



PREVENTION OF LIFE-STYLE DISEASES IN UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE -A REVIEW

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Article Received on 02/02/2018

Article Revised on 23/02/2018

Article Accepted on 14/03/2018

ABSTRACT

Adoption of abnormal life-style is supposed to be a cause of "life-style diseases". Burden of non-communicable diseases has increased worldwide both in developed as well as in developing countries, The Global Status Report on Non-communicable Diseases shows that about 38 million of the 56 million global deaths in 2012 were found to be occurring due to the non-communicable diseases. Unani system of medicine is one of the most traditional and ancient form of medicinal system in world, and preventing of a disease is of much concern in unani as compare to curing diseases, and so implementation of unani preventive measures can help to lower the burden of these diseases. Many factors are found to be responsible for the causation of lifestyle diseases like unhealthy eating habits, lack of physical activity, obesity, stress and anxiety, poor sleep, smoking, alcoholism etc. *Mizaj, Akhlat* and *Asbab-e-Sitta-Zarooriah* (six essential prerequisites) which form the basis for the prevention of lifestyle diseases, including preservation of body humours in order to maintain temperamental changes, use of clean and fresh air, hygienic, not putrefacted or germ free food and dirty water, daily activities as well as proper rest, psychic movement, sleep and wakefulness, excretion of waste and retention of useful products. This paper highlights all those lifestyle modification factors that can help to attain positive health.

KEYWORDS: Life-style diseases- *Asbab-e-Sitta-Zarooriyah- Mizaj- Akhlat*.

INTRODUCTION

In the recent times, there is an increasing incidence of diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, cardio vascular diseases, behavioral problems, high cholesterol, and obesity affecting even the younger people. Instead of increasing health awareness, more than half of the people in major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmadabad and Chennai are even suffering from diabetes.^[1]

Life-style the term originally used by Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler (1870-1937), which denotes the interests, opinions, behaviors and behavioral orientations of an individual, group, or culture. A healthy and unhealthy life-style will most likely be transmitted across generations, and the diseases that arise primarily by the adoption of abnormal life-style are supposed to be known as "life-style diseases".^[2] According to WHO lifestyle diseases are those which can't be passed from one to others, these diseases have a slow progression and are of long duration. There are mainly 4 types of non-communicable diseases, which are leading as the main cause of increase in mortality rate worldwide, these are cardio vascular diseases, (like heart attack and stroke), cancer, chronic respiratory diseases (like COPD and

asthma), and diabetes^[3], it is also estimated that by the end of 20th century these diseases will contribute more than 70% of the deaths worldwide.^[4]

Highest mortality rate have been contributed by the Cardio-vascular diseases as compares to the burden lodged by other lifestyle diseases i.e., about 30%. Hypertension, diabetes, obesity/overweight, dyslipidemia are the major risk factors leading for the development of Cardio-vascular diseases. In past few decades, a no. of people has adopted the western way of living leading to an increase prevalence of such diseases, even in India. A Healthy life-style contributes to physical, mental, social and spiritual health of an individual. Healthy lifestyle includes controlled eating, eating healthy foods, refrain from smoking, over-indulgence in alcohol consumption, and lacking in physical activity, that's why studies shows that military personnel are expected to be healthier in comparison to its native population because of the adoption of healthy living habits including regular physical activity, exercise and good nutrition.^[5] A study conducted on the contribution of changes in diet, exercise, and stress management to changes coronary risk in women and men in the multisite cardiac lifestyle

intervention program at USA, and significant overall improvement in the coronary risk was observed. They concluded the study by intervening the improvements in the dietary fat intake, exercise and the stress management.^[6]

In Unani System of Medicine, Hippocrate can be seen as the father of lifestyle medicines, as he had advised measures for the prevention of life-style diseases and modification of life-style habits through diet and exercise, in his famous treatises. Unani system of medicine differentiates lifestyle diseases and other diseases within the context of the *Asbab-e- Sitta Zarooriyah*. According to Unani medicine, lifestyle diseases are the diseases which arise from imbalance in the *Asbab-e- Sitta Zarooriyah* over a long period of time.

Concept of Lifestyle Diseases in Unani Medicine

In unani system of medicine lifestyle diseases, are considered result of improper management of the six governing factors over a prolonged period of time. If any disturbances of these governing factors occur, it leads to the accumulation of toxins inside the body, initially at the humoral level, resulting in illnesses and that further leads to the functional imbalances and finally impairing the body functions, like the digestive, urinary, circulatory system. Finally this accumulation adversely affects the tissue and organ system leading to structural damage of this system like in osteo-arthritis. Therefore, unani system of medicine approaches towards the treatment and prevention of these diseases, by avoiding the accumulation of such toxins inside the body humours abnormally.^[7]

Concept of Mizaj (Temperament) and Akhlat (Humour)

Mizaj (Temperament) and *Akhlat* (Humour) also considered as the most prevalent factor for disease causation, when altered.

According to Ibn-e-Abbas-Majoosi, humours in its balanced proportion both in quantity and quality leads to healthy bodily condition. Whereas, a disproportionate and irregular distribution of humours may lead to certain diseased condition, this equilibrium of humours is mainly control by the innate power of body called *tab'iat*, but the state of humour in the body may also be altered by any derangement in the external factors (for e.g. diet, environmental factors) which ultimately affects the temperamental composition of the body and becoming a cause of life-style disease as well.^[8]

Ibn-e Rushd laid emphasis that change in air quality, excessive fatigue, psychological factors such as anger and anxiety may also be a cause of altered temperament. Sedentary lifestyle and lacking in physical activity may also result in the temperamental change, diverting the body more toward coldness and moistness, this may become the main risk factor for developing obesity and

narrowing in the vessels, further giving rise to conditions like coronary artery diseases, stroke etc.^{[9] [10]}

Mizaj also is an indicator for identifying the risk factors associated with lifestyle diseases. A research study at the University of the Western Cape in 2006 shows that of 453 patients enrolled in the study 86% patients with hypertension had a dominant or sub-dominant sanguinous temperament, similarly another study on 372 patients of phlegm-related bronchial asthma, 84% patients had a dominant or sub-dominant phlegmatic temperament. It shows that *mizaj* is also an important indicator for identifying the risk factor, because one's the risk factors got identified; it will become easy to intervene necessary lifestyle changes mainly in diet and exercises.^[7]

Concept of Asbab-Sitta-Zarooriyah

The word *Asbab* (cause) in Unani terms refers to that which initiates a given state (health or disease) of humans. Unani system of medicine believed upon the homeostasis of the body that depends on balance of the four humours and disturbance in six essential factors that will become a cause of the disease.

The basis of preventive medicine in unani system is based upon *Asbab-e-Sitta-Zarooriah*, Six essential prerequisite, these are as follows:-

- *Hawa-e-Muheet* (atmospheric air)
- *Makool wa Mashroob* (food and drinks)
- *Harkat wa Sukoon-e Badni* (physical movement and rest)
- *Harkat wa Sukoon-e Nafsani* (mental movements and rest)
- *Naum wa Yaqza* (sleep and wake fullness)
- *Ehtibas wa Istifragh* (retention of essential and excretion of wastes).^[10,11,12]

1) Hawa-e-Muheet (Atmospheric Air)

Air surrounds us everywhere and is an essential element, for existence of life on earth, that's why it has been given the topmost priority amongst all other factors, the oxygen provided with it, is a vital *Rukn* of *Rooh* (pneuma). During inspiration, it performs the function of *Ta'adeel-e-Rooh* (moderation of *Rooh*) and simultaneously helps for the *Tankiya-e-Rooh* at the time of expiration. Most of the air borne diseases is caused as a result of seasonal changes or due to the environmental pollution. Seasonal changes are considered as normal changes where the air temperament shifts from one to other every season, and these changes lead to change in human body. Whereas polluted air is considered as an abnormal change, which induces putrefaction to the humours, heart is found to be affected first with these infective humours, because heart is more accessible to air than any other organ.

So it may conclude that pure air is necessary to perform the physiological functions, because accumulation of such air pollutants may lead to several diseased conditions.^[13,14]

2) *Makool wa Mashroob (Food and Drinks)*

Role of food and drinks in health development and disease prevention is of paramount importance. So Unani scholars mentioned it under the heading of “*Taghzia*” unani scholars believe that before initiation of treatment through drugs, individual must be treated with the restrictions and alterations in the diet. Avicenna had described the value of diet in his treatise “*Al-Qanoon-Fit-Tib*” the importance of diet can also be elicited by ‘Gruner’ the commentator of *Al-Qanoon-Fit-Tib* who had stated that “the stomach is the house of diseases and the diet is the head of healing” unani scholar not only had introduced the concept of nutrition but also recommended specific diet in specific diseases.^[15,10]

Nutritional value and quality and quantity of food and drink also believed to ensure the physical fitness by strengthening the *tabi'at*. Food when enters the body changes the body state, by the implication of the quality and quantity of food gained by an individual, an excess amount of food may produce conditions like indigestion, obstruction and ultimately putrefaction, whereas less amount of food may lead to emaciation, but the diet advised may vary from person to person depending upon the temperament, body power and health or diseased condition of the individual. Excess of food may even lead to coldness in body and could become a cause of obesity and CVS disorders. The treatment through diet is done upon the principle of *illaj-bil-zid*.^[13,16]

Jalinoos had suggested that four conditions to be kept in mind while gaining diet are:

- Time of food
- Type of food
- Quantity of food
- Temperament^[17]

As far as concerned with *Mashroob'at*. It doesn't nourishes the body but helps to carry the food and rectifies its consistency and also helps to transport the oxygen and nutrients to various body part through the network of vessels and channels. According to *Majoosi*, if a person has a *Su-e-Mizaj barid*, boiled water should be recommended. Consumption of Luke warm water also helps to maintain the digestion but may cause weakness too. Consumption of pure drinking water is recommended to prevent various waterborne diseases and maintain health.^[18,19]

3) *Harkat wa Sukoon-e-Badani (Physical Activity and Repose)*

Geek-o-Arab physicians anticipated an idea regarding physical activity that it is required for the activation of innate energy (*Hararat-e-Gharizia*) and to excrete out the waste products of the body, but if the duration is prolonged it may lead to dispersion of innate energy (*Hararat-e-Gharizia*), whereas, Rest is essential to store the body temperature and the body fluids. Excess of both may lead to the development of coldness in the body,

because excessive mobility may cause a decrease in innate fluid and in turn it will decrease the innate heat of the body, while excess of rest will increase the body fluids and decrease the innate energy. Granting rest to the body also helps in process of digestion.^[20]

Obesity/overweight is considered as one of the main risk factor for the development of CVS disorders and to counter that, it is required to reduce body weight by doing exercises before meals. *Majoosi* stated that *riyazat* is the second name of the body movements and can be classified into two parts, (a) *Dalak* and (b) *Riyazat*.^[19] It is advised that exercise should be done on a regular basis and under the supervision of health expert as too much activity may negatively affect the health. And should be done at warm places and followed by the massage with some *Mohallil Roghaniyat*.^[18] Different types of exercises helps to reduce body weight are:

- Jogging (435 calorie burnt per hour)
- Walking (167 calorie burnt per hour)
- Weight training(363 calorie burnt per hour)
- Cycling(508 calorie burnt per hour)
- Swimming(653 calorie burnt per hour)
- Aerobic exercise (399 calorie burnt per hour)
- Dance (254 calorie burnt per hour).^[20]

4) *Harkat wa Sukoon-e-Nafsan (Mental Activity and Repose)*

Ibn-e Sina was the first to provide the relationship between psychology and medicine. As *nafsiyati awamil* (psychological factors) are dependent on dominant *khilt* and *mizaj* of person so it leave an impact on his Body and mind. *nafsiyati awamil* (psychological factors) like happiness, sorrow, fear, anger have a significant effect on the health of a person, as excess of anger and joy may lead to dilatation of cutaneous blood vessels causing redness of the skin and it also increasing the heart rate which is a cause for various CVS disorders. Unani physician also have a view that certain diseases and mental disorders may occur due to the emotional strain and mal-adjustment.^[21,22]

In recent times prevalence of stress and depression have been rising worldwide, leading many other health problems with a shorter life span of individual, so it may also concluded that preservation of mental health can be done by adequate stimulation and proper relaxation of the body.^[23]

5) *Naum wa Yakza (Sleep and Wakefulness)*

Unani scholar also had advocated that sleep and wakefulness is also necessary for the healthy body conditions, sleep is an ideal form of rest physical as well as mental, sleep is necessary before any movement so that body can get nourishment as it provide rest to the nafs and organs making a person more active and helping in process of digestion. Excess of wakefulness may cause dryness in the body, whereas excess of sleep causes coldness, lethargy, headache and weakness etc ultimately disturbing the humoral concentration and developing

balghami diseases like arthralgia. (Obesity) Majoosi stated that *tabi''at* can be benefitted in two ways through sleep. Firstly, by mental and physical rest and secondly by the digestion and concoction of *akhlaat* causing the innate heat to enter the body. Lack of sleep causes indulgence of energies, mental weakness and digestive disturbances.^[24] Inadequate and insufficient sleep is a cause for various lifestyle diseases like obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and other health problems and it is considered as important risk factor and getting enough high quality sleep is also important.^[25]

6) *Ehtibas wa Istifragh* (Retention and Elimination)

To maintain a harmonic and coordinated *tabi''at*, beneficial end-products of metabolism should be retained in the body, while harmful ones should be expelled. If the waste products of body is not excreted properly and completely it will lead to certain diseased condition.^[26] Our body has mechanism to get rid of waste metabolites through natural means i.e., micturition, defecation, menstruation, diaphoresis, sebum secretion and mucus secretion etc. and any commotion with the excretory system like excess, diminution or blockage may lead to diseased conditions. Excess of *istifragh* makes the body weak and lead to temperamental changes diverting the body towards coldness & dryness, sometime it produces obstruction and ultimately decreasing the innate energy.

If abnormal retention of the morbid matters occurs, it will lead to several diseases conditions as:

- Amraz-e-sue mizaj (e.g. infection, decrement in hararat ghariziyah)
- Amraz-e-sue tarkeeb (e.g. embolism, paralysis)
- Amraz-e-tafarruk ittesal (e.g. rupture of vessels)
- Amraz-e-murakkabah (e.g. inflammation, abscesses).^[27]

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that maintaining *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah* is important for harmonious homeostasis of the temperament and humours in the body. Lifestyle recommendations within the health plan targets physical activity, smoking cessation, dietary habits, stress management and alcohol intake also prevent lifestyle disorder. Unani system of medicine provides a unique combination of *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah* which should be implicated in day to day life. *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah* can have a pivotal role in preventing various non-communicable diseases which has become threat to our life. If a balance in *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah* will be maintained, many lifestyle diseases could be prevented to a large extent.

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