

## Gua Sha

Gua Sha is a folk therapy and a lot of ppl do it in China who are not med trained. Mostly for common cold, wind cold/heat invasions, beginning of febrile diseases. If pathogen is caught, cannot be released then gua sha therapy can release it.

“Sha” has 2 possible meanings. The ‘sha’ spots that it leaves behind after the therapy. You could also call the moving cup marks ‘sha.’ Another meaning is ‘Sha syndrome’ which is:

Cause:

- ◆ Invasion of wind, cold, damp, heat, summer-heat
- ◆ Invasion of epidemic pathogen → blockage of channels  
This can happen as a result of the previous invasion which leaves the body open to invasion.

Manifestations:

Originally referred to cholera – diarrhea, pain in abdomen, ‘sha’ spots all over the body (red and purple spots). Can be acute onset.

- ◆ Distention feeling: headache, distention feeling in head, chest tightness, ab distention and pain, ache all over, distention/pain in limbs, etc.
- ◆ ‘Sha’ spots

Wei level → Qi level (deeper, more severe rx like high fever, profuse sweat) → Ying (red/purple spots perhaps) → Xue level

### What is Gua Sha

Use a round edged instrument to scrape/rub in a certain area to raise Sha Spots and release the pathogen. Actually, when the pathogen shows the Sha spots on it’s own, it’s too deep to do gua sha.

Uses (relatively mild problems)

- ◆ x blood stag
- ◆ open channels
- ◆ remove toxins
- ◆ clear heat.  
Sesame oil often used for this at home.
- ◆ Remove pathogen through skin when at 1<sup>st</sup> 2 levels of disease.
- ◆ Also can regulate internal organ function and channel function by stimulating the skin and the interface to the organ.

### Tools

- ◆ Gua sha plate  
Come in different configurations. Jade plate for instance. Also some that look like a 'comb' and is actually used as a comb for scalp stimulation.  
(regular scalp stimulation is actually very good for your health and intelligence – helps regulate brain function among other things.) Other shaped tools as well – looking like chisels with softer edges used in slightly different ways. Can press on certain points, curved tools can wrap around bones or both sides of spine, etc. because you don't want to scrape on bone. Buffalo horn also which is sharper than some others.

Buffalo horn – scrape over tightness in neck around Gallbladder area, flip the horn over to the pointier side and can use for acupuncture. Also clears heat, removes toxin, cools blood.

Jade – cooler than other stones, clears heat. Some massage tools are made of jade too – facial massage for instance – used with light scraping so doesn't raise the sha spots. Can also regulate qi and blood. Round jade tools to remove heat on the face and improve beauty.

For patients who need milder stimulation you use a more rounded edge which feels softer.

Home therapy often use Chinese soup spoon, coins, shells, etc.

- ◆ Gua sha oil  
Some oils have ingredients to clear heat, open channels, move blood, etc. Oil is absorbed by skin and the herbals assist you. Sesame oil is common for home use and for self therapy – clears heat. Also regulates skin, raise sha spots. Also used as a massage oil to regulate internal organ's function, reg qi and blood in channels.

## Manipulation

- ◆ Scraping
  - Direct: use the tool directly on the skin to scrape.  
Sliding cupping is a method of Guasha.
  - Indirect – not commonly used. Mostly for kids and very old who have tender skin or injures easily. Apply a layer of silk or other cloth on top of skin then scrape. Similar to some of the massage techniques.
- ◆ Drawing method  
Use when pathogen is superficial – Wei area.  
Use fingers for stuff like frontal headache – use fingers to pinch or draw skin repeatedly until purple spots appear. Templar headache (taiyang) do same thing in that area. Use when the pathogen is superficial and in areas such as head/neck, elbow/cubital fossa, popliteal fossa. Can also pinch/draw at these areas – yintang, taiyang area. Tightness of neck – SCM muscle area. High fever, mild sunstroke – P3 or LI 11, BL 40 areas (not exact points)
- ◆ Blood letting method  
Use when pathogen is deeper – Qi or Ying level. Sha spots may already be visible due to the pathogen. See the bloodletting notes from class 4 and 5.

## Areas commonly used

- ◆ Head
  - Yintang, taiyang, GB 20 at back of head below skull. Tension headaches starting at back of neck – scrape from GB 20 downwards. Combine with acupressure.
- ◆ Neck
  - Side of neck
  - GB 20 → 21. 21 is on supraclavicular toward lateral end near acromion process.
- ◆ Back
  - Du channel along the spine – scrape the spot between the spinous processes
  - Jiaji line and both bladder lines. Cover the whole line then can move to another line. Direction: downward and lateral. Don't go back and forth like moving cupping. Caveat: look for how the hair grows and follow that, esp on the neck area and T1-C7 area.
  - Lower body
  - Intercostal spaces – follow ribs to the lateral side
- ◆ Chest
  - Good for cough. Below clavicle, above breast, go lateral in direction
- ◆ Four limbs
  - For sciatica pain: buttock, lower back, side of leg.
  - Arm pain/shoulder tightness – upper back, arm. Also, whole arm for arm pain.

## Indications

- ◆ Diseases of external origin
  - Common cold, cough, asthma, st flu
  - Sunstroke/external excess heat
- ◆ Pain
  - Very effective for musculo-skeletal, ab pains. Needling, moxa, cupping, gua sha all effective.
  - Back, shoulder, neck, sciatica, etc
  - Stomache, ab pain, headache, etc.
- ◆ Other/Digestive
  - Digestive tract also connected to the external – wei qi also connected to the digestive via gastric membrane per new theories in chinese medicine.
  - Acute gastroenteritis
  - Dysentery and other damp heat invasions of the stomach.
  - Cases that are relatively chronic such as Crone's disease, alt constipation/diarrhea
- ◆ Health preservation
  - Use lighter stimulation without oil.
  - Headaches, Insomnia, Poor memory – stimulate head/neck
  - Sinus problems – chronic or acute – side of nose
  - Ringing in the ear – side of ear.
  - Can stimulate jiaji and bladder lines regularly for health maintenance.
  - Improve blood circulation – affected area
  - Chest tightness - chest
  - Allergies (wei qi xu) – stimulate ren channel and thymus
  - Digestive problems – over the digestive area.

## Significance of sha spots

What the spots mean after guasha therapy and how to read them

- ◆ Bright red
  - Exterior syndrome
  - Short history
  - Mild case
  - Good prognosis
- ◆ Dark red/purple patches
  - Interior
  - Long history, severe, poor prognosis
- ◆ No sha spots
  - No sha syndrome, treatment with gua sha not needed but ok for health preservation.

What's the difference between this and cupping? Not a lot, but can get into tighter spots with gua sha tools and can do head too.

### **Precautions**

- ◆ Patient's position: in such that muscle is not too tight, not too loose. To guasha the neck, for instance, have them sit or lay on a massage table but angle the head rest far enough down.
- ◆ Clean the gua sha plate.  
Don't need to disinfect, but do need to clean with soap/water, alcohol. Do disinfect once in a while even though this is not invasive
- ◆ Apply guasha oil
- ◆ Angle should be oblique to avoid cutting the skin. Never perpendicular.
- ◆ Strength: even. Same from beginning to the end of the stroke
- ◆ Direction: one way stroke. Finish one area before moving to another
- ◆ Stimulation intensity:
  - Until sha spots appear completely
  - Light stim for health preservation – esp for first treatment, for aged or weak patients. Go for pink/red.
- ◆ After treatment
  - Rest, drink warm water, no cold showers, no swimming in the cold water
- ◆ Frequency of treatment: every 3-7 days after sha spots appear.

### **Contraindications**

- ◆ If patient is a bleeder, hemophilia, purpura, hemorrhages, leukemia, etc.
- ◆ Local area on wounds, masses, scars, infections
- ◆ No bony areas.
- ◆ Not on low back or ab for preppers.