



REVIEW ARTICLE

IMPLICATION OF ASBAB-E-SITTA ZAROORIYAH IN PREVENTION OF LIFESTYLE DISEASES: A REVIEW

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Abstract

Unani system of medicine is traditional and the most ancient practised form of medicine in the world. It suggests a unique combination of *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*, which are six important factors that can help in the prevention of different lifestyle diseases. Lifestyle diseases are those diseases which are associated with the way a person or a group of people live and now becoming a global health problem. Diet and lifestyle are the major factors thought to influence the susceptibility of many diseases. All diseases are the result of poor management of the *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah* (six essential factors), beyond the ability of *Tabi'at* to maintain and restore. Lifestyle diseases can be prevented by bringing changes in diet, behavior and environment. The holistic approach of Unani medicine is well placed to cover the two main pillars of lifestyle diseases namely, *Prevention* and *Treatment*. It accepts the importance of the physical as well as mental dimensions of the individual person. Unani system of medicine exert a major influence on preventing the onset and development of several diseases of lifestyle by making modifications in '*Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*'. In this paper we will discuss about Lifestyle diseases and its prevention by modification in '*Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*'.

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INTRODUCTION

Unani-Tibb has traditionally adopted a holistic approach to the prevention and treatment of diseases. As a part of the treatment of a chronic, long-term or recurring clinical disorder, *Unani-Tibb* therapy is largely oriented towards the identification and remedies of adverse lifestyle factors. According to *Unani-Tibb*, lifestyle diseases are defined as diseases which arise because of an inappropriate relationship between a person and his or her environment. *Hippocrates* can be seen as father of lifestyle medicine. He often used lifestyle modifications such as diet and exercise to treat diseases such as obesity, what is today called lifestyle medicine. He is often quoted with "*Let food be your medicine, and medicine be your food*" and "*Walking is man's best medicine*".

Lifestyle diseases are often the result of or aggravated by choices people make in their life. They are mostly common in people who are inclined towards eating unhealthy food, having a sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy habits like smoking and drinking alcohol. The foundation of *Unani-Tibb* therapy is reform in the lifestyle as it recognizes the influence of surroundings and ecological conditions on the state of health. A balanced relationship between the six essential factors maintains the harmony between humours and temperament thus balancing the internal environment of the human body. *Unani-Tibb* strongly believes that lifestyle diseases can be avoidable by some changes in *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*. This embraces changing a person's diet where and when necessary,

encouraging more physical exercise, better breathing methods, improving sleep quality and more effective detoxification. The value of this, apart from dealing with the immediate clinical disorder, is that it encourages a more prudent lifestyle. This reduces the probability of the recurring disorder.

LIFESTYLE DISEASE: DEFINITION

According to WHO, chronic lifestyle diseases, also known as non-communicable diseases, are not passed from person to person. They are of long duration and generally have slow progression. The four main types of non-communicable diseases are cardiovascular diseases (like heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructed pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes. These diseases are driven by forces that include ageing, rapid unplanned urbanization, and the globalization of unhealthy lifestyles. For example, globalization of unhealthy lifestyles like unhealthy diets may show up in individuals as raised blood pressure, increased blood glucose, elevated blood lipids, and obesity. These are called 'intermediate risk factors' which can lead to cardiovascular disease that is a lifestyle disease and these diseases are assuming increasing importance among the adult population in both developed and developing countries. 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. (Park, 2007)

CONCEPT OF MIZAJ

Mizaj is an important and foremost concept of Unani System of Medicine. It has an important function in maintaining the ideal healthy state of an individual. Vulnerability of its altered temperament which is called *Sue-Mizaj* leads to several different types of diseases. Prolonged habits cause change in *mizaj* which further disturbs various physiological processes. *Ibn-e-Rushd* emphasized on change in air quality, excessive fatigue, psychological factors such as anger , anxiety etc., as these are major cause behind change in temperament from normal to abnormal. If there is an excess of comfort and less physical activity, it results in the change of *mizaj* to coldness and moistness. These are the main risk factors for developing obesity and narrowness in vessels and further gives rise to coronary artery diseases, stroke etc. (Ibn-e-Rushed, 1987), (Ibn-e-Sina, 2010), (Jamil, 2006), (Jurjani,2010), (Kabiruddin, 1930),(Majoosi, 2010)

Unani physicians have described secondary *Tabi'at* which can be interpreted as lifestyle habits which means adaptation to the specific environment and changes in lifestyle habits which influence the physiological functions of the body. *Hippocrates* quoted that “*Lifestyle is secondary to Tabi'at*”. (Majoosi, 2010)

Ibn-e-Sina said that “Every person comes to the end of his life according to his primary *mizaj* until there is influence of any abnormal cause”. Each organism has distinct properties in it which are inherited from their parents. Influence of *Mizaj-e-ula* ranges from equilibrium of *akhlat* to the functions of the body. This *mizaj* is related to the genetic makeup of an individual and have effect on morphological, physiological and psychological function of the body. Every individual comes into existence with its *mizaj-e-ula* that is encoded in genes when *iktisabi awamil*, that are environmental factors, interfere with *mizaj-e-ula* this *mizaj* changes to *mizaj-e-sani*. These changes may be local or general. (Ali, 2014)

ASBAB-E-SITTA ZAROORIYAH

The word *Asbab* (cause) in Unani terms refers to that which initiates a given state (health or disease) of humans. Unani medicine has provided a great importance to the prevention of diseases through maintaining the balance in *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriya* which have direct influence on health. Imbalance in these factors cause the alteration in *Mizaj*. For example, as in case of excessive intake of fat and lack of physical activity may lead to change of *mizaj* from normal to cold which is the main cause of development of obesity. Obesity is a major risk for developing diabetes, stroke and coronary heart disease, and is a major contributor to the onset and progression of chronic lifestyle diseases. (Gruner, 1973), (Ibn-e-Sina, 2010), (Kabiruddin, 1930), (Nafees, 1954).

Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah include six vital factors which are as follows-

1. **Hawa-e-Muheet** (Atmospheric air)
2. **Makool wa Mashroob** (Food and drinks)
3. **Harkat wa Sukoon-e-Badani** (Physical activity and repose)
4. **Harkat wa Sukoon-e-Nafsani** (Mental activity and repose)
5. **Naum wa Yaqza** (Sleep and wakefulness)
6. **Ehtibas wa Istifragh** (Retention and elimination). (Baghdadi, 2005), (Ibn-e-Sina, 2010), (Jamil, 2006), (Kabiruddin, 1930), (Nafees, 1954)

The above six causes (factors) essentially influence each and every human body, therefore, they are called *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*. Nobody could escape from these factors so long he is living. (Ahmad, 1980)

PREVENTION OF LIFESTYLE DISEASES

Unani medicine believes in holistic approach to the prevention and treatment of diseases. It covers physical, mental and spiritual dimensions of an individual's health. The temperamental / humoral theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the risk factors, pathological processes and therapeutic interventions for the effective management and treatment of lifestyle diseases. Lifestyle diseases are the conditions which arise from poor management of the governing factors (*Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*) over a long period of time. This finally results in the change in temperament of body which is beyond the ability of *Tabi'at* to deal with and causes *fasaad* (disturbance) at humoral level either by accumulation of excessive or abnormal humour. This condition further leads to functional imbalances. Therefore, the Unani approach to the prevention and treatment of these lifestyle and chronic diseases is aimed at avoiding the abnormal changes in six essential factors which can be restored by maintaining balance in *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*. (Bhikha),(Jamil, 2006)

HAWA -E-MUHEET (ENVIRONMENTAL AIR)

Air has got first priority over all the six essential factors, without air we cannot imagine the existence of life. By the word 'Air' we do not mean the simple (imponderable) element but the atmosphere around us. Air is an element to of our body and *Arwah* (pneuma) beside an element, it is a reinforcement which reaches our *Arwah* and become a cause of its purification not simply as an element but also as a modifying agent. Air performs the function of *Ta'adeel-e-Ruh* at the time of *inspiration* by exchanging the air. Simultaneously it also works as *Tankiya-e-Ruh* at the time of *expiration*. (Gruner, 1973), (Nafees, 1954).

The atmospheric air is subject to normal as well as abnormal changes and also to those changes which are outside the normal course and contrary to it. The normal changes are the seasonal changes because in every season the air changes into another temperament. Change in character of atmospheric air produce changes to human body. Abnormal causes include environmental pollution and these changes are of two kinds: change in the substance of air, and change in the quality. Polluted air induces putrefaction to humours. It begins with the putrefaction of the humours within the heart because it is more accessible to air than any other humour. Body needs fresh and pure air to perform physiological functions and to maintain health. Harmful air pollutants lead to cardiovascular diseases such as artery blockages leading to heart attacks. Accumulation of air pollutants contribute to serious, even fatal damage to the cardiovascular system and become the cause of chronic lifestyle diseases. As regards air, the best thing would be that they retain their inherent characteristics, for if it deviate from these characteristics it would produce diseases. (Ibn-e-Sina, 2010)

MAKOOL WA MASHROOB (FOOD AND DRINKS)

Foods and drinks are placed on second place after air because its importance is less than air but above all the factors. Every individual differ in bodily conditions, temperament, age, dietary patterns and habitat etc. so there is a need to choose different food according to their requirements. Foods and drinks act upon the human body in three ways: by their quality alone, or simply by their element, or by their substance as a whole. Foods change the state of the body their *quality* (quality of becoming hot or cold when it enters human body) and *quantity*. As regards of quantity, an excess produces indigestion, obstruction and then putrefaction of humours. If the quantity falls short, it causes emaciation. Excess of food is always cooling in effect which further become the cause of obesity and coronary heart diseases. Water does not nourish the body but it carries the food, rectifies it

consistency and carries it into the vessels and the channels. (Nafees, 1954), (Maseehi, 2008), (Kabiruddin, 1930)

Balanced and good quality food is essential for promotion of health while any imbalance either in quality or quantity may lead to variety of diseases. Diet is major factor to influence the susceptibility of many lifestyle diseases. Best diet according to Unani physician is in which the nutritional value and the quality and quantity of one's food and drink is believed to ensure physical fitness by strengthening *tabi'at*. According to *Hippocrates*, one should remember three things as dietary habits;

- Food should not be taken until there is a need.
- Overeating is harmful to health.
- Rest is necessary after taking the food.

Unhealthy dietary habits like use of alcohol and smoking and lack of physical exercise may also increase the risk of weakness of *tabi'at* and develop certain diseases especially in later life. Lifestyle diseases can also be preventable with simple and easy changes in our diet. Nowadays, traditional good quality and low calorie diets have been swiftly replaced by high-fat, energy-dense diets. But diet, while critical to prevention, is just one risk factor and we can prevent obesity by making healthy changes to our diet and control over obesity is itself a cure for many heart diseases that are developed due to unhealthy and irregular dietary patterns. *Jalinoos* suggested that four conditions should be kept in mind while making eating or drinking habits:

- Time of the food
- Type of the food
- Quantity of the food
- Temperament of the food. (Jamil, 2006), (Tabri, 2010)

HARKAT WA SUKOON-E-BADANI (PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND REPOSE)

To maintain perfect health and to prevent many diseases that come from sedentary lifestyle, the body requires exercise as well as rest. Again, certain diseases can be cured by giving rest to the body, while some are cured by movement of affected organs. Unani physicians advocated that physical activity is essential for the activation of *hararat ghariziya* (innate energy) and to excrete the waste products of the body but prolonged activity of every kind leads to dispersion of the *hararat ghariziya* (innate heat) Rest is necessary to relieve the fatigue and to decrease the body temperature which is harmful to body fluids. Excess of both causes coldness of the body because motion leads in the decrease of the innate fluids, excess of rest increases the body fluid which decreases the innate energy. Rest helps in digestion. Exercise helps in preservation of health if done before taking the meal, on the contrary it causes diseases if done after taking the meal. So it can be said that to sustain health, regular exercise as well as proper rest is needed. Unani physicians also emphasize the importance of exercise for preservation of health. *Ibn-e-Sina* said that "exercise is the cause of good health if it is done at the right time and in moderate quantity". (Jurjani, 2010), (Shah, 2007), (Majoosi, 2010), (Qarshi, 2010), (Razi, 1991), (Kabiruddin, 1930)

HARKAT WA SUKOON-E-NAFSANI (MENTAL ACTIVITY AND REPOSE)

Ibn-e-Sina was the first physician who developed the relation between psychology and medicine. Body and mind have impact on each other as *nafsiyati awamil* (psychological factors) are dependent on dominant *khilt* and *mizaj* of that person. Excess of all these change the temperament, weakens the *hararat-e-ghariziyah* and body becomes dry and feeble. All psychic conditions followed by inward or outward of *rooh* which may be sudden or gradual. Unani medicine holds that the human mind and brain needs adequate stimulation and proper relaxation as well. Psychological factors such as happiness, sorrow, fear, anger, etc. have significant effect on the health of a human being. Excess of anger and joy causes cutaneous blood vessels to dilate which provides reddish hue to the skin. This also increases the heart rate which becomes the cause of various cardiovascular disease in later life. Nowadays stress and depression are increasing health problems of affluent society around the globe which further leads to many health problems and also shortens the life span of an individual. Equilibrium of both mental activity and rest is required for preservation of good health and to avoid many physical illnesses. As the famous quote says, "*Sound mind in sound body*". (Baghdadi, 2005), (Ibn-e-Sina, 2010), (Kabiruddin, 1930), (Shah, 2007).

NAUM WA YAKZA (SLEEP AND WAKEFULNESS)

Normal sleep and wakefulness are essential for health. Sleep is an ideal form of physical and mental rest while wakefulness resembles the motion. The advantage of sleep is that, it provide rest to the *nafs* and organs which makes

a person more active and it also helps in digestion which makes person healthier. Healthy persons should be particularly careful, about sleep, it should be regular moderate and not too long. The adverse effects of wakefulness on humours and other faculties are neutralised in this manner. *Aristotle* said that, "Sleep is a necessity related to the activity of heart from which both motion and sense perception originate."

Movements causes the formation of *hararat* and helps in removing the waste product by disintegrating it and also prepares food for combustion. Therefore, sleep is necessary before any movement so that body can get nourishment.

Majoosi said that *tabi'at* is benefitted in two ways by sleep. One is mental and physical rest and second is the digestion and concoction of *akhlaat* which causes innate heat to enter the body. Lack of sleep causes dissipation of energies, mental weakness and digestive disturbances. Proper sleep and wakefulness are necessary because it is the main instrument to maintain the digestion and activeness of the body. Excess of sleeping causes coldness in temperament which further become the cause of weakness, laziness in the body and headache etc and may develop many diseases. Insufficient sleep has also been linked to obesity ,diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and other health problems, and it is considered as important risk factor and getting enough high quality sleep may be as important to health and wellbeing as nutrition and exercise.(Shah, 2007),(Maseehi, 2008)

EHTIBAS WA ISTIFRAGH (RETENTION AND ELIMINATION)

To maintain a harmonic and synchronized *tabi'at*, certain beneficial end-products of metabolism are retained in the body while harmful ones are expelled. *Tabi'at* gets rid of waste product by the natural means that are micturition, defecation, menstruation, diaphoresis, sebum secretion and mucus secretion etc. On the contrary, useful products should retain in the body as they are required to provide nutrition and to run many physiological functions normally. Abnormal retention of faecal matter leads to infection. So it is important work of *tabi'at* to justify what should be excreted or retained. When there is any problem in maintaining the normal excretory and retaining balance, then result will be hazardous to human health. Excess of *istifragh* makes the body feeble and changes the temperament towards coldness& dryness, sometime it produces obstruction and ultimately innate energy becomes weak. It is necessary to eliminate excessive humours and waste products from body at regular interval. If the retention of the matters become abnormal it will lead to several diseases categorized as:

1. *Amraz-e-sue mizaj* (e.g. infection, decrement in *hararat ghariziyah*)
2. *Amraz-e-sue tarkeeb* (e.g. embolism, paralysis)
3. *Amraz-e-tafarruk ittesal* (e.g. rupture of vessels)
4. *Amraz-e-murakkabah* (e.g. inflammation, abscesses) (Ameen, 2010)

CONCLUSION-

Lifestyle diseases are now an emerging problem in developed as well as in developing world and today there is a need to prevent these diseases so that it may not cause major health hazards. The occurrence of lifestyle disease is showing upward trend in most countries and for several reasons this trend is likely to increase. For most important reason, the lifestyle and behavioral patterns of people are changing rapidly, these being favorable to the onset of the chronic lifestyle diseases. For the sake of preservation of health, a person should follow the principles of healthy lifestyle. If there is any need to change the habits then it should be adopted or change gradually to allow the *Tabi'at* to become habitual of it. Irregularity in daily routine habits like dietary patterns, physical activity, sleep and wakefulness etc. may lead to disturbance in normal bodily functions. Unani system of medicine provide a unique combination of *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah* which should be implicated in day to day life. *Asbaab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah* has its significant role in preventing various non-communicable diseases which has become threat to our life. If we make balance in *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooriyah*, many lifestyle diseases will be prevented to a large extent.

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