

HOLISTIC APPROACH IN PRESERVATION OF HEALTH AND PREVENTION OF DISEASE: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Background and objective: Unani system of medicine (USM) is a holistic traditional system of medicine. This is a great healing art as well as science. Mode of treatment in this system is based on individualized manner to the *Mizaj* (constitution) of a particular person. The main purpose of Unani traditional system is to treat body, mind and soul. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized the USM as an alternative system to cater the health care needs of human population. Health is defined by various scholars but probably the oldest definition is that; health is the absence of diseases. Conventional medicine has its own side effect. To avoid these adverse effects USM can be an alternative to preserve health; hence a

comprehensive search was taken to explore classical text concerned with preservation of health. **Study Design:** Literary research. **Methods:** First we searched important sources in traditional medicine including the Canon of medicine Kamel-al-Sanaeh, Kitab-al-Kulliyat, Kulliyat-e-Nafisi and Kulliyat-e-Qanoon, available in the Library of Jamia Tibbiya Deoband Unani medical college and Library of National institute of Unani medicine Bangalore.

Various scholarly databases like Medline, Embase, Scopus, Pubmed were also explored to get relevant data concerned with the present topic. **Result:** In perspective of USM “health” is mentioned under the title of *Sihhat*. To preserve health various strategies like adaptation of *asbabe sitta zaroriah* (six essentials), *Tadeel-e-mizaj* (moderation of constitution), potentiating of *Tabiat* (physis) by Unani modalities like *Ilaj Bil Tadbeer* (Regiminal therapy) *Ilaj Bil Ghiza* (Dietotherapy), *Ilaj Bil Dawa* (pharmacotherapy) and *Ilaj Bil Yad* (surgery) are recommended. **Conclusion:** In Unani system of medicine health can be maintained by harmonious equilibrium between *Umur tabiiyya* (seven basic principles) as discussed by Unani physicians (Ibn Sina, Razi, Ibn Rush, Zohrawi etc.) and their knowledge can be implemented to preserve health, thus validation and conservation of traditional knowledge is essential for prospective research and valuable for use in the contemporary era.

KEYWORDS: Health, Unani, Mizaj, Ilaj, Sihhat, Physis.

INTRODUCTION

USM brings conventional and complementary approaches together in a coordinated way in the preservation of health. It emphasizes a holistic, patient focused approach to health care and wellness. Including mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, social, community aspects and treating the whole person rather than an organ or system. It provides well coordinated care between different aspects of health. The main focus of this system is to provide appropriate processes to facilitate the body’s innate healing response.^[1] In the opening section of the Canon, Ibn Sina has explained that the chief theme of medicine (Tib) is the preservation of health if it is already attained and restoration of it when it is lost.^[2] According the USM, “Medicine is a science by which we find out the various states of the body; when body remains healthy or when it is not healthy; is likely to be restored”. In other words, it is an art by which health is maintained and the art by which it is restored when lost.^[3,4] Ancient physicians defined “health as the beauty of body with long hair, clear complexion, balanced BMI, sound sleep, social interaction, fragrance and form” or in other words a state that resulted in normal functioning of its subject (human body).^[2] They explained regarding health that it is the expression of normal functions in the body. All physiological functions of the human body are considered to be based on the natural, fundamental components, known as *Umur tabiiyya*, they are *arkan* (basic constituents), *mizaj* (constitution), *akhlat* (humours), *aada* (organs), *arwah* (pneuma), *quwa* (faculties), and *afaal* (functions).^[5] These components

formulate the base of human body and determine the health or diseased condition. Any alteration in these may alter the function of the body.

Concept of health

The word health was derived from the old English word *hoelth* which is the state or condition of being well, that is, safe or sound of the body. The most popular and widely accepted modern paradigm of health is the notion that health is a disease free state or condition. “The concept of health cannot be defined without relation to its opposite: disease.”^[6] Health is a dynamic state in which the *mizaj* (constitution) and *tarkeeb* (structure) of human body are such that all its functions are carried out in a correct and wholesome manner. Basically it is a state of equilibrium in which a human being enjoys his life in favorable environment. Disease is an abnormal state of human body which primarily and independently disturbs normal functions. Disease thus may be regarded as a disorder of constitution and structure.^[3] Avicenna has defined disease as an abnormal condition for the human body. As written in the Canon, “this is an abnormal unnatural state of the human body, in virtue of which injurious effects result.”^[2,4,7]

It is a well known fact that, various metabolic changes continuously occurs in human body throughout the life. These changes result in maintenance of health and sometimes due to abnormal changes, produce diseased conditions in the body. *Ṭabiat* known as supreme planner of the body preserves health by the maintaining *etadal-e-mizaj* (normal constitution) in tissues, organs and entire body. According to the concept of Unani system of medicine *afaal* (functions) are expressions of *quwa* (faculties) and all *quwa* depend upon *mizaj* (constitution) and *tarkeeb* (structure) of the body.^[8] Hence inference can be drawn that until the *mizaj* and *tarkeeb* are normal, health status of the body is maintained. As a result main function of *Ṭabiat* is to maintain functions and structure of the body. Whatever functions *Ṭabiat* execute to maintain normal constitution and physiological functions of the body are known as *tadabeer-e-ṭabiat* (contrivances of *Ṭabiat*). This is the reason that *Ṭabiat* is also known as supreme planner of the body because *mizaj* is attributed to all organs of the body. It is also said that *Ṭabiat* always plays an important role for welfare of the body with which it is associated.^[9,7,10]

Health in the view of different scholars

Health is not just absence of disease but it is state of overall wellbeing. It has been defined by

Hippocrates (460-370 BC)

The Founder of Medicine known as father of medicine believed that health is the expression of a harmonious balance between the various components of man's *mizaj* (constitution), the environment and life style.^[6]

Shusruta (1500 BC)

The Father of Plastic Surgery writes that a healthy person as one in whom there is perfect balance of all body functions with tranquility and equilibrium of the mind, senses and spirit (soul).^[3]

Majusi (930-994 AD)

He was a Persian physician and psychologist from the Islamic golden age defined health in his book *Kamilus Sana* (The complete art of medicine) that health is a physical state of the human body in which *Tabiat* performs all the functions of the body in excellent and complete way.^[9]

Ibn-e-Sina (Avicenna) (980-1037 AD)

Ibn Sina created an extensive corpus of work during Islam's Golden Age. During his time, he was regarded as a renowned physician and philosopher described health a condition or state in which functions of the body are within normal limit.^[9]

Ibn Rushd (1126-1198 AD)

Known in Latin as Averroes, in his book "Kitab al-Kulliyat fit Tibb" defined health as a normal state of organs, in which their functions are within normal range and responses are also normal.^[11]

Jalinoos (Galen) (131-200 AD)

Galen the greatest physician of his era and was also a skilled surgeon and renowned philosopher explained about health that it is a natural state of the body in which all functions are normal.^[4]

Jalinoos has described that human body has three states that are *ḥalat-e-ṣiḥḥat* (state of health), *ḥalat-e-maraḍ* (state of disease) and *la ṣiḥḥat wa la maraḍ* (neither state of health nor disease/ intermediate state).^[4]

Ḥalat-e-ṣiḥḥat (state of health): it is a natural state in which the *mizaj* (constitution) and *tarkeeb* (structure) of all organs of the human body are such that all its functions are within normal range which result in performance of normal functions of the body.^[4]

Ḥalat-e-maraḍ (state of disease): It is an abnormal state of the body which directly or indirectly leads to disturbance in its normal functioning. In other words it can be stated that, disease is a state of the body which is just contradictory to the health. Some other scholars such as *Ibn Rushd*, *Majoosi*, *Jurjani* also explained that disease is the contrary state to health.^[4]

La ṣiḥḥat wa la maraḍ (neither health nor disease): This state of the body is between health and disease. It is also called *ḥalat-e-Salisa* (tertiary state), for example

- 1) In old age: some functions of the body organs are not performed well such as digestion metabolism due to lack of *Hararat Ghariziyya* therefore, Jalinoos consider it in intermediate state,
- 2) In Infancy: Jalinoos described that during infancy some functions of the body are not well as compared to adult so he considered infancy in intermediate state of the body.
- 3) Health and disease may be found at same time in two different organs of the body e.g. in blind person all body organs are normal but for vision function he is not well because of it Jalinoos consider this state in intermediate state.^[4]

Abu Sahl Masiḥi (1010 A.D)

A great Persian philosopher writes that health is a part of *umur ṭabiyya*, that is present moderately in *Aḍa Mufradh* (simple organs), *akhlat* (humours), *arwah* (pneuma), means they should be at their real (desirable) states. Likewise *Aḍa-e-aliya* (compound organ) should be normal.^[8]

Tabers

Health (he^lth) [AS. *haelth*, wholeness] It is condition in which all functions of the body and mind are normally active.^[12]

Webster

The condition of being sound in body, mind or spirit, especially freedom from physical disease or pain.^[13]

Oxford dictionary

Soundness of body or mind; that condition in which its functions are duly and efficiently discharged.^[13]

Perkins

A state of relative equilibrium of body forms and function which results from its successful dynamic adjustment to forces tending to disturb it. It is not passive interplay between body substance and forces impinging upon it but an active response of body forces working toward adjustment.^[14]

W.H.O (World Health Organization)

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity.^[14]

Preservation of health

Unani system of medicine consists of the sum total of all the knowledge and practices used in diagnosis, prevention and elimination of disease from ancient times to present. It is based entirely on observations and practical experiences passed downward from generation to generation. This system of medicine has two main branches, namely a Juz-e-Ilmi (theoretical branch) and another is Juz-e-Amali (practical branch) which each also branch into sub branches as follows:

1. The theoretical branch of USM: This branch is a science in which we discuss the status and changes in the human body and the causes and signs of health and disease.
2. The practical branch of USM: This branch is also a science, although it may remind us of practical procedures but it is really the science of how to keep health and how to restore it back after the occurrence of diseases.^[15,16]

Seven Basic Principles

All physiological functions of the human body are considered to be based on these natural, fundamental components, known as *Umur tabiiyya*, they are *arkan* (basic constituents), *mizaj* (constitution), *akhlat* (humours), *ada* (organs), *arwah* (pneuma), *quwa* (faculties), and *afaal* (functions). Health can be achieved by proper moderation of above components.^[4]

Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment

USM has given more attention and importance to the prevention of disease rather than its cure. In Unani system of medicine the effect of surroundings and environmental conditions on the human health is described in detail. Maintaining health was so important that the main duty of the physicians is to keep people healthy and to treat them if they became sick. There are six factors, which are essential for the maintenance of good health, which is referred to as: Sittah Zaroriya (six essentials) in unani literature. These essential factors are as follows:

1. Hawa (environmental factors),
2. Makool wa Mashroob (food and beverages).
3. Harkat wa Sukoon-e-Badani (movement and rest of body).
4. Harkat wa Sukoon-e-Nafsani (psychological factors).
5. Nawam wa Yaqza (sleep and wakefulness).
6. Istifragh wa Ehtebas (retention and evacuation).^[15,17]

Ancient philosophers described importance of these six essential factors in regarding the health and disease, because any disturbance in these factors may result in disease condition of the body. So an equilibrium and balance among these factors is necessary for healthy life.^[15]

Modes and Strategies of Treatment in USM

Any disturbance in body's *mizaj* (constitution) and *akhlal* (humors) leads to the onset of disease condition as it was previously mentioned. Therefore, treatment is based on the correction of *mizaj* and *akhlal* to achieve a balanced state in the body. Every *khilt* has a specific *mizaj* as described earlier. So, the drug used for the treatment should possess the opposite *mizaj* than that of the diseased *khilt*, which results in normalization of the *mizaj*. A disease, which is cold in nature, can be cured by a drug, which is hot by *mizaj* and so on. It should be noted that not all the diseases in the USM are treated, based on the temperaments, because there are three forms of disease according to Unani literature.^[16]

1. *Sue-e-Mizaj* (distortion of the constitution of a single organ up to the whole body)
2. *Sue-e-Tarkeeb* (distortion of the anatomy or the structure of an organ)
3. *Tafarruq-wa-ittisal* (distortion of the correlation and connection between organs)

The *Sue-e-Mizaj* is the one who mostly treated by correction of *mizaj* and the two latter described are mostly treated by special drugs or manipulation especially including surgery.^[4]

Ancient physicians have explained four of treatment:

1. *Ilaj Bil Ghiza* (Diet-o-therapy)
2. *Ilaj Bid dawa* (Pharmacotherapy)
3. *Ilaj Bil Tadbeer* (Regimental therapy)
4. *Ilaj Bil Yad* (surgical procedures)

These modes might also be considered as levels of treatment, where if a level fails or is inadequate the next level is considered.^[16]

METHODOLOGY

We first searched important sources in traditional medicine including the Canon of medicine Kamel-al-Sanaeh, Kitab-al-Kulliyat, Kulliyat-e-Nafisi and Kulliyat-e-Qanoon, available in the Library of Jamia Tibbiya Deoband Unani medical college and Library of National institute of Unani medicine Bangalore. We also go through website like Medline, Embase, Scopus, Pubmed to get relevant data concerned with the present topic.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is drawn from the above discussion that Unani medicine endeavors to find the best possible ways by which a person can enjoy a healthy life without risk of sickness. This system is completely based on the holistic approach to health including maintenance of health by supporting *Tabiat* and harmonious balance in the quality and quantity of *akhlat*, normalization of six essential factors of life and implementation of dieto-pharmaco therapies and other treatment procedures which are conducive to the health as well as preventive and curative for disease.

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