

Fast Track to Traditional Chinese Medicine

中医
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ILLUSTRATIONS OF GUASHA THERAPY

(English Edition)

刮痧图解
(英文版)

Chief Editors Zheng Mei-feng He Fu-rong
Chief Translator Han Chou-ping
Chief English Reviewer Lucy Dean



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Synopsis of Contents

Based on the holistic view of traditional Chinese medicine, Guasha therapy can be used in a full range of treatments to promote the body's self-healing ability. It is regarded as a convenient and reliable therapy, since it is safe, effective, and easy to operate. In addition, it does not cause any adverse reactions or side effects.

This book consists of three parts. Part A contains the essential theory of Guasha, including a brief introduction, an overview of commonly used tools, basic procedures, body parts and points, operational methods, and indications as well as precautions. Part B contains the practical applications of Guasha therapy in the treatment of common conditions and in health care in general. Finally the attached chapter provides a collection of typical case studies illustrating the use of Guasha therapy.

With rich contents and straightforward descriptions, this book can serve as a sound reference book for clinicians, medical students and overseas students as well as those who are interested in self care and treatment.

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Part A

Essential Theory of Guasha Therapy

Chapter 1

Brief Introduction to Guasha Therapy

With ancient origins and extensive development, Guasha therapy has been practiced consistently for thousands of years. ‘Gua’ means to scrape or rub, while ‘Sha’ is a reddish, elevated patch of skin. Sha is the term used to describe blood in the subcutaneous tissue that raises into a small red bump during Guasha therapy. It works well for seasonal diseases in summer or autumn such as sunstroke, external contraction, and gastrointestinal disorders. The records of using Guasha in the treatment of sunstroke with Ramee (zhù má, *Boehmeria Nivea* L. Gaud) can be traced back to the flourishing Tang dynasty. Some scholars believe that Guasha derives from tuina manipulations. The Tuina Manipulations for Raising and Protecting Children (bǎo chì tuī ná fǎ) by Xia Yun-ji in the Qing dynasty states that, ‘Gua means applying a slightly heavier pressure with the physicians’ fingers to the child’s skin’. The records of the use of Guasha therapy are also available from the Yuan and Ming dynasties, referred to as summer therapy. After this time, the records of Guasha are preserved throughout the dynasties. For example, a systemic monograph on Guasha therapy called *the Guide to the Differential Diagnosis and Treatment of Exanthema and Filthy Diseases* (shā zhàng yù héng), by Guo Zhi-sui in the Qing dynasty, records that, ‘Guasha therapy involves the layering of sesa-

me oil on the skin and scraping the neck and back along the spine or chest area, bilateral hypochondriac area, shoulders, and arms with a copper coin'; and the *Rhymed Discourses on External Therapy* (lǐ yuè pián wén), by Wu Shang-xian in the Qing dynasty, records that, 'For abdominal pain due to yang Sha, a miraculous treatment method is to scrape the back with a porcelain spoon dipped in sesame oil, since the back-Shu points connect with all the five-zang organs. Scraping these points can remove pathogenic qi and thus benefit the patient'. The advantages of Guasha include simple tools, easy operation, low cost, extensive indications and efficacy for prevention and treatment. For these reasons, Guasha therapy has been practiced for thousands of years as a key part of TCM and other therapies. It has become especially popular among medical workers and the general public in recent years, partly as this age-enduring natural therapy adheres to the call for biomedicine to return to nature.

Guasha is one of the external therapies of traditional Chinese medicine. Its definition is both broad and far reaching, and detailed. It is mainly indicated for disorders of 'Sha symptoms'. The broader use of Guasha includes scraping, twisting, pricking, blood-letting, and tendon relaxation, however, it is often used to refer to scraping alone: exertion of physical stimulations to specific body parts by scraping, squeezing, grasping, pinching and pricking with smooth, hard tools, fingers or metal needles. This causes spots, patches or punctuate bleeding on the body surface. Guasha therapy may be combined with a single

recipe or common herbal formula to stimulate the cutaneous region and collaterals in order to activate internal organs through the meridian system. The result of Guasha therapy is to improve qi flow and blood circulation, balance yin and yang, strengthen the anti-pathogenic qi, remove pathogenic factors, discharge or drain stagnant toxins, clear heat, open the orifices, and refresh the mind.

The indications of Guasha therapy are generalized as Sha syndrome. TCM asserts that Sha syndrome occurs as a result of internal obstruction of yang-qi from a decrease in the body's anti-pathogenic qi, coupled with external contraction of wind, dampness, and fire. It mainly manifests as acute conditions in summer and autumn, but may be present in other seasons. Sha syndrome is clinically characterized by Sha spots (exanthema), occurring immediately after treatment, purple, red and sand granule-sized petechia, or soreness and distension either local or generalized. It may involve a variety of clinical subspecialties such as internal medicine, external medicine, gynecology, pediatrics and ophthalmology & otorhinolaryngology. Mild conditions may affect the patients' health, life, and work, whereas a severe condition may cause chest tightness, vexations, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, cyanosis of lips, or even life-threatening fainting. There is Chinese saying that 'distension always accompanies Sha syndrome'. This is seen in clinic as patients with Sha syndrome always present with symptoms such as dizziness, head distension, chest oppression and distension, abdominal distension and pain, and general soreness or distension. Examples of this

include ‘summer-heat Sha’ or ‘muscle spasm Sha’ due to sunstroke; ‘cramp in cholera morbus’ involving calf cramp due to vomiting and diarrhea; ‘inverted menstruation’ involving hematemesis, nosebleed, restlessness, and insomnia due to amenorrhea; infantile ‘eruptive ascarides’ characterized by intestinal parasitosis and abdominal pain or distension; and ‘eruptive lumbago’ characterized by lumbar soreness, pain, and weakness of the lower legs.

Guasha therapy is a special physical therapy. The Guasha practitioner exerts force on specific body parts or points with tools or hand manipulation to treat disorders and strengthen the body. Biomedical studies show that Guasha therapy can directly stimulate subcutaneous peripheral nerves, improve local circulation of blood and lymph fluid, speed up the metabolism, promote nutritional supply, regulate immune function through the nerve-endocrine-immunoregulation network and facilitate the body’s defensive abilities. This, thereby, improves the pathological state and suppresses the pathological process. Guasha, therefore, constitutes an important part of the study and application of Chinese medicine.

Chapter 2

Common Tools of Guasha Therapy

Section 1 Guasha tools

1. Guasha boards: Guasha boards are the most commonly used tools. The boards are usually made of animal horn products such as buffalo. These boards are hard, elastic and flexible. Porcelain and jade boards are sometimes used for Guasha, however, these materials are not popular since they are brittle, expensive, and may easily cause injury to the skin. The Guasha boards may be rectangle or irregular. Most boards have a thinner edge on one side and a thicker one on the other side. (See examples in Fig.1-4)



Fig.1 Rectangle board



Fig.2 Irregular-shaped board



Fig.3 Buffalo horn board



Fig. 4 Different shapes of board

2. Ramee: This was a Guasha tool used in earlier times. Method: Select and decorticate the ripe ramee; remove the branches and leaves and dry in the sun; and then

twist the fibers with thick roots and dip into the cold water.

3. Hair: Twist long hair and dip it into the sesame oil.

In addition, the following things can also be used as Guasha tools: porcelain (soup spoon or rice pot), wood (wooden comb), shell (clam shell), and coin (copper coin). (See examples in Fig.5-8)

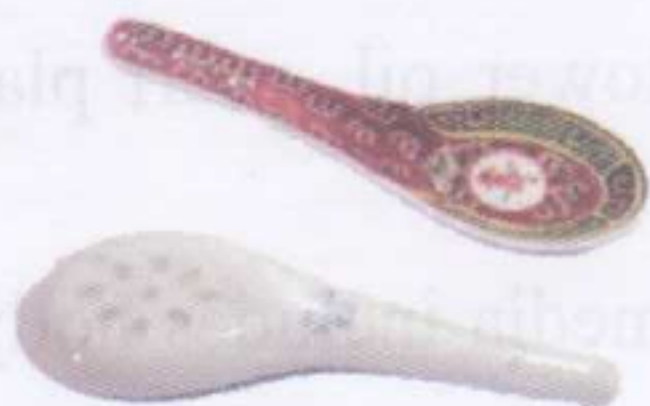


Fig.5 Soup spoon



Fig.6 Wooden comb



Fig.7 Shell



Fig.8 Coin