



Perspective of Knee Arthralgia in Unani System of Medicine

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Abstract - Unani System of Medicine has often been associated with the management of chronic diseases. One of the most common chronic diseases hampering the mankind is knee arthralgia. Known as *Waja-ul-Rakba* in Unani System of Medicine, knee arthralgia has been defined as the pain or the inflammatory condition involving the knee joint. Apart from joint it may also affect the muscles and ligaments surrounding the joint.

Keywords: *Unani system of medicine, Pain, Chronic disease, Waja-ul-Rakba, Knee arthralgia*

INTRODUCTION

Health and disease are inseparable part of human being. Quest of healing for the diseased person led to development of different type of remedies, therefore study of medicine flourished in all ancient societies. The Unani system of Medicine is an organized system of medicine which aims at maintenance of health and cure of sick, it evolved out of experience and empirical observation, by conducting such research and experimentation. “*Waja*” and “*Rakba*” are Arabic words meaning pain and knee respectively.^{1,2} *Waja-ul-rakba* is a term used for pain, inflammation, accumulation, deposition of abnormal material and other disorder of the knee joints resulting in difficulty in walking and other movements due to swelling and hardness.³

CAUSATIVE FACTORS

Eminent Unani physician and scholar Zakariya Razi, known to western world as *Rhazes*, in his book *Al Hawi* describes the cause of arthralgia as the accumulation of the fluids or morbid substance in the joints.⁴ It is stated that Ibn-e-Sina (*Avicenna*) described pure phlegm or mixed phlegm as the morbid material descending towards the lower limbs due to gravity. When these waste materials accumulate in large quantity and don't have a way to escape, they cause disease in the legs.⁵ Several other causative factors for knee arthralgia have been discussed in the Unani literature similar as digestive problem, lack of exercise, alcohol, bleeding piles, amenorrhea and inordinate sexual intercourse. Weakness of joint, injuries and inordinate common movement have also been described as causative factors.^{6,7,8}

CLINICAL FEATURES

In Unani literature such as *Al-Qanoon fit-Tib* (The Canon of Medicine) and *Kitab-ul-Mansoori* several symptoms have been described related to knee arthralgia such as increased amount of muscle fibres in the joints and fusion. Severity of pain may increase or decrease due to intensity. Symptoms like Inflammation, redness and hot skin over the joint are also observed.^{6,9}

Unani physician Hakim Sharif Khan has described the symptoms in relations to humors of the body.¹⁰

The main symptoms of *Waja-ul-Mafasil damwi* (Arthralgia related to derangement of blood) are redness, swelling and throbbing pain with warmth of the skin over the joints. Symptoms related to *Waja-ul-Mafasil safarawi* (Arthralgia related to derangement of bile) are yellowish discoloration over the joints with comparatively less swelling to the former and burning sensation which get relieved by using cool measures. Symptoms of *Waja-ul-Mafasil balghami* (Arthralgia related to derangement of phlegm) are comparatively less burning sensation, deep seated pain in joints which gets relieved by heat measures and also the presence of whitish skin over the joints. *Waja-ul-Mafasil saudawi* (Arthralgia related to derangement of black bile) manifests itself as mild pain, dryness at affected site, blackish discoloration, hardness and inflammation.¹⁰ Renowned Unani scholar and physician Hakim Ajmal Khan has described several other symptoms apart from pain such as hardness and disfigurement in the joint, emulsion of joints.⁷ According to *Razi* the morbid materials causing arthralgia are also responsible for the development of contractures in the joints in chronic cases and once the contractures develop they remain as a permanent feature which produces deformities in the affected joints.⁹

PRINCIPLES OF TREATMENT

Principally the treatment of any disease is to restore the normality of the individual patient, irrespective of the cause of disease or disorder. In Unani System of Medicine emphasis is on *Asbab-e-Sitta Zarooria* (six essential factors responsible for sustainment of life) where the principle of "Prevention is better than cure" is adhered to. Following these principles one can prevent the disease or disorders.

Unani physicians usually follow these criteria for the treatment:

- Removal of the cause
- Diversion of morbid matters
- Evacuation of morbid matters
- Use of analgesics, resolvents and anaesthetics etc.

1,8

TREATMENT

The basic line of treatment followed in Unani System of Medicine comprises of three methods:

Dietotherapy (*Ilaj bil Ghiza*):

Unani physicians have advised to include egg yolk, mutton and chicken in the diet of the patient. Intake of cold water and cold water bath should also be avoided.^{8,10}

Regimenal Therapy (*Ilaj bit Tadbeer*):

Unani scholars and physicians have advocated various regimens such as *Dalak* (Massage), *Hijamah-bil-Shurt* (Wet upping), Fire cupping, *Hijama-bila-Shurt* (Dry cupping), *Fasd* (Venesection), *Takmeed* (Fomentation) and *Hammam* (Turkish bath) etc.^{11,12}

Pharmacotherapy (*Ilaj bid Dawa*):

In Unani literature, many single and compound drugs are mentioned under the treatment of *Knee Arthralgia* such as *Suranjaan* (*Colchicum autumnale*), *Bozidan* (*Pyrethrum umbelliferum* Biose), *Asaroon* (*Valeriana Wallichii*), *Asgandh* (*Withania Somnifera*), *Gogul* (*Commiphora wightii*), *Baboona* (*Chamomile*), *Elva* (*Sempervivum*) etc.⁹

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