

The Challenges, Problems and Possibilities of Unani System of Medicine.

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Abstract

Unani system is one of the ancient system deals with the management of health and disease.

The unique realistic approach and clinical success of the unani system of medicine arise from its fundamental principles and the existence of this system till now, itself is an evidence of validity of its principles.

However, the long term existence of any system is based on a continuous search for new knowledge through research, development by using modern technique and equipment, and also introducing fresh and newer concept to strengthen its existence. The concept proposed should be scientific and should give a valid reason and solid evidences to proof when asked for.

New research now a days have only been limited up to the translation of old classical data which is at least helping the newer researchers, physicians and students of medicine to understand the unani concept and to enlighten the quotes said by unani physicians long time ago. In this way, the data is made accessible. Research should be made more vast and deep.

Ironically now a days, research is done just to compare unani system of medicine with the modern (allopathic system) and research done in the light of modern medicine protocol without considering the principles of unani system of medicine.

There is a need to work on unani drugs, Discover new drugs, Do research of a drug in a new aspect, Do extensive research to treat the chronic diseases, concentrate on Possibilities of unani system of medicine, and focus on problems of System.

Inside the article, the author stands for the need to understand possibilities and Problems of unani system of medicine.

Keywords:- Fundamental Principles, Drug, Protocol, Research.

Introduction:-

Unani system of medicine, as its name suggests, owes its immediate origin to ancient Greece (Yunan).

Unani system of medicine is a comprehensive medical system, which provides preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative health care.

The fundamentals, diagnosis and treatments modalities of the system are based on its principles.

Hippocrates - the father of medicine suggested the Humoural Theory, according to which there are four humours Dam, Balgham, Safra and Sauda, their right proportion according to quality & quantity is responsible for health and Disturbance in the equilibrium of these humours leads to disease.

The unani system of medicine diagnose & treats the patient as a whole looking to their overall physical, Mental and Spiritual aspects.

Unani system of medicine today forms an integral part of the national healthcare delivery system and India provides the largest infrastructure and network of educational; Research and Health care institutions.

The unani system of medicine offers treatment of diseases related to all systems of the body specially for chronic diseases of nervous system; Respiratory system and Life style disorders.

Despite all efforts; unani system of medicine has got gained much recognition world wide. In india also, people and Government is not giving desired attention and Response. The reason is Lack of authentic research and Scientific data; which is needed to prove the efficacy of Unani Medicine world wide.

Note:- Before Discussing further, I would like to Define the following terminologies:-

Possibilities:- A chance that something may happen or be true(Dictionary Cambridge)

Drug:- A chemical substance used in the treatment, cure, prevention, or diagnosis of disease or used to otherwise enhance physical or mental well-being. (Oxford Dictionary)

Medicine:- A compound or preparation used for the treatment or prevention of disease, especially a drug or drugs taken by mouth or The science or practice of the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease (in technical use often taken to exclude surgery). (Oxford Dictionary).

Possibilities of usm:-

(1) Standardization of drug:- It means confirmation of its identity, quality and purity throughout all phases of its cycle i.e. shelf-life, storage, distribution and use by various parameters. Use of single and compound drug is the main advantage in unani system. Drugs can be given in single as well as in compound form. Single Drugs (Mufrad Advia) can be given alone or in combination (Many Mufrada advia given in Single Formulation), In order to attain the desirable effect as early as possible. The drugs can be given in many forms as tablets, powdered form, Decoction etc.

(2) Side effects are very less compared to Modern medicines. Side effects even if seen will be due to prolonged usage of a drug or if excess quantity of drug is used. While prescribing drug and it's dosage, Mizaaj of a person (Temperament) and Mizaaj of a disease is Considered.

(3) Storage of drugs is possible. Drugs can be stored in dried or powdered form. Certain forms of drugs are functional even for prolonged durations Like Kushta. Eg. Volatile drugs as it contains volatile substances in it, as stored in air tight containers. Semisolid prepared medicines are stored in Glass jars. Raw drugs should not be stored in cloth bags. These drugs should be kept in air tight containers that too away from sunlight.

(4) Route of administration is vast. There are more routes through which drug can be administered. For examples, Oral route:- consists of medicines in two forms i) For Local application in Oral cavity. eg Liquid Medicine for Gargles (Given in throat problems). ii) Which passes via the Digestive tract, as most medicines given to eat and drink. Rectal Route:- Rectal administration uses the rectum as a route of administration for medication and other fluids, which are absorbed by the rectum's blood vessels, and flow into the body's circulatory system, which distributes the drug to the body's organs and bodily systems. A drug that is administered rectally will in general (depending on the drug) have a faster onset, higher bioavailability, shorter peak, and shorter duration than oral administration. Another advantage of administering a drug rectally, is that it tends to produce less nausea compared to the oral route and prevents any amount of the drug from being lost due to emesis (vomiting). In addition, the rectal route bypasses around two thirds of the first-pass metabolism as the rectum's venous drainage is two thirds systemic (middle and inferior rectal vein) and one third hepatic portal system (superior rectal vein). This means the drug will reach the circulatory system with significantly less alteration and in greater concentrations. Finally, rectal Medicines can be powered and Given as Inhalers, a liquid form of drug can be given through rectal route (as in enema), like this there are other routes also, like Respiratory route, (Medicine Given to inhale), Eye and Ear drops, Drugs given in local application for nourishing and brightening the skin tone (Ghaza), As oils applied to reduce the pain locally etc.

(5) Regiminal therapy is the mode of treatment in unani system only. The Disease cured by applying certain regimens (with or without using Medicine). Eg Cupping (Hijama), Leech Therapy (Ta'leeq), Dalk (Massage), Hamam (Bath) or Steam bath, Venesection (Fasd) etc.

(6) Raw materials (drugs) are of Minerals, Plant and Animal origin. Mineral origin drugs for example the Iron (Hadeed), In plant origin drugs, parts of plants like seeds, roots, stem, bark, leaves, flower etc are used as medicine. These are dried, powdered and used. Or Sometimes Fresh leaves are crushed and their extract is used in medicines. Animal origin drugs as fats, Liver and Gallbladder of animals, Brain of Goats, Fish liver oil, Deer Musk, Amber stone etc are also used as medicine. Mineral origin drugs for eg metals like Gold, Silver, Marble stone (Sange mar mar), Ruby stone (Yaqoot), Iron, mercury, pearls, Red coral (Marjaan) etc are used.

(7) Resistance:- Chances of developing of resistance to drugs in the patients are less. It is very effective to children as they have not been exposed to modern medicine much. Exposure to modern medicine means these persons are already exposed to much higher form of drugs. Indirectly means they became resistant to lower form of drugs and also for drugs in lower dosage.

(8) Substitutes of the Drugs are also available. Eg Instead of Aniseeds, Fennel seeds can be used. In place of tamarind, plum fruit can be used. Instead of Big cardamom, small one can be used etc..

To improve unani system:-

(1) Steps should be taken to develop. Easy literature; Books in Arabic; Persian and Urdu should be translated in English. So that, language should not become a barrier and can be easily accessed by interested people worldwide.

(2) Literature should be easy for common understanding. It should not include Arabic, Urdu and Persian terminologies even if used, a concised explanation of these terms should also be there.

(3) Drugs prescribed should be easily available & cost effective. Physician should prescribe the drug which is easily available in the locality where patient resides.

- (4) Spread the concept and Knowledge from one system of medicine to the other. For this, Seminars should be conducted with faculties and researchers of all healthcare system and Heathy Debates should be promoted.
- (5) The Senior Physicians should share their Knowledge, Experience and Formulations with their fellow students and colleagues.
- (6) **Reviewing of unani literature:-** The traditional system of medicine is purely based on the literature which is written centuries ago. Literary researches should not be done merely for collecting and assembling/gathering of all data at one place but should be done to carry forward the essence and meaning of literature and it's concepts and it's deep logic to make the people and future generation of unani understand the theory and concept and to add knowledge interest among them.
- (7) Unani literature should be updated with new findings and research should be complemented with a critical attack.
- (8) In past graduate & PhD courses; research schemes should be placed to increase their curiosity about research, and to study the ancient manuscripts and old books written by unani physicians long ago in quest of knowledge the PG scholars should visit libraries across the country.
- (9) Maintaining the threads of continuity & connectivity between the past & present is essential to shows the right direction into the future.
- (10) Unani perspective and ideology regarding a disease and it's treatment should be developed. Field of research and study should be vast. Diagnostic methods of unani system should be practiced by every Practitioner and Student of unani eg:- Diagnosis by evaluating of urine; Diagnosis by feeling pulse. The concept of pulse itself is so wide in unani system that a physician spent so many years to become master in it. Ancient physicians were so expert in analysis of pulse, that without any laboratory test (not available at that time), just by feeling pulse, they diagnose and treat the disease. Diagnosis is so important without which treatment is not possible.
- (11) The unani physician must be aware of both unani and modern terminologies weather it may be related to drug, diagnosis & treatment. The awareness of modern terminologies is essential for communication with the experts of other fields.
- (12) Unani physician must be able to explain the basic concepts of Unani system to members of other healthcare systems. It should be translated into English language, or ideas and concepts should be explained by using such terms which are present in all systems. It means common words should be used. For example explaining the concept of Tabi'at as immune system or immunity. Rutubat e Ghariziyah as protoplasm, Hararat e Ghariziyah as innate heat of body (Normal body Temperature), Arkaan as Elements, Aaza as Organs, Akhlat as Body Fluids etc. Explain concepts of Mizaaj (Temperament) and Quwa (Power) in easy language. Avoid using of rare terms to avoid any misunderstanding and controversy.

Safety profile of unani drugs:-

Majority of unani drugs are of herbal origin. There is a need for toxicological Studies on herbo mineral drug preparations; on a new drug usage.

Depending on mizaj & level of potency, a drug is categorised into four levels. (In increasing order). i.e, 1st level, 2nd level, 3rd level & 4th level drugs. 3rd level should be used with caution and 4th level of drug should be used only after detoxification and that too in minimal fractional dosages.

Why research is necessary in unani system

(1) To make our system contemporary to other systems:- we can make unani system equal to modern system of medicine if we can Give evidences of efficacy of drug and explain our Concepts. Research is needed to separate the active ingredient from a drug and prove it's efficacy in scientific way. In unani system, paralysis and many chronic diseases are cured but when asked what are the active ingredients that are working, the physicians are speechless. This shows blind following of old prescriptions and lack of scientific research which is needed as an evidence to proof the efficacy in the modern evidence based technology.

(2) To prove the efficacy of unani medicines:- As discussed earlier, we have to prove efficacy of unani drugs by doing research (Laboratory and clinical trial) and by using modern equipments.

(3) To develop the new drugs:- Research should be done to find new drugs, to find permanent cure for chronic diseases, to work on the trending global topics

(4) To face the challenges of new research ideology:- Students and research scholars should prepare themselves for new challenges.

(5) To compare the effect of our medicine:- Effects should be compared by doing clinical trials on persons of different age, different temperament and Different doses.

USM Problems:-

(1) While developing new concepts; one should make old concepts(Ancient physicians concepts) as base. Practitioners of unani are ignoring USM and following modern medicine.

(2) Drugs and their effects should be proven scientifically.

(3) The physicians of unani due to lack of income, lack of interest, lack of acknowledgement from Government, they are practicing modern medicine. Unani Physicians can use modern drugs but neglecting unani Medicines and only concentrating on modern means they are forgetting their roots and doing injustice to their profession. Along with Modern medicines they should work on unani Medicines to increase it's efficacy and to make people aware of it's benefits.

Drugs related problems

(a) Pure & standardized drug is not available most of the time. For instance, Honey is the mostly used medicine in Unani. The Pure and Good Quality Honey is not available in today's adulterated Markets. Usage of Medicines prepared with adulterated and bad quality Honey is not giving the desired results and efficacy of medicine is decreased.

(b) Source of drug is difficult & couldn't be reached mostly. Herbal plants sometimes grows in appropriate climate in certain places only. When they are cultivated in different environment and at different place, their quality, effect and active chemical ingredients also tends to change due to unavailability and change in natural and suitable atmosphere. And the medicine will not give the proper desired results as it is usually gives in it's previous suitable environment. That's why physicians recommend to get the medicines from that places in suitable climate. Eg Safron from Kashmir, Mastik Gum (Mastagi romi) from Rome, Samagh e Arabi (Acacia Arabica) extract of Babul from Arab, Namak Lahori (Lahore salt) etc. Best Quality of herbal medicine means it's Color, Smell, Taste, and other Qualities should be of superior level or level of excellence and should be free from any defect. Some herbal medicines are highly effective in lesser Age while other drugs are effective in older age. All these things make the availability of drug difficult sometimes.

(c) Difficulty related to availability of drug. Sometimes a herbal plant or fruits or Flowers grows in particular season resulting in unavailability for the rest of the seasons.

(d) Problem related to alternative names of drug (many alternative names are there for a single drug).

(e) New techniques to extract the active principal of drug are not used by many physicians due to lack of advanced technological knowledge.

(f) Problems in prescribing the drug according to levels (mizaj of drug) and it's action in pateints of different temperaments.

Reaserch in Unani system of medicine should be experimental and clinical. And also Chemical analysis should be applied & experiments on animals to be considered when using new drug.

Conclusion:- In the scientific era; understanding as well as implementation of basic concepts of unani system of medicine along with research & introduction of further advancement will be beneficial for unani system of medicine to grow world.

New scientific method to be adopted to improve the unani pharmacology books to be translated in english to make unani data accessible for the people across the world.

Application of all the above methods can give unani system a perfect position as well as promising among all about healthcare systems.

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