

The Concise Overview of Unani Treatise Contemplating Oral Health and its Associated Common Conditions

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Abstract

Oral health is essential to quality of life because it promotes social and physical well-being and serves as a reflection of general health. According to some estimates, dental and oro-dental conditions are the most prevalent illnesses in the world. One important known predisposing factor for various oral illnesses is poor oral hygiene. Since the beginning of recorded history, mankind has suffered from oral diseases in all of its manifestations. Ancient Chinese, Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Arabic, and Indian surgical and medical treatises all discuss mouth illnesses at some point. Many renowned Unani physicians have too mentioned about various oral diseases and unhygienic conditions in their respective books. They have clearly mentioned how to maintain oral health and treat various oral conditions in their respective rich Unani texts. Present review paper is an attempt to throw some light over oral hygiene, its historical background and diseases which occur due to poor oral health light of the Unani literature.

Keywords: Oral health, Unani medicine, oral diseases, preventive measures.

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INTRODUCTION

Oral diseases are among the most common diseases found in humans. Despite their high social and economic burdens, oral diseases receive little attention in many countries and remain a neglected area of international health [1]. Oral health is defined as “a state of being free from mouth and facial pain, oral and throat cancer, oral infections and sores, periodontal (gum) disease, tooth decay, tooth loss and other diseases and disorders that limit an individual’s capacity in biting, chewing, smiling, speaking and psycho social well-being”[2]. The commonest dental diseases are tooth decay (cavities, dental caries) and gum diseases, including gingivitis and periodontitis. The prevalence of these diseases is constantly increase with change in dietary habit of peoples and increased consumption of sugar. The prevalence of dental caries is approximately 60-65% in India. However, this disease is greatly affected by many factors other than sugar consumption [3].

Teeth are very hard but sensitive organ which are implanted in the jaw bones. They not only help in the cutting and grinding of food but also help in speech. Any malfunctioning of the teeth or a disease of the gums disturbs the process of digestion [4]. More than 400 species of bacteria live in human mouth. Dr. Robert Genco points out that serious gum infection can release bacteria from heart disease, stroke and other similar ailments. It is also known that periodontal disease can even cause premature labour by release of prostaglandins by periodontal bacteria and also worsen condition like diabetes and pneumonia [5].

The use of medicinal plants to treat dental problems has been discussed from time to time by many researchers, viz the use of Satyanasi (*Argemone mexicana*), Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) and Rehan (*Ocimum indicum*) in dental health care has been reported. In Unani system of medicine there are many single and compound drugs which are used in the treatment of dental diseases like Anar (*Punica granatum*), Chobchini(*Smilax china*), Haldi (*Curcuma longa*), Aqarqarha (*Anacyclus pyrethrum*), Tambaku

(*Nicotiana tabacum*), Suddab (*Ruta graveolance*) etc.[6] and compound drugs like Sunoone-e-zard Sunoon-e-mulook, Sunoon-e-mustahkam dandaan and Sunun-emujalli etc.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The ancient history of the world's fascination with oral health is a long and illustrious one [7]. Many different oral hygiene practices have been practiced since the dawn of civilization. The first known mention of tooth decay and toothache occurs on a Sumerian clay tablet now mention to as the "Legend of the worm It was written in cuneiform, recovered from the Euphrates valley, and dates from around 5000 BC [8]. As early as 3000 BC, Assyrian cuneiform medical texts mention teeth-cleaning procedures. Other Mesopotamian sites have contained toothpicks from the same era (modern-day Iraq). *Aesculapius*, the Roman equivalent of Greek god of medicine and healing was believed to advocate cleansing the mouth and teeth (1193 - 1164 BC). Ancient Greek physician *Hippocrates* is the first to recommend a dentifrice powder to clean the teeth (355 BC). Oral hygiene was practiced by the Sumerians. Elaborately decorated golden tooth picks found in excavations in Mesopotamia; suggest their interest in cleanliness of mouth [8]. The embalmed bodies (mummies) of Egyptians of 4000 B.C. showed the signs of periodontal diseases. The oldest scriptures of Egyptians medicines Ebres and Edwin Smith papyrus contain many references to gingival diseases and prescriptions for strengthening the teeth. The ancient Egyptians also wore amulets to prevent toothache [9]. The Ebers papyrus (1500 BC) details a recipe to treat "gnawing of the blood in the tooth", which included fruit of the gebu plant, onion, cake, and dough, to be chewed for four days [10]. Among the ancient Greeks *Hippocrates* (460 B.C, also known as father of medicine) proposed humoral pathology. According to him four essential humours are phlegm, blood, yellow bile and black bile. He said that the deposition on tooth has corroding action on tooth; he also stated that stagnation of juices in teeth was a cause of toothache. As long ago as 3000 BC, the ancient Egyptians constructed crude toothbrushes from twigs and leaves to clean their teeth. Similarly, other cultures such as the Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Indians cleaned their teeth with twigs. Some would fray one end of the twig so that it could penetrate between the teeth more effectively [11].

Some of the Most Common Oral Conditions As Mentioned In Unani Literature

Dental Caries (*Taakkul Asnan*)

Dental Caries is a localized destruction of the calcified portion of tooth by microorganism. It is one of the most common diseases of the world. There are a few people who have not suffered from it at any stage. Early Unani physicians have described the decaying and cavity formation in teeth. For that they have suggested some precautions as not to allow the food to

get putrefied in stomach, avoid hard and sticky foods, proper cleaning of teeth and application of various drugs in the form of *Manjan* and gargle for the treatment. They used the detoxification (*Istafragh*) by means of purgative and *Fasd* [12-14]. *Rabban Tabri* renowned Unani physician had advised the filling of teeth which is having a cavity with *Aqar qarha*, *Afyun* and *Post-e-Kibr*. To avoid decaying of teeth he has suggested gargle with rose oil mixed with vinegar. To keep teeth as well as gums healthy he has suggested the massage of *Saad*, *Gulsurkh*, *Kundur*, *Maazo*, and *Post-e-Anar* in the roots of teeth and gums [12, 15].

Periodontal Disease (*Amraz-e-Lissa*)

Diseases of all the elements supporting the teeth represented by cementum, periodontal membrane, gingival and alveolar bone constitutes periodontal disease. Those which involve chronic and progressive destruction of periodontal membrane and alveolus are termed as perio-dontitis. In Unani system *Post anar*, *Gulnar*, *Mazoo*, *Alum*, *Aaqar qarha*, *Samaq*, *Namak* are used to treat this condition. Make power of these drugs and then mix it with fermented vinegar of *Habbul Aas*. Make tablets and use them [14].

Halitosis (*bakhrul fam*)

Halitosis typically emanates from the oral cavity or nasal passages. Volatile sulphur compounds resulting from bacterial decay of food and cellular debris account for the malodour. Periodontal disease, caries, acute forms of gingivitis, poorly fitting dentures, oral abscess, and tongue coating are common causes. *Tabri* explained the causes of *bakhrul fam* (halitosis) as that bad odour fluid which remain stagnant for long time in the stomach, infected gums or food particles which remain fixed inside the teeth for long time. If the halitosis is due to stomach fluids then evacuate the stomach fluids by laxative drugs like *Majoon Fanjinoos*, *Iyaraj Faiqra*, *Aaqar qarha*, *Haleela zard* etc. [12].

Stomatitis (*qula-e-duhan*)

Stomatitis or Aphthous ulcers are superficial and painful; they occur in any part of the mouth. There are three main types of stomatitis; Traumatic, Infective and Aphthous stomatitis. Early Unani physicians as *Rabban Tabri*, *Zakariya Razi*, *Abbas Majoosi* and *Ibn Sina* have specified some ulcers of the mouth which erodes the tissue where ever present, and may appear at gums, lips, tongue and often referred to as *Quruh Khabisa*, *Aaklah-al-fam*. Reason, they said are acrid humours mostly black bile (*mutaharriq sauda*) [15-18]. Drugs as mentioned in Unani literature include *Zargul*, *Nishasta*, *Tabasheer*, *Tukhme khurpha*, *Dhanya hhuushk*, *Rasoot Makki*. Make powder of these drugs and mix small amount of *Kafoor* and apply to the affected portion and leave it for some time as such [17].

Odontalgia (*wajaul asnan*)

Toothache, also known as dental pain, is pain in the teeth and/or their supporting structures, caused by

dental diseases or pain referred to the teeth by non-dental diseases.[19] Toothache is the most common type of oro-facial pain[20] and when severe, it is considered a dental emergency, since there may be a significant impact on sleep, eating, and other daily activities. It is one of the most common reasons for emergency dental appointments [21].

Ali Ibne Abbas Majoosi has suggested the gargle with water in which *Post-e-Anar* and *Samaq* has been boiled for inflamed gums. If pus is also coming add *Sandal*, *Long*, *Kafoor*, *Sumbuluteeb* and *Mastagi*. Drugs which keeps teeth clean and white are *Kafe-Darya*, *Sheeh Sokhta*, *Post-e-Bayza Sokhta*, *Namak-e-Lahori*, *Sajaz Hindi* and for the decayed tooth he has recommended application of *Bhang*, *Murmuki*, *Afyun*, *Filfil* and *Heeng* in the form of paste [18]. *Ibn sena* recommended *Sutira*, *Shajrina*, *Ma'jun al-khabth* and *Kaukab* tablets for tooth ache [22].

Gingivitis (Warme-Lissa)

It is an inflammatory lesion confined to the tissue of the marginal gingiva. Sometime the gum becomes inflamed during the eruption of teeth in the children due to *Har khilt*, like increase amount of *Safra* or *Dam* and sometime gums also gets inflamed by few kinds of drugs like mercury mixed with other drug used then also gum become inflamed and pain occur [23].

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Thus from the available literature present on the various conditions related to Oral health indicates that from ancient era physicians were having detailed knowledge about them and also knows how to deal with them. The cause behind various diseases lies in the derangement of four humours (Akhlat-e-Arba) found in the human body. It also paves a path for the development in the same area as various Unani formularies are still very effective if one tries to get rid of such oral ailments. It is also a fact that the field of dentistry itself is very much accelerated, but a person can keep the oral conditions hygienic if they adopt a lifestyle that prioritizes oral health, as described in classical Unani literature, in order to promote oral health, as well as general health.

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