



## ROLE OF UNANI DRUGS IN THE SUSTAINABLE HEALTH CARE: A REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Sustainable health care gets paramount importance when cost benefits risk of main stream medical system has created enormous challenge for common masses. It becomes too evident when people living in slums, tribal areas and remote village don't have access to basic health care. Alternative systems especially Unani system which has huge base of natural drug products and is a culture friendly system serves an important filling gap in this scenario. More over the limitations of the present system has compelled the civilized societies to turn to this natural system which synchronizes well with the evolutionary adoptive measures of human race. The paper emphasizes the challenges and enumerates the potential of Unani system to fetch up a self fulfilling sustainable health care.

**Keywords:** Sustainable health care, natural adaptation, cost benefits, natural drugs sources, complementary system, parallel system, culture friendly system.

### INTRODUCTION

The western world is approaching a pandemic in obesity and stress related illness, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Good health is something we take for granted. Most of us focus on our health, when we are ill or have a major catastrophe in our lives, when it simply might be too late. Our society has conditioned us to constantly focus on our material wealth at all cost; however having good health is something money simply cannot buy. Sustainable health care is a commitment to maintain the health through preventive means, this mean not only having regular exercise but also what we eat, maintain a healthy and balanced state of mind. Sustainable health is:

- A preventive approach
- A balance of body, mind and spirit
- Taking care of what we put into our bodies
- Taking natural medicines for maintaining health and hopefully preventing the disease
- Leading and maintaining a balanced life by taking "middle road approach" not for little not too much is the key.

The natural medicines can play vital role in sustainable health approach for individuals and society as a whole. The plant based medicine [natural medicines] are being used from ancient time; according to WHO, plant based medicines constitute the main source of every day health care for the majority of the population of most developing countries up to 80 % of many countries; currently, some 90 % of patients in the world are held in developing countries In India 70 % of population uses herbal medicines as reported by Indian govt. Similarly in Australia 48 %, Canada 50 %, USA 42 %, Belgium 40 %, France 75 % and UK 90 % people use alternative medicines as stated in govt. reports of these states 1. Before discussing about "Role of Unani drugs in sustainable health care" let's first discuss about the limitation of main stream health care.

### Limitation of mainstream health care system

Despite a revolution witnessed during the twentieth century in human health care, which has dramatically declined the mortality and increased the life expectancy, there are certain important areas in the health care, where the allopathic health care system has either failed or shown gross deficiencies.

### Cost of the drug

It is estimated that over 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the world's population lacks regular access to modern medicine. General population in developing countries is unable to use anti biotic drugs which form the main regime of treatment because of cost factor 2.

### Cost of surgeries

Common masses in developing countries usually find the surgical treatment non-affordable. It is commonly observed that despite the surgical treatment available for the particular disease, a common man is unable to avail the surgical facility because of cost factor.

### Cost of implementation of various schemes

Various scheme and programmes are run by central and state governments to improve the health care systems. As various scheme and programmes have been formulated to reinforce the delivery of primary, secondary and tertiary health care, but there are various programmes which are not being implemented because of finance or because of deficient man power available to implement these programmes. And if implemented the desired results are not achieved.

### Inadequate management of various diseases

Despite great advances made in the health care by the modern medicine to eradicate and control of various diseases there is

inadequate management of various other diseases like AIDS, Cancer, TB, Hepatitis B and Psoriasis. AIDS still poses challenge for its management and control and till date no satisfactory treatment is available crores and crores of rupees is being spent through various agencies to find ways and method to treat the disease. TB and Cancer have high motility in rural as well as urban population. Eczema, influenza and autoimmune diseases are not having satisfactory treatment available in modern medicine.

#### Inadequate reach of health care to common masses

Health care institutions of modern medicine are placed at every nook and corner of the country. But it is observed that common masses are not able to avail these facilities due to various administrative and non administrative reasons this is particularly true about the certain section of the population like rural population, tribal areas, hilly and slum areas. Sometimes adequate medicines are not available at these institutions and other time staff is not available or staff is not willing to serve at these remote places.

#### Traditional health care system

According to WHO the traditional health care system constitutes the main source of every day health care for majority of population in developing countries. They also serve the health care needs of population in industrial countries like USA, Canada, Australia and Newzeland. The practice and knowledge of these systems differ in different parts of the world. In Asia there are formalized tradition such as Ayurveda and Unani health care system, in China they have Chinese medicine and Tibetan medicine<sup>1</sup>. While the traditional health system in developing countries provide the primary health services to rural communities, and poorest levels of society, there is now increasing reliance on traditional health care by urban population as well. India has well established traditional health care system which is called as "Indian system of medicine". It was reorganized and a separate department created called as department of ISM and H. which is now called as department of AYUSH consisting of Ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, unani, sidha and homeopathy. Unani system forms an important component of this department and plays vital role in national health care delivery system including various national health programs<sup>2</sup>. The Unani system of medicine is based on well established knowledge and practices, relating to promotion of positive health and prevention of disease. The system emphasizes the use of naturally occurring herbal medicine and also medicine of animals and mineral origin. The system is based on humoral theory and humors are assigned separate temperaments. Every person is supposed to have unique humoral constitution which represents the state of health. Any imbalance in humoral composition or temperament produce the disease, and medicine are used to restore the humoral balance and retaining the health<sup>4</sup>. Special emphasis is laid on prevention of disease by recognizing the influence of surrounding and ecological conditions on the state of health of human beings. This system aims at restoring the equilibrium of various elements and faculties of human body<sup>4</sup>.

#### Advantages of Unani Health Care System

##### Availability

Modern medical services do not reach to a large section of rural population and these services are often under staffed, or under equipped. Under such circumstances people continue to utilized locally available Unani health services for common ailments such as injury cough, cold and fever<sup>1</sup>.

##### Cost effective

The trend of increased traditional (Unani) medicine utilization is because the modern medical services and pharmaceutical products are rarely available in rural areas and most often expensive and unaffordable. Also because of charges of user fees in Gov. Health

services is resulting in substantial shift of patients away from modern medicine to traditional health care system.

#### Culture

The cultural factors also play significant role in the continued faith of rural masses on traditional medicine which is familiar and trusted. It is often observed that people seek symptomatic relief from modern medicine, and turn to traditional medicine for cure of true cause of conditions.

#### Role of Unani drugs

India with highly diversified agro climatic and bio-geographic zone and eco system is a home for very rich medicinal plants resource. Ayurveda uses about 800 plants in its various formulations, Siddha uses 600 plants, and in Unani 600 plants are used in various formulations consisting of single drugs for their combination. The medicine is easy to get as most of them are available locally<sup>3</sup>.

#### Specific drugs to cure specific diseases

There are specific drugs available to cure specific disease, as we have wide range of Unani drugs available for various diseases.

- Hajrul Yahood (*Lapis judaicus*), Jawakhar (Potassium carbonate) and Habbul quilt (*Dolichos befflorus*) for renal stones,
- Afsanteen (*Artemesia absinthium*), Makoe (*Solanum nigrum*), Kasni (*Pistacia intigerima*), Sumbulut teeb (*Viliriana jatemansi*) for hepatitis,
- Muquil (*Commiphora mukul*), Mazu (*Quercus infectoria*) Rasowt (extract of barberis) for hemorrhoids.
- Gurmar buti (*Gymnema sylvestra*), Karela (*Momordica charantia*) and Hulba (*Trigonella foenum*) are used for diabetes mellitus,
- Aroosa (*Adhatoda vasaka*), Sapistan (*Cordial latifolia*), Aslussoos (*Glycerryza glabra*) and Tulsi (*Ocimum basilicum*), are used for asthma and bronchitis<sup>5</sup>.

#### Diagnosis of Disease

This is a unique feature about Unani system of medicine; there are various drugs available which can be in suitable formulations used for diagnosis of various diseases. To differentiate amoebic dysentery from bacillary dysentery following method is used for the diagnosis. 3-4 seeds of khayarshambar (*Cassia fistula*) or lmlil (*Tamarindus indicus*) are given to the patient mixed with ghee, after waiting for sometime if seeds are passed out in the stool, then bacillary dysentery is diagnosed, otherwise patient is suffering from amoebic dysentery if seeds are retained<sup>6</sup>.

#### Prevention from Disease

The Unani system of medicine has good concept of preventive medicine having two components:

##### General Regimes

For various section of population, for different age group and different genders; for old person we have moistening and warming measures including foods, baths, drinks and plenty of sleep. They need to have their bowel and bladder evacuated regularly. Massage with oil and exercise is also beneficial. The Unani has given clear view regarding the proper diet, and activity for different age group. There are various methods and regimes available for different class of people for maintaining health and preventing of disease. It has been mentioned clearly about various aspects related to exercise and diet for various age groups<sup>7</sup>.

##### Specific Regime

Ginger reduced the formation of pro-inflammatory prostaglandin and thromboxane and hence lowering the clotting ability of blood. It controls blood cholesterol level. In US it is recommended to reduce

and prevent the nausea caused by motion and morning sickness. Similarly Amla (*Embelia officinalis*) due to presence of vitamin C, gallic acid and ellagic acid exhibit antioxidant and immunomodulator property and is used as preventive agent for several diseases<sup>8,9</sup>. Similarly, afsanteen, sharbat deenar, majoon dabidulward and jigrin are proved hepato-protective drugs and are used as chemo prophylactic against hepatitis A and E<sup>10</sup>.

### Unani Drugs Preference in Sustainable Health Care Cheap Drugs

There is wide range of plant parts used in Unani medicine such as stem, seeds, roots, fruits, resins and rhizomes. Large scale single drugs as well as compound preparation are available which are cheap and affordable for common people. This is the main reason of the system being popular in rural population.

### Freely available

The success of any system of medicine depends upon the freely availability of drugs which are affordable as for as cost of medicine is concerned. As the plants and plant based products are used in Unani as medicine which are freely available. The plants are either collected from the wild source or from the cultivated source, but due to acceptability and recognition Unani has gained in the country and also globally, there is over exploitation of herbal source and some of the drugs have become rare. Unani system can provide a sustainable health care of its own but there are certain limitations which we need to take care off.

### Emergency Drug

This is perhaps one of the biggest challenges for Unani system to have its own emergency drugs. Medical emergencies are very common and so many patients come daily in PHC and dispensaries. We as health professionals working in Unani health institutions find it extremely difficult to manage such emergency with present lot of drugs available. Though efforts are going on to tackle this problem and develop emergency drugs. There are drugs available in our system for acute problems like Habb-e-Mubarak and Habb-e-karanjawa for acute fever, qurs dawaul shifa and muffarah barid for zaghtuddam qavi (high blood pressure), safoof habis, sharbat injabar for nasfuddam (for bleeding) and habbe zaher mohra and shikanjabeen lemoon for vomiting<sup>11</sup>. But there is a need to develop emergency drug in injection form for quick relief to the patient. This can be achieved by using extracts of the drugs in proper doses which has been indicated to be useful for various acute conditions. Recently CCRUM in 2000 has published a list of essential drugs for all Unani health care institutions.

### Awareness among the masses regarding the herbal medicine (Unani)

There is need for greater awareness programme to make people aware about the benefits of Unani medicine and its role in health care system. It has been observed that people considered the Unani

medicine for only minor ailments like cold, cough and for some sexual problems and also safety and efficacy of these drugs needs to be explained to general mass by conducting melas (health fairs), demonstrate and education programmes. There is also wide misconception that natural means safe and all Unani medicine are safe devoid of any side effects, but this needs to be cleared by explaining the people about the potential side effects of the herbal drugs.

### Dosage forms

This is another area of concern for Unani system of medicine which needs attention. Unani drugs like majoon, jawarish are taken in the dose of 8-12 g, which at times become difficult for patient to take, similarly in the case of sharbats and arqiyat. With the help of modern technology used in pharmacy, Unani drugs can be made more palatable and easy for administration.

### CONCLUSION

To reinforce the activities of Unani system of medicine and to make the Unani health care a sustainable health care system, there is need for a careful planning and collaboration among different levels of health care sectors, a partnership can be built which provides a good health care environment based on quality in health care and on the provision of services, which complement one another. A key to ensuring access to Unani medicine is the protection of knowledge and sustainable use of medicinal plant resource. The development of the system should begin from the roots and should be comprehensive in approach. The modernization does not mean westernization, but taking stock of its own inherent resources to develop, based on the local needs and realities.

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