

## Unani Medicine, Part 3—The Practice Framework

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### Abstract

Unani medicine is an organic synthesis of Greek, Arabic, and Islamic medical knowledge. It enjoys vast popularity in certain parts of the world, and the World Heritage Center, part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Foundation list it as an authentic and still-living form of traditional medicine. Despite these facts, contemporary Western cultures know very little about this ancient form of primary health care.

This article is Part 3 of a three-part series. Part 1 highlighted the historical and civilizational beginnings of this medicine while it also investigated the Arabic and Islamic

worlds' subsequent transformation of it into the Unani medicine practiced today. Part 1 also presented a brief primer on the rich philosophical and spiritual framework defining Unani medicine.

In Part 2 of this article, the author provided some summary remarks about Unani medicine's governing principles and theories, such as the concept of the humors.

Finally, Part 3 focuses on illustrating facets of this medicine's classical and contemporary translations into clinical practice, with further discussion about its various modes of natural therapeutics.

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Because of the obvious difficulties that confronted personalized, physician-to-patient travel and care in the late 10th and early 11th centuries BCE, Avicenna, also known as Ibn Sina, drew up plans for the centralization and standardization of medical operations for the masses in hospitals. Shahid Athar says, "These hospitals kept records of all their patients and their medical care, something done for the first time in medical history."<sup>1</sup>

These hospitals were immense structures with courtyards, and they had features such as lecture halls, libraries,<sup>1,i</sup> mosques, and chapels (they treated people of all religious beliefs), charity wards, kitchens, and dispensaries. Hakim GM Chishti says,

From the tremendous impetus of advancement in medicine that Avicenna supplied, the Arabs took the huddled masses of the sick and established them in sleek and elegant hospitals. Qualified male and female nurses attended all patients. The following account reflects the mood at the magnificent Mansūr Hospital in Cairo, with the amenities arranged for the benefit of all patients "Day and night, fifty reciters intoned the Qur'an aloud. At nightfall, musicians played soft melodies to induce drowsiness in the patients. Professional storytellers entertained the sick with their tales. When the patients left the hospital, they were

given enough money so that they would not have to resume work immediately."<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, even before Avicenna's lifetime and progressive influence, "a separate hospital existed in Damascus for lepers, while even 6 centuries later, in Europe royal decrees condemned lepers to be burned to death."<sup>1</sup> The *bimaristans* (hospital systems) and smaller mobile hospitals (possibly the first ambulances in the world, dedicated to serving under times of civil or community distress, urgency, or emergency)<sup>1</sup> were complex in structure and function.

### Therapeutic Modalities

The philosophies of some European (especially German) movements in the past, such as the back-to-nature movements of the mid-19th century through the early 20th century, have made a transatlantic shift to the United States and become rooted in medical movements there, such as Eclectic Medicine<sup>3</sup> or the Thomsonian Medicine of the late 19th century, the American Medical Vitalism school of the mid-19th century to early 20th century (which was opposed philosophically to scientific materialism),<sup>4</sup> and Nature Cure of the late 19th century

i. "The library of the Tulum Hospital which was founded in Cairo in 872 AD (1100 years ago) had 100 000 books. Physicians had their own extensive personal book collections, at a time when printing was unknown and book editing was done by skilled and specialized scribes putting in long hours of manual labor. Mustansiriyya University in Baghdad contained 80 000 volumes; the library of Cordova 600 000 volumes; that of Cairo 2 000 000, and that of Tripoli 3 000 000 books."<sup>1</sup>

through the mid-20th century.<sup>5</sup> This transfer resulted in a cross-pollination of research, scholarship, practice, and politics. The European movements greatly influenced North American holistic and naturopathic medicine, bridging time and space to unite North American practice with Unani medicine, in which “the patient is kept close to nature during illness.”<sup>6</sup>

The lives of personalities such as Nicholas Culpeper,<sup>ii</sup> Benedict Lust, Henry Lindlahr, and William Kellog, with their applied therapies, provide examples of this North American connection to Unani medicine.<sup>2</sup> In *The Traditional Healer's Handbook*, Chishti says:

By the time of the early eighteenth century, the *Tibb* system was the basis of virtually all medicine in the civilized world, (its sources) being translated and forming the basis of the work of such men as Father Sebastian Kneipp (1821-1897) and Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843), the founder of homeopathy, who is reputed to have known Arabic and read Avicenna's works.<sup>2</sup>

### Food-Based or Dietary Therapies

The objective of dietary therapy (*•ilāj bil ghida*) is proper regulation of a patient's appetite, in terms of quality or quantity, to maintain the balance of the humors and strengthen the vital force. Practitioners accomplish this objective by detailing the patient's food-based protocols as a prescription, such as (1) restricting intake of food, (2) fasting,<sup>7</sup> (3) consuming a liquid diet, (4) ending excess eating, (5) maintaining a semisolid diet, and (6) using a bland diet.<sup>6</sup> The doctor (*hakim*) paid attention to the seasons and the requirements of the body in relationship to the environment to determine the foods to recommend. These foods depended on the “degree of effectiveness of types of

cereals; leguminous plants, vegetables, root crops, or fruits; meat; milk; honey and sweet-meats; water; drinks; and [edible] aromatic herbs.”<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, “Food is one of the most potent and yet safe instruments of establishing balance in a disturbed organism.”<sup>7</sup> Dietary therapy aligns with the Hippocratic proclamation of “Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food,” as well as conforms to his first principle of therapy, which stipulates “first do no harm.” Indeed, Seyyed Hossein Nasr says, “It is not accidental that the Andalusian physician Abū Marwān ibn Zuhr in the 12th century wrote the first scientific work on diet ever composed, *The Book of Diet* (*Kitāb al-Aghdiyah*).”<sup>9</sup>

### Pharmacy, *Materia Medica*, and the Black Seed

Manfred Ullmann discusses the Arab inheritors of Greek knowledge and wisdom with regard to pharmacology and the *materia medica* and indicates that, historically, “it is sufficient to say that Dioscorides was indisputably the greatest authority, that his work was many times translated and elaborated.”<sup>8</sup> These scholars included individuals such as al-Biruni, Ibn-Bajjah (Avempace), and al-Idrisi (a famous geographer whose maps purportedly influenced the maritime travels and adventures of Christopher Columbus).<sup>10</sup>

The dominant therapeutic modality in Unani medicine without a doubt is pharmacotherapy (*•ilāj bil dawā*). The raw materials, the *materia medica*, for this therapy come from the plant (90%), mineral (5%), or animal kingdoms (5%).<sup>7</sup>

### Environmental Regimens

Individuals can take advantage primarily of three regimental therapies<sup>6</sup> as part of Unani medicine's approach.

#### Activity (*Riyādhāt*)

This therapy usually means some form of voluntary movement or exercise with the purpose of achieving (1) fit organs that perform their functions efficiently, (2) better absorption and assimilation of food and nutrition, (3) clearing of pores in the skin, (4) removal of waste products through the lungs, and (5) strengthening of the physique.

#### Massage (*Tadlik*)

Another person provides physical pressure and movement through gentle or aggressive touching, moving, or rubbing of muscles and soft tissues for the purpose of

**Figure 1.** Father Sebastian Kneipp, pioneer of modern hydrotherapy, is shown giving a bath treatment to a patient.



ii. “Culpeper was an herbalist who followed the classical medical precepts of Hippocrates and Galen. A medical populist, Culpeper's mission was to put medicine and natural healing back into the hands of the people ... Culpeper's best known and loved work is his herbal, called *A Complete Herbal* [which has been studied and used by many contemporary naturopathic physicians for academic and clinical practice purposes], which has never really gone out of print since it was first published ... *A Complete Herbal* is Culpeper's treatise and alphabetical catalog of the medicinal plants of his native England, including their astrological correspondences and indications.”<sup>23</sup>

## A Spotlight on the Spiritual Lore and Medicine of the Black Seed

No doubt exists that the most revered and used herb in Unani medicine and in the various cultures of the Middle East and Asia is the black seed (*al-habba al-sauda* or *al-habba al-barakah*), the seed of grace or blessed seed. Its scientific name is *Nigella sativa*.<sup>11</sup>

The Prophet specifically mentions the black seed, exhorting members of his community to “use the black seed, which is a healing for all diseases except *al-Sām*, and *al-Sām* is death.”<sup>12</sup> With such a pronouncement, historians may infer that the Prophet was the first and prototypical *hakīm*. Use of the black seed is very common for devout Muslims around the world who follow the example and recommendations of the Prophet of Islam, especially as he is perceived to conform to that mystical, heavenly, and semidivine human archetype that the Sufis call the Perfect and Universal Androgynous Human Form (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*).

Thus, the Prophet’s statement regarding the black seed elevates and ennobles this plant beyond its investigated scientific benefits.



**Figure 2.** Shows the black seed, also known as *Nigella sativa*.

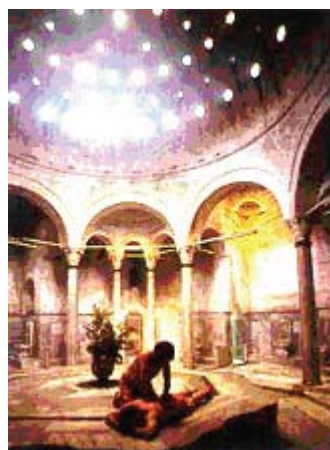
Unani practitioners have posited that “advancements in the methods of analytical chemistry, physiology, pharmacology, and microbiology, etc have led to the discovery of many active principles of the *N sativa* (seed) like nigellicine, nigellidine, nigellimine-N-oxide, thymoquinone, dithymoquinone, thymohydroquinone, nigellone, thymol, arvacrol, oxy-coumarin, 6-methoxycoumarin, and 7-hydroxycoumarin, alpha-hedrin, steryl-glucoside as well as rich amounts of flavinoids, tannins, essential fatty acids, essential amino acids, ascorbic acid, iron, and calcium. The black seed also has a number of pharmacological effects of profound therapeutic value, like analgesic, antiinflammatory, antihistaminic, antiallergic, antioxidant, anticancer, immunologically stimulative, antiasthmatic, antihypertensive, hypoglycemic, antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, and antiparasitic effects.”<sup>12</sup>

achieving (1) a bracing of the body, (2) a relaxation response, (3) decreased body fat, (4) enhanced circulation, and (5) good organ function.

## Steam Baths (*Hammāmāt*)

Found around the world, they sometimes have mineral constituents, like sulfur, leeching out of a terrestrial basin holding the waters; the benefits of these hot baths include (1) releasing waste products and impurities through the skin, (2) reducing the viscosity of the humors, and (3) reducing obesity.

Of the above-mentioned regimental therapies, without a doubt the hydrotherapeutic hot or steam bath (*hammām*) is the therapy that many people have either heard of or possibly experienced. The term *Turkish bath* probably is the more familiar term to Western ears. Many medical and recreational resorts around the world today incorporate traditional steam baths in cavernous, underground, or open-air communal systems.



**Figure 3.** Massage in a Traditional Turkish *Hammām*

The travel web site, “Go Red Sea,” provides a typical description of a *hammām* experience:

Traditionally the *hammām* is made up of a number of chambers with domed white roofs. The rest salon (*istirāha*) is where visitors are received and unrobed. The inner sanctum of the *hammām* is usually set down from the *istirāha*, with further descents into the various steam rooms. The walls of the steam rooms are customarily made from a black stone (*hajar habash*), which holds the heat for a long time. Once you have achieved a good sweat (*ta-rīk*), you then proceed to another warm room where the *hammāmi* greets you.

The *hammāmi* is the person who cleans or exfoliates your body and gives you a (vigorous) massage. One person commented, “I was pummeled, stretched, twisted like a pretzel, and scrubbed with a floor-like brush for about an hour.” You do emerge glowing and gleaming, however, with your metabolism raring and your fat cells pum-



meled and detoxified. Finally, you are returned to one of the outer chambers, wrapped up in a robe, and led to a cubicle to rest and relax and enjoy a mint tea or juice.<sup>iii</sup>

The site also discusses the medical benefits of the *hammām*, which date back to 200 BCE:

Hippocrates stated, “Give me the power to create a fever, and I shall cure any disease.” Essentially, the steam bath induces a hyperthermia, which raises the body temperature above normal. Hyperthermia stimulates the immune system by increasing production of antibodies and interferon (an antiviral protein with cancer-fighting capabilities). A good, healthy sweat can help relieve pain and stiffness of joints and muscles, treat respiratory problems like sinusitis, and ward off symptoms of colds or flu. It is also excellent for detoxification, and especially in conjunction with massage, it can reduce cellulite by releasing toxins from fat cells. Also, increased blood flow stimulates metabolism and rejuvenates the skin.<sup>iii</sup>

On his web site <http://www.greekmedicine.net>, David Osborn discusses the practice of hydrotherapy in the West:

Hydrotherapy enjoyed a great resurgence in the 18th and 19th centuries in Austria and Germany and was a key part of Father Sebastian Kneipp’s system of natural therapeutics, which went on to become the basis for Naturopathy. For example, in many European countries that had hot springs or spa resorts, (hydrotherapy) treatments were a recognized subspecialty of medicine.<sup>13</sup>

### Surgery, Cauterization, and Blood-Letting

Manfred Ullmann’s *Islamic Surveys II* and Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s *Islamic Science* provide illustrated plates (1) demonstrating a Cesarian section<sup>8</sup> from an ancient Arabic manuscript; (2) showing the diagrams for surgical instrumentation<sup>8,9</sup> that Abu al-Qāsim al-Zahrāwī (known to the West as *Albucasis*) developed and used; he was one of the greatest surgeons of antiquity who “took surgery (*jarh*) out of the hands of barbers and put it into the realm of scientific medicine<sup>8</sup>,” and (3) presenting surgical interventions involving hemorrhoidal correction, bone-setting, reductions of dislocations of joints, dental procedures, etc.<sup>9</sup> “The Arabs also used surgery to correct cataracts.”<sup>14</sup>

Al Battata, MD, Department of Pathology, Wright State University School of Medicine wrote in a 1992 letter that many of today’s Unani doctors (*hakīms*) accept that they should refer patients needing surgery to modern medical school-educated-and-trained surgeons. The same hold true for (1) cauterization (*kay*), which provides healing through heating or burning of tissue and which medical practitioners today accomplish with the help of lasers; (2) blood-letting (*fasād*), which releases venous blood to purge toxic or disturbed humoral physiology; and (3)



**Figure 4.** This depiction of the birth of Caesar may be the first illustration of a caesarean section found in the written works of the most famous Muslim chronicler, Al-Biruni (973-1051 AD).

leeching (*ta•līk*), which uses leeches to evacuate corrupt blood.

Historically, other therapies such as cupping (*hajamāt*) and the use of cathartic colonic purgatives (*ishāl*) often went hand-in-hand as supportive or adjunct therapies to surgery as well.

### Pneumatology, Wellness, and the “Infallible Remedy”

*Hakīms* often were part of guilds, craft orders, or philosophical schools of thought that influential political or religious leaders of their time supported. Also, these guilds mostly were attached to one of the many mystical brotherhoods of Islam, known as Sufi *Tarīqahs* (which were spiritually or esoterically oriented Paths or Initiatic Orders leading to God-realization and enlightenment for the aspirant).<sup>iv</sup>

An *hakīm* (male doctor) or *hakīma* (female doctor) not only invested in practicing his or her medicine but also turned his or her mind, soul, heart, and spirit toward Heaven in pursuit of the perfection of the virtues. The very word *hakīm* derives etymologically from other words denoting a physician or doctor as well as from words identifying an individual who has attained a certain level of spiritual *hikmah* (wisdom, sagacity, or saintliness) through the practice of the virtues. These virtues include beauty of character, wisdom, respect and compassion for all of creation, charity through self-sacrifice and altruism, and most important of all, constant remembrance (*dhikr*) of the Divine.

In this light, a natural concern and goal on the part of the *hakīm* is improving the lot of patients with regard to their mental and emotional well-being, not just caring and tending to the health of the physical body.

iii. The website from which this quote was obtained no longer exists. The URL from which the quote was obtained is as follows: [http://www.goredsea.com/en\\_magazine-archivebyissues-article-whatisahammam-magazinearticle.aspx?monthid=may2003](http://www.goredsea.com/en_magazine-archivebyissues-article-whatisahammam-magazinearticle.aspx?monthid=may2003).

iv. For more information on the topic of traditional Sufism, please see works by Martin Lings such as *What is Sufism?*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s *Sufi Essays*, Titus Burckhardt’s *An Introduction to Sufism*, William Stoddart’s *Sufism*, and one of the most profound esoteric expositions on Sufism available to the general public which is Frithjof Schuon’s *Sufism: Veil and Quintessence*.



**Figure 5.** The Wellness Wheel

Unani doctors have always known that wellness is a state of wholeness, which individuals cannot learn through an academic investigation of health and disease. Wellness is a state of total satisfaction and contentment, a state of understanding that everything is as it should be; otherwise, metaphysically speaking, God would not be God and we would not be we.

Now, *hakims* teach us that individuals can approach wellness through various life lessons, experiential methods, and psychospiritual disciplines. Indeed, Lao Tzu explained that “at the center of your being, you have the answer; you know who you are, and you know what you want.”<sup>15</sup> When tending to the soul of a person with guidance (*huda*), the *hakim* often prescribes a variety of treatments for a patient that precipitates a more “balanced, emotionally stable, and successful individual who is able to make better decisions and realize better achievements in life.”<sup>1</sup> The *hakim* accomplishes this goal through the practice of pneumatology, traditional psychospiritual counseling or healing, which includes some of the following subjects: (1) prayers—personal, supplicatory, or intercessory<sup>v</sup>; (2) meditation (*fikr*), often with focused breath (*nafas*) and sacred music or sound<sup>vi</sup>; (3) contemplation or intellection (*tasawwur bil ʿaql*)<sup>vii</sup>; (4) remembrance through repetition of a sacred formula or divine name (*dhikr*)<sup>viii</sup>; (5) recitation of holy scripture<sup>ix</sup>; (6) solitude in nature<sup>x</sup>; (7) visualization<sup>xi</sup>; (8) music therapy<sup>xii</sup>; (9) forgiveness for self and others<sup>xiii</sup>; (10) elimination of unhealthy and disturbed attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors such as arrogance, pride, self-deception, lack of concentration, giddiness, frivolousness, irreverence, degradation of others, forgetfulness, fear of failure, hypocrisy, excessive emotionality, severe anger, and inconsiderateness<sup>xiv</sup>; (11) philosophical counseling<sup>xv</sup>; and (12) pilgrimages to local and international holy sites or cities such as Jerusalem, the Kaʿba, Benares, Angkor Wat, the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Lourdes, Mt Shasta, Mt Fuji, etc.<sup>16</sup>

## The Infallible Remedy

The *Infallible Remedy* is the recitation in the original sacred Arabic language of the first chapter of the Noble Qurʾān, forty one times for forty days. This recitation occurs during the interval between the obligatory canonical dawn prayer and the optional prayer immediately after it. In *The Book of Sufi Healing*, Hakim GM Chishti says:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “In *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* there is a balm for all ailments.” He went on to provide the specific instructions for using this most treasured remedy. ...The accumulated experience of the Sufis confirms that the reading and reciting of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, with true faith and sincere conviction, cures all maladies, whether spiritual or worldly, external or internal. ... The companions (of the Prophet) used to read it for treatment of diseases, both physical and mental.<sup>17</sup>

If, for whatever reason, an individual cannot accomplish this level of intensity or precision in the recitation of the opening chapter of the Holy Qurʾān, as methodically instituted and practiced by the Prophet of Islam himself, the person should “simply recite eleven times: *Bismi Llāh ir-Rahmān ir-Rahīm*.”<sup>17</sup>

- v. <http://www.duas.org/index.htm> is an excellent resource for a list of prayers used for “Curing Ailments.”
- vi. For a concise but profound treatment of this subject from the esoteric point of view, please read Chapter 11 entitled “The Universe of the Breath” in Chishti’s *The Book of Sufi Healing*.<sup>17(pp123-129)</sup>
- vii. <http://muslim-canada.org/tasawwuf.pdf>
- viii. This would be very similar to the Jesus Prayer or the Ave Maria within Orthodox and Western Christianity as well as the tradition of Japa Yoga within Hinduism.
- ix. “The Qurʾān in its totality, and certain sections and verses in particular, is curative of serious conditions not amenable to other forms of treatment. The methods of using the Qurʾān are many: Taʾwīdh (‘seeking refuge from harm or evil’ with God), Daʾwah [‘supplication for help from God’], and Ruqya [reciting sacred verse to a sick person].”<sup>17</sup>
- x. We should remember here the contemporary resurgence of the direct healing power of nature in the movement of Eco-Psychology and all that it has to offer.
- xi. <http://www.leggeattrazione.altervista.org/visualization.pdf>
- xii. “In addition to baths, drugs, kind and benevolent treatment given to the mentally ill, musico-therapy and occupational therapy were also employed. These therapies were highly developed. Special choirs and live music bands played daily to entertain the patients by singing, music, and other light-hearted performances.”<sup>1</sup>
- xiii. For an incredible assessment of the various humoral personality types with regard to personality traits, please visit the following website for further information: <http://www.intraspec.ca/>
- xiv. Sometimes physiologic fever is coincident with such disturbances, but according to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) this type of fever “constitutes a deep spiritual cleansing causing ‘the sins to fall off like leaves being shed from a tree.’ These fevers burn off impurities on the soul level.”<sup>17</sup>
- xv. “In ancient and pre-modern times, people saw the practical value of philosophy as a guide for living ... But then, in the early 1980s, German philosopher Gerd Achenbach decided to revive the old and time-honored practice and offered his services as a philosophical counselor for those seeking to solve their problems philosophically. In 1982, Achenbach founded the Society for Philosophical Praxis to establish philosophical counseling as a profession. Praxis is a Greek word meaning the practical application of a branch of learning—in this case philosophy—to solve life’s problems. In classical Greek astrology and counseling, Praxis also refers to one’s career, life path, or calling. Helping clients find their career or life path is a specialty of philosophical counseling.” For further information about this technique of counseling please see [http://www.greekmedicine.net/therapies/Philosophical\\_Counseling.html](http://www.greekmedicine.net/therapies/Philosophical_Counseling.html).<sup>16</sup>

The following is the opening chapter of the Qur'an in Arabic, translated and transliterated to allow those individuals who don't read Arabic simply to pronounce the words and phrases and thus benefit from the sacred sonic quality of the recitation as it surrounds and penetrates the human body and its immediate environment:

1:1 *Bismillāhi r-rahmāni r-rahīm*

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

1:2 *Al ḥamdu lillāhi rabbi l- 'ālamīn*

All praises to Allah, Lord/Cherisher/Sustainer of the Universe.

1:3 *Ar rahmāni r-rahīm*

The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

1:4 *Māliki yawmi d-dīn*

Sovereign of the Day of Judgment.

1:5 *Iyyāka na 'budu wa iyyāka nasta 'īn*

You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.

1:6 *Ihdi-nā ṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*

Guide us to the true path;

1:7 *Ṣirāṭ al-ladīna an 'amta 'alayhim ḡayril maḡḏūbi 'alayhim walād ḡāllīn*

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed your favor, not of those who have earned Your anger, nor of those who go astray.<sup>18</sup>

## Clinical Quick Notes

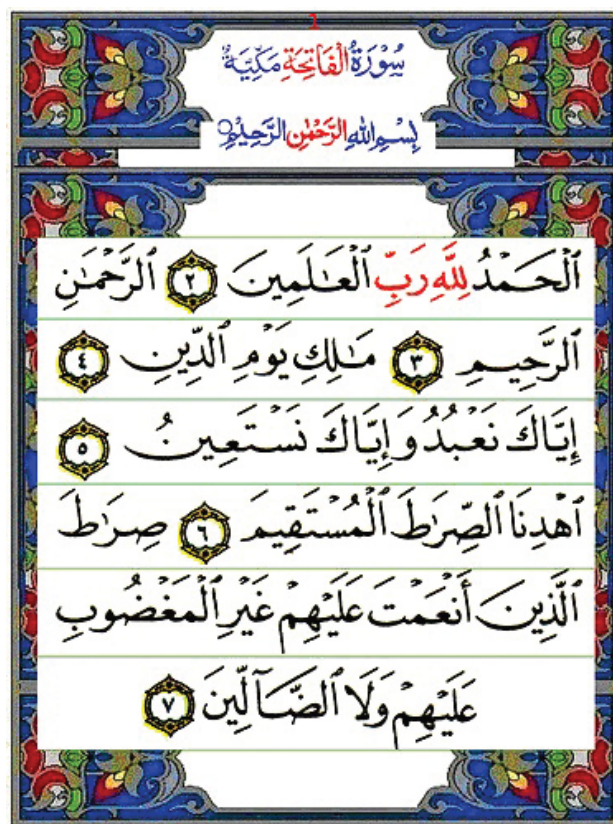
In *The Traditional Healer's Handbook*, Hakim GM Chishti provides some condition-specific protocols that are crucial as true examples of the diagnostic and therapeutic paradigms of Unani medicine. These cases illustrate the clinical mindset and logic of a *hakīm* or *hakīma* in his or her traditional mode of prescriptive authority.<sup>xvi</sup>

**Lethargy (Chronic Fatigue).** "Its cause is the prevalence of moisture in the brain, brought on either by phlegm or blood. Use an enema. Make the person smell vinegar and feed him only light, easily digested foods."<sup>2</sup>

**Melancholy (Sadness, Low Mood, or Depression).** "Its cause is an imbalance of the phlegm humor. Use an enema at waking and at bedtime. Eat only soft foods. Sexual intercourse has a remarkable effect in removing melancholy."<sup>2</sup>

**Tinnitus (Ringing in the Ears).** "Detoxification of the system should be accomplished first, in conjunction with relaxation techniques. It has been determined, however, that those who suffer from a constant ringing in the ears continue to hear the sound even if the auditory nerve is severed...."<sup>2</sup>

**Nosebleed.** "A nosebleed can be controlled by cup-



**Figure 6.** The Opening Chapter of the Holy Qur'an, Written in Arabic

ping the back of the head. If blood is coming out of the right nostril only, also apply cupping to the area of the liver. Apply cupping over the spleen if blood is coming out of the left nostril only."<sup>2</sup>

**Asthma.** "If the cause is phlegm, the remedy is to eliminate first all foods that produce mucus, such as milk, eggs, cheese, fruits, and all sugars of any kind. Syrup of hyssop with warm water three times a day is recommended after a bout with asthma. Rub the chest with linseed oil and beeswax....If the cause of the asthma is too much internal heat affecting the lungs, the remedy pursued should be using cold drinks and a cucumber pomade on the chest....Gargling with added milk and cinnamon with honey is also recommended."<sup>2</sup>

**Coughing.** With black bile, a blackish or dark greenish substance comes out when coughing. Give boiled wheat bran with sugar or honey. Use of cough powder relieves general irritation of the throat and lungs. Use 1/8th teaspoon (in all) of each of the following: skunk cabbage, horehound, African cayenne, bayberry bark, valerian root, and gentian; mix with 3 ounces of molasses and take

xvi. The clinical formulary sections found in Hakim Chisti's two books are indispensable for further reading here. Please see *The Traditional Healer's Handbook* and *The Book of Sufi Healing*.<sup>2,18</sup>



1 teaspoon with hot tea.”<sup>22</sup>

## Summary and Conclusion

Today, Unani medicine continues to thrive as a living school of medicine in most of the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, or more generally speaking, the sub-Himalayan regions of the Orient. Unani medicine competes with three other systems of medical knowledge: Ayurveda, traditional Chinese medicine, and modern Western medicine. Although current “Western antipathies to things Arabic and Muslim”<sup>19</sup> seem to have stalled the advance of Unani medicine into the stadium of complementary and alternative therapies in the West, it is slowly and gradually gaining ground as an optional health-care system for many patients.

“In India, the government has set up a Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM), which also has a licensing system for traditional practitioners.”<sup>14,20,21</sup> Subhuti Dharmananda, PhD, writes: “Unfortunately, details of the overall medical situation in Pakistan and other countries are not as well known or are simply not available.”<sup>22</sup> Dharmananda also indicates that:

India has 18 colleges of Unani medicine with about 100 Unani hospitals and nearly 1400 beds for inpatients. In addition, nearly 900 dispensaries of Unani medicines and about 30 000 registered practitioners exist. The number of persons served by Unani medicine, in India alone, is estimated to be at least 23 000 000 from over 220 villages.<sup>22</sup>

Considering the current upheavals in the United States about reorganization of various aspects of mainstream medicine, no better time than the present exists to discover the beauty and mystery of Unani medicine. This medicine of the East, in addition to Ayurveda and TCM, will reveal itself to be an integral component of any health-care reform platform for those individuals interested in more natural, safe, and effective approaches.<sup>xvii</sup>

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xvii. “Since both Ayurveda and Greek Medicine are constitutionally based, it's not surprising that improving basic constitutional strength, resilience, and resistance to disease should be a very important therapeutic objective in both systems. The methods and modalities employed are also quite similar: diet is first and foremost, followed by simple herbal remedies, lifestyle modification, massage and bodywork, hygienic purification treatments, and exercise/gymnastics/yoga. Being humorally-based, both systems consider self-poisoning, or auto-intoxication with toxic metabolic residues and superfluous morbid humors to be the primary cause of all disease and pathology, for which they prescribe various hygienic purification treatments and regimes. The Ayurvedic word for toxins, *ama*, means *crude* or *raw*. Residues from faulty or incomplete pepsis<sup>21</sup> that haven't been properly integrated into the body and its functioning, therefore impede it. The word *ama* has its equivalent in the word *crudities*, a common term for toxins in Greek Medicine.”<sup>22</sup>