

## THE CONCEPT OF NIQRIS (GOUT) AND ITS MANAGEMENT WITH THE HELP OF REGIMENAL THERAPY: A REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*Gout* is one of the oldest known diseases and described in Unani system of medicine under the term *Niqras*. *Niqris* (gout) is a type of *Waja' al-Mafasil* (arthritis) which is characterized by recurrent attack of acute pain and swelling primarily affecting one joint usually the metatarsal joint of big toe and small joints of hand and feet. It is a commonest joint pain creating problems in day to day life of various people of the world. In Modern drugs used for subsiding acute attacks or lowering serum uric acid are associated with potent adverse effects. Moreover, these commonly used therapeutic agents often, and for various reasons, do not achieve the desired lowering of serum urate levels to below 6.0 mg/dl. The objective of present study was to ascertain the Unani concept described in Unani classical literatures regarding various causes, symptoms and management of this common arthritic disorder by Renowned Unani Physicians with an aim to spread the knowledge for preventive measures, home remedies, regimenal therapy to get relief from the disease and the management of gout by Unani compound formulations, which are not only easily available but also have no side effect on human body. In this regard, we may conclude that spread of knowledge of enormous effective Unani components and general principles of treatment, which are being used by Unani physicians since ancient times, shall be extremely effective in the management of this musculo skeletal disorder.

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### INTRODUCTION

*Niqris* (gout) is a painful and inflammatory condition of big toe of feet.<sup>1,3,4,5,6</sup> *Azam Khan* has defined it as inflammation of heels and toes especially big toe. According to *Ibn Hubal* the joint of big toe is called "Ankorus" and its pain and inflammation is named as *Niqris* or *Naqras* and the site is called *naqroos*.<sup>5,8</sup> In 13th century a scientist, Die Vielerhadouin named it "gout" from a Latin word "gutta" means "fall of matters".<sup>2</sup> *Ibn Sina* has explained that it involves different joints of feet especially metatarsals and tarsals, and this pain can refer to whole feet and sometimes to ears also. According to *Razi* the pain starts from one joint and spread to other joints, even in other feet and also to the bladder, rectum and knees.<sup>1,3</sup> *Azam Khan* has added the information regarding the referral of pain to wrist joint

and fingers of hands.<sup>7</sup> It can also refer to lumber region as mentioned by *Jurjani*.<sup>9</sup> According to *Jalinus*, all the joints pain are same but they are named as gout, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis etc., according to their involvement of joints. It is perhaps said that *Hippocrates* (460-370 BC) recognized the *Niqris* in the 5th century BC and described it an un-walkable disease.<sup>2</sup> He gave various names of gout according to the site involves such as, podagra for the gout in legs, Cheiragra for elbow, Gonagra for knee and Omagra for the gout of shoulder. *Hippocrates* was the first who documented it under hereditary diseases.

### Etiopathogenesis

The Unani System of Medicine is based on the Hippocratic doctrine of four humors (Akhlal) i.e. Blood (Dam), Phlegm (Balgham), Bile (Safra) and Black bile

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(Sauda). A proper balance of Akhlat within the body is essential to maintain optimum health. According to Unani System of Medicine, diseases are due to the disproportionate distribution of humors or Akhlat inside the body. These humors, which are out of proportion (quantity and quality), collect in various parts of body, at times producing inflammation, and are often root cause in the origin and development of a particular illness, one of them being Niqras. In case of Niqras, the humors collect in the joint, thereby leading to pain, swelling and other articular damage.<sup>10,11</sup> According to Hakeem Kabeeruddin gouty matter (noxious matter causing gout/maddah-e-Niqras) is basically a byproduct of liver metabolism, and it look likes the urinary calculus to a large extent. Niqras is one of those disease, which is related to the hepatic and tissue metabolism (hazm-e-kabidi or hazm-e-chaharum).<sup>12,13</sup>

According to most of the Unani scholars humors which is associated with Niqras is mostly phlegm (balgham), which may be either raw phlegm (balghmkham) or it may be admixed with serous humor (mirrah). The other humors are less likely to cause this disease. As such, when propulsive power of the body (Quwwat-e-Dafiyah) tries to expel this matter, a part of it still remain in the body, which accumulate at various anatomical locations (joints, kidney etc.) and produce various clinical features. Simultaneously, the blood and urine level of this substance are also raised.<sup>14</sup>

Avicenna (Ibn-e-Sina) in his famous book "Alqanoon fit Tibb" said that, the matter liable for Niqras may be blood (Dam) alone or blood mixed with phlegm (Dam-e-balghami), or blood mixed with yellow bile (Dam-e-safrawi), or blood mixed with black bile (Dam-e-saudawi) or it may be phlegm (balgham) alone or raw phlegm (balghamkham) alone or serous humor (mirrah) alone or a mixture of humors. But in majority of cases this matter is of serous phlegmatic type (balgham-e-mirrah).<sup>15</sup>

AllamaQarshi has explained the pathogenesis of this disease in detail in his well-known book "Moalijat-e-Nafeesi". According to Qarshi pure phlegm (balgham-e-khalis) cannot reach the joints due to its viscosity and it can do so only after the admixture of serous humors (mirrah) with it. Raw phlegm (balgham-e-kham) although does not flow much towards the joint spaces, it still is the most common cause of arthritis comparatively to the other three humors. According to Qarshi other humors are much less likely to cause this affliction due to their specific properties. Qarshi said that blood (Dam) is a rare cause of Niqras because there are not many blood

vessels around the joints. Yellow bile (Safra) due to its irritant effect or less viscosity will get expelled from the adjacent possible route and a smaller amount reaches the joints. Black bile (Sauda) is a very rare cause due to its high viscosity.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Clinical features**

The clinical manifestation (symptoms and sign) of niqris depend upon the dominant humors (akhlat/noxious matter/maddah-e-niqras). On the basis of responsible humors (maddah-e-niqras), four types are recognized with different clinical features.

#### **Su'alMizajSazij (Simple imbalance of temperament)**

This type of niqris is very rare but if occurs, cure very fast and associated with pain of low intensity, absence of heaviness, swelling, and humoral features over the affected part are the classical symptoms.<sup>17,18,13</sup>

#### **Su'alMizajMaddiMufrad (Single humoral imbalance)**

When the causative matter of niqris is sanguineous (damvi), the skin over the affected part is red in colour, the swelling is prominent, associated with pain and tenderness. Patient feels comfort by the use of cold things and gets trouble from the hot things.

In case of bilious (safrawi) matter, redness is less marked over the affected part compared to damvi and there is yellowish discoloration of skin around the affected part. Swelling is less, but there is warmness, pain of low intense and itching over the affected part. Application of cold things is beneficial to the patient whereas warm things may aggravate the symptoms.

When it is caused by phlegmatic (balghami) matter, the skin of the affected area may either be normal or pale or whitish in colour. Swelling is soft, pain of low grade but present constantly, absence of warmth are the classical features. Patients get benefits by the use of hot things and cold things make worse the condition.

In melancholic (saudawi) type, the skin of affected part is dry without laxity, lustre or warmth, pain is mild, swelling is hard in consistency and the colour of the skin is either slightly black or with a bluish tinge.<sup>17,19,20,21,18,22</sup>

#### **Prognosis**

According to *Raziif the Madda* (matter) is viscid then its prognosis will be poor but if the *Madda* (matter) is thin then the prognosis will be better. If both types thick and thin matters involved collectively then it takes more time to cure, but not more than 40 days. Galen says if humours are raw and urine is thick then its prognosis will be better.

It is said to have poor prognosis when it is hereditary, appears in early age, associated with kidney disease and has frequent episodes.<sup>5</sup> Gout is very rare in elderly people but if it occurs then prognosis will be poor. If it occurs on right side then prognosis will be poor than left side.<sup>23</sup>

### MODE OF TREATMENT

Unani scholars have given certain principles for the treatment of *Niqris*(gout) in their classical literatures. The treatment depends upon the humour involved either acute or chronicity.

### Dietotherapy

Razi, Qamri, has recommended wild birds meat, with sour grapes and spinach. They have recommended yolk of the egg, radish water. They have asked to avoid meat and alcohol. People should not take food immediately after coitus after *Hammam* and increased physical activity. They have laid stress on proper digestion of food. Razi has recommended those foods which make blood thin (*Muraqqiq-i-dam*). Kabeerudin has recommended *ZudHazzm*(easy to digest) diet such as roti, milk, rice, daliya (barley water), spinach (*Spinaciaoleracea*L.), fenugreek (*Trigonellafoenum-graecum*L.), tomato (*Lycopersiconesculentum*Mill.) in food and pear (*Pyruscommunis*L.), apple juice in fruits. He has also advised to take foods at proper interval. Strong calorific should not be given especially in young people.<sup>5</sup>

### Regimenal therapy

Before starting the treatment we should enquire about the things such as lack of exercises, empty stomach, *Hammam*, age, habit and temperament of patient are also to be considered.<sup>5,23</sup> Unani physicians have recommended treatment according to the *Madda* (matter) involved. According to various Unani physicians, bloodletting by *Hijama*(wet cupping), *Fasad* (venesection) and *Irsal-i-Alaq* (leeching) is very beneficial, if it occurs due to *Dam* (blood). Various physicians advised mostly first to do venesection and subsequently purgation. After that initially treatment should start with analgesics and divergent drugs, but overindulgence should be prohibited. Venesection is to be done on *Warid Basaliq* (basilic vein) of the same side.<sup>1,3,5,7,24,23</sup> IbnZohr suggested venesection on *Warid Qaifal* (cephalic vein) of opposite side.<sup>25</sup> Blood should be drained according to quantity required, resistance and temperament of the patient. They advised to give soups of chicken, *Ab-i-Kasni*, *Ab-i-Makod* during venesection. Early Rabi season is better for the procedure of bloodletting through venesection. In case of acute gout

cold sponge is useful if there is chronicity then feet should be kept first in hot and then in cold water.<sup>7,9,23</sup> Dry baths and hot water of waterfalls are beneficial.<sup>1,3</sup> If there is very much congestion then venesection should be done first then purgation and then local treatment should be applied. *Ibn Sarafiyun* says feet should be washed with salt water. *Ali bin Zain* has advised people to avoid walking bare foot in hot season.

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