



Review Article

# An Overview of Geriatric Care and Concept of Anti- Aging in Unani System of Medicine

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## A B S T R A C T

Geriatrics is the science that deals with the study of disease and their treatment peculiar to old age. Aging is a multi-dimensional process and refers to the process by which organism proceed through a physical deterioration of the body. According to philosophy of Unani Tibb, the people above 60 years of age are considered as *Mashaik* (aged/ older people), while in modern medicine geriatric care is concerned with the people aged 65 years and above. According to Unani System of Medicine, human life is categorized into four stages.

- *Sinne Namu*
- *Sinne Shabab*
- *Sinne Kahoolat*
- *Sinne Shaikhookhat*

According to Unani Concept, in *Sinne Shaikhukhat* (old age) decline in *Hararate Ghariziya* (innate body heat) occurs due to increase in *Tahleel* of *Ratoobat*.

*Ghariziya* (dissolution of innate moisture) leads to decline in *Quwa* (faculties) which results in *Nuqsaan e Afaal e Tabayiyya* (decline in normal function).

Management for adulthood ailments are often successfully attained by *Ilaj bil Tadbeer wa Ghiza and Ilaj bil Dawa*.

Unani *Atibba* (physicians) described different types of regimes (*Tadabeer*) for the care of *Mashaikh* (i.e., *Riyazat, Dalk, Hammam, Nutool, Hijamah, Fasd*) and management through plant, mineral and animal origin drugs which delay the aging process.

In the present paper the concept of ageing, principles of geriatric care, its prevention and management in Unani System of Medicine are going to be discussed in detailed.

**Keywords:** Geriatric, Unani Management, *Hararate Ghariziya, Tadabeer e Mashaikh*



## Introduction

Geriatrics is the science that deals with the study of diseases and their treatment peculiar to old age. Ageing may be a universal organic process that results in progressive and deleterious changes in organism.<sup>1</sup>

Ageing can also be defined as, a process of gradual progressive and generalized impairment of functions leading to the loss of adoptive responses to stress and increasing the risk of age-related problems.<sup>2</sup>

Geriatrics essentially cares with the people aged 65 years and above.<sup>2</sup>

The Unani Philosopher Hippocrates, proposed about *shekhukhat* or ageing as a process resulted from the gradual and progressive loss of *Haratat* (heat) from the body, and thus body becomes *Barid* (cold) and *Yabis* (dry).

Galen viewed about ageing that there's humoral imbalance due to loss of bodily heat which lead to cause *Barid-Yabis* constitution of the body resulting with decline in organ function and reduction in vitality and muscular strength.<sup>3</sup>

According to Unani System of Medicine, human life is categorized into four stages which is understood as *Asnaan-e-Arba* viz:

- *Sinne Namu* (Temperament is hot and wet (*Haar Ratab*) and is valid up to the age of 30 years)
- *Sinne Shabab* (Temperament is hot and dry (*Haar Yaabis*) and is started from 30 to 40 years of age)
- *Sinne Kahoolat* (Temperament is cold and dry (*Baarid Ratab*) and is applicable from the age of 40 to 60 years) and
- *Sinne Shaikhookhat* (Temperament is cold and wet (*Baarid Yabis*) and is applied to people above 60 years aged<sup>4</sup>

## Mechanism of Aging in Unani Perspective

*Ratoobate Ghareeziya* play key role for the equilibrium of *Hararate Ghareeziya*. When quantity and quality of *Ratoobate Ghareeziya* changed, it directly affects the *Hararate Ghareeziya*. Excess diminishing (*Tahleel*) of *Hararate Ghareeziya* affects in two ways:

- (i) Diminished *Hararate Ghareeziya* results in change in *Huzoome Arba'*. If changing occurs in *Huzoome Arba'* then results in abnormal humours or *Ratoobat* which advocates the change in their *Mizaj* which is prominent factor for aging.
- (ii) Diminished *Hararate Ghareeziya* also diminishes the *Quwa* or faculties. Diminished powers unable to perform in proper function; that's also promotes the method of aging. According to author of *Kamil Al-Sana'a*, Ali Ibn Abbas Majoosi quoted regarding death as "Death occurs in living organisms, when *Fasaad* occurs in *Hararate Ghariziya*.

## Health Problems of the Aged

- Physiological
- Psychological
- Social
- Pathological

### Physiological Health Problems

These are normally occurring and are due to ageing process (eugenic changes) resulting in disabilities, for example, senile cataract, glaucoma, nerve deafness, bony degenerative changes, physical outlook (wrinkles of the skin).

### Psychological Health Problems

- **Mental Changes:** Loss of memory (senile dementia) related to impaired comprehensive and impaired intellectual performance.
- **Decline in Sexual performance:** It leading to physical and affective disorder.
- **Isolation:** Death of the kith and kin, lack of care by the younger generation, social maladjustment and such other results in isolation.
- **Depression:** Symptoms like lack of interest within the activities, sadness, unexplained crying spells, irritability, loss of memory, confusion, disorientation, change of appetite and sleep pattern, persistent fatigue, lethargy and aches etc.
- **Social Health Problems:** These are poverty (Due to retirement, loss of income, more expenditure thanks to ill health), maladjustment with younger generation.

### Pathological Health Problems

- **Diseases of Heart and Blood Vessel:** hypertension, atherosclerosis, myocardial infarct, cerebrovascular diseases like stroke.
- Cancer, Diabetes Mellitus and Obesity
- **Disease of Bones and Joints:** Spondylosis, myositis, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, gout, atrophic arthritis, fractures etc.
- **Disease of Respiratory System:** bronchitis, asthma, emphysema etc.
- **Disease of Genitourinary System:** BPH, incontinence of urine, dysuria, UTI
- **Disease of Nervous System:** Alzheimer and Parkinson's disease.<sup>5</sup>

To prevent and manage the geriatric problems *Tadabeer Mashaikh* are often divided into following manner:

- *Ilaj-bil-ghiza* (Diet therapy)
- *Ilaj-bil-tadbeer* (Regimenal therapy)
- *Ilaj-bil-dawa* (Drug therapy)

### Ilaj-bil-ghiza (Diet Therapy)

Renowned Unani physician have suggested certain principles about *Ghiza* (Diet) of older people.<sup>6</sup>

Diet shouldn't be taken before *Hammam* (bathing), because it may end in producing obstructions within the vessels.<sup>7</sup>

Beet root and *Maa-ul-Shaeer* (Barley water) are the simplest diet for *Mashaikh*, because it helps to evacuate abnormal humors from the body. In fruits, figs and Al-Bukhara are advisable. As they need the property of being *Mulayyain* (Laxative) and also features a high nutritional value.

Milk is useful for them as long as they will digest it easily, goat's milk and donkey's milk is taken into account best for them. It's recommended for nutrition and *Tarteeb* (moistness), because it passes down quickly.<sup>8</sup>

### **Ilaj Bit Tadbeer (Regimenal Therapy)**

Regimenal therapies are mostly non-medicinal procedures for promotions and protection of health.

- **Riyazat (Exercise):** Elderly people should perform *Moatadil Riyazat* (moderate exercise) regularly like walking, or slow riding consistent with their body condition and tolerance.<sup>7</sup>
- **Dalk (Massage):** *Dalk* may be a sort of exercise used for removal of toxins from the body. It strengthens the body and muscles. In elderly people *moatadil dalk* (moderate massage) (which is completed slowly and softly with hands, without exerting much pressure) should be done especially on those part of the body which become weak, It should be done without oil (with a piece of coarse cloth) or with oils.<sup>8</sup>
- **Hammam (Therapeutic Bath):** *Hammam* may be a sort of medicated bath with objectives to extend the *Hararat-e-Ghariziya* (innate heat), to evacuate waste products through skin and to enhance *Istehala* (metabolism) of the body. It should be done regularly with fresh and lukewarm water a minimum of once during a week or consistent with body strength of elderly people.

### **Ilaj Bil Dawa (Drug Therapy)**

Prevention of *Wabai Amraz* with *Tiryaqi Advia* (antidote) is suggested in our system since ancient times.

- *Tiryaqiyat* strengthens the guts, keeps the *Quwa* (faculties) strong and stimulate *Hararat-e-Ghariziya* thus helps *Tabiyat* to guard the body from harmful effects of morbid materials.
- Numerous common old-age complaints like insomnia, lethargy, constipation, and backache etc. are often effectively managed by some common drugs like *Jawarish Jalinoos*, *Majoon Falasfa*, *Khamira Gaozaban*, *Khamira Abresham*, *Khamira Marwarid*, *Majoon Azaraqj*, *Sharbat Faulad* etc.<sup>2</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Unani Atibba intensely depicted process of aging and care of

it within the caption of *Tadabeer-e-Mashaikh*. With life-style modification and adopting various regimens and principles of Unani System of medicine, some age related diseases are often prevented while certain Geriatric changes are often bogged down to a greater extent in elderly people.

**Conflict of Interest:** None

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