An appraisal of Unani fundamentals in the management of Humma (fever)

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ABSTRACT

The fever has been described in Unani System of Medicine in a very elaborative manner. Besides controlling raised body temperature, the management also comprises other measures to achieve holistic treatment. The basic modes of treatment viz. Ilaj bil Ghiza (dietotherapy), Ilaj bil Tadbeer (regimenal therapy) and Ilaj bil Dawā (pharmacotherapy) are taken into account as per the basic principles of treatment in Unani medicine. Use of cold water and other drinks (mashroob) reduces body temperature, while use of easily digestible and jayyadul kemoos diet like maal ash, ma’al shaheer, kashak-as-shaheer, ush-e-jaau etc. are given in small amounts, just to provide strength to tabiát and to avoid further increase in morbid matter. Various types of drug used to manage different kinds of fever are Dafe Humma, Muaarriqat, Musaffirwat wa Muaddilat, Mubarradat wa Musakkinat, Mudirrat, Muqawwi Kabid and Mufarrehat.

Keywords: Humma, Fever, Unani, Management, Basic Principles

INTRODUCTION

The fever has been described in Unani System of Medicine in a very elaborative manner. Different types of fever, their pathophysiology, clinical presentation and management are illustrated very clearly.

Besides controlling raised body temperature, the management comprises other measures also to achieve holistic cure. The management includes basic modes of treatment viz. Ilaj bil Ghiza (dietotherapy), Ilaj bil Tadbeer (regimenal therapy) and Ilaj bil Dawā (pharmacotherapy) step by step according to the well defined principles laid down in Unani System of Medicine. Therefore, to manage raised body temperature patients are advised to take barid mashroobat (cold beverages), then some procedures of regimenal therapy like cold sponging, ghusul-e-barid (cold bath) etc. is done, and finally some medicines are prescribed as per need.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to categorize the different means of management of fever under the headings of well known methods of treatment of Unani Medicine. Unani physicians have extensively discussed the line of treatment of fever, but in scattered manner. In this paper an effort has been made to explore these guidelines of treatment and their rationality under specific headings, so that a quick review can be made while discussing the basic principles of management of fever.

The details of all modes of treatment and their possible mechanism of action (the way they normalize the body temperature) and how they support the body to combat the ailing condition of fever is described as follows:

ILAJ BIL GHIZA (DIETOTHERAPY)

Basic concept of Tib-e-Unani (Unani Medicine) is that tabiát (Medicatrix naturae) is the real muallîj (physician), hence it becomes necessary to protect and strengthen this tabiát and diet management plays a vital role in it. Therefore, if the subject is strong enough to fast, it is better to do faaqā (fast/ avoid meals), so that the tabiát remains free from the digestive process and may pay full attention for the restoration of health.

The patients of Humma yaum should not be advised faaqā (fast/ avoid meals), as it is supposed that this fever will subside within a day or two, and will not affect the tabiát too much. But the patients of humma yaum ishâliya (fever with loose motions) in which the etiology is tukhma must be advised faaqā1.

And if it is not possible to do faaqā (fast), Ghiza-e-lateef wa jayyadul kemoos (light and nutritious diet) is given, so that...
the tabī‘at (Medicatrix naturae) remains strong enough to fight with the ailing condition. If fever is acute and it is supposed to continue only for a week and quwwat/ tabī‘at is not too weak, then only liquid diets like ma‘ul asl, julab, juice of pomegranate and milk etc. may be given to the patient.

When it expected that this fever will continue for 2 weeks then Milk, Barley water, Pearl sago (Sagoodana) should be given. If it is difficult to assess the period of fever, then after a few days of using ma‘ul asl the patient should be given ma‘ul sheeer, as it is easily digestible, produces good quality blood and moreover the temperament of ma‘ul sheeer is barid ratab.

In general all patients of fever should be given liquid diet as it helps in normalizing the body temperature by improving diuresis and diaphoresis like ma‘ul asl, sikanjbeen, aab-e-anar, aab-e-naranj, aab-e-tarbooz, julab, sharbat-e-gul, ma‘ul sheeer, kashak-us-shaeree, Milk, etc. But old patients and children should never be put on fasting as they are too weak to tolerate it1,2,3.

Diets advised to the patients must be barid (cold) and ratab (wet) and in temperament as it will antagonize the effect of fever because it is a disease of soo-e-mizaj haar yabis (deranged hot and dry temperament) and use of such diets are very much rational as per the basic principles of management of Unani Medicine i.e. ilaj bil zid (antagonistic therapy)4.

Reduction in the quantity of diet is beneficial in all types of fevers as tabī‘at of the patient confronts with the disease more efficiently and effectively5.

According to Ibn-e-Sina ‘aash-e-jau’ (Barley water) is the best diet for the patients of fever. Ibn-e-Sina has cited 12 qualities of aash jau:

1. Thick in consistency
2. Viscid
3. Easy to swallow
4. Energetic
5. Provides wetness
6. Easy to digest
7. Cold in temperament
8. Quenches the thirst
9. Easily absorbed
10. Does not stick in the alimentary passage
11. Enhance the phlegm
12. Non-flatulent

The patients in which use of aash-e-jau is contraindicated may be given ma-ul asl, but it has less nutritive value and sikanjbeen may be another substitute for ma-ul asl4.

While managing the patients of haar mizaj (hot temperament) or safravi mizaj (bilious temperament) usually sour syrups are used and sweet syrups are avoided except sharbat neelofar, which can be used in such patients. If sour syrups are being used it should be well diluted. Sikanjbeen and other sour material are used to prevent the tendency of fever to change into humma safravi (bilious fever)5.

Patients of fever should not be given fatty meals, because it may increase the morbid matter except roghan badam sheerin as Unani physicians have advocated its use in the management of fever.

If the diet of the patient of fever is not regulated according to the principles as mentioned, it may lead to the formation of akhl-e-ghaar saleha (bad humours) and may enhance the quantity of morbid material, therefore may increase the course/ severity of the fever.

If food is given to the patient, it should be given during waqfa (afebrile phase) or during lowest temperature so that it can be digested properly. Therefore, the patient should be empty stomach when the body temperature rises so that tabī‘at (Medicatrix naturae) may concentrate to eliminate the causative factor of fever rather to divert towards the digestive system2,6.

Regarding use of cold water in fever following rules are made by the physicians of Unani system of medicine:

- Cold water is neither always beneficial nor always harmful.
- Fever is like fire, therefore water is the best mean to counter it, for high grade fevers cold water is medicine and cure in itself; hence Shaikh Bu Ali Sina says: the patients of humma ufoonia (infective fever) should not be stopped to use cold water and the patients of humma safravi (bilious fever) must be given cold water.
- In high grade fever cold water provides strength to the quwwat-e-tabāia/ tabī‘at (Medicatrix naturae).
- Cold water often helps quwwat-e-tabāia/ tabī‘at to remove morbid matter from the body through vomiting, urination, sweating and even through loose stools; therefore it is wise to give cold water to the patients of high grade fevers1,3,7.
- Patients get relief form humma muharraqa (high grade fever) when given plenty of cold water until it induces chills/ rigors, this will normalize the temperature or will convert humma muharraqa into humma balghamia (phlegmatic fever)6.

But cold water should be used with precaution in patients of fever with following conditions:

- Morbid matter is thick
- Cold & cough or any respiratory disorder
- Deranged temperament of stomach or liver
- Inflammation in any vissera
- Pain
- Debilitating condition
- Anaemia

Patients of humma safravi (bilious fever) should be given cold water except in those subjects who have weak innate heat, and in those patient also who are not habitual for drinking cold water6.

The Sikanjbeen quenches the thirst in fever, cools the hiddat of Safra, and keeps the oral cavity wet and moist. Sirka (vinegar) of the sikanjbeen breaks the heat of Safra moreover it converts Ghaleez (thick) morbid matter into Lateef (thin) making it easy to remove from the body, whereas Honey provides innate heat and nutrition to the ailing body6.

In case when cold water is harmful, cold Sikanjbeen is the best substitute3.
If fever is associated with inflammation in liver then only Sikanjbeen should be used to combat the fever.6

If constipation is a concomitant presentation in the patients of fever then no food should be allowed until the constipation is relieved and very first emphasis is given to clean the bowel. Stasis of jua (faecal matter), the tabiät (Medicatrix naturae) cannot give full attention to manage the fever. Moreover constipation leads to flatulence and fulness of abdomen. In a state when the bowel is free from the faecal matter the tabiät (Medicatrix naturae) works more attentively, efficiently and properly to normalize the body functions. Thus it is necessary to clear the bowel first.

Another concept to manage the constipation first is that; if the bowel is not clear and remains full of jua (faecal matter), the tabiät (Medicatrix naturae) cannot give full attention to manage the fever. Moreover constipation leads to flatulence and fullness of abdomen. In a state when the bowel is free from the faecal matter the tabiät (Medicatrix naturae) works more attentively, efficiently and properly to normalize the body functions. Thus it is necessary to clear the bowel first.

For the management of constipation, well defined guidelines are there like:

- Only laxatives should be used and purgatives should be avoided (purgatives weaken the tabiät of the patient).
- Laxatives used should be cold and wet in their temperament like:
  - Saboo-e-aspghol (aspgol husk)
  - Gulqand maah tabait
  - Khameera banafsha
  - Tamarhindi (tamarind pulp) in large quantity
  - Aalu Bukhara (plum pulp) in large quantity

Use of above mentioned mulayyanat (laxatives) are the best options as they have laxative as well as mubarrid and musakkim properties to lower the body temperature to normal.

In high grade fever aalu bukhara, zulal tamar hindi with shakar or anar tush with ussara shaljam with shakar may be used to manage constipation.7,8

If there is qulani (severe constipation) with fever, kashak aab should be given to remove the faecaloliths along with mild enema. Shaikh Bu Ali Sina advocates using Mild purgative enema (huqna) instead of oral purgative in this condition. Mild enema clears the bowel only by local effect at the lower alimentary canal without disturbing the whole body whereas purgatives affect the whole body as it gets digested and absorbed leading to disturbance of the normal physiological mechanism. The following nuska may be used for this purpose:6

Aab-e-Tarbooz, Aab-e-Khiyar, Aab-e-Kaddu, Aab-e-Khurfa, Roghan-e-Gul with little Kafoor

ILAJ BIL TADBEER (REGIMENAL THERAPY)

Ilaj bit Tadbeer includes keeping the patient in a cold and moist ambient. This can be achieved by following ways and all these tadbeer lowers the body temperature of the patient.

- Keep the patient in a water tub
- Spraying cold water mixed with itr-e-khas, arg-e-gulab or arg-e-kewda
- Waving moist hand fans in front of the patient

One of the important tadbeer to lower down the raised body temperature in fever is to put a cloth over the forehead, abdomen and on the hands and feet of the patient and wetting this cloth in ice cooled sirka and arg-e-gulab.

If these tadbeer fail to bring the body temperature normal, then the patient is being drenched in cold water known as ghul-e-barid. In case of high grade fever every possible measure should be taken to lower down the temperature in order to avoid any complication.

ILAJ BIL DAWA (PHARMACOTHERAPY)

The drugs used are daf humma, muárriqat, musaffiyat wa muúddilat, mubarridat wa musákkim wa mafjarrahat.

Dafe Humma lowers the body temperature by virtue of its innate property. Khaksi has an enormous effect to lower the raised body temperature. Khaksi (Sisyriam irio), Karanjwah (Caesalpinia bonducella), Bada-aaward (Fagonia araba), Kankan (Cinchona officinalis), Atees (Aconitum heterophyllum) are used for this purpose.5,8,10,11

Muárriqat are drugs which induce sweating. Perspiration helps in lowering the body temperature by taking away latent heat from the body. Muárriqat also helps to get rid of the fever by removing the morbid matter from the body that is why the sweat of a patient of fever is foul smelling as it contains mawad-e-fasida (noxious matter). Pudeena (Mentha piperita), Badranjwah (Melissa officinalis/ Nepta cataria), Gal-e-Babuna (Matricaria chamomilla) are mostly used Unani medicines for this purpose.9,11

Musaffiyat wa Muúddilat-e-dam also lowers the body temperature by decreasing the ghilyan and ufoonat of the blood. According to the concept of tibb-e-Unani there is ghilyan (excessive heat) in the blood in case of humna ufoonat. To decrease the ghilyan of the blood it is necessary to use some muúddilat-e-dam. These muúddilat-e-dam normalize the excessive heat of the blood by virtue of its mizaj barida (cold temperament). Aalu Bukhara (Prunus domestica), unnab (Zizyphus vulgaris), gilo (Tinospora cordifolia), tamar hindi (Tamarindus indica) are being used for this purpose.9,8,10,11

Musaffiyat not only detoxifies the mawad-e-fasida (noxious matter) produced by infection. This detoxification takes place either by making the morbid/ noxious matter removable from the body or by nullifying its toxicity. Musaffiyat also checks the infection and reduce the production of morbid/ noxious matter. Most of the musaffiyat being cold in temperament also acts as coolant of the blood. Therefore, musaffiyat act in various ways to control the raised body temperature and to restore healthy blood and healthy body. Chiraita (Swertia chirata), shahtara (Fumaria officinalis), gilo (Tinospora cordifolia), chobchini (Smilax china), ushba (Smilax ornata) are being used for this purpose.9,10,11

Mubarridat by virtue of its mizaj (temperament) and cooling effect lowers the raised body temperature to normal. According to Ibn-e-Sina, luab ispghol, beehdana, aab khurfa, rub-us-soos are bil-quwa and bil-féal cold (by virtue of their strength and action), therefore these are the best musakkim/ mubarrid.5 Kafoor (Cinnamomum camphora), tabasheer (Bambusa arundinacea), rehan (Ocimum sanctum), khurfa siyah (Portulaca oleracea), qinnab (Cannabis sativa), aspghol (Plantago ovata) are being used for this purpose.5,9,10,11
**Muqawwi Kabid** medicines are also a part of prescription for hummiyat. One aspect of using *muqawwi kabid* drugs is that it protects the liver/body from the *mawad-e-fasida* (morbil matter) produced during fever. Another aspect is to produce *akhlat-e-saleha* in a greater quantity and of best quality. Aftimoon (*Cascuta reflexa*), kasaundi (*Cassia occidentalis*), kutki (*Picrorhiza kurroa*), baranjasiif (*Artemisia vulgaris*), afsanteen (*Artemisia absinthium*), zarishk (*Berberis vulgaris*), bathua (*Chenopodium album*) are being used for this purpose.

**Mufarrehat** are used to boost the *quwwat-e-manaât* and it gives the feeling of well being to the patient. Rehan (*Ocimum sanctum*), badranjboya (*Melissa officinalis/ Nepta cataria*), sandal (*Santalum album*), tukhm tarbooz (*Adiantum capillus-vulgaris*), kutki (*Portulaca oleracea*) and it helps to regulate the body temperature in a natural way and finally *ilaj bil dawa* with *dafe humma, muârriqat, muâddilat-e-dam wa musfïyat, mubarridat, muðirrat and muqawwi kabid* drugs. Use of all these drugs lowers the raised body temperature by different ways, i.e. by their cooling effect, detoxifying the body from morbid/noxious matter and by providing strength to *tabiät* as discussed above in detail.

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