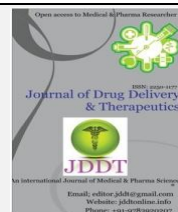


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Review Article

Cancer (Sartan) amongst women and its preventive approach in Unani system of medicine

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ABSTRACT

Cancer has been defined as, malignant growth characterized by the uninhibited proliferation of cells, often affecting healthy tissues locally or throughout the body. Cancer is not a new disease some of the cancers that most often affect women are breast, colon, endometrial, lung, cervical, skin, and ovarian cancers. The most significant risk factor for cancer is age; two-thirds of all cases were in those older than age 65 years, Owing to its high incidence in nature, it is the second leading cause of death after cardiovascular aetiology. Unani or Greek-o-Arab medicine originated in Greece about 2500 years back and is based upon the four humours theory, Unani scholars believed that the body contained four humours (*Akhlaat*) any imbalance of these fluids will result in disease and excess of black bile (*Sauda*) in a particular organ site was thought to cause cancer (*Sartan*). The world's oldest recorded case of breast cancer hails from ancient Egypt in 1500 BC and it was recorded that there was no treatment for the cancer, only palliative treatment. According to inscriptions, surface tumours were surgically removed in a similar manner as they are removed today. So it is an effort through this paper to highlight the preventive measures mention in the classical Unani literature for cancer prevalent amongst females and some of the cancers can be prevented by avoiding the accumulation of abnormal humours inside the body.

Keywords: Akhlaat, Sartan, Preventive measures, sauda

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INTRODUCTION

In Unani system of Medicine cancer has mentioned under the name of *Sartan*, which is an Arabic word which means Crab, because a cancer "adheres to any part that it seizes on in an obstinate manner, similar to a crab. In Unani literature the basic cause of disease is change in (*akhlat*) Humours with respect to their quality and quantity. When the black bile (*sauda*) deviates from its normal quantity and quality.¹ Cancer is a clonal acquired genetic disease caused by alterations in genes that are important for normal cellular functions (proto-oncogenes and tumour suppressor genes), and characterized by uncontrolled cell growth and metastasis. In addition to uncontrolled cell proliferation, some cancer cells have the ability to invade other tissues through direct cell migration or through the blood and lymph systems and may affect other distant tissues/organs.¹

Women are pivotal contributors to society in their role as mothers, individual, family member and as citizens if the health of a woman is poor her contribution to the society will also decrease and leading to an imbalance in her family as well as in the economy of her country.

Cancer is one of the major cause for the morbidity among women, most common cancer affecting the health of a woman breast cancer, cervical cancer, ovarian cancer, uterine cancer and endometrial cancer which projects large number of new cancer diagnosed cases that will going to reach 22 million in next two decades up from 14 million in 2012.²

Breast Cancer

It is the most commonly diagnosed cancer amongst women it can be characterized by pressure of lumps around the breast with irregular edges, painless hard or soft mass swelling on a part of the breast under the arm around the collar bone. Skin irritation breast pain nipple pain or nipples inward retraction, scaly lesions are the common symptoms found.

Overall Burden

According to ICMR in 2012, breast cancer accounted for nearly 25% new cases and 15% of all cancer cases death amongst women, In India the age adjusted rate of breast cancer is as high as 25.8 per 100,000 women and mortality 12.7 per 100,000 women. In the year 2016, there

were 1.5 lakh new cases of breast cancer, representing 10% of all cancers.³

Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among Indian women, Cervical cancer remains without showing any symptoms till it becomes invasive and goes into the nearby tissues, the most common symptoms includes the normal vaginal bleeding including postmenopausal bleeding, bleeding after sexual intercourse or unusual discharge from the vagina and back pain.⁴

Overall burden of the Disease

Around 85% of the Global burden of cervical cancer has been observed in the developing countries it is the second most common cancer in India and accounts 17% of all cancer related death among women.⁵

Although HPV (human papillomavirus) is the most common cause of cervical cancer, there are other factors that increase the risk of death. These include genital infections, tobacco use, long-term use of hormonal contraceptives, and co-infection with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus).⁶

Ovarian Cancer

It usually affects the middle age, the one who have attained menopause but it may develop in younger women as well. It is usually diagnosed in the advanced stages with 71% patients diagnosed in stage 3rd and 31% in stage 4th.⁷ It is often remains asymptomatic in its early stages the most common symptoms include abdominal pain, bloating, trouble with eating, a feeling full quickly frequent urination, pain during intercourse Although the ovarian cancer affects anyone, certain factors may also increase the risk of getting it, these may include old age, family history of ovarian cancer, genetic abnormalities etc.⁷

Overall Burden

It is the second most common type cancer amongst all Gynaecological cancer and has the worst prognosis with a 5 year survival approximately. In India, the ovarian cancer incidence (age-adjusted rate per 100,000) in different population-based cancer registries is reported to range from 1.7 to 15.2 for the year 2012 to 2014. An increasing trend of this cancer has been observed since 1982 to date. The projected number of cases for this cancer in India for 2015 and 2020 are 45,231 and 59,276, respectively.⁸

Endometrial Carcinoma and Uterine Sarcoma

Endometrial Carcinoma and Uterine Sarcoma are the two main types of uterine cancer, cancer of the endometrium is the most common gynaecological malignancy. In develop countries it is ranked as the 6th the most common cancer amongst women. In India endometrial cancer has the second most common malignancy after cervical cancer and is characterised by vaginal bleeding, pain in pelvic region, palpable mass, unusual weight loss and spotting.

Overall burden

In 2014, US population almost 25.7 per 100,000 cases of endometrial cancer has been reported every year with the no. of death 4.6 per 100,000 women. In India patient with five year survival rate have a good outcome as compare to the global status, study documented that 95% of 5 year survival rate has been seen amongst Indian women, prognosis of the uterine sarcoma is quite poor because of its asymptomatic nature which affects the time of the diagnosis, recurrence rate and distant metastasis.⁹

Unani Concept of Cancer (Sartan)

In Unani system of Medicine cancer has mentioned under the name of *Sartan*, which is an Arabic word which means Crab, as it stick to its prey like a crab. Sartan has been defined as a type of malignant, melanotic swelling which can occur anywhere in the body.^{10,11}

According to Ancient Unani scholar's human body have four basic fluids, called as humours (*Akhlaat*). These are Blood (*Dam*), Phlegm (*Balgham*), Yellow bile (*Safra*) and Black bile (*Sauda*). The humours are vital spirits that course through the blood vessels, exert control over the body's metabolism, and influence the function of all physiological systems. the concept of cancer has been described by many eminent scholar viz, *Galen* (131-210AD), *Al-Razi* (865-925 AD), *Al-Zahrawi* (939-1013 AD) and *Ibn-e-Sina* (980-1037AD), Cancer has been a disease of Black bile humour (*Sauda*), it is caused by an imbalance of this humour, or when one or more humours become out of balance along with it, In severe cases, all four humours may be disordered.¹⁰ It is believed that cancer is the end stage of the degeneration of the metabolic efficiency of the body. The extinguishing of the innate heat (*Hrrat-e-Gharizia*) brought on primarily by incorrect diet and other imbalances in various aspects of life, usually occurring over a long period of time.

Generally, it is developed in those persons whose built is obese and flabby that is one of the reason for its high incidence amongst females particularly in those hollow organs of the body where the causative matter (*Ghair TabaiSauda*) Morbid Melancholic Humour easily gets accumulated viz. Breast, lungs, cervix, and uterus etc.^{12, 13} It starts with small swelling that increases in size with time. The roots of the swelling are deep with prominent vessels and spreads up very rapidly.^{10, 11}

Preventive Measures for Cancer:

Unani Scholars and physician have not only explained the concept of cancer (Sartan) but they firstly focussed upon the idea of prevention of disease, instead of treating them, they have described a chapter on knowledge of protecting the health (Ilm Hifz-e-Sehat) in which they stated as the science of regulating the healthy body condition to preserve health. They have categorized this branch in three major areas as:

- (a) Promotion or preservation of health (*Hifze Sehat*)
- (b) Prevention of disease through non pharmaco-therapeutic approach (*Taqaddum bil hifz*)
- (c) Protection of the susceptible (*Tadabeer Abdane Zaefaa*)¹⁰

By creating a balance between humours and by adopting above mentioned knowledge of protection may lead to decrease incidences of Cancer in following manner.^{10,11,12,13,14,16}

1. The body should be de-toxified from (*Saudawi maada*) Morbid Melancholic Humour.
2. Prevention from (*Garam wa khusk*) hot and dry temperament producing food.
3. Avoidance of alcohol.
4. Fresh and pollution free air for breathing.
5. Avoiding exposure to excessive heat or excessive cold.
6. Stoppage of tobacco chewing and smoking.
7. Avoiding smoked foods and preserved foods etc.
8. Avoiding excess of non-vegetarian diet.

9. Avoiding black bile (*Sauda*) producing diets such as red meat, dried and salted meat and fish, etc.
10. Taking soft and (*Zood Hazam*) easily digestible diets like bottle guard and pumkin etc.
11. Consuming fiber rich diet to avoid constipation.
12. Avoid sedentary lifestyle.
13. Do Moderate Exercise (*Motaadil Riyazat*) for 30-45 min per day.
14. Avoid (*Zehni dabao* & *Zehni Inteshaar*) mental stress and anxiety.
15. Avoid (*Nafsiyati Awamil*) extreme emotions, e.g. anger, fear, sadness.
16. Lead a spiritual peaceful life.
17. Sleeping for six to eight hours.
18. Ensuring proper (*Istifragh*) evacuation, urination, perspiration and menstruation.
19. Plenty of oral fluid to avoiding dehydration.

Some of the preventive measures for different cancers are as follows:^{15,16}

Breast cancer:

- Regular Moderate Physical Activity
- Decrease consumption of the alcohol
- Limit exposure to radiation
- Avoid delayed Marriage
- Plan Pregnancies early
- Breastfeeding

Cervical cancer:

- HPV vaccination for girls
- Health education
- Sex education
- Education about the benefits of using condom
- Male circumcision
- Screening programme
- Ensuring access to effective treatment
- HIV testing for women at high risk
- Ablative surgery
- Radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

Ovarian cancer:

- Taking oral contraceptives for more than 3 years may reduce the risk up to 50%
- Breastfeeding
- Full term pregnancy
- Having surgical procedures like hysterectomy or tubal ligation.

Uterine cancer:

- Avoidance of Hormonal therapy.
- Maintaining an Optimal body weight
- Proper Breast Feeding
- Maintaining Healthy Lifestyle and Being Physically active

Conclusion

Since cancer has been considered as a fatal and dreaded disease, People of all age groups and gender are equal at risk, but there are some cancers that are only prevalent amongst in female population. The physicians of Unani system of medicine were well aware with the in depth knowledge of cancer, its causes and prevention as well, so by adopting these preventive measure mentioned by them, along with modern medicine techniques the standard of living can be improved amongst the female population as well.

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