

Review Article

Diagnostic Manifestations (*Istedlal wa Alamat*) of Anaemia (*Faqr al-Dam*) in Ancient Unani Literature - A Review

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A B S T R A C T

Anaemia has a long history, as evidenced by 4,000-year-old bone samples from Thailand that showed advanced signs of the disease. Man has known the importance of iron in health and sickness since the dawn of humanity. Egyptians, Indians, Greeks, and Romans were among the first to use iron as a medicine. In the 17th century, iron was used to cure chlorosis (green disease), which was commonly caused by an iron deficiency. The molecule of haemoglobin requires iron to function properly. It is the most effective therapy for treating anaemia caused by a haemoglobin deficiency for over 2000 years. The aetiological factors (*Asbāb*), types (*Aqsaam*), pathophysiology, and clinical manifestation (*Istedlal wa Alāmāt*) of anaemia have been described in the Unani ancient literature which may be very useful for early diagnosis of anaemia. Data for this review article were collected from ancient Unani books and other manuscripts. It was found that there are several clinical manifestations (*Istedlal wa Alāmāt*) of *Faqr al-Dam* in ancient Unani literature that aid in the diagnosis and treatment of anaemia. This article may be quite helpful for the early diagnosis and treatment of anaemia through the Unani system of medicine.

Keywords: Anaemia (*Faqr al-Dam*), Aetiological factors (*Asbāb*), Clinical manifestation (*Istedlal wa Alāmāt*), Types (*Aqsaam*), Pathophysiology of anaemia, Prevention

Introduction

Ancient Unani physicians believed that derangement of the liver, *sū mizāj and Du'f al-kabid* (weakness of hepatic faculties) or sometimes associated diseases results in impaired and improper production of blood causing anaemia.¹⁻³

The word *Sū'al-Qinya* was coined by *Ismail Jurjani* (12th AD). *Sū* means defect and *Qinya* means treasure, therefore anaemia might be considered a treasury defect.⁴ Other vernaculars of anaemia stated by contemporary physicians are *Faqr al-Dam*, *Sū'al-Qinya*, *Qillat-i-dam*, *khoon-ki-kami*, *khoon ki mohtaji* (*ghareebi*, *nadari*) and *Fašad al-Dam*.⁵

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The phrase *Faqr al-Dam* is a term that was coined in the 20 century. It means “shortage of blood”. The Arabic word “*Sū’al-Qinya*” refers to a shortage, change or deficiency of iron. According to the Unani system of medicine, *Sū’al-Qinya* is either caused by “*Ḍu’f al-jigar*” (weakness of the liver) or by “*Sū’-i-Mizāj*” (a change in an individual’s temperament or temperament of the liver). Another terminology of anaemia in the Unani system of medicine is mentioned as “*Ridhayat-e-dam*,” which refers to changes in blood quality, such as concentration, odour, viscosity, temperature, and colour.⁶

Pathophysiology of Anaemia

According to Unani concepts, anaemia or *Sū’al-Qinya* occurs with either change in bodily *mijaz* (temperament) or when there is an abnormal humeral imbalance.^{7,8} Normal blood production requires proper vital power and functioning of vital organs related to digestion and elimination like stomach, kidneys, and spleen. When the liver’s function is disrupted as a result of a change in temperament, it has an impact on humour production, as well as its quality and quantity.⁹ It also impairs the *Ṭabī’at Mudabbira’-i-Badan* (Medicatrix Naturae) and also leads to a reduction in immunity.¹⁰

Classification of diseases in the Unani system of medicine is as follows:

Amrāḍ mufrada: *Sū’ mizāj* (temperamental disorder, especially of liver, with cold and wet temperament), *sū’tarkeeb* (derangement and disorder in formation) and *tafarruqe ittesal* (malformation and disorder in attachment or connections especially in stomach, intestine, kidney, gall bladder etc.)

Amrāḍ murakkaba: *Amrāḍ murakkaba* implies when any two or more than two of these conditions are present at the same time.

Sū’ mizāj can be subdivided into *sū’ mizāj sada* and *sū’ mizāj maddi*. When temperament is altered from the physiological temperament, it can be *sū’-i-mizāj sādā* or *sū’-i-mizāj māddī*.¹¹⁻¹⁴ The liver has a hot and moist temperament, and it is the body’s storehouse since food is metabolised in the liver and then changed into blood, which then nourishes the entire body.^{15,16} As a result, any change in its temperament will affect the quality and amount of *akhlāṭ* (blood, dam). This alteration is known as *sū’al-qinya*. Furthermore, some Unani physicians described *sū’al-qinya* due to *ḍu’f al-kabid* while others described it due to *sū’ mizāj*.¹⁷

Kabiruddin (1950 AD) further described *Khizra* (chlorosis) as a type of *Soo-ul-Qinya*, affecting women and described its aetiopathology as an alteration in the constituents of blood. He also added that the size of RBCs become small (microcytosis) and their red substance decreased (hypochromic) with increased fibrous material in the blood.⁵

Types of Anaemia in the Unani System of Medicine

1. *Sawiul kurriyatee* (Normocytic anaemia)
2. *Kurria kibriya* (Macrocytic anaemia)
3. *Fauladi* (Hypochromic anaemia)¹⁸

Aetiological Factors (*asbab*)

The following causes of anaemia have been described in the Unani ancient literature:

Amrāḍ-i-kabid (Liver Disorders)

- *Sū’-i-Mizāj-i-Kabid*: Anaemia is caused by the weakness of the *quwate muallide khoon*, which is caused by the *sū’ mizāj bāriḍ* of liver, which inhibits haemopoiesis; resulting in slow or impure blood formation and leads to anaemia.¹⁹
- *Ḍu’f al-Kabid*: weakness of liver, leading to defective haemopoiesis, which in turn, results in defective cellular nutrition in liver, and leads to anaemia.^{20,6}

Amrāḍ-i-ṭihāl (Splenic Disorders)

- *Ḍu’f al-ṭihāl ba sabab baroodat*: It is the weakness of the spleen due to coldness. It leads to its enlargement, congestion (warm) profuse discharge of black bile from spleen and impaired absorption of black bile produced in the liver which may lead to anaemia.^{13,21}

Amrāḍ-i-mi’da-o-am’ā (Gastrointestinal Disorders)

- *Faṣād e medi* (distemperament of stomach): Impaired function of the stomach may lead to anaemia.
- *Ḍu’f al-mi’da* (weakness of stomach): Anaemia may be caused due to weakness in the stomach.^{22,6}
- *Ḍarab-o-khilfa* (frequent motions/ diarrhoea)¹⁹
- *Ḍidan al-am’ā* (intestinal worms)²³
- *Mi’da ka amal-i-jarraḥī* (GIT surgery)
- *Qay’al-dam* (blood in vomiting)
- *Purana Qabz* (old constipation)⁵
- *Sū’-i-Mizāj* (cold type)¹⁴

Amrāḍ-e-gurda (Kidney Diseases)

- *Bawle-damvi* (blood in urine)
- *Warm-i-gurda muzmin* (chronic inflammation of nephrons) also leads to anaemia.⁵

Acute Communicable Diseases

- *Diqq-e-riwi wa digar sil* (pulmonary coach and extrapulmonary tuberculosis)
- Acute haemolysis occurred in malaria⁵

Amrāḍ-i-’aḍā’-tanāsul (Genital Disorders)

- *Kasrat al-ṭamth* (menorrhagia)^{19,23}
- *Ihtibās al-ṭamth* (amenorrhoea)^{24,6,22}
- *Kasrat al-Jimā* (excessive coitus)
- *Jalaq* (masturbation)²³
- *Usr al-ṭamth* (dysmenorrhoea)

- *Haml* (pregnancy)⁵

Amrāḍ-i-Sadr (Cardio-ulmonary Diseases)

- *Ḍu'f al-qalb* (cardiac weakness)^{25,26}
- *Nafth al-dam* (Haemoptysis)⁵

Improper Uses of Unani Drugs of *draja-e-charraum* (4th-grade Drugs of Toxicological Importance and Animal Poisons)

- *Murakkab-e-Simab* (compounds formulation with mercury)
- *Safeda* (Pb)
- *Kasrat-e-sharab Noshi* (alcohol abuse)
- Poisons from insect⁵

Badhazmi (Indigestions)

- *Mī dī* (gastric)
- *Kabidī* (hepatic)
- *Urūqī* (vascular)
- *Uḍwi* (cellular)^{13,26}

Mutafarreqat (Miscellaneous)

- *Nazf-al-dam* (severe haemorrhage): As a result of *Nazf-al-dam*, the liver becomes cold and depleted of blood, which can lead to anaemia.¹⁹
- *Ghayr siḥḥat Bakhsh rehaish* (unhygienic living conditions)
- *Faqr-o-faqa* (poverty and starvation)
- *Mitti khane ki aadat* (calcium deficiency), especially in children
- *Ghayr munazzam ghidhā* (improper diet)²³
- *Naqs-i-taghdiya* (malnutrition)²⁷
- *Ghayr mamooli mehnat-o-riyāḍat* (extreme exertion and exercise)
- *Tafaqqurāt* (anxiety)
- Malabsorption of *faulad* (iron)
- *Lahmeen ka naqse Taghdiya* (PEM)
- *Ghayr ṭabaī 'ī tihālī mikāniyat* (impaired metabolism of spleen)
- *Zulkhasa* (unknown aetiology)
- *Nuqs e ḥayātīn A, B12, and C*
- *Zauf-e-muallif dam* (impaired haematopoietic weakness)
- *Bad haḍmī* (dyspepsia)
- *Ghayr mamooli harkat* (over-activity)
- *Nafsiyātī awaamil* (psychogenic disorders)⁵

Clinical and Diagnostic Manifestations (*Istedlal wa Alāmāt*)

Clinical manifestations of anaemia are described in the Unani system of medicine as follows:

- Pale and white colour of skin
- Swelling on face, eyelids, extremities or whole body²⁸
- Intermittent loose motion and constipation
- Feeling of air with fullness in stomach

- Sleep disturbances
- Oliguria (According to sheikh)
- Excessive sweating
- Delayed healing of wounds or ulcers
- Gum itching and wounds¹³
- Indigestion
- Pitting oedema on feet
- Loss of appetite, sometimes increased appetite
- Heaviness and fatigue⁶
- Stomatitis²²
- Dyspnoea on exertion
- Vertigo and giddiness
- Spasm and tremors
- Prominent veins on peripheries
- Cold extremities
- Syncope (sometimes)⁵
- Palpitation²⁹
- Splenomegaly¹⁹
- Hepatomegaly
- Jaundice and ascites¹⁸

Source of Data Collection

The data were collected from 21 ancient Unani books as well as other published research papers.

Conclusion

Anaemia is a widespread clinical condition that affects the vast majority of school-aged children, adults, women of childbearing age, and pregnant women. There are many diagnostic tests available in modern medicine in India, such as Mean corpuscular volume (MCV), Mean corpuscular haemoglobin (MCH), serum ferritin level, and so on, but the majority of the population in India is from low socioeconomic groups and may not be able to afford cost-effective diagnostic tests. There are several clinical manifestations (*Istedlal wa Alāmāt*) of *Faqr al-Dam* in the ancient Unani literature that help to diagnose and treat anaemia. Unani medicine promises a cure for anaemia without any adverse effects.

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