Medical Science in Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT: Islam is not only a religion but also a complete way of life. It covers every facet of human Endeavour. So when addressing the matter of medication, Islam has a lot to say about it, ranging from its meaning and purpose, to its deployment and efficacy. Thus, in this paper exertion is made to exposing the Islamic concept of medication in the light of the Qur’an and Hadith, based on the following headings, aside the introduction and conclusion: Medical Significance of Islamic teachings, Islamic theoretical basis on Medicine, Quran, Hadith.

Key Words: Islamic medication, Quran, Hadith, Medical significance, Medical Science, Islamic Perspective, Medicine.

Introduction
Islam from its very beginning highlighted the significance of seeking knowledge. The very first Revelation points towards seeking knowledge (Qu’ran 96:1-5). Both the Qur’ân and Hadith stimulate for seeking Knowledge. As the Qur’ân says “O You who believe! When you are told to make room in the assemblies, (spread out and) make room: (amply) room will Allah provide for you. And when you are told to rise up, rise up, Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees) those of you who believe and who have been granted (mystic) knowledge. And Allah is well acquainted with all of you do.”

The Qur’ân invites the man towards the contemplation over the signs of Allah in the universe like the sky and earth for the logical comprehension and fortification of one’s belief in the Creator and for this, Almighty of course has bestowed man with necessary faculties. Similarly, it is said, “He grants wisdom to whom he pleases; and he to whom wisdom is granted receives indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding.” and “He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections: that you may give thanks (to Allah)”.

Qur’ân seeks to purge the human mind of all sorts of superstitions, delusions and prejudices that kills its vitality “But they have no knowledge therein: they follow nothing but conjecture and conjecture avails nothing against truth.”

Humanity is guided by the Prophets from time to time. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did not spare any occasions to get his followers educated. For instance, he gave the assignment of educating at least ten Muslim children each, to some of the captives of the battle of Badr. Thus, teaching the Muslim students was fixed as their ransom. A community that was almost illiterate and ignorant became, with the onset of Revelation, the torch bearers of knowledge and learning, culture and civilization and spread out to every nook and corner of the then known world, under the dynamic leadership of the beloved Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, who declared the acquisition of knowledge compulsory for every Muslim.

A number of Muslim scholars and intellectuals carried out extraordinary research endeavors in almost all the sciences of antiquity along with their own religious sciences either independently or under the patronage of the rulers. Throughout the medieval period of Islam particularly between 8th to 11th centuries or even more the scientific learning by the Muslims reached its zenith. This period witnessed the large scale translation, commentary and abridgment of the ancient works of diverse fields of knowledge including the field of medicine.

Medical Significance of Islamic teachings
Islam advocates of building an ideal human society, wherein its members may be able to cultivate all the physical, mental, and spiritual faculties fully. Therefore, it could not have remained without inspiring its followers to improve their health and hygiene, because the sound physical and mental health is essential not only to enjoy comfort and pleasure of this world, but also to understand the purpose of life as well as relationship with the Creator and His creation. To fulfill this mission that Islam combines spiritual bliss with material wellbeing by exhorting its followers to work simultaneously for both material advantages and spiritual enlightenment, which can be testified by the following Quranic verses as:

“And there are men who say! “Our Lord”! Give us good in this world and good in the hereafter and save us from the torment of Hell fire!”

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“But seek with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on you, the home of the hereafter, nor forget your portion in this world: but do you good, as Allah has been good to you, and do not seek (occasions for) mischief in the Lord! for Allah does not love those who do mischief”.

In these verses, people are enjoined to spend something of worldly use in the way of Almighty Allah duly after fulfilling their own needs. In other words, the Qur‘ān has provided a link for us between the efforts for this world and the efforts for hereafter, nevertheless in this particular Āyah, it is worth noting that the word ‘hereafter’ is mentioned twice (directly and indirectly), while “good of this world” is mentioned only once, thus pointing to the desirability of subordinating the efforts for this world to those for the hereafter.

Islam lays great emphasis on the importance of cleanliness at individual as well as the collective social level by making it an integral part of the religion. Dirt, impurity or filth is the root cause of various diseases, and Allah ordains of cleanliness in the following words in the Qur‘ān:

“O you wrapped up (in the mantle), Arise and deliver thy warning, and your Lord do thou magnify! And thy garments keep free from stain! And all abomination shun!”

Regarding importance of cleanliness there are also many traditions of Messenger (ﷺ) but the following is sufficient to maintain the standard of cleanliness.

“Cleanliness is an important part of faith.”

“Key of Paradise is Prayer and the Key of Prayer is cleanliness (Ablution)”.

Long before the modern medical research could establish the importance and function of sleep in the human body, the Qur‘ān described it in clear terms as an indispensable means of refreshing and revitalizing the mental health and the physical body. Further, it is held as a fundamental characteristic of every living creature, whereas, the Creator himself is in neither need of it, nor does it over take Him. Since both sleep and physical exertion are inter-related and are equally important for maintaining health. The Qur‘ān provides a balanced schedule for mundane life and advises humankind to work (for achieving the means subsistence) during the day and sleep during night, as Allah said in the Qur‘ān:

“And made your sleep for rest, and made the night as a covering, and made the day as a means of subsistence.”

The darkness of a night as a covering, just as the covering protects us from exposure to cold and heat, gives us spiritual respite from buffets of the material world and from the inner activity of our own inner exertions. The day is specially illuminated in order that the life activities of all kinds may be fully exercised. So, night and day is a mercy of Allah. During day, a person can work for fulfilling his mundane needs and during night, the rest and sleep refreshes the person so that he can start the day again with full energy.

Islamic theoretical basis on Medicine

I. Qur‘ān

The Qur‘ān, fundamentally a book of guidance and a code of life enabling the mankind to distinguish between the right and the wrong, halal and haram, legal and illegal. It is not merely a book of science or scientific predictions. Which is based on human experimentation and Qur‘ān stimulates man to see and observe the Allah’s creation and harness from it what is good and refrain from what is filth and impure.

Number of verses of the Qur‘ān and several traditions of Messenger (ﷺ) highlight the medicinal values of many fruits, vegetables, honey, birds, fishes, minerals, milk etc. The Quranic stand on medication is illuminating and is not in any way ambiguous in giving its consent for medication. As Qur‘ān said:

“We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur‘ān that which is a healing and mercy to those who believe: to the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss.”

The Qur‘ān shows the significance of both spiritual as well as physical health and enunciates the importance of healing through prayer and application of meditation. It is more specific on physical healing when it says on the tongue of Prophet Ibrāhīm (A.S.W.) “When I am ill, it is He (Allah) who cures me.”

The verse explains that every cure is from Almighty Allah. In other words, the Islamic stand on the principal of medication and healing revolve around the conception that it is Allah alone who can heal and provide appropriate medication for all forms of physical and spiritual afflictions.

The Qur‘ān is more categorical about the importance of medication for physical health when it refers in the chapter (Al-Nahl) to the chemical composition of honey as of great medicinal value. As Allah says in the Qur‘ān:

“And your Lord taught the Bee to build its cells in hills, on trees and in (man’s) habitations, then to eat of all the produce (of the earth) and find with skill the spacious paths of its Lord! These issues from within their bodies a drink of varying colors, wherein is healing for man: verily in
Honey has been used for medicinal purposes since ancient times and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) guided us that: “There is cure in three substances, a drink of honey, a slash with a knife used for cupping and cauterization by fire. I forbid my nation from Cauterizing by fire.”

The Prophet’s (ﷺ) saying that there is Shiřa (cure) in honey is sufficient to prove the medicinal value of honey.

Of all the revelations, Al-Qur’ān is universal as well as the only authentic book, it is divine guidance, as Allah himself described his book in these words:

“We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur‘ān that, which is healing and mercy to those who believe.”

The Qur‘ān is panacea for the reason that the blessings sought through the recitation of the Qur‘ān serve as cure and remedy for illness. The Prophet (ﷺ) used to recite Ayat al- Kursi, Muwadhatayn, Sūrah al- Ikhlas and the last two verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah for protection from evil and harmful creatures.

II. Hadith

Besides Quranic medicinal notions, a number of Ahādith of the Prophet (ﷺ) address the issues of illness and their medication and the Books of Hadith have separate chapters entitled as Al-Tibb al-Nabawi (Medicine of The Prophet (ﷺ)). This can be considered as the basis for the Islamic medication.

The Prophet (ﷺ) had mentioned various things to cure different diseases, “If you here of an epidemic in any place do not proceed to it; and when it breaks out in your place, do not flee from it. So that the diseases cannot be communicated to other places.”

“Every illness has a cure and when the proper cure is applied to the disease, it end it, Allah willing.”

Another tradition says that “There is no disease that Allah has sent down except that he also send down it’s treatment.”

In another tradition, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “If a fly falls in the vessel of any of you, let him dip all of it into the vessel, and then throw the fly away, for in one of its wings there is disease, in the other there is cure.” In this tradition, it is said that there is disease in one of the wings of fly, and one wing is antidote for that disease. Therefore, this tradition also indicates that Allah has sent cure for every illness, but man needs to research and explore it constantly.

In one more tradition the beloved Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Hold fast with two medicines, honey and the Qur‘ān.”

In another tradition of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), he said: “There is a cure in three substances honey, cupping (act of removing black blood from body and cauterization).” He (ﷺ) instructed his followers constantly to use honey for medicinal purposes. And one of the examples of this instruction reported by Sāhih al-Bukhārī says:

One day a man came to the Messenger (ﷺ) and said, “O Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), my brother is suffering from stomach trouble, the Messenger (ﷺ) said, told him to drink honey, then he went away and next day he came back to say, O Messenger (ﷺ) he drank the honey but the trouble increased, the Messenger (ﷺ) gave him same advice until the fourth occasion, the Messenger (ﷺ) then said, Allah’s word is the truth and the belly of your brother had lied: so he gave him honey to drink again and then he was cured.”

The Prophet (ﷺ) ordered him to give his brother honey, but for few days the disease increased and on the fifth day, he was cured. This indicates that a person needs a medicine with a complete dosage and if anyone would leave to take medicine before taking a complete dose, it will not help his cause.

The Sunnah of the Messenger (ﷺ) is worthy to mention as for as the hygiene is concerned. It includes, washing of one’s hands before have meals, the way of sitting while eating one’s meal, sitting during drinking water etc., regarding cleanliness of body and environment and fight against the environmental pollution as well as epidemics and contagious diseases.

The Prophet’s (ﷺ) medical instructions are not confined to preventive measures alone. However, he has given the greatest possible incentives to his followers to make intensive research in all branches of medical science. As He (ﷺ) said: “O servants of Allah, I treat yourselves medically for a number of diseases but there is a curative for it except one disease and that is senility.”

The Prophet (ﷺ) himself prescribed medicine for a number of diseases. He(ﷺ) treated among other diseases, various kinds of fevers, headache, dropsy, wounds, pleurisy, sciatica, intestinal and heart diseases, ophthalmic, pimpls, anxiety, depression, insomnia etc.

“It is narrated that one day the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) came to Hadrat ‘A’isha (R.A.) and saw a boy with a bleeding nose and said, “what is this: they said , he is suffering from tonsilitis” or a headache. He said “woe unto you I do not kill your children. Let the mother whose child is suffering from this disease scribe Indian costus (aloes) with water and then administer it to the child nose.” When...
Hadrat ‘Ā’ishah ordered that the prescription be followed the boy was cured.\textsuperscript{xxxi}

This tradition of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) clearly shows that he ordered his followers to use medicine and take recourse to medical treatments and not let anyone die as such.

**Conclusion**

It should be emphatically stated that Islam is a total way of life that covers every aspect of human endeavours, it has not left any trouble or illness without submitting solution or cure to it in the noble Qur’an or the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). In other words, Islam has solutions and cures to any trouble or illness that may tempt us to run to unbelievers for solution to any spiritual or physical problem except if the case requires orthodox medication or treatment. Thus, the Muslims should be adequately informed about the Islamic medication in the Qur’an and sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). And those who are blessed with the knowledge should spread and circulate it and not accumulate it for themselves.

**References**

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\textsuperscript{iv} Al-Qur’\textsuperscript{ā}n, 53:28
\textsuperscript{v} Saifur Rahman al-Mubarakpuri, *Ar Raheeql-Makhtum, (The sealed Necter)*, p.15.
\textsuperscript{vi} Al-Qur’\textsuperscript{ā}n, 2:201.
\textsuperscript{vii} Al-Qur’\textsuperscript{ā}n, 28:77.
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\textsuperscript{xix} Al-Qur’\textsuperscript{ā}n, 16: 68-69.
\textsuperscript{x} Muhammad Ibn Ismail al-Bukhārī, Al-Jami al-Sahih, Kitab al-Tibb, Bab al-Shifa fi salas.
\textsuperscript{xxi} Al-Qur’\textsuperscript{ā}n, 17:82.
\textsuperscript{xxiii} Muslim, *Op.cit.*, Book of salutation, chapter; There is a remedy for every Melody and its excellent to get treatment.


xxvi Ibid.


xxviii The type of medicine that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and his followers used to take was nothing like the chemical mixtures that are called “Aqrabathayn” (pharmacopoeia). Rather the majority of their medicine consists of only one ingredient. Sometimes they would take another substance to assist the medicine or make its taste better.

xxix According to Abū ‘Ubaydah “tonsillitis” is a blood related throat irritation. It was also said that this is an ulcer that appears between the ear and throat that especially afflicts young boys. This has been cited from the *Healings of the Prophet* by Ibn Qayyam al-Jawzi.