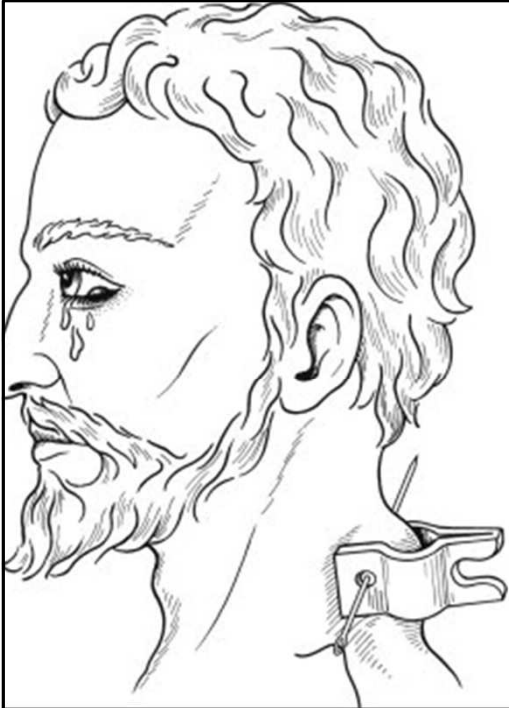


# GUA SHA

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# HISTORY

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The theory of scraping stems back to the early times of ancient medicine, where we can witness the creation of such texts as the Yellow Emperor's Classic in China, and the Ebers Papyrus in Egypt

It was accepted that the conditions of the time had a tendency to be quite extreme, and that two pathogens could not exist in the body at one time.

This in itself displays the shift that has occurred in the human condition, as we see now in clinical practice our patients arriving with multiple complaints, and a slew of medications to treat them.

Hippocrates believed that the 'cause of disease should be sought in nature, the cure due to nature.'

Chinese Medicine Doctors also saw humans as a microcosm of nature, and that we were one with the cosmos. Humans were but a small portion of the bigger picture.

## Gua Sha – Theory

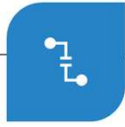
*Gua Sha instrument- assisted unidirectional 'press-stroking' of a lubricated area of the body surface to intentionally create transitory therapeutic petichiae representing extravasation of blood in the subcutis.*

(Nelson, 2013)

### **Sha**

Sha is a term that describes the presence of surface Blood Stasis or petechiae that is associated with pain or sickness, or the result of applying Gua Sha. Sha may be symptomatic (sha Syndrome) asymptomatic, or mildly symptomatic and potentially pathogenic.(cholera)

## Introduction to Gua Sha - History



GUA SHA IS A COUNTERACTIVE METHOD USED TO INDUCE AN ARTIFICIAL CRISIS, RESOLVING THE INNER DISEASE BY COUNTERING THE INTERNAL INFLAMMATION.



FRICTIONING METHODS WENT AS FAR BACK AS HIPPOCRATIC MEDICINE.



THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR SHA IS TRANSLATED AS "REDDISH ELEVATED, MILLET-LIKE SKIN RASHES."



GUA SHA WAS USED IN ASIA TO TREAT CHOLERA, AND CHOLERA LIKE DISORDERS, AND BASICALLY ANY DISORDER INVOLVING FEVER OR PAIN, UNLESS CONTRAINDICATED. SYMPTOMS SUCH AS FEVER, VOMITING, DIARRHEA, DEHYDRATION, AND CRAMPS.



GUA SHA WAS FIRST TAUGHT IN THE WEST AT THE NEW ENGLAND SCHOOL OF ACUPUNCTURE (NESA) IN 1976.



# Gua Sha can treat:

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Fever, bronchitis, asthma, respiratory infection, cough, throat infection	Mastitis	Autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus	Musculoskeletal disorders such as frozen shoulder, neck pain, tennis elbow, lumbar disc
Facial paralysis, head and face neuralgia	Skin problems	Cardiovascular problems	Digestive problems, pediatric diarrhea
	Stress, insomnia, chronic fatigue	Hepatitis	

# Gua Sha Functions, Uses, Actions

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**Fascia** is the connective tissue that binds and supports in compartments that that aid in supporting the skeleton, muscles and organs to maintain their structural integrity.

Connective tissue is filled with a clear viscous fluid called **ground substance**. The viscosity varies depending on that tissues it is supporting, but it is the conductor of all intercellular fluids.

Nutrients, hormones, and plasma are all carried from blood vessels to cells through ground substance, and cellular waste is carried from cells to blood and lymph vessels. When the viscosity of ground substance is affected by stress, trauma, dehydration, or disuse, the circulation and passage of ground substance is compromised.

Collagen fibers and fibroblast cells are also contained within ground substance.

# Gua Sha Functions, Uses, Actions

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## Action of Gua Sha

When applying Gua Sha, one will notice a gradual reddening of the tissues. This is known as petechiae. Sometimes the colour will appear darker, in a brown, gray, blue or black tone.



# Gua Sha Functions, Uses, Actions

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3 main characteristics of Gua Sha:

- 1) Closely repeated uni-directional stroking that intentionally presses into the fascia
- 2) Application is predominantly along a muscle and specifically not oscillating or across muscle tissue
- 3) The intentional creation of transitional petechiae and ecchymosis

# Gua Sha Tools

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Buffalo Horn has traditionally been considered a cold and acrid substance that is effective at moving Blood and Qi, improving circulation and relieving stiffness. Buffalo Horn is considered the second coolest element in TCM next to rhinoceros which we obviously can not ethically use for this purpose. The coolness of the buffalo horn means that it can have a powerful effect on removing heat and inflammation from the body.



## Gua Sha Tools

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### Jade

Jade has traditionally been considered the stone to create harmony of body and mind. It is said to calm and irritable mind, and eliminates negativity. Jade is a cooling stone, so the tools are effective at reducing heat and inflammation.

### Rose Quartz

Rose Quartz is considered the "love stone", as the vibration of the stone resonates with heart energy and creates a vibration of unconditional love, joy and emotional healing. It is for emotional stability, and helps with anxiety. Rose Quartz has brightening properties, if you have concerns about your skin tone, rose quartz will help.



## Gua Sha Tools

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Stainless Steel tools are cold and hard in nature. Not appropriate for the face, the weight and density of stainless steel provide the strongest and coolest treatment option. The benefit of stainless steel are that it will not break, it is easy to disinfect, and the weight of the tools adds extra pressure to the area being treated. The down side is that the treatment is very strong and potentially painful or damaging to the tissues.

## Surface Area and Edges of Tools

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The surface area and edge of the tool that you use will have a great impact on your treatment.

If the surface is too rounded you may not achieve the desired result and if it is too sharp it may be very uncomfortable.



# Graston Technique

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The Graston technique is a type of manual therapy that utilizes specialized ergonomic tools that massage and scrape the skin gently.



The Graston technique uses a set of stainless steel instruments to help soft tissue injuries to the connective tissues, muscles, neurological tissues and skin. It is effective for soft tissue injuries like repetitive stress injury, strains, sprains, and subluxations. This soft tissue mobilization technique treats a wide number of conditions, including quadrickep pain, rotator cuff pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, lower back pain, plantar fasciitis, tennis elbow, and even headaches. This technique has had proven results for patients.

# Instrument Assisted Soft Tissue Manipulation (IASTM)

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IASTM is most commonly used to relieve stubborn fascial restrictions and scar tissue to resolve adhesions, decrease pain, and increase range of motion.



Using these tools creates an advantage over manual therapy due to the hard surface of the tools ability to apply deeper penetration and more specific treatment to the affected area without further stress on the body of the practitioner. IASTM claims to promote connective tissue remodelling through the resorption of excess fibrosis as well as inducing repair and regeneration of collagen fibre. This results in the breakdown of scar tissue, adhesions, and fascial restriction.



• Gua Sha is not a sterile procedure. Instruments must be cleaned and disinfected after each patient use.



• Instruments used on intact skin is a non-critical item and should be cleaned and disinfected with a low-level disinfectant between patients. (according to OMH, recent studies show otherwise)



• Instruments used on non-intact skin (e.g., used with needling) is a semi-critical item and should be cleaned and disinfected with an intermediate-level disinfectant between patients.



WE RECOMMEND ALWAYS USING HIGH LEVEL DISINFECTION

## Gua Sha - Safety



Skin wounds, including blisters, sunburn, warts, moles, pimples, acne, open sores and cuts, shingles, rashes, herpes outbreaks (near them, not on them)



Geriatric patients (loose skin, thin skin, tear and bruise easily).



Weak patients or those who have been very ill



Patients who has difficulty healing wounds (i.e. immunocompromised)



Pregnancy (contraindicated over the abdomen, and lower back)



Recent injury where there is bruising or abrasion (cupping or gua sha marks are contraindicated until the marks have healed)

## Contraindications

# *Cautions*

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Diabetics, especially those with uncontrolled blood sugar, diabetic neuropathy

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Those who are unable to perceive heat or pain properly

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Those who have circulatory conditions

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Those who are unsure if their condition is contraindicated should seek guidance from their primary care physician prior to receiving cupping therapy or gua sha.

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Malignant Tumors

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Use over major arteries and cautioned over large blood vessels

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Hemophilia or other bleeding/clotting disorders

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Patients taking blood thinners



# Body Gua Sha

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# Notes on Practicing Gua Sha

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- Gua sha is applied in repeated, closely timed unidirectional strokes over a lubricated area of the body.
  - After palpation (checking for sha), identify an area to be treated and apply lubricant
  - Place the smooth edged instrument just above the area to be treated. This instrument should be at a low angle to the skin.
  - Move down the area with moderate pressure, pressing the smooth edge into the flesh.
- If the stroke is toward the provider, the extended thumb makes contact with the flesh, and the fingers apply pressure to the front of the instrument. If the stroke is away from the provider, the bent fingers make contact with the flesh in front of the instrument. This method diffuses the sensation of the Gua sha instrument.

# The Gua Sha Stroke

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This technique should not cause pain to the client, though it may be slightly uncomfortable when the sha is near complete expression.

A stroke should only be 4-6 inches (10-15cm) long

Strokes are repeated at a stroke line raising the sha before moving to an adjacent line.

The direction of the strokes should always start above, or distal to the area of treatment

# Sequence of Gua Sha strokes

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As with most modalities, there is a recommended sequence and direction that we perform Gua Sha

- It is recommended to start distal to the area of pain, and work toward the focal area
- Start close to the spine, and work toward the extremities being the final areas of treatment
- Begin at the top of the body, and work downwards
- Gua sha should be applied along the course of the muscles.

# Head and Face Gua Sha

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# Head and Face Gua Sha

Depending on the condition, you can start at the vertex of the head. Perform each stroke is 15 – 25 times

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- Stroke the neck, from chin to clavicle, three lines. Then, chin to ear, on the underside fo the chin
- Stroke forward to the hairline. Then stroke backward to the occiput. Next stroke right, then left to the ear
- Cover the eyes gently. Let the tool lay softly over the eye, then roll the tool out, and stroke from the temple and around the ear. Continue to perform 15-25 strokes around the ear (GB meridian)
- Stroke from the medial eyebrow to the temple. Stroke from the eyebrow to hairline. Stroke from the centre of the forehead outward
- Stroke from the middle of the chin to the ear, the bridge of the nose to the ear

# After Treatment

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It is important to have clear communication with your patient

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The effects of gua sha could be traumatizing to patients, so they need to clearly understand before the session that the results of gua sha will appear similar to bruising.

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Palpate the area after treatment, and gently massage the area to check for changes and tenderness as well as to assist in circulation.

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*It is advised to show the patient the results of their Gua sha treatment so that they are not frightened by the reddening of their tissues.*

# Body Areas for Treatment

## *Upper Back, Neck, Shoulders and Head*

### *Common Conditions to Treat Upper Back, Neck, Shoulders*

- acute head cold, sinusitis, rhinitis, bronchitis
- asthma, emphysema, cough, neck pain,
- headache, toothache, trigeminal neuralgia, Bell's Palsy
- eye problems, ear problems, TMJ
- upper back pain and extremity problems (add extremities)
- shoulder dysfunction, tennis elbow, carpal tunnel syndrome, frostbite (add extremity)

# Body Areas for Treatment

## *Middle Body*

### *Common Conditions to Treat Middle Body*

- Epigastric pain, abdominal pain, flank pain, hepatitis, jaundice, stomach ulcer, nausea, bloating, gas, distention
- Rib pain, intercostal neuralgia, rib fractures, dislocation, back pain
- Herpes zoster (shingles) - after lesions have healed

## Body Areas for Treatment

### *Lower Back, Hips and Extremities*

#### ***Common Conditions to Treat Lower Back and Hips***

Acute and chronic low back pain, lumbar disc herniation, kidney problems, urinary bladder issues, pelvic floor pain, genital pain, impotence, vaginitis, excessive or deficient vaginal lubrication, colon, rectal prolapse, hemorrhoids, uterus, ovaries, irregular menses, uterine fibroids, inducing or treating labour

Sciatica, hip pain, hamstring, quadriceps strain, knee injury, ankle strain, foot/toe injury, heel pain. Plantar fasciitis, difficulty walking

# Body Areas for Treatment

## *Chest and Sternum*

To treat the sternum it should be stroked from the top down to the xyphoid process. Proceed very gently, an experienced practitioner can apply Gua sha to the breast for mastitis or breast distension.

## *The Extremities*

Treat the torso first, usually the back. Then move on to the extremity. Have the limb relaxed in sitting, or reclining position. Always work along the muscle, and in this case the treatment can go proximal or distal but the recommendation is always towards the heart.

## *Fatty Areas*

Fatty areas on the Gluteal region, upper thighs and abdomen will always feel more sensitive and should be treated lightly. This is because they retain more water and contain more cellulite. One would not expect the sha to appear as prevalently as in other areas.