

Role of Unani (Eastern) Medicine in promoting health and wellness at the global level

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Despite incredible improvements in health over the past half a century and notable achievements in the medical field, the reality is that many challenges persist which require our individual and collective action.

Today, we witness a continuous increase in the poor health index of all age groups across the world due to uncontrolled pollution, the rise of pandemics, outbreaks, the spread of communicable or non-communicable diseases, and the degradation of a healthy ecosystem. This has resulted in a new low in the quality of life and livelihood. Thus international commitment is required including action, multilateral cooperation, healthcare solidarity, and most importantly creating awareness about prevention and a healthy lifestyle on a global level. This is essential to supporting global health recovery and building back better. At this juncture, there is an immediate need to look into the available, affordable, and effective Tibb-e-Unani (Eastern medicine) system, which has an outstanding potential to reverse the worsening health status across the world. The hallmark of Tibb-e-Unani medicine is that its practices take into account an individual's total internal, social, and external environment when considering disease prevention, promotion, and treatment-thus all-inclusive wellness.

Although, the concept of Well-being is centuries old as in Greco Arab Medicine (Unani medicine) Hippocrates (460-377 BC) emphasized the power / hidden ability in an individual referred to as the administrative and defensive mechanism of the body or **قوت هجر بدن**.

The WHO has emphasized Well-being earlier but it gained momentum after COVID-19 which affected the global communities socially, psychologically, and economically making them vulnerable to viral and other pathogens and non-pathogen-related diseases. Thus the focus is more on the adoption of preventive measures to prepare oneself for future health-related and aforementioned challenges.

Notably, since 1991 Hamdard University offers a five-year Unani medicine bachelor's degree program at its Faculty of Eastern Medicine, Karachi Pakistan. Among, many other relevant subjects, Physis (Tabiyat) is also taught in detail to the future Hakims to initially develop its clear understanding theoretically and later apply it clinically for diagnosis of the state of the body (Health, Neither health nor disease and Disease). Thus for Unani Physicians, Physis is an inherent physician of the body, playing a crucial role to maintain homeostasis and the role of

Tabib is to assist Tabiyat. This Holistic concept of the human body under normal and diseased conditions is the main crux of the Unani Medicine Philosophy. Therefore, the motto of Hamdard Pakistan, “From Wellness to Wellbeing”, resonates with the core principle of all-inclusive wellness. In line with its commitment to global health, Hamdard Pakistan has been a positive instrument of health and progress in the region with active participation in WHO initiatives.

Most recently, WHO Bench Mark released on February 11, 2022, emphasized the importance and recognition of Unani medicine in primary health care, globally. This was prepared by experts in Unani medicine representing 22 countries around the world. Unfortunately, Pakistan, the 2nd largest, was not represented despite having an active education, clinical practice programs, and product manufacturing establishments for decades. Nevertheless, the guidelines for WHO’s benchmark following the principles of Unani medicine will be gradually implemented in Curriculum improvement (Teaching and Practice), Training/recruitment program for BEMS graduates, extensive laboratory work, and Competitive Healthcare, thereby, moving from theory to action to achieve the health-related Sustainable Development Goals. Hamdard is committed to partnering with stakeholders to synergize its efforts to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through the most productive, efficient, and effective utilization of resources.

In conclusion, healthy populations are an essential foundation of sustainable development and social progress. In order to ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to invest in strong alternate health systems and ensure global awareness about prevention to maintain general health. That is how we are going to address the world’s most urgent and pressing global health challenges in an effective way.