympics, have candidly exhibited dramatic cupping marks on various parts of their body, leading to media frenzy! This has helped to reignite interest in this ancient but highly effective therapy, particularly from athletes, massage therapists and beauty therapists.



Figure P.1: Michael Phelps with cupping marks, at the Rio Olympics

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1 Chirali, I.Z. (2014) *Traditional Chinese Medicine Cupping Therapy*, 3rd edition. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone.

CHAPTER 1



A BRIEF HISTORY OF CUPPING

A personal journey

I was born in the village of Lemba (Çirali) near Paphos, Cyprus, where cupping was part of traditional Cypriot folklore medicine, practised by both the Turkish and the Greek population (Turkish – şişe düşürmek; Greek – ventouses). According to villagers, for the past two to three hundred years the accepted traditional practice was a cupping application for colds and coughs, and hemp tea for all other afflictions!

I experienced cupping on my body from a very young age and continue receiving it to this day. During my Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) studies in Melbourne, Australia, in the 1980s, I was lucky enough to have a teacher who also was a keen cupping therapy practitioner. Most acupuncture sessions at his TCM academy/clinic would conclude with a cupping treatment and Tuina (a TCM massage technique). In a short time, I found myself teaching cupping therapy techniques to new students at the college. I am a devoted cupping therapy practitioner and a teacher, and intend to continue to be so. For more than 35 years in a clinical environment, as well as outside clinical situations, I have witnessed first-hand the truly remarkable benefits of cupping therapy enjoyed by many men and women, old and young, particularly when their suffering was due to the common cold, asthma, pain and countless forms of muscular complaints.



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2

the skin. On the other hand, the prognosis – that is, the correct diagnosis and the cupping application technique that the practitioner will employ during the course of the treatment – will very much depend on his or her skill.

Fascia and muscle

Fascia is a jelly-like connective tissue made of collagen protein that attaches muscle to and separates it from internal organs. As described above, during cupping application the connective tissue fascia is simultaneously stimulated together with the skin. As a direct result of cupping application, the flow of oxygen-rich blood to muscle mass and the surrounding fascia is encouraged, resulting in improved muscle flexibility, stretching, muscle nourishment and energy surge to the treatment location.

Central nervous system

The next immediate beneficiary of cupping application is the central nervous system. Much like a complicated but very organised electrical wiring network in a large building, the human central nervous system is similarly responsible for transferring the external stimuli through the skin via the local skin receptors to the central nervous system (the feedback mechanism), to the brain and ultimately to the diseased organ. The interaction between the stimulation of the skin and the viscera (internal organs) is well documented by numerous scientific researchers. This intimate association between skin stimulation and the viscera is the key theory behind the cupping therapy function. A similar relationship in fact exists during an acupuncture treatment, namely the principle of meridians or channels, and the acupuncture points which are located on the fascia and their association with a particular organ and the central nervous system.

Body fluids and the circulatory system

From the very moment the suction cup engages on the skin, the local microcirculatory system is excited and invigorated. Depending on the dimension of the cup, each cup is capable of forcing a certain volume of blood and fluid to move towards the suction, resulting in hyperaemia (increase of blood flow in the vessels and body tissue). Cupping, no matter with what strength it is applied, promotes blood and fluid circulation by way of dilating and relaxing the blood vessels. This in turn helps to nourish and relax the muscle tissue, which can help with muscle performance and pain management (this

is particularly effective when treating muscular pain, stiffness, joint pain, arthritis and neuralgic conditions). As therapists, we are all aware that for the healing mechanism to start functioning properly,

Facing page:

Figure 2.5: Strong cupping method

Skin is pulled quite forcefully into the cup

Figure 2.6: Cupping marks

following strong cupping application

skin type, sometimes the cupping marks may last longer than expected. Almost all cupping marks will eventually clear completely without causing or leaving any permanent damage to the skin.

SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

**CUPPING THERAPY
CONSENT FORM**

I (patient's full name) declare that the cupping
therapy practitioner (practitioner's full name)
has fully explained to me the cupping therapy procedure, benefits,
contraindications and possible side effects. I have been made aware
that cupping marks may last between 8 and 20 days.

Signed

Date

CHAPTER 5

CUPPING APPLICATION VARIATIONS

No matter which type of cupping equipment is chosen during the treatment, different cupping techniques may be necessary to maximise the effectiveness of the therapy. The techniques listed below are the most frequently used variations during cupping therapy application.

Static cupping technique

In many folklore cupping practices, as well as in Traditional Chinese Medicine clinics around the world, the static cupping technique is by far the most practised cupping technique. A single cup or several cups are applied to predetermined locations and left in position for 3–15 minutes at a time. Static cupping can be achieved by all types of cupping equipment, but the most popular cupping equipment for this technique is the pistol-handled cupping pump. It enables the practitioner to be fast and in control of the situation at all times. This technique increases blood and fluid circulation, relaxes the fascia and helps to reduce inflammation and swelling, resulting in almost immediate pain relief (**Figure 5.1**).

Discus

ANATOMY INVOLVED

The discus throw dates to the ancient Olympics and is depicted in Myron's classic statue *Discobolus* as a symbol of power and strength. Today's modern track and field athlete continues the quest to throw the discus as far as possible. Success in the event requires the ability to generate power from all of the major muscle groups. Throwing the discus specifically requires muscles to exert the most amount of force in the shortest amount of time, thus engaging the fast-twitch fibres.¹²

MAIN MUSCLE GROUPS USED IN THROWING A DISCUS

- Upper body: trapezius and erector spinae muscles.
- Shoulder and chest: the pectorals, deltoids and rotator cuff muscles.
- Forearm and wrist: the arm extensors and flexors.
- Lower body: the gluteals, thigh and leg muscles (quadriceps, tibialis anterior and the gastrocnemius).

MOST COMMON DISCUS-THROWING INJURIES

- Glenohumeral ligaments (GL).
- Rotator cuff muscle injuries.
- Labral tear of the hip (see **Figure 7.11**).
- Ankle sprains.¹³

12 Voza, L. (2017) 'Which muscles are used when throwing a discus?' www.livestrong.com/article/332308-muscles-used-throwing-discus

13 Rockwell, R. (2017) 'Discus Thrower Injuries.' <https://www.livestrong.com/article/discus-thrower-injuries>



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