



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The effects of cupping therapy as a new approach in the physiotherapeutic management of carpal tunnel syndrome

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Abstract

Background and Purpose: Cupping therapy has been used widely as a safe and common method to tackle soft tissue lesions in most Asian countries, Central Europe, and parts of the United States. In this study, cupping therapy has been used for the treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS), which is the most common entrapment neuropathy. The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of cupping therapy on the clinical findings of patients with CTS.

Methods: This is a randomized clinical trial. For this research, a total of 56 hands with CTS were studied, aged 18–60 years, and of both genders. The participants were divided into two groups: test and control, regardless of the severity of their CTS. In the control group, 28 were treated with routine physiotherapy (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation and ultrasound), and in the test group, the other 28 were treated with routine physiotherapy with cupping therapy. The variables used to determine the effect of cupping were symptom severity scale, functional status scale, distal sensory latency, and distal motor latency. The severity of symptoms and functional status of patients was evaluated with the help of the Boston questionnaire, and the distal latency was evaluated through electromyography.

Results: The results of study demonstrated a significant improvement in symptom severity ($p = 0.006$) and also a significant decrease in distal sensory latency ($p = 0.007$) of the test group (routine physiotherapy with cupping) as compared with the control group (routine physiotherapy).

Conclusions: The results showed that incorporation of cupping therapy in a routine physical therapy programme can reduce the severity of symptoms and improve the distal sensory disturbance of the median nerve. Therefore, it is suggested that cupping, as a convenient and low-cost method, can be used as a complementary therapy in the treatment of CTS.

KEYWORDS

carpal tunnel syndrome, cupping therapy, TENS, ultrasound

1 | INTRODUCTION

Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is the most common peripheral nerve entrapment of the upper extremity and is caused by compression of

the median nerve in carpal tunnel (Ahmadi, Schwebel, & Rezaei, 2008). This syndrome consists of a constellation of symptoms, such as numbness, burning pain in the palm and first three fingers, and reduced grip strength (Kostopoulos, 2004). The prevalence of this