



Review Article

# Unani Concept of Fasd (Venesection): A Review

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## I N F O

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## A B S T R A C T

Unani medicine is an assortment of opinions, views, and concepts of the Greek and Arab scholars and is often termed as *Greco-Arab* medicine. It is a traditional method of treatment, established on the concepts of renowned physician-philosopher *Buqrat* (Hippocrates) followed by Avicenna, Rhazes, Averroes and so on. Four modalities of treatment are described, of which *Ilāj bit Tadbīr* (regimental therapy) is one among them. *Ilāj bit Tadbīr* comprises different types of regimes for the accomplishment of health and disease-free life. *Taleeq*, *Dalk*, *Fasd*, *Hijamah*, *Hamman* etc. are various common regimes practised all over the world predominantly in the Middle East. *Ilāj bit Tadbīr* encompasses regimes that try to correct this disruption and help the body to restore itself. According to the Unani philosophy, every individual has a distinctive *humoral* constitution; health is attained when there is balance in the *humors*, and any imbalance leads to a disease condition. *Faşd* (venesection) is a part of *Ilāj bit Tadbīr* which involves blood-letting by placing an incision in specified veins. It is mentioned as a minor procedure meant for excretion of morbid matter which has both preventive and therapeutic benefits. *Faşd* has manifold benefits including *istifrāgh* (excretion) of wastes, removal of *imtila* (plethora), and reduction in viscosity of blood. Hence, if carried out according to guidelines, it serves as an effective treatment modality in many local and systemic disorders. The present paper aims at reviewing the literature to intricately discuss *Fasd* with special mention to Unani medicine.

**Keywords:** Unani Medicine, Hippocrates, *Ilāj bit Tadbīr*, *Fasd*, Humors

## Introduction

*Ilāj bit Tadbīr* (regimental therapy) is one of the leading and most widespread methods of management and cure. The dictionary meaning of the Arabic word *Tadbeer* is 'regimen or systemic plan' whereas *Ilaj* denotes treatment or therapy. Thus, *Ilāj bit Tadbīr* entails the maintenance of general health and care of the diseased person through regime or intervention.<sup>1,2</sup> Regimental therapy encompasses *Riyazat* (exercise), *Dalk* (massage), *Takmeed* (fomentation), *Ildrar-e-*

*boul* (diuresis), *Ta'reeq* (sweating), *Zimaad-wa-tila* (ointment and liniment), *Hammam* (bath), *Qai* (emesis), *Ishaal* (purgation), *Huqna* (enema), *Kai* (cauterization), *Hijamah* (cupping), *Taleeq* (leeching), and *Fasd* (venesection). Out of these regimens, one important regimen is *fasd*. It provides great scope in the management of various ailments.<sup>3</sup> By definition, it is a specific technique of blood-letting wherein a blood vessel is cut and some blood is evacuated from the body.<sup>4,5</sup>

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The concept of Unani medicine states that it is a technique wherein an incision is made to any specific superficial blood vessel and blood having *madda-e-fasida* (morbid material) is permitted to flow spontaneously.<sup>3,6</sup> The aim of this procedure is the removal of *fasid madda* (morbid material), after which superfluous or abnormal *humors* become normal in proportion in the blood vessels. It is also known as venepuncture, phlebotomy, venesection, drawing of blood, blood draw etc.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of *asbaab* (causes), the Unani Sages had classified diseases into three categories, namely:

- *Sue-Mizaj*
- *Sue-Tarkeeb*
- *Tafarruq-e-ittisal*

*Amraze Sue Mizaj* deals with the ailments arising due to atypical alteration in the *mizaj* (temperament) of any organ, organ system and/ or the whole body. These are of the following two types:

- *Sue mizaj sada*
- *Sue mizaj maddi*

In the case of *Sue mizaj maddi*, the diseased/ morbid matter may be existing inside the vessels, tissue space, potential cavities, or may be adherent to the surface.

The encouraged norm of treatment in this condition is the evacuation of *madda-e-fasida* from the body.<sup>7</sup> Venesection is generally indicated in *Damvi Amraaz* (sanguineous) like *Sarsam*, *Shaqeeqa*, *Khunaaq*, *Ramad damvi*, *Judri*, *Khafqaan*, etc. and in the individuals, who are susceptible to diseases that develop because of excess of blood.<sup>7,8</sup> In *Damvi Amraaz*, it is applied as a remedial therapy and then it is recommended as prophylactic therapy. In the current scientific era, venesection has been indicated as unscientific by European physicians because of insufficient evidence-based research, and this novel mode of treatment has lost its utility.<sup>7</sup>

### Material Required in Procedure of Fasd (Venesection)

Venesection is a classic regimen and is done with experts using the best available sterilisation procedures at times. The following materials may be used in this procedure: bandage, gloves, scalpel, cotton, anaesthetic agent, antiseptic lotion, and haemostatic drugs like *Dammul akhwain*, along with emergency medicine.<sup>7,9</sup> Proper sterilisation of venesection instruments such as blade, scalpel, cotton etc. is very important and a suitable sterilisation technique should be used for it. While doing venesection, it is better for the patient to lie down, however, the position may be altered as per the vein that is to be incised. The utmost important work in the procedure is to recognise the vessel to be venesected. The selected vein is to be made noticeable with

the help of a tourniquet at a distance of 4 cm proximal to the site of incision. After this, cleaning of the site of Fasd is prescribed using an antiseptic solution. Also, an anaesthetic agent should be applied at the site of incision, which is to be chosen as per the disease and the patient's condition. The state of patient should be observed throughout the process. If any complication arises during blood-letting, then the process should be ended immediately and the complaint should be treated accordingly. Normally, if there are no complications, Fasd is finished as soon as the speed of blood-letting turns sluggish or after the colour of blood changes from blackish to bright red or the blood consistency gets thin. Eventually, the entire area is then and there dressed and bandage is applied. After completing the procedure of venesection, the patient is advised bed rest for around 6-8 hours. Patients are also counselled to avoid food and drugs of *Har* (hot) *temperament*, *riyazat*, and *hammam*. They are also instructed to take light and easily digestible foodstuffs.<sup>7,10,11</sup> The amount of blood to be taken out in venesection is determined by the disease. In a few diseases, copious blood-letting is suggested, and in some, nominal blood-letting is recommended.<sup>11</sup>

### Common Indications of Fasd<sup>7,8,12</sup>

#### Diseases of Nervous System

For diseases of the nervous system such as *Suda'a* (headache), *Warm-e-dimagh* (meningitis) and *shaqeeqa* (migraine), the temporal vein is prescribed and for *Sidr* (vertigo), and for *Sidr* (vertigo), median cubital vein, located behind the ear, is prescribed.

#### Diseases of Respiratory System

For diseases of the respiratory system such as *Rua'af* (epistaxis) and *Surfa*, cephalic vein is prescribed. For *Zeequn nafas* (asthma), basilic vein is prescribed. For *Zatur riya*, (pneumonia) and *Nafsud dam* (haemoptysis), both cephalic and basilic veins are prescribed.

#### Diseases of Gastro-intestinal Tract (GIT)

For diseases of GIT, such as *Warme meda Har* (acute gastritis) and *Warme tihal*, basilic vein is prescribed. In the case of *Bawaseer* (piles), basilic vein and saphenous vein both are prescribed.

#### Diseases of Urogenital System

For diseases of the urogenital system, such as *Ehtabase tams* (amenorrhoea) in females, saphenous vein is prescribed. In *Kasrate tams* (menorrhagia), median cubital vein is prescribed.

#### Diseases of Joints

Basilic and median cubital veins are prescribed in *Wajaul mafasil* (arthritis) while in cases of *Niqras* (gout) and *Wajauz zahar* (low backache), basilic vein is prescribed.

## Other Diseases

There are many other diseases of eyes, throat, oral cavity, ear, etc. wherein venesection is beneficial. Cephalic vein is prescribed in cases of *Khunaaq* (diphtheria), *Aashobe Chashm* (conjunctivitis), *Warme lissa* (gingivitis) and *Warme halq* (pharyngitis). In cases of *khafqan* (palpitation), and *sonokhus*, basilic vein is prescribed. In cases of *Juzam* (leprosy), venesection of Haft andam is advantageous. In the cases of *Irqunnisa* (sciatica), vein venesection of both basilic and saphenous<sup>7,8,12</sup> veins is beneficial.

## Contraindications of Fasd

Blood-letting must not be executed in the following cases:

- Earlier than 14 or after 70 years of age
- Feverish conditions
- Very cold and hot climate
- Patients suffering from *amraze barida*
- After taking meal
- In the course of pregnancy
- In weak, feeble, and anaemic persons
- In overweight and fatty individuals
- When there is a weakness of liver<sup>2,7,13-17</sup>

## Conclusion

*Fasd* is a classical regime practised by Unani physicians since centuries.<sup>3,7</sup> In the current scenario, venesection is cast aside chiefly on the basis of some modern pathology-based studies.<sup>7</sup> The concept of conventional medicine is different from Unani medicine.<sup>18</sup> The thousand years of meticulous observations of Unani physicians cannot be denied just on the basis of the studies that have been undertaken on small sample sizes. Besides, this classic regimen is also found effective in some studies of this modern time.<sup>4,6</sup> Thus, in the present era, further studies have to be carried out on a large sample size for scientific justification of venesection.

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**Conflict of Interest:** None

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