MEDICINAL CUPPING THERAPY IN 30 PATIENTS WITH FIBROMYALGIA: A CASE SERIES OBSERVATION
Huijuan Cao, Hui Hu, Jianping Liu
Evidence-Based Chinese Medicine Center for Clinical Research and Evaluation, Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, Beijing, China

INTRODUCTION: To evaluate the therapeutic effect of traditional medicinal cupping for treatment of fibromyalgia.

METHODS: A prospective case series was conducted in patients with fibromyalgia at an out-patient department in a hospital in Beijing. Patients were diagnosed according to the criteria of 1990 by the American College of Rheumatology. The bamboo cup, treated by herbal decoction for 5 minutes, was applied to Ashi (pain) points for 10 minutes once daily for 15 sessions. Visual analog scale (VAS) responses for pain and the number of pain spots were recorded at baseline and at 5, 10, 15 days, and followed up at 2 weeks after the treatment.

RESULTS: The average VAS score of 30 patients was 2.63 0.73, and the number of pain points was 13.5 1.66 at baseline. The VAS scores were reduced during the treatment (2.22 0.77 at 5 days, 1.72 0.71 at 10 days, 1.29 0.68 at 15 days). The number of pain points was reduced from 12.57 2.25 at 5 days, 11.2 2.50 at 10 days, to 9.33 2.89 at 15 days. Compared with baseline, VAS score was reduced 52.27%, and the number of pain points was reduced 30.86%. 29 patients were followed up to 2 weeks and the VAS and pain points sustained (1.24 0.67 for VAS; 9.07 2.96 for pain points). There was no serious adverse effects found during the treatment.

DISCUSSION: Medicinal cupping therapy appears to relieve pain in patients with fibromyalgia in terms of VAS and number of pain points, and the potential effect deserves to be tested in clinical trials.