

Holistic Approach of Unani Medicine: Integrating Basic Concepts of Unani Medicine and Health Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Holism is a philosophy that believes in treating the whole person and in the integration of mind, body and spirit. Holism promotes the belief that these three elements of a human being must be treated together in order to achieve any notion of healing rather than simply treating a person for a specific illness or inquiry. *Tabi'at* (natural recuperative power) is the administrator of the vital body and when *tabi'at* is powerful enough to withstand the disease, it does not require the aid of physician. [1] This paper highlights the importance of basic concepts of Unani Medicine in promoting the basis of our health (*e'itadal al- mizaj* "homeostasis").

Keywords: Holistic approach, *Tabi'at*, Health, Unani Medicine

INTRODUCTION

The name Unani is derived from a Greek word "Ionian" which means medicine, a symbol of life. Tib means the knowledge of the states of the human body in health and illness (decline of health). [2] Unani Tib strives to find the best possible ways by which a person can lead a healthy life. Unani medicine is said to have a holistic approach, refers to the whole knowledge as a total recognition of the patient's condition. "It is more important to know what sort of person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has" – Hippocrates. Greeks gave a new direction to medicine thought.

The term holism was coined by Jan Smuts. In the holistic belief system, illness and injury are often the result of disharmony in the mind-body-spirit, which they see as one. This disharmony can often come about from a dysfunction in anyone of these areas. But holistic medicine believes that a

dysfunction in one area affects the whole person and not just that one area of the body. "The rhythm of the body, the melody of the mind and harmony of the soul creates the symphony of life". [3,4]

Holism also denoted a theory of the universe in the same vein as Materialism and spiritualism. [5] Spiritual health is one of four dimensions to well being as defined by the WHO, which include Physical, Social and mental. In 1983, 22 WHO member countries from Eastern Mediterranean Region proposed a draft resolution to this preamble to include reference to Spiritual Health, such that it would redefine health as a state of Physical, Mental, Spiritual and social Well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. [6,7] According to Plato (philosopher), "the cure of many diseases is unknown to physicians because they are ignorant of the whole. For the part can never be well unless the whole is well". The purpose of Unani Medicine is

to assist natural recuperative power and thus eradicate the disease from the human body. Nature of the body "Tabi'at" spontaneously removes the morbid matter through the process of sweating, urination or defecation. Otherwise, munzij (maturation) is done to make the body to remove the morbid matter followed and purgatives. Everyone has a doctor in him/her, we just have to help it in its work. The natural healing force within each of us is the greatest force in getting well" (Hippocrates).^[8]

Umoor-e-Tabiyah (Basic Physiological Principles)

According to practitioners of Unani Medicine, the health of the human Body is maintained by the harmonious arrangements of Umoor-e-Tabiyah, the 7 basic Physiological principles of the unani Medicine. These Principles include:

1. Arkan or elements
2. Mizaj or Temperament
3. Akhlat or Bodily Humours
4. Aaza or Organs and systems
5. Arwah or vital Spirit
6. Quwa or Power
7. Afaal or functions

Interacting with each other, these seven natural components maintain the balance in the natural constitution of the human Body. Each Individuals constitution has a self regulating capacity or power called Tabi'ah Mudabbir-e-badan viz medicatix naturae which is considered the supreme planner of our body and whose sole function is to keep the seven components in the equilibrium.^{[1][9]}

Arkan and Mizaj: Elements and Temperament.

Arkan or Anasir (elements) are simple undivisible matters which provide the primary components for not only the human body but also makes up all the creations in the universe. There are predictable consequences to the actions and the interactions (imtizaj) of all the four elements Ariz (earth), Maa (water), Nar (Fire) and Hawa (air). As these elements act up and react with each other and continuously undergo change into various

states of "genesis and lysis" (generation and deterioration). The significance of Arkan is not only limited to the structural and functional element of our body but it influences our body in many other ways and they play an important role in diagnosis and treatment of the diseases too.

Mizaj (temperament) indicates the properties of an 'unsur, a molecule, a cell, a tissue, an organ and of the organism as a whole. According to Tibb the cause of health is the maintenance of mutadil mizaj (normal temperament) within the cells. The four essential mizaj (temperaments) are hot, cold, moist and dry. Four more are compounded of those single temperaments namely hot and dry, hot and moist, cold and dry, and cold and moist possessed in different proportions. Mizaj is balanced by all entities in the cosmos including all plants, minerals and animals. The equilibrium of the individual's elemental combination and resulting mizaj, as determined by tabi'at, provides a stable constitution to that individual. Therefore mizaj plays a pivotal role in unani in characterizing a person's normal state (physical, mental and social), as well as the nature of the disease.^{[1][10]}

DOCTRINE OF AKHLAT:-

The concept of akhlat (humours) has occupied a central place in Tibb. The humoral theory was postulated by Hippocrates (460 B.C.) he in his book Tabiat al-Insan (human nature) has set forth his famous doctrine that: "The body contains four (major kinds of) humours dam (phlegm), safra (yellow bile) and sauda (black bile); a right proportion, according to quality and quantity, and mixing of which (homeostasis) constitutes health and upright proportion and irregular distribution, according to their quantity and quality constitutes disease". These groups were refined by Galen and later by Avicena. Each person is considered to have a specific humeral makeup, determined by the predominance of a given humor in his or her constitution. The quality and the quantity of the humors in an individual- a person's

unique, proper and proportionate humeral makeup – is said to guarantee health, conditions other than this balance signal ailment or disease. [1][10][11]

Relationship between Tabi'at and Asbab-e-sittah- Zarooriah:-

In the Unani system of medicine, Tabi'at is an individual's internal power or capacity to withstand or combat disease or to perform normal physiological functions. According to Unani practitioners, tabi'at can eradicate most infections without medical treatment and it is believed that tabi'at is assisted only from outside for maintenance of health. Unani medicine recognizes six physical or external factors called asbab-e-Sittah Zarooriah which are essential in establishing a synchronized biological system and thus living a balanced existence. The six asbab-e-Sittah Zarooriah are:

Hawa (Air): The quality of the air a person breathes is thought to have a direct effect on his other temperament and thus health.

Makool-wa-mashroob (Food and drink): The nutritional value and the quality and quality of one's food and drink are believed to ensure fitness by strengthening Tabiyat.

Harkat-wa-sakoon-e-jismiah (bodily exercise and response): It emphasizes the positive effects of balanced physical exercise on an individual's internal resistance and tabiyat.

Harkat-o-sakoon nafsaniah (mental work and rest): It emphasizes the simultaneous engagement of the human mind in numerous emotional and intellectual activities. Just as the body needs systematic and planned exercise and rest, Unani medicine holds that the human mind and brain need adequate stimulation and proper relaxation.

Naum-o-Yaqzah (Sleep and wakefulness) in which an individual's health and alertness are understood as being dependent on a specific amount of sound sleep in the course of a 24 Hour (Circadian cycle).

Ihtebas and Istefragh (retention and excretion) which considers the metabolism of food and liquid as both affecting and being regulated by Tabiyat. According to Unani medicine, the assimilation of food

and liquid facilitates the elimination from the body of excessive and noxious substances. Therefore to maintain a harmonic and synchronized tabiyat, certain beneficial end products of Koun-o-fasad (genesis and lysis) are retained in the body while harmful ones are expelled.

The harmonious balance of this state of the human individual integrated into his environment, constitutes health. These six factors are believed by unani practitioners to directly affect the harmony of the human mind and body. Socio-economic, geographic and environmental factors are considered secondary factors (asbab-e-eghair Zarooriah) in the Unani system and therefore indirectly influence tabiyat. However both the primary and secondary factors must be closely considered in the process of treatment. [1][8][12]

Modes of treatment:

The initial approach to the treatment in the Unani system entails the establishment of a regimen to normalize and balance the external factors (e.g air, water and food) involved in ailments and diseases. In this system of medicine, the basic principle of treatment is Ilaj-bil-Zid i.e treatment is in contrast to nature and mizaj of the disease and rational methods which are employed through diet, drugs, regimes, manipulation techniques and operations. Broadly speaking, there are four different methods of treatment viz:

- Ilaj-bil-Tadbeer (Regimental therapy)
- Ilaj-bil-Ghiza (Dietotherapy)
- Ilaj-bil-Dawa (pharmacotherapy)
- Ilaj-bil-yad/jarahat (Surgery)

Ilaj-bil-Tadbeer is one of the most popular methods of treatment, practiced by ancient Unani Scholars since antiquity. Literally Tadbeer is an Arabic word meaning regimen or systemic plan where as ilaj means therapy or treatment. Thus Ilaj-bil-tadbeer means treatment through regimen, which is a method through which care of a person and maintenance of general health is attained through modulation or modification in Asbabe-sitta-Zarooriya. Regimental therapies are mostly non

medicinal techniques/procedures by which we modulate the life style, dietary habits and some other therapeutic regimens for the treatment of various diseases. The eminent Unani Scholar, Ibne-Sina has mentioned thirty six regimes in his famous book "Cannon of Medicine". These regimens are actually meant for the istefragh (evacuation) of Akhlate-Radiyah (morbid fluids), from the body. These morbid humours are responsible for the genesis of disease. As soon as these morbid humours are removed from the body, normal health gets restored. [13][14]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We live in a time of great imbalance. There are more pollutants and chemicals in our food and environment than ever before. We face epidemic rates of obesity and chronic disease. Most people have poor diet and exercise habits. Almost everyone in our fast-paced society struggles to manage daily stress and many are afflicted with chronic depression and anxiety. Because of all this, consumers are concerned for their health. There has never been a greater need for the Holistic Health approach, and people are demanding medical alternatives and actively seeking better options for their personal wellness. This has resulted in constant research and development in the wellness industry. It is the need of hour that all healthcare practitioners should aspire to Holistic medicine and try to practice it. Recognizing the whole person in the prevention and treatment of disease may hold the key to some diagnosis for doctors. It may also allow valuable and important help and guidance to be given to the patient.

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How to cite this article: Sana SH. Holistic approach of unani medicine: integrating basic concepts of unani medicine and health perspective. International Journal of Research and Review. 2019; 6(8):63-66.
