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“My Body Shrinks” – the Influence of Traditional Cupping on the Body Image in Patients with Chronic non Specific Neck Pain

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Background: The body image as a representation of perceived body dimensions is modulated by somatosensory and proprioceptive input. Pain conditions like phantom pain, chronic regional pain syndrome, and most likely also functional chronic back pain can severely distort the body image and thereby affect everyday life. In the present study we used body image drawings and interviews before and after traditional cupping therapy to investigate, whether patients with chronic neck pain suffer from a distorted body perception and whether cupping therapy has an effect on these distortions.

Method: A subsample of 6 patients with chronic non specific neck pain was drawn from a larger trial on traditional cupping; three of them were treated with a single cupping treatment. On day 0 they were asked to complete the life-size drawing of their upper body by filling the perceived outline of the neck region. The task was repeated four days after the cupping treatment and followed by a semi standardised interview to retrieve more information on the drawings and the body image. Interviews were evaluated by an interdisciplinary interpretation group using the content analysis approach according to Mayring.

Results: With regard to the drawings the body image of neck pain patients seemed distorted; some body parts were left blank and others were at variance with actual neck anatomy. Interviews repeatedly pointed out the dominance of pain, which patients further described as heaviness or a burden. Not only is pain perceived as something that does not belong to them, we also found evidence that patients were to some extent disconnected from their body and their emotions. Patients had different ways of dealing with the pain, i.e. “enduring”, “distraction” or taking up relieving postures. Interestingly it also seems possible to re-interpret the pain on cognitive levels. If those strategies fail, medical treatment is sought to get “fixed”. Those strategies seem to serve one purpose only: the preservation of efficiency. While patients of the control group reported no changes in body perception the treated patients reported less pain, tension and heaviness after cupping. Shrinking outlines and rounder edges in the drawings were the equivalent of these changes. Pain areas were described more punctuate and distinct, which might reflect better discrimination. Pain areas also seemed to be more integrated in the body image.

Discussion: The results of this study reveal possible body image distortions in patients with chronic non specific neck pain. Drawings as well as interviews might be helpful to evaluate the nature of this distortion. Furthermore cupping treatments may alter the body image, however further research is needed to validate these methods.

Homeopathic Therapy in Paediatric Respiratory Complain from 1998 to 2009: Long-term Outcomes in Asthma and Allergic Rhinoconjunctivitis

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Objective: To study the socio-demographic features of the paediatric population homeopathically treated for respiratory complaints, the observed diseases, the most commonly used remedies, the follow-up and the long-term results in asthma and allergic rhinoconjunctivitis.

Materials and Methods: An observational longitudinal study was conducted on 2592 patients consecutively visited at the Homeopathic Clinic situated at the Campo di Marte Provincial Hospital – ASL 2 Lucca from its establishment in September 1998 until December 2010, and 651 patients (25.1%) are below or equal to the age of 14; 410 (63%) were aged 0-6 years; and 241 (37%) were aged 7-14 years. A total of 48% of children performed at least one follow-up visit. The homeopathic prescription strategy is to administer a single remedy and involves the initial use of the remedy in