



Review Article

A Contemporary Review of Dietetics Contemplating Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariya Al Razi Perspective

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A B S T R A C T

In Unani System of Medicine a great emphasis is given on curing certain ailments by the administration of specific diets and also by modifying the food in term of quality and quantity. In addition to this nutritional properties of several foods are also capable of pharmacological actions. Ilaj-Bil-Ghiza (Dietotherapy) an offshoot of regimental therapy envisage the phenomena which encourages person with a chronic disorder or the bodily dysfunctions, that was especially brought on by a faulty or imprudent personal lifestyle, to consciously adopt reasonable and pragmatic changes to his or her diet, in order to undo these changes and for the attainment of optimum Health.

There are recorded evidences that ancient Egyptians advocate the therapeutic use of food to sustain a healthy body. But Rhazes knew much about nutrition and diet. In this regard, many of his highly developed concepts are accepted by today's nutritional science. It is a well known fact that many of Rhazes exceedingly developed concepts are very well acknowledged by the researchers in nutritional sciences. *Manfe' al aghzie va mazareha* (Benefits of food and its harmfulness) written by Rhazes is one of the accomplished guide of foods that includes several health benefits of various foods as well as it also advocates how to avoid harmful effects of several food. Another notable contribution of Rhazes in the field of Nutritional Sciences is *Ma iaghdam men al favakeh va al aghzieh va ma* (Fruits, diet or drink before or after meal). So it is worthy to say that Abu Bakr Mohammad Ibn Zakariya Razi will be considered as the physician having the expertise in the field of the Dietetics.

Keywords: Ilaj-Bil-Ghiza, Rhazes, Dieto-Therapy, Dietetics

Introduction

It is a prudent fact that Ghiza (diet) is contributed as one of the basic necessities of life. Though during ancient period the peoples are of the opinion that diet is only to satisfy the hunger or satiety, but with the rise of medical science people

began to understand the dietary significance and assumed that it plays an important role to preserve health. It also plays an important role to recover from various ailment. It is only in 19th century A.D that dietotherapy has become a noteworthy specialty where as Unani physicians were way ahead in incorporating dietotherapy as a separate principle



of treatment as evident by Unani literature. The present appraisal is an earnest effort to highlight the salient features of dietotherapy both prophylactically and therapeutically as enunciated in conventional literature of Unani medicine. There have been dietary recommendations to combat several health issues as described by well known Unani physicians. But Rhazes knows much about nutrition and diet. In this regard, many of his well established concepts are acknowledged by today's nutritional discipline.^{1,2}

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi Literary Treatise

A renowned Iranian scholar Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi (865 to 925) commonly known as Rhazes in the west was an, researcher, physician, and alchemist. He was born in Rey, nearby Tehran is a city which is marked as birthplace of this great Physician. Rhazes was among the outstanding physicians and medical scholars of his time and made remarkable contributions in the fields of theoretical and practical medicine. Rhazes was appointed as the chief of the main hospital in Baghdad because of his expertise and reputation, and for a while as a court physician of the emperor of that era. Rhazes was among the two greatest physicians of medieval Iran. Avicenna (937-1037) was the predecessor of Rhazes and was regarded by him as an honorable and distinguished scholar.^{2,3}

There are over 200 books and treatises on medicine that was very well written by Rhazes beside alchemy, philosophy, and religion. The most prominent of his books was the encyclopedia "The Virtuous Life (al-Hawi)" which is known in Europe also as "The Large Comprehensive" or "Continens Liber (Jameh-al-Kabir)" it comprises of nine volumes. This book "The Virtuous Life" contains various medical subjects in detail and also contain a valuable criticisms on concepts of Greek and Aristotelian. Many innovative views are expressed in the work of Rhazes and hence many scholars consider him as a greatest physician of the Middle Ages. In addition to "The Virtuous Life" and "Doubts about Galen," the most notable of his books and treatises on medicine were "Outcome of the Science of Medicine (Daramad-i Bar Elm-e Pezeshki)," "The book written on formation of small stones: Renal stones and bladder stones (Ketab-dar Padid Amadan-e-Sangrizeh)," "The book on Intestinal Pain (Ketab-dar Dard-e-Roudeha)," "The book on the specific Diseases of Children," "Proving the Science of Medicine (Isbat-e-Elm-e-Pezeshki)," "About the Liver (Dar Hey'ateh Kabid)," "About the Heart (Dar Hey'ateh Qaalb)," and "A remarkable Treatise on Smallpox and Measles (Al-Judari wa al-Hasbah)" is valuable work of this great Physician.^{2,3,4}

Early example of a clinical trial were also given by Rhazes, when he divided his patients suffering from meningitis (al-siršam) into two groups. Rhazes also treated one group with bloodletting while the other group did not get the treatment

that shows the scientific temper of this renowned Physician.

One of the great saying of this humble, generous and kind hearted Physician is laudable to be mention here "The doctors' aim is to do well, even to our enemies, so much more to our friends, and my profession forbids us to do harm to our kindred, as it is instituted for the benefit and welfare of the human race, and God imposed on physicians the oath not to compose mortiferous remedies.", Rhazes, AD 865-925.³

Dietetics is considered to be as the scientific study of nutrition, or the food and drink we consume in our diet on a regular daily basis. In contrast to this, the study of how food, or particular components of it, can contribute to the long-term treatment of chronic ailments is best applied in the subject of Dietotherapy.⁵

Dietetics In Holy Quran

The Holy Quran contains numerous verses on healthy eating that gave stress on physical and spiritual health of the mankind. Holy Quran also encourages how to eat only healthy and pure food. Holy Quran says Healthy eating not only satisfies hunger but also has an effect on how well we worship.

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ كُلُّوْا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ

الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٣١﴾

O mankind ! eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy."⁶

Hadith on Dietetics

The importance of diet and how the balance is to be maintained is also very well stated by the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, as reported by Miqdam ibn Ma'd said, "The son of Adam cannot fill a vessel worse than his stomach, as it is enough for him to take a few bites to straighten his back. If he cannot do it, then he may fill it with a one third of his food, a one third of his drink, and a one third of his breath."⁷

Ilaj-Bil-Ghiza (Dietotherapy)

As Dietotherapy has become a core specialty in 19th century A.D. where as Unani physicians were way ahead in incorporating dietotherapy as a separate principle of treatment as evident by Unani literature. Unani Medicine deals with different types of diet like Ghizae Dawai, Dawae Ghizai, Ghiza Qaleelul Taghzia, Ghiza Jayadul Kaimoos, Ghiza Raddiul Kaimoos, Kaseef Ghiza, Lateef Ghiza, Motadil Ghiza and many more. The principal therapeutic agents and Modified diets serves as a preventive measure as well as therapeutic aid in some metabolic diseases and chronic diseases.⁸

There is recorded and established evidences dating back to the ancient Egyptians as they advocate the therapeutic use of food to maintain a healthy body. There have been dietary recommendations to combat several health problems as described by renowned Unani physicians in ancient Greek and later in Roman such as Galen, Hippocrates, and Dioscorides.

There are several books written by many Unani Scholars on the subject of Dietetics that lays great stress on treating certain ailments by the administration of specific diets or by regulating the quality and quantity of food. Some of them are:^{9,10,11}

- Manafe-ul-Atima wal Ashriba, by Rabban Tabari
- Kitab fil Aghzia by Rabban Tabari
- Fit Tadbir-al-Asehha Bilmakul Wal Mashrub by Hunanin Bin Ishaq
- Kitab Aghziya-Tul-Marza by Najibuddin Samarqandi

As stated by Unani Physicians in addition to nutrition properties several foods are also capable of acting through their pharmacological actions. For example many foods are laxative, diuretic and diaphoretic. Sagu is good for diarrhoea. It is also time tested remedy that the weakness of certain organs is corrected by administering the same organ of an animal by the way of food; for instance, disorders and weakness of liver are treated by feeding the patient on liver. Likewise heart, kidneys and brain are administered in treating the ailments of these parts and it results in definite cure also.¹¹

Rhazes Dietetics thoughts and Perspective

The Great chemist, Physician, Astronomer and Philosopher Rhazes (865-925 AD) is regarded as a factual Nutritionist and Dietician of that era and a pioneer of Dietetics. Rhazes wrote over surplus books in different branches of sciences. Some of his work drew attention to the notion that: "Nutrition is an important part of treating diseases and health care procedures".¹²

In this regard, many of his highly developed concepts are accepted by today's nutritional sciences. His contributions in the field of Dietetics are as underneath:^{13,14,15,16}

- **Manfe' al aghzie va mazareha** (Benefits of food and its harmfulness)

This is a comprehensive encyclopedia of foods including the health benefits of certain foods as well as advice on how to avoid harmful effects of certain food.

- **Ma iaghdam men al favakeh va al aghzieh va ma** (Fruits, diet & drink before or after meal)

Rhazes have a firm belief that some fruits are suitable as a starter and others are more preferable to be given as a dessert.

- **Keifiat al eghteza** (Temperament and quality of foods)

It is regarded as valuable treatise on Dietetics as in this classical literature temperament, nutritional value, and qualities of food are well classified.

- **Al aghziat al mokhtasareh** (Brief facts about foods)

Unfortunately, this treatise is not available. Its name is mentioned in old bibliographies. But it shows that precise efforts were made to explore the subject of food by this renowned scholar.

- **Ata'me al marza** (Food for patients)

This classical literature explore and reflects the expertise in the clinical aspect as he clearly described the list of food and drink suitable for patients during the treatment period for the betterment of the health.

Desensitization Diet¹⁷

The allergenic food is given in gradually increasing amounts over a long period of time. Some established facts are also found in the treatise "Manfe' al aghzie va mazareha". Desensitization approaches for food allergies are generally at the research stage. They include:

- Oral immunotherapy, which involves building up tolerance by eating a small amount of (usually baked) food
- Sublingual immunotherapy, which involves placing a small drop of milk or egg white under the tongue;
- Epicutaneous immunotherapy, which injects the allergic food under the skin
- Monoclonal anti-IgE antibodies, which non-specifically reduce the body's capacity to produce an allergic reaction
- a Chinese herbal formulation, FAHF-2, another non-specific approach currently being studied in peanut allergy; use of probiotics

DASH Diet^{18,19}

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, also known as the DASH diet, is a therapeutic diet used to treat high blood pressure. The diet encourages you to eat foods that contain high amounts of potassium, magnesium, calcium and fiber to help lower your blood pressure. It also recommends you limit your intake of sodium to 1,500 mg a day if you have high blood pressure. The DASH diet is considered an overall healthy diet and has also been shown to be helpful for those wishing to lose weight and prevent the onset of diabetes. The diet includes high amounts of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, along with lean sources of protein, low-fat dairy foods, nuts, seeds and legumes.

Avoidance diet²⁰

An adequate diet which excludes the food (s) that causes allergic reactions (e.g. milk-free, egg-free diet, wheat-free

diet, etc.) “Manfe’ al aghzie va mazareha” of Rhaze is having valuable suggestions in this regard. An elimination diet, also known as exclusion diet is a diagnostic procedure used to identify foods that an individual cannot consume without adverse effects. Adverse effects may be due to food allergy, food intolerance, other physiological mechanisms (such as metabolic or toxins), or a combination of these.

Conclusion

So it is well established that Rhazes knew much about nutrition and diet as stated in his valuable treatise. In this regard it is to be stated that many of his highly developed concepts are accepted by today’s nutritional science as they are having a scientific background and firm justifications. It is also true to mention here that many of his concepts make suitable candidates for further studies in food medicine. A book with special title on nutrition and dietetic medicine established him as one of the pioneers in nutritional science though many of them are to be explored.

The remarkable field of Dietetics is ever growing and subject experts continue to find out a innovative and different ways to communicate nutrition information to the public by utilizing the information on nutritional sciences present in Unani treatise for the treatment as well as for the prevention, restoration and protection of health. It is a need of the hour that subject of the dietetics under the perspectives of Unani thoughts and fundamentals are to be validated on scientific parameter. It enlightens a valuable path and synergies the emerging trends of Dietetics, Dietotherapy and different distinction of dieting regime that are to be incorporated in our fundamental based researches.

Conflicts of Interest: None

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