

## HIJĀMA; A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH- A REVIEW

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and Hospital, Sambhal,  
Moradabad.**ABSTRACTS**

*Hijāma* is a *Unāni* mode of treatment which is carried out by creating a partial vacuum in the *Hijāma* glass placed on the body surface by mean of heat or suction, in order to remove the morbid material or to distract the material from the disease part, to go back a displaced organ to its normal position and to promote the blood flow to the site of intrusion. *Hijāma* therapy gets its name from the cups that are used to deliver the treatment. Cupping glasses made up of glass or wood are used for sucking purpose and vacuum is created by vacuum pump. In *Hijāma*, blood is sucked after applying cup to specific area of the body. *Hijāma* is a mode of *Istifrāgh* which evacuate the causative material of the disease.

**KEYWORDS:** Hijama, Istifragh, Unani.**INTRODUCTION**

The word *Hijāmat* has been derived from the Arabic verb *Hijāma*. It has different meanings which are mentioned in different dictionaries and texts. One of the meanings of *Hijāma* had been adopted by the Arabic physicians. It literally stands for sucking.

*Ibne Manzoor* mentioned in *Lisan-ul-Arab Al-Hijāma* is to suck. When a baby sucks the breast, it is said that *hijāma al sabyo sadya Ummihi* (the baby sucked the breast of his/her mother) and when he/she does not suck, it is called '*ma hajama al sabyo sadya ummihi* (the baby did not suck the breast of his/her mother)<sup>[1]</sup> This meaning is very closed to the technical meaning of *Hijāma*, because in ancient time and middle ages *Hijāma-i-Ghair Nāriya* was

carried out by sucking, through the narrow opening of the hollowed out animal horn, which was placed on the site of *Hijāma* by the mouth and still it is in practice in certain rural areas.

Application to the skin of a glass vessel, from which air has been exhausted by heat, or by a special suction apparatus in order to draw blood to the surface.<sup>[2]</sup>

### SOME SPECIFIC TERM RELATED TO *HIJĀMA*<sup>[3,4]</sup>

**Mahajima:** The instrument which is used during *Hijāma* is called *Mihjamah*

**Mahajim:** SITE OF *Hijāma*.

**Hajjam:** The person who perform *Hijāma*.

**Mahatajim:** Person to be cupped.

**Shart:** Means incision, long cut, rips, slash and slit

**Synonyms:** *Hijāma*,<sup>[5]</sup> *Al-Hijāma*, *Hijāmat*, *Seenghiyan khichwana*<sup>6</sup>, *Seenghiyan Lagwana*<sup>[3]</sup>, *Jiaofa* and *Baguanfa*(Chinese).<sup>[7]</sup>

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*Hijāma* (*Hijāma*) is amongst the oldest medical manipulation or procedure.<sup>[8]</sup> The exact origin of *Hijāma* therapy is controversial. Arabic writers of the middle east reported that *Hijāma* therapy dates back to 3500 BC (5500 year ago), where Assyrians were the first Arab population to use ancient tools as bamboo wood and animal horns for *Hijāma* therapy. Arabic civilization called *Hijāma* therapy as *Al- Hijāma*.<sup>[9,10]</sup>

In ancient Macedonia, *Hijāma* therapy had been used since prehistoric times (3300BC) to treat disease and health disorders.<sup>[9,10]</sup>

Ancient Egyptians reported to use *Hijāma* therapy prior to much old civilization, where *Hijāma* was one of the oldest acknowledged medical therapies in ancient Egypt. The first report of using *Hijāma* therapy in ancient Egypt was 1550 BC (more than 3500 years ago) found on the famous Egyptian, Eber's papyrus<sup>[9,10,11]</sup> and some images have been found in the tomb of the king, Tut-Anakh-Amun and few paintings showing the images of the cups used for bloodletting, in the temple of *Kum-Ambu*, which was considered to be the biggest hospital of that era.<sup>[12]</sup> In Egypt, *Hijāma* was the treatment not only for every type of disease but also for preserving health.<sup>[5]</sup>

Chinese scientist report in their literature that *Hijāma* therapy is a part of the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) dating back to 2,000 years.<sup>[9,13]</sup> Its application was first documented

by Ge Hong (281-341 AD), in Handbook of prescription for Emergencies.<sup>[14]</sup> In this article, he described *Hijāma* methodology.<sup>[7]</sup> Ge Hong was the leader in that art.<sup>[9]</sup>

From Egypt it was transferred to Greece; and here, the cup was acknowledged as the symbol of medicine. Hippocrates and Galen also greatly advocated *Hijāma*.<sup>[5]</sup> Textual evidence on *Hijāma* can be found in the writing of Hippocrates (460-377 BC).<sup>[15]</sup> Hippocrates gave instruction as to the shape and application cups. He suggested that they must be small in diameter, conical in shape and light in their weight, when the ailment for which they are applied is deep seated. When the disease was close to the surface, they should be wide. He recommended dry *Hijāma* mainly but only a limited use for bleeding or wet *Hijāma*. Celsus, was a strong advocate of bloodletting by scarification and *Hijāma* to relieve local condition. Galen was also advocate of bleeding and *Hijāma* and this form of therapy was extremely popular in the later years of the Roman Empire.<sup>[8]</sup>

Beside, in Iran *Hijāma* has been used for long time Avicenna in his book “*AL-Qanoon*” has mentioned *Hijāma* has a medical pillar for the management of disease.<sup>[16]</sup>

*Hijāma* therapy in Europe and middle east grow from humoral medicine, a system of health based on the four humour in the body; blood (dam), phlegm (balgam), yellow bile (safra) and black bile (sauda).

*Hijāma* used as a medical treatment throughout Europe. It was practiced by such famous physicians as Galen, Paracelsus, and Ambroise pare. *Hijāma* was also practiced by other practitioner including barber surgeons and bath house attendants.<sup>[17]</sup>

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Physician recommended *Hijāma* were Sydenham, Willis, Pitcarin, Mead, and Heberden, in England.<sup>[8]</sup> In the united state, there is progressive increase in the use of *Hijāma* therapy and other type of complementary medicine<sup>[9,18]</sup> *Hijāma* therapy has been used as an alternative treatment method, especially in Asia, the middle east, and Europe.<sup>[19,20]</sup>

In Korean medicine (KM), *Hijāma* has been employed for facilitating the circulation of qi and removing blood stasis through suction and negative pressure.<sup>[12]</sup> According to a recent survey of Korean medicinal doctors, *Hijāma* is primarily used for the treatment of musculoskeletal diseases (96%), and the most frequently used points for *Hijāma* are the neck and shoulder (94%)<sup>[21]</sup>

## CLASSIFICATION

Basically *Hijāma* is divided into two groups<sup>[22,23,24,25,26]</sup>



### 1- HIJĀMA BI'S SHART

**Synonyms;** Wet Cupping, Bloodletting, Phlebotomy, Full *Hijāma*

It is the most common variety of *Hijāma* therapy practiced in Arab countries. This is an invasive procedure carried out taking all aseptic measures. It starts with dry *Hijāma* at desirable site; after the appearance of site of congestion, multiple small incisions are made by sharp instrument like lancet. Then blood is made to ooze out by applying cups over the incised skin. Wet *Hijāma*, also known as bloodletting, define as when an incision of about 1.5 ml deep and 1.5ml wide is made with a special type of lancet on the region of the skin where the cup is applied.<sup>[27]</sup> There are two main types of bloodletting, general and local. General bloodletting is when blood is taken from a vein (Venesection / phlebotomy) or an artery (arteriotomy) using a lancet. Local bloodletting is using *Hijāma* therapy or leeching (applying bloodsucking worms or leeches to a patient's skin).<sup>[27]</sup> Scarification "lancing" were other names for bloodletting which involved making criss-cross cuts on the skin to allow blood to ooze out.<sup>[27]</sup> In modern medicine, bloodletting is used to treat haemo-chromatosis as phlebotomy.<sup>[28]</sup>

Depending upon the objectives, it is further classified as<sup>[24]</sup>

#### A. HIJĀMA IDTIRARIYAH (MANDATORY)

It is used for therapeutic purpose. *Ibn Sina* practiced both wet and dry *Hijāma* prophylactically in traditional medicine.<sup>[27]</sup>

#### B. HIJĀMA IKHTIYARIYAH (optional)

As preventive measure for the sustenance of health and self-resilience.

## 2. *HIJĀMA BILA SHART* (DRY Cupping)

It is the most common variety of *Hijāma* therapy practiced in china. This procedure is not invasive. In this variety, the cups are applied over desirable site by creating vacuum within the cups with suction pump or fire.

It is further classified into two varieties.<sup>[24]</sup>

### A. *HIJĀMA NARIYAH* (FIRE *HIJĀMA*)

In this type, vacuum within the cups is created by fire.

### B. *HIJĀMA GAIR NARIYAH* (*HIJĀMA* WITHOUT FIRE)

In this type, vacuum within the cups is created by suction pump.

## SOME MODIFIED VARIETIES OF *HIJĀMA*

MOVING <i>HIJĀMA</i> /GLIDING <i>HIJĀMA</i>	Practitioner gently moves cup in one direction <sup>[5,9]</sup>
EMPTY <i>HIJĀMA</i>	Cups are removed immediately after suctioning. <sup>[9]</sup>
NEEDLE <i>HIJĀMA</i>	A combination of both acupuncture needles and <i>Hijāma</i> . <sup>[5,9]</sup>
MEDICINAL (HERBAL) <i>HIJĀMA</i>	Herbal medicine is boiled in water inside bamboo cups for 30 minutes followed application of cups suctioning <sup>[5,9]</sup>
STRONG <i>HIJĀMA</i>	Suction will be enormous and therefore, it is not recommended for children and elderly people. <sup>[5]</sup>
WATER <i>HIJĀMA</i>	Hot water within bamboo cups is removed over skin surface right away.
LIGHT <i>HIJĀMA</i>	weak suction can be used in the cup for light <i>Hijāma</i> . It is suitable for children and elderly patients. <sup>[5]</sup>
MEDIUM <i>HIJĀMA</i>	A medium strength of general purpose for <i>Hijāma</i> . <sup>[5]</sup>

## PRINCIPLES OF *HIJĀMA*

The principles of *Hijāma* recommended by various Unani physicians are<sup>[24]</sup>

- It should be performed in the mid days of lunar month calendar.
- It should be performed in sah paher (afternoon), because this time is most suitable for *Hijāma*.
- It should be perform in the summer. Because in this season, the materials (humors) become less viscid due to increased *Harārat* and get easily evacuated through *Hijāma*.
- It should be performed in those persons whose blood is relatively less viscid.
- It should be perform after the use of syrups having *muqawwi-i-meda* and *dafae mawad* properties.
- It should not be performed in weak and cachexic persons.

- It should not be performed below 2 years and after 60 years of age.
- It should not be performed just after *Hammām*.
- It should not be performed just after coitus.
- It should not be performed after heavy physical work Date and time: In Islamic literature, *Hijāma* is recommended to be done on days 17, 19, and 21 of the lunar calendar month; these sessions were performed accordingly.<sup>[29]</sup>
- *Hijāma* should be done after one and half an hour of summer season, while after three hours of sunrise during winters.<sup>[6]</sup>

### MECHANISM OF ACTION OF *HIJĀMA* (UNANI PERSPECTIVE)

The prime objectives of *Hijāma* are:<sup>[30,5]</sup>

#### 1. TANQIYA-E-MAWAD (EVACUATION OF MORBID MATERIAL)

*Evacuation of the causative material of the disease is done directly by Hijāma, as in case of waja-ul-mufasil.*

#### 2. IMALA-E-MAWAD (DIVERSION OF MORBID MATERIAL)

Diversion of causative material from the diseased organ to the distant organ is done through *Hijāma*. *Hijāma* is performed under the breast, in case of menorrhagia, as vessels of breast are interconnected with those of uterus, this helps the *tabbiyat-mudabbera-e-badan* (natural healing power of body) to act on the matter and causes resolution of the matter.

In the middle ages humeral pathology was the common theory. There are four humours in the body and balance among them is the reason for health, and the aim of bloodletting by *Hijāma* is to bring one of these humours back in to balance. In the ancient times when technology had not advanced this is the way to see diseases. *Hijāma* is based on this simplified theory, purely because there is no definite proven answer.<sup>[27]</sup>

Another possible mechanism might be 'Counter irritation' which is the procedure of relieving pressure from deep structures in the body by irritating the superficial skin and transferring it to another structure. This idea is akin to the Chinese balance of 'qi' however in this case illness is assumed to be caused by increased pressure in a specific region hence to achieve health, then pressure should be relieved.<sup>[27]</sup>

The “*Taibah* Theory”, postulates that *Hijāma* drains interstitial fluid, extra intravascular fluid, and toxic metabolic materials. The theory also assumes that *Hijāma* stimulates endogenous nitric oxide production and excretion of gathered vasoactive materials and free radicals, which may cause reduction in pain. All these outcomes are beneficial for managing pain, as the theory states.<sup>[29]</sup>

### ACTION OF HIJĀMA

*Hijāma* has a physiological effect on the body influences the neurological, haematological, circulatory, and immunological system. Before listing the benefits of *Hijāma* therapy, it is important to first look at the skin and its relation to the internal organs, the lymphatic system and the immune system.<sup>[31,32]</sup>

### SKIN

Any topical stimulus designed to influence and manipulate internal or external organs must start at the skin level. The skin is our largest organ containing fluid, blood, blood vessels, connective tissue, muscles and nerve. It is a main organ of sensation, through millions of nerve endings contained in its structure. A rich network of blood vessels and gland provides an effective mean of temperature control. Skin stimulation on particular point of the body, a practitioner can manipulate change in a particular organ's blood flow. In this therapy after sucking the skin will be followed by extravasation, the skin temperature of the local area will increase, accompanied by capillary dilatation, increased vascular permeability, resulting in improved metabolism and relieve pain.<sup>[33]</sup>

### LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

The lymphatic system is made up of lymphatic vessels and lymph nodes that extend throughout body. It helps in maintaining the balance of body fluid in the body. Lymphatic system associated to the cardiovascular system. All form of therapies involving the stimulation of the skin surface which result in the improvement of the blood and lymph circulation. On improvement that blood circulation have over lymph circulation is that blood is pumped around the body by means of the heart. Lymphatic system is responsible for collecting and removing waste product from the tissues. When this waste material is not collected adequately and effectively, it congregates as localized congestion.

Both the blood and lymph circulatory systems are simultaneously stimulated to work more efficiently during the process of *Hijāma*. By this process the collection and transportation of

toxic substances and deposition into the lymphatic system to destroy and allow the circulation of fresh lymph in order to nourish the tissues and boost the immune system.

*Hijāma* regulates the energy and blood flow. It helps draw out and eliminate imbalanced quality i.e. heat, cold, moistness, dryness. Pores of the body are open due to *Hijāma* which allows the precipitation of pathogens through the skin. Blood and energy moves as efficiently due to *Hijāma*. The main objectives of regimen is to eliminate the cause of dissonance from the body, re-establish the circulation of blood, energy and fluids thus aiding physic in re-establishing homeostasis.<sup>[34]</sup>

In the **neural system**, the main effect is likely regulation of neurotransmitters and hormones such as serotonin (of platelet), dopamine, endorphin, CGPR (calcitonin-gene related peptide) and acetylcholine. Furthermore, it seems the negative charge of neuronal cells are affected by *Hijāma*.

In the **haematological system**, there are two probable pathways.

1. Regulation of coagulation and anti-coagulation system (eg. decrease in the level of haematological element such as fibrinogen).<sup>[35]</sup>
2. Decrease the HCT (hematocrit) and there increase in the flow of blood and the end organ oxygenation is increased.

In the **immune system**, it probably effects via three pathways.<sup>[35]</sup>

1. There is an artificial local inflammation which irritates the immune system, and then activates the complementary system and there is increase in the level of immune products such as interferon and TNF (tumour necrotizing factors).
2. Thymus is effected.
3. Increases the flow of lymph and controls traffic of lymph in the lymph vessels.

Khosro Farhadi *et al*, says that the effects of *Hijāma* can be divided into several components, including neural, haematological, immune and psychological effects. Particularly the “pain suppression” mechanism of *Hijāma* might be through influence on three following neurological systems:

- a. The “analgesia” system in the brain and spinal cord (including the periaqueductal gray and periventricular areas, the raphe magmas nucleus, and the nucleus reticularis paragiganto cellularis)

- b. The brain's opiate system (endorphins and enkephalins)
- c. Most influential through inhibition of pain transmission by simultaneous tactile sensory signals. At a biological level, *Hijāma* therapy works by stimulating the immune system, enkephalin secretion neurotransmitter release and dilatation and the gates for pain in the CNS which interrupt pain sensations.<sup>[36]</sup> Finally, it is supposed that stimulation of *Hijāma* point can lead to the pain gates to be overwhelmed by increasing rate of impulse, therefore primary to closure of the gates and hence the pain reduction.<sup>[37]</sup> This mostly related to interleukin mediator liberated from the epidermal cell layer of the skin IL-1 and IL-6 which may have immunological effects.<sup>[38]</sup> In addition to that there is a correlation between the immunological factor and pain mechanism control supported by calcitonin gene—related peptide (CORP) which is a sensory neuropeptide important in the inflammatory pain, that conveys pain information centrally and dilates blood vessels peripherally. A protein increase in the skin and more neurons have detectable CGPR expression in the innervating dorsal root ganglion (DRG), so decrease pain.<sup>[39]</sup> *Hijāma* has anti-inflammatory function, as seen in inflammatory complaints like acute lateral ankle sprain.<sup>[40]</sup>

Ilkaychirali *et al* in a study of *Hijāma* in inflammatory complaints found that there was statistically significant increases in platelet and lymphocyte count, and a decrease in serum concentration of fibrinogen and ferritin after the *Hijāma*. They concluded that ferritin and fibrinogen are inflammatory markers reduce during *Hijāma* therapy is related with a reduction in the inflammatory status of the patient. Platelet and lymphocyte may increase as a result of local vascular damage from the *Hijāma* therapy itself or from a reduction in the adherence of these cells to areas of activated endothelium, associated with inflammation. Besides these it is an effective method for senile habitual constipation, can be used as a therapy for post stroke. *Hijāma* is an effective method in reducing LDL cholesterol and the LDL/HDL ratio, decreases blood glucose levels and blood pressure.

#### EQUIPMENTS OF HIJĀMA

1. Glass or plastic cups.
2. Suction pump or lamp or candle.
3. Antiseptics.
4. Inflammable small cones of paper or cotton.
5. Sterilized gloves.

6. Sterilized medical scalpel.
7. A pack of cotton and medical sterilized gauze pieces.
8. Micro pore adhesive tape.
9. A razor to remove the hair of site to be cupped if needed.

Hippocrates commented on the shapes of the cup. He advised that the cups should have a small diameter, cone shaped and be light in weight<sup>[27]</sup> Initially animal horns were used commonly for *Hijāma* in India and Africa. They would place the wide end of the horn on the skin and suction was produced by strongly sucking by the mouth from the narrow end of the horn until a vacuum was achieved then they placed their thumb over it to close it. Cups gradually changed from animal horns to cups made from mud then bamboo then glass.<sup>[27]</sup>

### **Hijāma protocol**

Hijāma, whenever called its means a wet cupping. The technique of applying cups is described in detail the Hippocratic writings mentioning their shape and size, the width of their mouth, and the kind of disease. The instruments should be applied, without puncturing the skin, in order to remove blood.<sup>[41]</sup> There are two kinds of cups, which are used according to the disease. One is a little convex instrument, with a minor, round mouth and along, light handle. The second has a larger, round mouth. The first type is usually used when there is accumulation of fluid far from the superficial tissue, as the shape of this cup attracts “in a straight line and draws the dispersed up nicely toward the tissue.” The second type of cup is used when there is pain spreading throughout the tissues, because “it draws the morbid material from as many parts as possible to the place.” The second type is also used in cases where fluxes are blocked in the inner structures, cups then attract more material from the rest of the tissues.<sup>[20,41]</sup> The sites of *Hijāma* are identified of the participants and they are sterilized using alcohol swabs. The *Hijāma* procedures lasted 15 minutes per participant and the steps were as follow:

1. **Primary sucking:** The cups were placed on the selected sites and a negative pressure was created by manual suction using the provided pump with the kit. The cups were left for a period of 5 minutes after make sure their firm attachment to the skin.
2. **Incision:** The cups were removed and 10-12 superficial incisions were made on each designated area of the skin using sterile surgical blade.
3. **Blood-letting:** After soaking the cups, they are placed back on the designated areas of the skin and negative pressure is built up. The cups were left on the skin until they are filled

with blood from the capillary. The process of blood-letting is repeated for 3 times.

4. **Removal:** The cups are removed nearly after 3 minutes and new cups are placed on the same site as mentioned earlier. The used cups are soaked in betadine for sterilization.
5. **Clean and sterilize:** The *Hijāma* areas are eviscerated using betadine followed by placement of clean dressing.

Following the *Hijāma* therapy, each participant was offered 125 ml of fruit juice and blood pressure were recorded 30 minutes later.<sup>[42,43]</sup>

#### DIFFERENT SITES OF *HIJĀMA* AND THEIR INDICATION<sup>[13,16,19,24,29,34,45]</sup>

Different eminent Unani scholars have described following areas for the induction of *Hijāma* *Ibn Sina*, an experienced cupping, have mentioned sites of *Hijāma* in his book ‘*Al-Qanoon fit tib*. Cups are applied to the sites where there are muscle i.e. chest, abdomen and buttock.

The site where the cups are applied depending on the nature of the disorder:

S No.	Sites	Indications
1	<i>Hāmah/ Yāfookh</i> (Middle of the head)	<i>Ikhtilāt-i-Aql, Dawār</i> , Diseases of the eye ( <i>Jarab-ul-Ain, Busūr-ul-Ain, Mūrserj</i> , etc.)
2	<i>Qamhadwah</i> (Occiput)	<i>Kudūrat-ul-Hawās</i> .
3	<i>Nuqrah</i> (Nape)	<i>Ramad, Waja-ul-Uzunain, Siql-ul-Rās wal Ajfān, Kalaf, Barash, Namash, Rēh-ul-Subul, Sulāq, Jarab-ul-Ain</i> , and <i>Bakhr-ul-Fam</i>
4	<i>Akhda'ain</i> (Lateral sides of neck)	<i>Irti'āsh-e-Rās</i> , Diseases of the Face, Tooth, Ears, Eyes, Throat, Nose e.g. <i>Waja-ul-Azrās, Waja-ul-Lisān, Waram-e-Lissah, Ramad, Waram-e-Uzun, Sudā', Shagēqah, and Khunāq</i>
5	<i>Zaqn</i> (Chin)	Diseases of tooth, face, throat, head, mandible, and maxilla e.g. <i>Bakhr-ul-Fam, Waram-ul-Lisān, Busūr -ul-Fam, Qulā', and Waram-ul-Lauzatain</i>
6	<i>Uznain</i> (Both ears)	<i>Waram-ul-Ajfān</i>
7	<i>Kāhil</i> (Inter scapular region)	<i>Rabu, Zēq-ul-Nafas, Su'āl, Imtilā', Amrāz-e-Sadr Damavi, Khunāq-e-Damavi, waja-ul-Halaq, Waja-ul-Katif, and Nafs- ul-Dam</i> .
8	<i>Mankibain/ Katifain</i> (Shoulders)	<i>Khafqān</i> due to <i>Imtilā and Harārat, Aujā-ul-Kabid Hārrah</i> and <i>Aujā-ul-Tihāl, Humma-e-Rub</i>
9	Below the bust Line	Metrorrhagia or Menorrhagia
10	<i>Rusgh-ul-Yadain</i> (Ventral aspect of four arms)	<i>Jarb-e-Muzmin Damavi, Hakkah, and Shiqāq-fil -Yad</i> .
11	<i>Nāghiz</i> (Hypochondric region)	<i>Aujā-ul-Kabid Hārrah, and Aujā-ul-Tihāl</i>

12	Warkain (Buttocks)	<i>Bawāsēr, Sailān-ul-Dam, Waram-e-Rahem, Waram-e- Maq'ad, Nazf-ul-Dam and Baul-ul-Dam, Harārat-ul- Kilyatain, Hurqat-ul-Baul, Zarbān-e-Maq'ad, Waram-e- Unsiyain, Badbu-e-Reham, Hakka-e-Reham, and Damāmēl-e-Fakhizain</i>
13	Qatn (Lumbar region)	<i>Damāmēl-e-Fakhiz, Jarb-e-Fakhiz, Busūr-e-Fakhiz, Niqris, Bawāsēr, Dā-ul-Fēl, Riyah-ul-Masānah and Reham, Hakkat-ul-Zahr.</i>
14	Us'us (Coccyx)	<i>Bawāsēr, Wounds of the lower part of body, Sailān-ul-Dam- min-al-Maq'ad, Waram-e-Maq'ad, Baul-ul-Dam, Hurārat- ul-Kilyatain, Hurqat-ul-Baul, Waram-e-Unsiyain, and Hakkat-ul-Farj.</i>
15	Maq'ad (Anus)	<i>Waram-e-Maq'ad, Bawāsēr, Jarb-e-Maq'ad, Waja-ul-Am'ā and Ihtibās-e-Tams.</i>
16	Fakhzain (Thighs)	<i>Waram-e-Khusyah, infected wounds of shank, Waram-e-Reham, Sailān-ul-Dam from uterus, Bawāsēr, Shiqāq-e- Maq'ad</i>
17	Rukbah (Knee)	<i>Waram-e-Rukbah, Waja-ul-Mafāsīl Damavi, Zarbān-e- Rukbah Hār, infected wounds of thigh.</i>
18	Sāqain (Shank)	<i>Waja-ul-Rakba, Muzmin Waja-ul-Reham Muzmin Waja- ul-Masānah Muzmin, Busūr, Damāmēl, Ihtibās-e-Tams and Khunāq.</i>
19	Urqubain (Tendocalcaneus)	All Those Diseases in which <i>Hijāmat-e-Sāqain</i> is useful.
20	Ka'bain	<i>Ihtebās-i-Tams, Irq-ul-Nisā, and Niqris.</i>

### Contraindications<sup>[16,25,46]</sup>

1. *Hijāma* should be avoided during the beginning and the end of the lunar month (only in case of *Hijāmat -i-Ikhtiyāriyah*).
2. *Hijāma* should be avoided in infants, probably up to the age of two years, and in elderly persons after 60 years with exception of some special circumstances.
3. *Hijāma* should be avoided in extremely cold or hot weather.
4. *Hijāma* should not be done on an area having poor musculature.
5. *Hijāma* should not be done on an area having major blood vessels such as back of the hand and foot specially in those people who are lean and thin.
6. *Hijāma* should be avoided on torn ligaments of the joints.
7. *Hijāma* should be avoided on the edematous knee but may be done on the surrounding area.
8. *Hijāma* is avoided soon after eating and is indicated at least after two hours of meals.
9. It is proper to avoid *Hijāma* after bath except in the case of viscid blood.
10. *Hijāma* should not be done in the pregnant women on the lower abdomen and chest particularly in first trimester.

## USES

*Hijāma* is used to treat the of low back ache, sciatica, myalgia, arthralgia, fatigue and headaches.<sup>[47]</sup> Expulsion of unnamed toxins, enhancing blood flow, or activation of the immune system. *Hijāma* has also been practiced to reestablish appetite and improve digestion, get rid of tendency to faint and stimulate menstrual flow.<sup>[27]</sup> *Hijāma* has been used in the field of dermatology with variable degree of success for the management of skin diseases as cutaneous infections, urticaria, acne vulgaris, and chloasma.<sup>[43]</sup>

## Adverse events

*Hijāma* may result in bruising, burns, and/or skin infection. Adverse events of *Hijāma* therapy may be divided into two adverse events: local and systemic.<sup>[4]</sup> Scar formation, burn, skin infection, panniculitis, and abscess formation are the **local effect**, whereas anemia, dizziness, vasovagal attack, insomnia, headaches, and nausea comes under **systemic effect**.<sup>[29,47]</sup>

## DISCUSSION

It is evident that complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) will be a part of healthcare for the majority of the population in the coming years. Fortunately, research in this realm has been growing rapidly.<sup>[29]</sup> Hence, it was reasonable to assess the effect of *Hijāma* therapy.

*Hijāma* therapy is a very efficacious but under-utilized healing procedure in *Unāni* system of medicine. There are many different techniques of *Hijāma*, involving different levels of suction, heat, and duration of therapy. Stationary cups are typically placed on the patient in an area of local stagnation with a medium level of suction for 10-15 minutes. Timing and level of suction is to be adjusted depending on the type of tissue or structure which is being treated. *Hijāma* therapy stimulates the nerves, muscles, bloodvessels and subcutaneous glands causes a series in response of nerve and endocrine system as to improve blood circulation, eliminate blood stasis, bad cholesterol, increase permeability of blood vessels, and promote blood circulations.<sup>[48]</sup>

According to Gallen, bloodletting acts to remove “bad fluids” i.e. pathogenic agents that favour or cause the unnatural body state of disease. Over the centuries, this rationale has persisted unchanged in cultures that practice bloodletting(venesection).<sup>[49]</sup> Galen said that this bloodletting is so effective that, in one day, the diseased man was saved. The same teaching is found in his disciple Johannes Afflatius (ca.1040-ca.1100).

## CONCLUSION

*Hijāma* may function in a manner similar to the other type of cupping as dry cupping, fire cupping etc and it may stimulate particular parts of the body that includes and release off neurotransmitters, endogenous opioid like substances, and activation of c-fos within the CNS. The mechanism of reduction in pain score after *Hijāma* therapy are still not well investigated by a suitable number of researchers to formulate a basic knowledge and evidence base for such traditional therapy. The principles of acupuncture and acupressure are very similar to that of *Hijāma* therapy. The reduction in pain scores can be attributed to sound rationale as *Hijāma* therapy can elicits the release of morphine like substance (endorphin), serotonin or cortisol which can ultimately lead to pain relief and pain alter the physiological status of the individual.

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