

## UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE – AN OVERVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*Unani system of medicine is one of the oldest systems which was originated in Greece by Hippocrates. According to this system human body is composed of the four basic elements like earth, water, air, fire and the body fluid is composed of blood, phlegm, yellow bile, black bile. Also, it talks about four temperaments. Bringing about harmony among the disturbance in the above is the aim of treatment. Unani medicine believes in the promotion of health, prevention of diseases through various modes of treatment i.e., regimental therapy, diet therapy, pharmacotherapy, surgery. It has been using the drugs of herbal, animal and mineral origin. Government of India established a Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine to develop this system in its own theoretical framework. This review gives an overview of unani system of medicine.*

**Keywords** – Unani, Cupping, System of Medicine.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The unani system of medicine originated in Greece. As the Greece's adopted medicine from Egypt, the roots of this system go to Egypt. Further it was adopted, developed and improved tremendously by the Arabs.

Hippocrates (460–370 BC) also known as father of unani medicine emphasized the natural causes of disease as well as noted the existing medical knowledge and set the grounds for medicine to develop as a systematic science. The system was introduced in India by the arabs and persians and today India is one of the leading countries as far as the practice of unani medicine is concerned.

This system deals with the health and diseases management by providing preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative healthcare with holistic approach. The system takes into account the whole personality and gives prime importance to diet and the state of digestion in health as well as disease. [1]

### 2. BASIC PRINCIPLE

The basic principle of the system involves seven natural factors such as elements, humours, temperament, organs, pneuma, faculties and functions, basics of pathology, principles involved in diagnosis and treatment. [2]

**a) The natural factors**

The Unani system believes everything in the universe is made up of four basic elements i.e., Air, water, fire and earth in varying amount and proportion and their imbalance leads to illness. Each element has its unique set of temperament i.e., hot or cold and dry or wet.

The humours which are mainly responsible for moisture maintenance of organs of the body and also provides nutrition. It involves blood (hot and wet), phlegm (cold and wet), yellow bile (hot and dry), black bile (cold and dry).[3][4]

**b) The basics of Pathology**

According to Avicenna “Disease is an altered state and not an entity, and it is morbid to that extent that it disturbs the normal functions of the body”. It is classified into two i.e., simple and complex disease.

Simple disease involves metabolic disorders, structural deformities, cuts, injuries and dislocations while complex disease is a combination of two or more simple disease [5].

**c) Principle of diagnosis**

This is based on the parameters such as examination of pulse, urine and stool. Pulse examination can be done by its size, strength, elasticity, consistency, rate, temperature, rhythm and regularity. However, urine and stool can be examined by its colour, quantity, the presence of foreign bodies.[6]

**d) Principles of treatment**

Treatment can be done by removing the causative factor, normalization of the morbid temperament or evacuation of morbid material. It also involves heterotherapy, in which the drug having opposite temperament to the disease is administered for the correction of morbid temperament and cure of illness. [7]

**3. MODES OF THE TREATMENT**

**a) Regimental Therapy**

It involves mainly non-medical procedures and used either independently or in combination with other therapies. [8]

**i. Cupping**



**Fig. 1: Cup therapy**

Cupping is also known as hijama and it draws the inflammation and pressure away from the organs like heart, brain, liver, lungs and kidneys. It is used to treat the disorders which can be managed by subcutaneous or superficial bleeding. The objective of the cupping is to eliminate the morbid material, to enhance blood supply, detoxification and to evacuate waste through skin. In cupping, glass vessel is used to apply to the skin, from which air can be exhausted by heat or by a special suction apparatus due to which blood and lymph circulatory system are simultaneously stimulated to work more efficiently. This results in a more efficient collection and transportation mechanism for toxic substances, depositing it into the lymphatic system to be destroyed and allowing the circulation of fresh lymph in order to nourish the tissues and generate a booster for the immune system. [9]

**ii. Leeching**

Leeches are applied on the affected part and they suck the blood from deeper tissues and inject biologically active compounds present in their saliva like hirudin, hyaluronidase, kallikrein trypsin inhibitors, anaesthetics and antibacterial into the blood. Various species are used like *H. medicinalis*, *H. granulosa*, *Macrobdella decora* (American medicinal leech), *H. michaelsoni*, *H. nipponia*, *H. verbenae*, and *H. orientalis*.

Leeching can be done to treat ring worm, eczema, alopecia, chronic non healing ulcer, disorders of the ear, eyes and nose, genito urinary diseases, joint diseases. [10][11]

**iii. Venesection**

Venesection is use for absolute elimination of morbid material or excess humour. In this, incision is given to the superficial veins and blood is allowed to flow.

Venesection is mainly done to prevent toxicity and accumulation of waste material in blood, to stimulate metabolic processes as well as to correct altered temperament. [1]

**iv. Massage**

Massage can be done by various techniques like by applying mechanical force to the soft tissues of the body. The force should be such that it should not change the joint position and it should evoke some physiological effect and give therapeutic or preventive goal. [12]

**v. Diuresis**

Diuresis involves formation and excretion of urine to excrete waste products, to purify blood and evacuate morbid humours, to manage heart, kidney and liver.

Diseases.

**vi. Purgation**

This method is used to eliminate waste from the body through rectum. During purgation, frequency of stool is increased by decreasing the absorption of water in the intestines or by increasing the peristaltic movement.

**vii. Emesis**

Emesis is used to eliminate morbid material from the upper GI tract in order to manage gastro-intestinal diseases, headache, migraine, melancholia etc.

**viii. Diaphoresis**

In this, sweating is induced by certain types of massages, bathing, keeping the patient in a room and blowing hot air to reduce the excessive heat, divert the morbid material from kidney to the skin, purify blood, improve dermal nutrition and enhance body texture. [13]

**ix. Cauterization**

It involves the application of hot metals, oils or corrosive drugs to burn the parts of skin or diseased tissues. Conditions where it may be employed is to halt the spread of sepsis, to stop the flow of disease-causing humors toward the healthy areas, to correct the abnormal cold temperament in an organ, to stop hemorrhage, to remove dead and necrosed tissues if other methods are not effective. [14]

**x. Turkish bath**

It is based on water-based treatment for body cleaning. Patient is allowed to sweat in steam bath for 20 minutes followed by shifting patient to massage room for specific duration, then patient enter in hamam room where patient is supposed to sit in tub filled with medicated water of herbs for particular duration, if person feels restlessness, then procedure is stopped. Finally, patient

is moved to normal room to relax and kept under observation for 15-20 minute for recording vitals parameters. This is mainly used to reduce the viscosity of humours, to improve the quality of health and to eliminate waste products through skin. [15]

#### **xi. Dietotherapy**

The unani system gives great importance to treat ailments by administration of specific diets, regulation of the quality and quantity of food. The weakness of certain organ is corrected by administering the same organ of an animal by way of food. [1].

#### **xii. Pharmacotherapy**

When regimental and dietotherapy is not enough to treat certain disorder, treatment with the drugs is recommended. The dosage and potency of the drug is determined by the organ involved, severity of the disease and other related factors such as sex, age, weight, habit and habitat, season, built, previous treatment, and stage of the disease. Drugs used to treat diseases are obtained by mineral, plant or animal origin. [16][17]

### **4. REGULATORY ASPECTS OF UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE**

This system is covered under Drugs and Cosmetics act, 1940 in chapter IV which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1983. The Government of India has introduced GMP to monitor the quality standards of the unani drugs also it regulates manufacturing and marketing of Unani drugs. In order to advise the Government in policy matters of ASU drugs, the Central Government, as per the provisions of Drug and Cosmetic Act, 1940, has set up an advisory body of experts and representatives from different stakeholders groups called as "Ayurveda Siddha Unani Drugs Technical Advisory Board (ASDTAB)". [18][19][20]

### **5. THE AMENDMENTS NEEDED IN THE UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE**

- There is need to revise the unani literature with critical outlook to give better insight of the principles.
- Fundamentals of unani system needs to be revalidated for better understanding.
- There is need of finding more ways for the treatment of existing as well as modern diseases.
- Unani and modern drug interaction study should be done. [20][21]

### **6. CONCLUSION**

According to unani system of medicine disturbance in any of the factor like humour or temperament alters both, the quality as well as quantity of homeostasis and leads to production of morbid humours. Unani system of medicine mainly concentrates on the actual root of pathology otherwise condition may stabilize for a period but can develop again. Hence, for an effective treatment there is need to understand basic principles of treatment and adhere to it.

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