

Is cupping therapy effective among athletes?

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Credit: Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers

Swimmer Michael Phelps's continued dominance at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics was accompanied by worldwide awareness of cupping. Cupping therapy has re-emerged as a potential approach to boost post-exercise metabolic recovery, reduce pain, and improve range of motion by increasing local microcirculation. But what does science tell us about the effectiveness or safety of cupping? A new systematic review that examines the results of eleven clinical trials encompassing nearly 500 participants is published in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine (JACM)*.

Romy Lauche, University of Technology (Sydney, Australia) and colleagues from Endeavour College of Natural Health (Fortitude Valley, Australia) and University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany) coauthored the article entitled "Effects of Cupping Therapy in Amateur and Professional Athletes—Systematic Review of Randomized Controlled Trials." Despite some reports of benefits, including some related to reduced pain and disability, the authors found the reports uneven and found a high risk of bias in the trial designs. They therefore determined that no conclusive recommendations for or against the value of cupping in sports performance can be made until further trials are carried out.

Co-author Lauche states: "Cupping therapy is a classic example in which research lags behind clinical practice. We are confident that this [review](#) will point out the need for and encourage further high-quality research of cupping, a therapy which has been around for millennia."

"This systematic review by Lauche and her international team squarely place this [therapy](#) in evidence limbo," says JACM Editor-in-Chief John Weeks, johnweeks-integrator.com, Seattle, WA. He adds: "There is evidence here for advocates, evidence for detractors, and [evidence](#) for researchers - that we need more of it!"

More information: Rhianna Bridgett et al, Effects of Cupping

Therapy in Amateur and Professional Athletes: Systematic Review of Randomized Controlled Trials, *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1089/acm.2017.0191](https://doi.org/10.1089/acm.2017.0191)

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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