

Therapeutics

In Unani System of Medicine, four types of treatment are employed when the prevention is failed and disease occurs, which include Regimen therapy (*‘Ilāj bi’l-Tadbīr*), Dietotherapy (*‘Ilāj bi’l-Ghidhā*), Pharmacotherapy (*‘Ilāj bi’l-Dawā*) and surgery (*‘Ilāj bi’l-Yad*). The preference is given to Regimen therapy and dietotherapy. Pharmacotherapy and surgery are used only if required. Psychiatric treatment (*‘Ilāj Nafsānī*) and spiritual treatment (*‘Ilāj Rūḥānī*) are also used.

Regimen therapy (*Ilāj bi’l-Tadbīr*) is one of the most popular methods of treatment practised by Unani physicians since antiquity. Literally, *Tadbīr* is an Arabic word meaning ‘regimen’ or ‘systematic plan’ whereas *‘Ilāj* means ‘therapy’ or ‘treatment’. Thus, *‘Ilāj bi’l-Tadbīr* means treatment through regimen by which care of the sick person is taken and the general health is maintained. Regimen therapies are mostly non-medicinal procedures by which we modulate the lifestyles for preservation of health and treatment of disease. Unani physicians have described various regimens for the management of diseases, either independently or in combination with other regimens including changes in diet, physical exercise, lifestyle and measures to eliminate the morbid humours (*Tanqiya*) from the body or divert them. The regimen therapies practiced in Unani Medicine include Cupping (*Hijāma*), Massage (*Dalk*), Leeching (*Ta’liq*), Venesection (*Faşd*), Purgation (*Ishāl*), Emesis (*Qay’*), Diuresis (*Idrār-i Bawl*), Enema (*Huqna*), Diaphoresis (*Ta’rīq*), Expectoration (*Tanfīs*), Counter Irritation (*Īlām*), Sitz Bath (*Ābzān*), Turkish bath (*Ḥammām*), Irrigation (*Naṭūl*) and Fomentation (*Takmīd*), etc.

Dietotherapy aims at preventing and treating certain ailments by administration of specific diets or by regulating the quantity and quality of food. Unani Medicine lays great stress on treating certain ailments by administration of specific diets. In addition to nutritional properties, various foods have pharmacological actions too. For example, many foods are laxative, diuretic and diaphoretic.



Wet cupping (*Hijāma bi'l-Sharṭ*)



Leeching (*Ta'liq*)

The weakness of certain organs is corrected by administering the same organ of an animal by way of food; for instance, disorders and weakness of liver are treated by including the goat liver in the patient's diet. Likewise, heart, kidney and brain are recommended in the respective organ's treatment.

Pharmacotherapy deals with the use of naturally occurring drugs, mostly herbal, though drugs of animal and mineral origin are also used in Unani Medicine.

In Unani Medicine, single drugs or their combinations in raw form are preferred over compound formulations. Further, the *materia medica* of Unani Medicine being vast, the medicines are easy to get for most of them are available locally. The naturally occurring drugs used in this system are symbolic of life and are generally free from side-effects. Such drugs as toxic in crude form are processed and purified in many ways before use.

The Greek and Arab physicians encouraged poly-pharmacy and devised a large number of poly-pharmaceutical recipes which are still in vogue. In Unani Medicine, although general preference is for single drugs, compound formulations are also employed in the treatment of various complex and chronic disorders. Since in this system stress is laid on the particular temperament of the individual, the drugs



A page from the book *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf li-man 'Ajiza 'an al-Ta'līf* showing some surgical instruments.

are prescribed according to the temperament of the patient, thus accelerating the process of recovery and also eliminating the risk of drug reaction.

Surgery (*Ilāj bi'l-Yad*) has always been a part of treatment in Unani System of Medicine since ancient times. In fact, the ancient physicians of Unani Medicine were pioneers in this field and had developed their own instruments and techniques. Abū al-Qāsim al-Zahrāwī, an Arab Unani physician, wrote a book entitled *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf li-man 'Ajiza 'An al-Ta'līf* with illustrations of surgical instruments, consisted of 30 volumes on topics of medicine, surgery, pharmacy and other health sciences. The last volume, comprising 300 pages, is dedicated to surgery. He treated surgery as a separate subject for the first time in the history of medicine. He described several procedures, and techniques, including extraction of cataracts, removal of kidney stones, tonsillectomy, tracheotomy, craniotomy, caesarean section, dentistry, etc.