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International Journal of Advanced Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy
2013, Volume 2, Issue 1, pp. 132-136, Article ID Med-110
ISSN: 2320 – 0251

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# Concept of Arthritis in Unani System of Medicine

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Publication Date: 19 October 2013

Article Link: http://medical.cloud-journals.com/index.php/IJAAYUSH/article/view/Med-110

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**Abstract** The objective of the study was to ascertain the classical literature regarding Arthritis in Unani System of Medicine. The Unani System of Medicine is one of the Indian System of Medicine which has been in the healthcare delivery system of India since centuries. The system of Medicine has been introduced in India by Mughals and was further propagated by the local Indian Hakeems known for their sharp mindset. Arthritis has been one of the major concerns of the health since time immemorial. The Unani System of Medicine has been able to differentiate different types of Arthritis. The Unani literature and classic text books were searched in Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine Srinagar, Jamia Hamdard and CCRUM libraries. Also search regarding Unani and Arthritis was given to Google, Pubmed, and Medline. Except for the classical literature very less information is available on the net. While as classical literature has ample amount of know how regarding the disease.

**Keywords** *Waja-ul-Mafasil; Niqras; Irqun Nisa; Gout; Sciatica; Wajaul Zuhr*

## 1. Introduction

Greece in Arabic, Persian and Urdu is known as Unan and since Hippocrates was basically a Greek physician and being the father of Medicine as such the Unani Medicine came into existence. The History of Unani Medicine dates back to 375 AD when *Madrasa Jundishapur* was established by King Shapur in Iran. He was able to gather physicians from Rome, Greece, Egypt, India and Arabia who translated the medical literature of their own countries into initially Persian and then into Arabic. The whole concept of Medicine revolved around the theories laid down by Hippocrates and Galens.

When Muslims conquered Persia the *Madrasa Jundishapur* came also under their control and they started infusing more and more intellects into the School which flourished leaps and bounds. During the Muslim rule the Medicine got evolved in three stages:

1) Translation of old testimonials available at that time;
2) Experimentation by the renowned scholars of Medicine;
3) Decline of the Muslim influence due the propagation of Western Medical System.

The Unani System after its decline due to British rule who promoted the Western system of Medicine remained as ruminants in Indian subcontinent. It was Hakeem Ajmal Khan of Delhi who established Unani and Ayurvedic Medical Colleges during the British rule in first quarter of 20$^{th}$ century AD which helped in keeping both the system of Medicine alive as we see it today (Hassan Nigrami, 1989).

## 2. Methodology

The Unani literature and classic text books were searched in Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine Srinagar, Jamia Hamdard and CCRUM, New Delhi libraries. The texts of Unani, Wajaul Mafasil, Unani Medicine and Arthritis was written on the search engines of Google, PubMed, Medline, EPub which revealed almost 25 papers regarding the subject. After the sorting of these papers which were downloaded from the net only 3 papers were having relevant information regarding the subject. Which means little information regarding the Wajaul Mafasil (Arthritis) in Unani Context is available on the internet. So the authors relied mostly on the classical literature of Unani Medicine.

## 3. Discussion

In the Unani context the arthritis is being termed as *Wajaul Mafasil* which in broader terms means pain in joints. *Wajaul Mafasil* is used to describe all kinds of joint disorders including pain, swelling, and stiffness. It has been described as *Wajaul Mafasil Aam* (arthritis), *Wajaul Zuhr* (back pain), *Niqras* (gout) and *Irqun Nisa* (sciatica) etc.

When all the joints of the body are painful it is called as *Wajaul Mafasil Aam* (*Majoosi A.A.I.A., 1889*), when pain and inflammation is in the smaller joints of hand it is *Wajaul Mafasil Khas* (Rheumatoid arthritis). *Wajaul Mafasil* has been described as *Gatthia* in Hindi texts (*Jurjani A.H., 1903*). In *Wajaul Mafasil* pain occurs in joints of hand, feet, knees, and ankle joints. *Wajaul Mafasil* is also seen in temporomandibular joints and vertebrae (*Khan M.A., 1939*).

### 3.1. Classification

Consideration of the types of *Khilt* (Humours) causing *Wajaul Mafasil* (Arthritis) leads to its division into four types:

1) *Wajaul Mafasil Balghami* (Phlegmatic)
2) *Wajaul Mafasil Damvi* (Plethoric)
3) *Wajaul Mafasil Safravi* (bilious)
4) *Wajaul Mafasil Saudavi* (Melancholic)

According to *M Azam Khan*, the classification has been described on the basis of temperamental imbalance as *Wajaul Mafasil Sada*, which is caused by *Su-e-Mizaj Maddi* which is accompanied by the humoral imbalance and is being further divided into 3 types:

1. ***Wajaul Mafasil Mufrad*** This type of *Wajaul Mafasil* is caused by the abnormal change in the one of the four humours and has been categorized into; *Wajaul Mafasil Balghami*, *Wajaul Mafasil Damvi, Wajaul Mafasil Safravi* and *Wajaul Mafasil Saudavi*.

2. ***Wajaul Mafasil Murakkab*** When the change is in more than one humour and at least two humours are involved i.e. *Safra (Yellow bile)* with *Sauda (Black Bile)*, *Dam (Blood)* with *Balgham (Phlagma), Dam* and *Safra* etc.

3. ***Wajaul Mafasil Reehi*** This type of *Wajaul Mafasil* is caused by the *Reeh Ghaleez* literally meaning (Bad Gases).

## 4. Aetiology as Per Unani Classics

According to *Sahibe Kamil* the etiology of *Wajaul Mafasil* is so obscure and complicated that it is not possible to pinpoint the exact causative factor. According to *Ibne Sina* the psychic factors play a prominent role in the causation of this disease. Other factors, which are responsible for the disease, include hereditary & joint weakness etc.

*Madda (Substance)*: According to *Samarqandi* the *madda* (substance) which is responsible for the cause of *Wajaul Mafasil* is of a very thick consistency and white in colour, whereas *Ibn Sina* states that this *madda* almost resembles to pus (*Reem*).

The humours responsible for the development of *Wajaul Mafasil* may be one or more of the following:

1) *Balgham (Phlegm)*
2) *Dam (Blood)*
3) *Safra (Yellow Bile)*
4) *Sauda (Sanguine or Black bile)*

*Ibn Sina* also mentioned that *Wajaul Mafasil* is caused by phlegm, blood, yellow bile and black bile in the decreasing order of frequency as follows:

- *Wajaul Mafasil Balghami* is more common.
- *Wajaul Mafasil Damvi* is common.
- *Wajaul Mafasil Safravi* is less common.
- *Wajaul Mafasil Saudavi* is rare.

The *Madda* (Substance) causing *Wajaul Mafasil* accumulates in the joints due to the weakness of the joint called as *zauf-e-mafasil* (*Majoosi, 1889*).

*Wajaul Mafasil* is caused by accumulation of *Mawad-e-Fasida* (Literally meaning Toxic Substances) in the joint which happens due to following factors:

1) Joint movement
2) Joint space
3) Joint fluid

The feature of the joint is that it attracts the fluid (*Ratoobat*) towards itself. The joint movement is responsible for this. The *mawad* moves towards the joint by the movement of the joint and the heat produced by the joint movement. The feature of the heat is that it attracts the fluid towards itself.

The joints of the body have no power of absorption (*Quwat-e-Jaziba*) and as the absorption of the fluid according to Unani Physicians depends on the heat and as the bones, cartilage, ligaments, etc. which are the major constituents of the joint are having cold and dry temperament, so the *Khilt* which enters the joint cannot be reabsorbed and thus gets lodged in the joint.

Since the joints does not have the excretory power (*Quwat-e-Dafe'ah*) as well so the bad matter which needs to be excreted gets lodged in the joints and thus leading to disturbances in the joint. The *Khilt*

in the joint gets putrefied and gets converted into the harmful products which then induce *Wajaul Mafasil*.

The above-mentioned causes are known as *asbabe asli* i.e. primary causes (*Jurjani, 1903*).

### 4.1. *Asbabe Arzi* or Secondary/Precipitating Factors

There are total of 7 aggravating factors mentioned in the Unani classics:

1) Giving up the exercise (*Tarke Riyazat*)
2) Weakness of stomach (*Zaufe M'ada*) leading to the absorption of impaired matter
3) Derangement (*Su-e-Tarteeb*)
4) Sedentary life style
5) Regular and excessive use of alcohol
6) Excessive coitus and exercise after meals
7) Cold and catarrh

Other causes of accumulation of bad humours in the joint are as follows:

1) Giving up the voluntary habitual excretion (*Tarke Istefragh-e-Aadati*) e.g. vomiting, purgation, venesection etc.
2) Cessation of normal involuntary excretion e.g. menstruation, piles etc.
3) Intestinal colic
4) Drinking of water on empty stomach
5) Anxiety, depression, insomnia etc.

## 5. Pathogenesis

*Su-e-mizaj* (derangement in temperament): According to the Unani Medicine the term *mizaj* (temperament) is used to describe the normal biochemical equilibrium of the cells, tissues, organs and body as a whole. Any change in this equilibrium is termed as *su-e-mizaj* or derangement of temperament.

*Wajaul Mafasil* is caused by an abnormal change in the body equilibrium due to the derangement of the temperament, which may affect either a whole body or may be confined to the vital organs (*A'aza-e-Raeesa*).

This abnormal change in the temperament causing arthritis is of 3 types:

1) *Su-e-Mizaj Har Multahib*
2) *Su-e-Mizaj Barid Munjamid*
3) *Su-e-Mizaj Yabis Munqabiz*

Also it has been mentioned that *Su-e-Mizaj* causing arthritis is of two types:

1) *Su-e-Mizaj Saada*: When the derangement is based on the temperament without the involvement of the humours.
2) *Su-e-Mizaj Maddi*: When the derangement involves humours or gasses.

Thus if all the above information is taken into consideration there is more comprehensive mention of all the types of the Arthritis in the Unani literature and in those days of life when the avenues were very much less the physicians were able to differentiate the different types of arthritis.

There has been very little addition to the types of arthritis in today's modern era when the sophisticated machinery is involved, lot investigations take place and we have modern tools of diagnosis.

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