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Research Article

Hypertension and its Management through Alternative Regimes of Unani Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Blood pressure or hypertension has become one of the leading medical issues among people all over the world. High blood pressure, if not controlled can lead to a many other related problems. Among them are kidney disease, heart failure, eye problems, strokes, and heart attacks. Alternative traditional regimes have proved to be highly successful in lowering high blood pressure and also promoting good health and wellness among patients. Hypertension or high blood pressure is typically caused when the blood thickens and becomes heavier over time. However in few people also have a larger volume of blood circulating in their bodies that causes blood pressure levels to rise. Cupping therapy and steam bath are non-invasive form of treatment, and works to eliminate the root causes of high blood pressure and draw out the thick and stagnant blood so that pure, light blood can circulate more freely.

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INTRODUCTION:

Nowadays, hypertension is considered as a global public health issue and in recent decades, it has shown a growing trend due to changes in lifestyle. The prevalence of hypertension increases with age to the extent that one out of every two individuals older than 60-year-old is suffering from high blood pressure¹. Hypertension is very common indeed and hence a major public health issue. The prevalence is expected to increase considerably in the coming years. In 2000, the estimated number of adults living with high blood pressure globally was 972 million. This is expected to increase to 1.56 billion by 2025. In rural populations, the prevalence rate is two to three times lower than in urban areas².

Blood pressure is the result of the impact of the blood against the walls of arteries that distends them as the heart contracts during systole, or relaxes during diastole, and as this pressure increases above those upper limits of normal, 140/90, the vasculature suffers, is injured, becomes stiffer, thicker, and is more prone to atherosclerosis, and to blockages that lead to heart attacks, strokes, contribute to progression of kidney failure, and peripheral vascular disease that may lead to amputation of limbs. So these are some of the major consequences of high blood pressure: stroke, heart attacks, renal failure,

peripheral vascular disease, and blindness due to compromise of the vasculature of the retina³.

Therefore, addressing this disease from the viewpoint might provide a better management from the perspective of unani traditional regimes cupping therapy and steam bath of this “silent killer”. Lifestyle factors, such as physical inactivity, a salt-rich diet with high processed and fatty foods, and alcohol and tobacco use, are reasons for this increased disease burden, which is spreading at an alarming rate from developed countries to emerging economies, such as India, China and African countries.

Objective

To recommend a better strategy for preventing, treating, and reducing the debilitating complications of hypertension in the future through traditional regimes.

Concept of hypertension in Unani

Unani scholars were all aware of *Zaghta-e-damwi* (Blood pressure) and described *Zaghta-e-Inqabazi* as Systole and *Zaghta-e-Inbesati* as Diastole⁴. After systematic swot of Unani literature, it may be concluded that hypertension seems to be a

manifestation of dry temperament (*Mizaj-e-Yabis*) but according to Rashid Bhika, there are two main types of hypertension; (a) that due to a hot and moist, or sanguinous, imbalance; and (b) that due to a cold and dry, or melancholic, imbalance⁵. Viscosity of blood (*qiwamuddam*) creates the peripheral resistance thereby the blood pressure is maintained which ensues efficient circulation of blood. *Ibn-e-Abbas* mentioned that the *qiwamuddam* of the venous blood is higher than the arterial blood due to pressure tension of Bukhara-e-dukhanian (CO_2) in the blood⁵.

Causes

The most important causes of hypertension are stress and a faulty style of living. People who are usually tense suffer from high blood pressure, especially when under stress. If the stress continues for a long period, the pressure may become permanently raised and may not become even after removal of the stress. An irregular life style, smoking and an excessive intake of intoxicants, tea, coffee, cola drinks, refined foods, destroy the natural pace of life. The expulsion of waste and poisonous matter from the body is prevented and the arteries and the veins become slack. Hardening of the arteries, obesity, diabetes and severe constipation also lead to hypertension. Other causes of high blood pressure are excessive intake of pain killers, common table salt, food allergies and eating a high fat, low fibre diet, processed foods deficient in essential nutrients. The kidneys play an important role in controlling blood pressure through secretion of rennin, a natural chemical. If increased rennin is secreted by the kidneys, more salts are retained in the body, which leads to an increase in the volume of circulating blood and consequently to an increase in the blood pressure. Repeated infections and inflammation in the kidneys can also give rise to hypertension⁶.

The cure: The modern medical treatment of high blood pressure is highly unscientific as it brings down the pressure by drugs without making any effort to remove the underlying causes. Drugs may temporarily reduce blood pressure, but they do not cure the condition and are harmful in the ultimate analysis. All drugs against hypertension without exception, are toxic and have distressing side effects. The safest way to cure hypertension is to remove the real cause. The natural way of dealing with it is to eliminate the poisons from the system which cause it. Persons with high blood pressure should always follow traditional regimes like cupping therapy (*Hijama*), steam bath, venesection (*Fasd*) and well-balanced routine of proper diet, exercise and rest⁶.

Cupping therapy (*Hijama*)

Cupping Therapy refers to the therapeutic method of applying partial vacuum cups onto certain parts of the patient's body. In Unani practice, this method is also used in the treatment of hypertension. Cupping therapy treats hypertension by regulating the whole body, rather than by simply lowering the blood pressure. Medical studies suggest that high blood pressure is a result of the feedback regulation which takes place when the blood supplies to some important organs, such as the heart, brain and kidney, are not in balance. This regulation is a compensatory reaction of the body, but it is imperfect and leaves a pathological state of hypertension. So the proper treatment for hypertension is to make blood supply of the heart, brain and kidneys return to normality. Simply lowering the elevated blood pressure may lead to a new imbalance of blood supply^{7,8,9}.

Cupping therapy treats hypertension based on syndrome differentiation; this is just to regulate the functions of the whole body, promote its self-balance function. It has been proved that the holistic concept of cupping therapy is accorded with the principle of treatment of hypertension. Cupping therapy can not only lower high blood pressure, control it in a normal range, prevent and treat various complication of hypertension, but also make various imbalance states of the body return to normal⁷.

Sweating in steam bath

Sweating in a steam bath is a by-product of applying heat to the body. The sweating process gently and safely helps eliminate all heavy metals and toxic chemicals. Medical studies demonstrate that most toxins can be eliminated through the skin, relieving the burden on the kidneys and liver. Sweating during steam bath is a great way to reduce the fluid levels in the blood, causing the toxin rich intercellular fluid to be available for detoxification.

Steam bath is safe for most people as long as the steam bath follows a few simple rules: stay inside the steam bath chamber for no more than 15 to 20 minutes at a time; lie down or sit for at least 10 minutes after using the steam bath; make sure drink plenty of mineralized water before and after the bath; always relax after a session to allow the body to readjust. While using the steam bath, it is important to take frequent showers in order to cool down as well as to remove substances from the skin and prevent their re-absorption. Some people feel fatigue after sessions, and this is normal. Patients often experience general health improvements such as increased mental clarity, restored energy levels, fewer allergies, improved sleeping patterns, and lowered blood pressure¹⁰.

Some studies have indicated that steam bath lower blood pressure, enhance blood flow and improve cardiac functioning in people with congestive heart failure or other cardiovascular disease^{11,12}.

Materials and methods

In this article, traditional resources of different ages, such as The Canon of Medicine by Avicenna (980–1037 AD), The Complete Art of Medicine (*KitabKamil as-Sina'at-Tibbiyya*) by Haly Abbas (949–982 AD), and Facilitating Treatment, *Tahsil Al-Elaj* by Mohammad Taghi Shirazi (1814-1896) was selected to rule out the disease. Likewise, Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine (the main textbook of internal medicine) and databases like Pubmed, Scopus, and some unani databases like were searched based on keywords in order to extract evidences and to find probable hypertension symptoms, preventive measures and management.

Al-hijama procedure is described as follows: Clean the areas with alcohol swab then put the cup on the area and start suction. Gently take of the cup and make 5-10 very superficial incisions parallel to each other. Replace the cup on the same area and repeat suctioning. Remove and replace the cups for about two times, then clean the area and do dressing. The *hijama* was carried out on four to six sites of the body. The first site is between the two scapulas, opposite the T1-T3 scapular spine (*Al-Kahil*), as done in Zarei's study⁸. The second site is located on the seventh cervical vertebra (GV14), as done in Guo's study⁹. The other 4 sites are on both sides of the neck and below. They are located 2 fingers posterior to the angle of the mandible on both sides, just below the skull bone, on the hair line (*Al-Akhdaain*).



Wet cupping therapy



Wet cupping therapy

Results and discussion

Case 1: A 48-year-old man BP readings (158/98 repeat; 156/10). His BP was 156/98 in both arms after resting for 5 minutes in the exam room.

Physical examination; Height 169 cm, weight 82 kg, hear rate 77, chest clear to p & a, heart regular rhythm, no organomegaly, was suffering from hypertension since 6 yrs and on Telma 40 on and off since 3 yrs, because his B.P measurement was in the abnormal hypertension range. Diagnosis was made confirmed from multiple BP measurements. The patient was advised for wet cupping therapy weekly for 2 months. On every visit BP is measured through electronic automatic digital blood pressure monitor before and after therapy to compare the results and advice as follows:

- Weight reduction
- Restriction of sodium intake, use of rock salt as per taste requirement
- Reduction in dietary fat and cholesterol
- Regular physical exercise 30 minutes 5 day's weekly
- Cessation of smoking, tobacco chewing

BP measurements:

Date	Before Therapy	After therapy
04.09.2016	156/98 mm of hg	150/100 mm of hg
11.09.2016	154/100 mm of hg	152/96 mm of hg
19.09.2016	150/110 mm of hg	146/92 mm of hg
26.09.2016	144/94 mm of hg	140/90 mm of hg
04.10.2016	140/92 mm of hg	136/88 mm of hg
11.10.2016	134/90 mm of hg	130/84 mm of hg
19.10.2016	130/82 mm of hg	124/80 mm of hg
26.10.2016	BP measurements only 120/82 mm of hg	

Above case is on screening and routinely to check-up blood pressure with dietary precautions weekly for further 6 months.

Case 2: A 52-year-old self-employed worker came with a h/o recurrent cough and upper respiratory tract infections. He was not having significant past medical history of any medication, no known allergies. But a regular smoker and has been since his teens drinks a couple of stubbies a night and a bit more on the weekend. Observations were recorded temperature 37°C, pulse rate 77, regular blood pressure (BP) 152/96 mmHg, repeat BP 150/94 mmHg. Diagnosis was made of hypertension based on multiple BP measurements taken on separate occasions. Recommendation was advised behavioural modification as on the basis of hypertension management (e.g. reduced alcohol intake) and to reduce his risk of CVD (smoking cessation) and

advised wet cupping every 15 days followed by steam bath every week (for sweating to decrease level of sodium input) for 2 months.

BP measurements:

Date	Before Therapy	After therapy
02.11.2016	WCT 150/94 mm of hg	142/92 mm of hg
09.11.2016	Steam bath only	142/92 mm of hg
17.11.2016	150/90 mm of hg	142/90 mm of hg
24.11.2016	Steam bath only	140/90 mm of hg
01.12.2016	WCT 142/90 mm of hg	136/86 mm of hg
08.12.2016	Steam bath only	134/86 mm of hg
15.12.2016	WCT 132/86 mm of hg	126/84 mm of hg
22.12.2016	Steam bath only	124/86 mm of hg
30.12.2016	WCT 126/86 mm of hg	124/82 mm of hg

The disturbance of the cardiac system may be caused by ischemia or oxyachrestia. Also myocardial infarction is due to ischemia resulting from arterial stenosis (arteriosclerosis) and the thrombi themselves when they are in these coronary arteries. The angina pectoris is generated when there is a decrease in supplying the heart tissue with the necessary Oxygen. Because the fat precipitations have partly blocked up the coronary artery. Then the high level of arterial hypertension may lead to complications such as: cardiac insufficiency, angina pectoris and encephala vascular incident. The long arterial hypertension may cause heart enlargement, and atherosclerosis.

However, it would be necessary to do further investigations looking for secondary causes of hypertension such as renal artery stenosis, hyperaldosteronism or phaeochromocytoma. Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring would be indicated. Referral to a hypertension clinic could be considered at this stage.

Conclusion and recommendations

Applying traditional regimes are the best solution to prevent and treat such cases, as cupping decreases the level of fat (triglyceride, cholesterol) in blood to normal one, gets rid of hypertension and increases the blood flow through heart tissue after cleaning the arteries and preventing them from atherosclerosis and steam bath lower blood pressure, enhance blood flow and improve cardiac functioning in people with congestive heart failure or other cardiovascular disease. Researchers worldwide are invited to pay more attention to develop more research in investigating remedies practiced in Unani medicine to cure and relieve human suffering in many incurable diseases with dismal prognosis.

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