Cupping All the Rage

May 31, 2013 By Mike Barr

Hollywood and Primrose Hill are all abuzz over the strange, red, circular remnants of this ancient East Asian practice of placing thick glass jars of flame-stoked air over the upper, lower back, shoulders--even the bottom of your foot! “Cupping” comes in for its close-up. Is it really any different (more fraught with risk?) than a good deep-tissue massage though?

Blame it on Gwyneth. At least that’s the version I have heard. When the facial yoga guru appeared at red carpet events this past winter with crop circle shaped welts and bruises on her shoulders lain bare, all the E!TV world wanted to know.

And apparently the celebrity following is not limited to the Talented Mr. Ripley cum Shakespeare in Love leading lady. Jennifer Aniston, Victoria Beckham, Jessica Simpson and David Arquette all posed for a flurry of UK features on the topic over the past couple of months. (Finally. A dude. Even if I have no idea who he, or Jessica Simpson for that matter, is. Yes, I live under a rock, and given the realistic current alternatives I rather like it that way. Oh wait, another one. Looks like Gwyneth got Coldplay hubbie hooked as well.)

Even the staid (if scandal plagued) BBC felt the need to get in on the action.

One of many online demos (this one of the more traditional “fire cups”) can be viewed here.

And for images (both soothing and disturbing) of cupping in action as well as, well, the aftermath, you can Google as easily as I can!

I will be posting more stuff on cupping over the weekend, but I welcome readers’ comments and experiences.

If you head to the shores this perfect pre-summer beach weekend, let me know if there really are people out there sporting tell-tale signs of the latest celebrity fad. I myself will be home in front of the AC working my way through the series of 10-18 facial firming asanas.

Mike Barr is a board certified acupuncturist and herbalist and can be reached at Turning Point Acupuncture (just off Columbus Circle across from the new Mandarin Oriental hotel) and at Suite 904 in the Flatiron District. His interests and experience include sports acupuncture, pain syndromes, liver health, immunological support, herbal and acupuncture approaches to getting off/putting off prescription medications of unsatisfactory or unclear benefit, and in helping to manage the side-effects of other necessary and life-saving biomedical interventions. He has also

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