



Review Article

A Multifaceted Review of Theories and Health Care Practises Prompted by Ancient Greek Under the Paradigm of Health

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A B S T R A C T

Ancient Greek civilization is one of the oldest civilizations in the history of mankind. Present modern civilization is grateful to Greek contribution in different sector especially in medical science. The humoral theory asserts that the human body consists of four humors which represent the cardinal fluids. The cardinal fluids are blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm. Each humour is associated with a different organ and season. Tabiyat is an ultimate developer of the body to create the healthy environment within the body and prepare to fight against the disease. In ancient Greek medicine illness was initially regarded as a divine punishment and healing a gift from the gods. "Healthy mind in a healthy body" was the main component of the Hippocratic philosophy. Three main categories were observed in the Hippocratic provision of care: health promotion and mental care and art therapy interventions. The aim of this paper is to present the Different theories and philosophy of health and the provision of care at a physical and mental level in ancient Greece.

Keywords: Humors, Tabiyat, Health, Diseases, Greek

Introduction

The classic period of Greek medicine was the year 460-136 B.C. The Greek enjoyed the reputation of the civiliser of ancient world. They thought men to think in terms of 'why' and 'how.' An early leader in Greek medicine was Aesculapius (1200) B.C. Aesculapius bore two daughters: Hygiea and panacea. Hygiea was worshipped as the goddess of health and panacea as the goddess of medicine. Panacea and hygiea gave rise to dynasties of healer (curative healer) and hygienist (preventive medicine) with different philosophies. The dichotomy between curative medicine and preventive medicine began early. Aesculapius is still cherished in medical circles: his staff entwined by serpent continues to be the symbol of medicine.

Hippocrates was the greatest physician in Greek medicine and is renowned as "Father of Medicine." He studied and classified diseased based on observation and reasoning. He challenged the tradition of magic in medicine and initiated a radically new approach to medicine.¹

The aim of this paper is to present the Different theories and philosophy of health and the provision of care at a physical and mental level in ancient Greece.

Humoural Theory (NAZARIYA-E-AKHLAT)

The first fundamental theory of the Greek system was established by Hippocrates. He believed that the body of the individual is composed of four basic elements collectively called Anasire Arba viz Arz (Earth), Ma (Water), Hawa (Air),



Aag (Fire). These humours have their own temperaments as blood (hot and wet), phlegm (cold and hot), yellow bile (hot and dry) and black bile (cold and dry). The body has the simple and compound organs which get their nourishment through Akhlat Arba. These are generated in liver by the nutrient components of the ingested food and liquids. These humours exist in normal balance and normal quantities. Thus, health is regarded as a state of body in which there is equilibrium in the humours and functions of the body are normal in accordance to its own temperament and the external environment. When the equilibrium of the humours is disturbed and functions of the body are abnormal in accordance to its own temperament and environment disease occur.²

Concept of Tabiyat

Greek scholars describe the concept of Tabiyat which is an ultimate developer of the body to create the healthy environment within the body and prepare to fight against the disease. If Tabiyat is strong then a man became healthy and does not suffer from any disease. A man becomes prone to disease easily if it is weakened. The Tabiyat may be defined as the sum total of structural, functional and psychological character of the human being. According to Hippocrates, there is a special ability hidden in every individual called the defensive mechanism of the body and in unani it is called as Tabiyate Muddabare Badan. This Tabiyat is the best physician and maintains the equilibrium of four body humours. For the maintenance of health, the quantity and quality of these humours should be in equilibrium. Broadly speaking Tabiyat is considered as the real healer of the body and the role of the Tabeeb (physician) is to aid this Tabiyat.³ Rabban Tabri has mentioned in his book Firdousal Hikmat that Tabiyat is an administrative power of the body. The function of administration of the body is accomplished by Tabiyat with the help of many powers called Quwwa of the body like Quwwate tabaiyya, Quwwate haiwania and Quwwate nafsanah. Thus, the main role of the Tabiyat is to provide the general administration as well as defence or immunity to the body. Unani physicians recommended improving the body immunity and strengthening the Tabiyat by restoration of health and the management of diseases. For this purpose, they have mentioned various drugs under the headings of muqawwe azae raisa, muqawwe badan, muqawwe asab, muqawwe qalb, muqawwe jigar etc.⁴

Concept of Umoor-E-Tabbiya (Natural Factors)

According to the Greek scholars they believed that the human body is composed of seven natural and basic components called Umoore Tabaiyah which are responsible for maintenance of health. These are Arkan (Elements), Mizaj (Temperament), Akhlaat (Humours), Aaza (Organs), Arwah (Vital forces), Quwwa (Faculties) and Afaal (Functions). For the proper functioning of the body

all the above components should be present and work in coordination with each other. The loss of any one of these basic components or alteration in their physical state could lead to disease or even death.⁵

Concept of Health and Diseases

In ancient Greek medicine illness was initially regarded as a divine punishment and healing a gift from the gods. From 5th century BCE Greek practitioner identify the causes of illnesses rather than spiritual ones and this led to a move away from superstition towards scientific enquiry. Greek medical practitioners explore the connection between cause and consequence, symptoms of illness and the success or failure of various treatments.

The distinction between the mystical and physical worlds are often indistinct in Greek medicine. The God Asclepius was considered a dispenser of healing but also a highly skilled practical doctor. The god was called upon by patients at his various sanctuaries to give the patient advice through dreams which the site practitioners could then act upon. Grateful patients at the site often left monuments which reveal some of the problems that needed to be treated, they include blindness, worms, lameness, snakebites and aphasia. Lifestyle and such factors as warmth, cold and trauma were discovered to be important factors in people's health and they could worsen the symptoms and severity of an illness. They believed that a better understanding of the causes and symptoms of a disease helps in to fight against the diseases. The observation of symptoms and their variations became a preoccupation of the Greek doctor.⁶

Asbaabe Sitta Zarooriya (Six Essential Factors for Life)

Greek scholars have also given great importance to the prevention of the disease and promotion of health than cure. There is an influence of surroundings and ecological conditions on health of human beings. There are six factors, which are essential for the maintenance of good health called Asbaabe Sitta Zarooriya. Unani scholars' states that these factors should be balanced in terms of quality, quantity and sequence in order to sustain good health. These essentials are as follows:

Hawae Muheet (Fresh Air): Good and clean air is most necessary for health, many diseases occur due to changes in the air. Ibne Sina described in his book Canon of Medicine that the alteration of atmosphere relieves the patients of many diseases. He also emphasised that the need of open airy houses with proper ventilation, playgrounds and gardens in the cities so that everyone has plenty of fresh air and a proper ecological balance is maintained.

Makool Mashroobat (Food and Drink): The food that we eat should be fresh, free from putrefaction and disease-producing matters. The drinking water should also be pure.

Harkat wa Sukoone Badania (Body Movement and Repose): To maintain perfect health the body requires exercise as well as rest. certain diseases can also be cured by giving the rest of the body while some are cured by the movement of affected organs. For proper treatment of Inflammation and fractures it requires complete rest. On the other hand, disease such as paralysis require specific movement.

Harkat wa Sukoone Nafsania (Mental Movement and Repose): Psychological factors such as gladness, mourning, fear, anger etc. have an adverse effect on human health. Certain diseases like tuberculosis, hysteria and mental disorder are caused by emotional strain and maladjustment. When a physician deals such cases, he should do his best to take all these factors into account. This type of diseases treated by illaj nafsania (psychological treatment). This type of treatment cures the disease without using medicines and sometimes by administration of drugs along with psychological methods. The curative effect of music, pleasant company and beautiful scenery has also been recognised by physicians.

Naum wa Yaqzah (Sleep and Wakefulness): Normal rest and sleeplessness are essential for health. Sleep is an ideal form of rest, physical as well as mental. Lack of sleep causes indulgence of energies, mental weakness and digestive disturbances.

Ehtibas wa Istafraagh (Retention and Evacuation): when waste products are not completely and properly excreted out from the body it produces disease. The natural means of excretion are the diuresis, diaphoresis, vomiting and faeces, and excretion through uterus (in the form of menses), eyes, ears and nose (or respiration). Proper and normal functioning of the excretory processes must be confirmed in order to maintain perfect health. Any disturbance in the normal excretory balances whether it be excess and blockage produce diseases. Unani Practitioners cured numerous diseases by regulating the excretory processes.⁷⁻⁹

Health Care Practices

Asclepius and Hippocrates focused medical practice on the natural approach and treatment of diseases highlighting the importance of understanding the patient's health, independence of mind, and the need for harmony between the individual, social and natural environment as reflected in the Hippocratic Oath. According to the literature, "healthy mind in a healthy body" was the main component of the Hippocratic philosophy. Three main categories were observed in the Hippocratic provision of care: health promotion, interventions on trauma care, mental care and art therapy interventions. Health promotion included physical activity as an essential part of physical and mental health, and emphasized the importance of nutrition to improve performance in the Olympic Games.

It is widely accepted that the foundations of science and the study of physiology, anatomy and psychology in ancient Greece were developed in order to find out the sources of diseases and to promote health status.¹⁰

Moreover, there were the moral obligations of individuals who were working in health and other fields of science. With the increasing developments in medical science, different perceptions were created as to the exercise of medical practice as a consequence of the formation of different medical schools.¹¹

Health Promotion

In primary schools of ancient Greek, Physical activity was a necessary part of the training to promote physical and mental health.¹² Health promotion appeared during the Olympic Games and it included the care of athletes, prevention of injuries, special services provided by instructors called "paidotrivai."¹³ According to Hippocrates's study "on food", for the exercises that were done by athletes, olive oil was used to increase body temperature, warm up and for muscles to be flexible so as to avoid sport injuries.¹⁴ Figs and other fruits with high glucose concentration that provide energy were offered to athletes to improve performance.¹⁵

Mental Care Interventions and Art Therapy

The first classification of mental disorders proposed by Hippocrates included Mania, Melancholy, Phrenitis, Insanity, Disobedience, Paranoia, Panic, Epilepsy and Hysteria. Some of these terms are still used today.¹⁶ Hippocrates said that the brain is responsible for mental illnesses. He believed that mental illnesses can be treated effectively in a similar manner to physical medical conditions.¹⁷ According to Hippocrates, the diagnosis and treatment of mental and physical diseases is based on observation, causes, balance of theory and on the four liquids, blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. Plato's theory mentions that the healing of body and soul may be either true or false, and medicine and gymnastics are classified as true treatments.¹⁶

It was believed that healing the soul through music also healed the body and there were specific musical applications for certain diseases. For example, the alternating sound of the flute and harp served as a treatment for gout. Asclepius was the first to apply music as therapy to conquer "passion."¹⁸ Aristotle believed that the effect of religious melodies that thrill the soul resembles those who have undergone medical treatment and mental catharsis.¹⁹ The ancient tragedies acted as psychotherapy for patients.²⁰ The Theatre of Epidaurus at the Ancient Temple of Epidaurus was the place where "catharsis" or the release of emotions through performance took place. Moreover, "quiet rooms" were designed in which patients would go to sleep so that they could dream of being mentally healthy and it was believed that this would help them to improve their mental health.²¹

Conclusion

It is evident from the above discussion that greek medicine strives to find the best possible ways by which a person can lead a healthy life with minimum or zero sickness. It is totally based on the major approaches of health promotion include improvement of immunity, maintenance of balance in the quality and quantity of humours, moderation of six essential factors of life. the ancient Greeks had understood long ago that "healthy mind in a healthy body" was the key for the physical and mental health of humans. Thus, health care and psychological support aimed to approach the psychosomatic entity and not only the symptoms of diseases. Mental and physical cares were provided parallel to one another, regardless of whether the disease came from the soul or the body.

Conflict of Interest: None

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