

Understanding Basics of Menopause in Greco-Arab Medicine: A Review

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Abstract

Sine yaas (Menopause) is the age at which there is natural cessation of menstrual periods. Human female is almost unique among the mammals in that her reproductive life does not continue as her biological life. All women who live beyond the age of 55-60 years and many young agers experience a period of transition from reproductive to non reproductive life. It is assumed that reproductive function in women generally ceases at about the age of 50 years. Unani system of medicine is enriched with concepts and literature of menopause. In Unani medicine, menopause symptoms are dealt in detail. Details of concept of Menopause in unani system of medicine will be discussed in detail in full length paper.

Keywords

Unani System, Menopause, *Sine Yaas*, Ancient System

Received: April 2, 2015 / Accepted: April 30, 2015 / Published online: May 19, 2015

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1. Introduction

According to Unani concept, the whole human body is divided into four age groups, which are considered to carry their particular *mizaj*. The age group of 35-60 years is known as *sinnakahulat* in which *mizaj* becomes *barid* (cold) and *yabis* (dry). In this age, production of *ratubat-e-unsiryah* are decreased, to that extent that they are insufficient to maintain *hararta-e-unsiryah* and all the *quwa* (power) starts deteriorating (6). It is believed that, *Ehtebazhaiz* (stoppage of menses) in women of this age occurs naturally due to change of *mizaj* (1). It was the Hippocrates (460-377BC) who firstly postulated the concept of disease is due to the imbalance of humors (2-5). He mentioned in his book *Tabiatulinsa'an* (Human Nature) *Khilat-e-Sauda* (Black Humor) is *barid* and *yabis* and elderly person are *barid* and *yabis* by temperament so it is dominant in this age group (6,7). *Tibbie sine-e-yaas* (Natural Menopause) is attained at the age of 40 years, sometimes 50 years and sometimes 60 years. The earliest reference of menopause comes from Ebers Papyrus a series of

Egyptian text 1500 BC (9). Aristotle says menstruation normally ceases at the age of 40 years (10).

2. Aetiopathogenesis

In Unani Medicine, the pathogenesis of general diseases has been attributed to three factors viz. *mizaj* (temperament), *tarkeeb* (structure) and *ittesal* (continuity of tissues). Abnormalities of these factors are considered as: *sue Mizaj* (altered temperament), *sue Tarkeeb* (altered structure) and *tafaruq-e-ittesal* (discontinuity in tissues) respectively (11,12). *Mizaj* is a specific and distinct state of an individual reflecting neuro-endocrine, normal menstruation, genoto-metabolic and somato-environmental equilibrium at the optimum functional level of adjustment (13). Unani medicine, as is well known, based on the Hippocratic humoral theory. This theory supposes the presence of four humors in the body viz. blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. The *mizaj* of individual are expressed by word *damawi* (sanguine), *balghami* (phlegmatic), *safrawi* (choleric) and

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saudawi (melancholic) according to the dominance of the humour. Every person is supposed to have a unique humoral constitution which represents his healthy state and any change in this state causes illness of the said person. The severity of the disease depends directly upon the change in equilibrium from *mizaj* (14). Most of the unani scholars are of the opinion that change in the temperament towards the *barid* and *yabis* (*sauda*) is the leading cause of *ahetebasetamas* (Amenorrhoea) at menopause.

According to Hippocrates *khilatesauda* is *barid* and *yabis* in temperament and is dominant in adults, *ehtebasehaiz* occurs in 40-50 years, *sokhilatesauda* is the main cause (6).

According to Nafis *Sauda* is the fourth and last humor of the body and is inferior amongst all humors (15).

According to Ismael Jurjani menstruation ceases after the age of 40 years because the temperament of women changes towards coldness at this age. Blood production in liver also declines (16).

According to Zakariya menstruation stops due to dominance of cold or vicious humors closer to uterus or its vessels due to obstruction or increase viscosity of blood when this amenorrhoea prolonged diseases of uterus would occur. In classical Unani literature it has been documented that various clinical disorders of *amrazesaudavi* like *Ikhtenaaqurrehm* (hysteria), *Mania*, *Melancholia* (Melancholia) can be a result of *Ihtaebazehaiz*. Razi quoted that menstruation may cease due to weakness of liver caused by other associated organs (8).

According to Ali Bin Abbas Majoosi menstruation may cease due to liver disease and obesity as the blood vessel becomes narrow and blood flow is reduced. Saabit bin-Qurrah mentioned that menstruation stops at the age of 35-60 years, once menstruation ceases various diseases and complications occur.

3. Clinical Features

Zakaria Razi mentioned in *Kitabul Hawi* that menopausal women suffer from following sign and symptoms (8)

1. Anorexia
2. Headache
3. Backache
4. Vomiting
5. Pain in lower limbs
6. Fever
7. Constipation

Along with these sign and symptoms various melancholic

diseases would occur

According to Ibn Sina following sign and symptoms occur during menopause (16)

1. Headache
2. Chest pain
3. Sweating
4. Dryness of uterus
5. Various neurological disorders

According to Ibn Sina, Razi and Ismael Jurjani, due to cessation of menstruation women complain of following signs and symptoms

1. Loss of Appetite
2. Whole body becomes heavy
3. Feeling of nausea
4. Pelvic heaviness
5. Back ache
6. Neck pain
7. Oligouria
8. Blackish urine

4. Management

Unani system of medicine has described a well organized line of treatment in the management of diseases. The fundamental principle in the treatment is to restore the normalcy of patient, correction of imbalance of *mizaj* and to restore the balance of humors in the body by evacuation of excessive and deranged/ abnormal humors in the management of *Sinne yaas*. The following pattern of treatment is prescribed by Unani physicians.

A. Correction of *sue mizaj* and elimination of Excessive humour

B. Dietary management

4.1. Correction of Sue Mizaj and Elimination of Excessive Humour

In *sue mizaj maddi (saudawi)* restoration and normalization of humors is done by *tanqiya* (removal of excessive humour) and *ta'deemizaj* (restoration of temperament) with their respective drugs. In *nuzj* (concoction) the *akhlateraddiyah* (morbid matter) are assembled in order to evacuate conveniently from the diseased organ by using drugs possessing properties of *tahleel*, *taqti*, and *talteef*. Once the *akhlata-e-raddiya* (abnormal/deranged humors) are ready for elimination from the superficial and deeper structure of

affected organ after a course of *munzijat*, *istefragh*(elimination) is brought into action with the help of *mushilat*. *Mushilat* (purgatives) are considered to facilitate the elimination of material from the body. *Ta'deelemizaj* is related to restoration and normalization of physiological functions after eliminating the *akhlateraddiyah* from the affected organ. In this phase of the treatment the altered temperament is brought back to normal along with *Muqawwiyyate Rehm*(uterine tonic) drugs by using either alone or with *tadabeer* (regimental therapy)(17,18).

Pharmacotherapy in Unani Medicine

Table 1. List of Single Drugs Generally Used By Unani Physicians In Management Of Menopausal Symptoms

Unani Name	Botanical Name	Unani Name	Botanical Name
1. Bisfajj	Polypodium	Post	Terminaiiachebula
2. Aftemoon	Vulgare	haleelakabuli	Levendulasteochas
3. Haleela siyah	Terminaliaarjuna	Turbudsufaid	Ipomoea turpethum

Table 2. List of Poly Herbal Drugs Generally Used By Unani Physicians In Management Of menopausal Symptoms

Name of polyherbal Formulation	Name of Polyherbal formulation
1. Majoone Najah	6. Joshanda Aftimoon
2. Majoone Lana	7. Moatadil Sharbat Ahmad Shahi
3. Itrifal Zamani	8. Mufarreh Barid
4. Dawaul Misk	9. Khemera Abreesham
5. Khemera marvareed	10. Majoone-e-dabeedul ward

4.2. Dietary Management

Unani scholars prescribe diet to the patient on the basis of humoral theory, so that the correction of the sui mizaj will be enhanced. Following are the few principles generally suggested by renowned scholars

- Avoidance of all those items that are *moallid-e-sauda* and *saфра* (yellow bile and black bile productive) like stale, salty and astringent food items.
- Intake of *Lateef and lazeez aghziya* (light and delicious food items) should be eaten.
- Use of *Murattib* (emollient) diet such as barley water, milk, pumpkin, cucumber, leafy vegetables like spinach, lettuce, purslane etc.
- Use of bilious concoctive fruits such as dampson, orange, lemon and other citrus fruits.(17,18,19)

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that menopause in Unani system of medicine is attributed to *Khilt-e-Saudawi*, *Baris Yabis Mizaj*, obesity and liver disorders. The main symptoms are loss of

appetite, cessation of menses. All the menopausal symptoms can be managed by *Ilajbilghiza*, *Dawa* and *Tadbeer* on the principle of *IajbilZid* which means all the regimens should be used as to contradict the *mizaj* of *Sin-e-Yaas* and by initially giving *Munzijat* then *Mushilat* and lastly giving *Muqawiyat* to restore the lost *Quwat* (Power) due to *munzijmushil* therapy.

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