

## DIETO THERAPY IN UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

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### ABSTRACT

The word diet is taken from a Latin word 'dieta' means a way of living in Greek. The food therapy is an important part of Traditional Medicine, it not only nourishes and strengthens the body, but it can also prevent diseases and prolongs life. In Unani System of Medicine abundant literature regarding the Dietotherapy has been discussed, Dieto therapy (Ilaj bil Ghiza) is a unique non medicinal therapy by which the patients are treated and health is attained through modulation in dietary habits i.e. fasting, use of food stuff in more quantity having less nutritional value or less quantity having more nutrients. Unani Medicine deals with different types of diet like Dawae Ghizae, Ghizae Dawai, Kaseef ghiza, Lateef Ghiza, Motadal ghiza and many more. As dietotherapy is the use of food as an agent in effecting recovery from illness. It is concerned with those receiving normal diet as well as those for whom modified diet has been prescribed. Modified diets are the principal therapeutic agents in some metabolic diseases and chronic diseases it serves as a preventive measure as well as therapeutic aid.

**Keywords:** Dietotherapy, Unani Medicine, Ghiza, Nutrition, Dawa.

### INTRODUCTION

We live in a world with rapidly changing elements our environment, food supply, population and scientific knowledge. Within individual environments, our physical bodies and our personalities change and with them our personal needs and goals. These constant changes of lives must be in some kind of positive balance to produce healthy living. Thus, to be realistic within these life concepts of change and balance, our study of food, nutrition and health care must focus on health promotion. Although we may view and define health and disease in different ways a primary basis for promoting health and preventing disease must always be good food and the sound nutrition it provides<sup>1</sup>

Dietotherapy is a therapy by which patients are treated with a non medicinal therapy from which health is attained by modulation of dietary habits<sup>2</sup>.

Dietotherapy seeks to restore the imbalance in the body due to errant lifestyles. Unani system of Medicine lays rules for a balanced lifestyle, which revolves around six essential factors. Noncompliance with these principles leads to an errant lifestyle and ultimately leads to disease. Diet is an important component of these essential factors. The Unani system of medicine believes that a physician is not the healer but an

assistant to nature Tabiyat (physique) of the body, which is the true healer hence the diet should be in accordance with it. Diets have been mentioned according to various stages of life to maintain the digestive system at its best<sup>2</sup>. Diet can be defined as any substances which is used for the purpose of providing nutrition to the body by metabolism<sup>2,3,4</sup>. "Nutrition is the science of food, the nutrient and the other substances there in, their action, interaction and balance in relation to health and disease and the processes by which the organism ingests, digests, absorbs, transports, utilizes & excrete food substances".<sup>1</sup>

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Dietotherapy has a long history, it stems from the Zhou Dynasty, 1000BC, Zhang Ji, a distinguished physician in the Han dynasty realized the action of dietotherapy during the rehabilitation from the disease.<sup>5</sup>

Nutrition as a discrete or separate discipline has existence since Vedic times, 8000 yrs B.C. Charaka Samhita & Sushruta Samhita described all major branches of medicine including dietetics. Egyptian, Roman, Greeks such as Hippocrates (460-327 BC), Aristotle (384-377BC), Celus (53BC-7AD), Galen(130-200AD) were great pioneers in dietetics. They gave much importance to diet during health &

sickness, however dietetics gained more popularity during the time of Mohammed, the Prophet (PBUH) (570-632AD).

The holy Quran speaks very high of the health and medicinal value of various fruits like pomegranate, figs, dates, olives, milk, honey, ginger etc. and forbids certain harmful foods like blood, putrified & unslaughtered meat etc. Later on Arabian physicians like Rhazes(850-923AD) "The Galen of the Arabs" improved dietetics and advised "when you can heal by diet prescribe no remedy".

After Rhazes another Persian by name Avicenna(989-1036AD) "The Persian Galen, gave much more importance to diet in sickness & health. His noted book "Canon of Medicine", remained a classical medical text book for many centuries all over Europe & Arabia<sup>6</sup>.

### General principles of Treatment<sup>2,7</sup>

Treatment is carried out by

- a) General management and diet (lifestyle management and Dietotherapy)
- b) Pharmacotherapy by simple and compound drugs
- c) Operatives procedures which include various Regiminal therapies
- d) Surgical procedures
- e) **General principles of Dietotherapy<sup>2,3,7</sup>**
  - Abstinence(Tarke Ghiza)
  - Reduction in intake of diet(Taqleee Ghiza)

Food may be withheld, reduced or given in a moderate quantity or purposely increased. Food is withheld when the physician wants the body to be occupied with the maturing humors and morbid matter. It is reduced when desired, to maintain the strength and allow sufficient time to the body to deal efficiently with the morbid condition rather than involve itself in the digestion of a large meal. When the problem is dual the most important aspect should be given priority. If strength is low it should receive prior attention, but if disease is severe it should be attended first, therefore diet is reduced in quantity or quality or both. Quality is lowered by giving food which is heavy and bulky but of low nutritional value. E.g. a diet mainly of vegetables and fruits is bulky but of poor quality.

Food is generally stopped or reduced in quantity in acute diseases

Food serves to replace the loss from the wear and tear of body and provides nutrition. When the body is too weak to digest heavy food and the need is urgent to maintain the strength and restore the loss of vitality easily assimilable food should be given. Highly nutritious but slowly

assimilable food is given when it is desired to strengthen the body and prepare it for vigorous exercise and activity<sup>2,3,7</sup>.

### Management and diet

Management consists of suitable modification in the six essentials of life. These are Atmospheric air, Food and drinks, Rest and physical activity, Psychological activity, Sleep and wakefulness, Elimination and retention<sup>8</sup>.

### Constitution of food material

The constitution of food (Mizaj/ Temperament) means its effect in the healthy body (Pharmacodynamics). Every food /drug produces certain perceptible and non perceptible symptoms when the same is administered in various concentrations. This effect is described in terms of one's feelings in different intensity<sup>4</sup>.

For E.g.

If food is consumed in a certain quality and after its assimilation one does not notice any effect or change in his body is considered as motadil or moderate<sup>2</sup>.

If it produces a slight effect of heat/ cold /dryness and same passes off without leaving any feeling after 4 hrs is considered as food having constitution of hot/ cold/ dry/ wet in first degree.

If the intensity of the effect is slightly more and remains in the body for more than 8hours and does not harm the body is known as second degree.

If the effect of a given substance produces a remarkable but tolerable effect and remains in the system for more than 18 hrs but does not endanger one's life is considered as third degree Lastly if the consumed substance produces intense effect immediately after 1/2hr to 1hr and endangers one's life is known as having fourth degree constitution. All toxic/poisons are in 4<sup>th</sup> degree with hot and dry effect.

The intensity of the effects of foods depends on one's own constitution/ temperament. In Unani system the normal health of a person depends on the proper combination and physiologic effects of four humours ie blood, bile, phlegm and black bile.<sup>2,3,7,8</sup>

### Classification of food<sup>1,2,3,4,7</sup>

1. According to calories
2. According to Chyme
3. According to functions

### According to production of calories diet is classified as<sup>2,3,4,7</sup>

Food may be light, heavy or moderate. A light food is that which produces thin blood, while

heavy food is that which forms thick blood, moderate food produces blood of average consistency

Food may be of high calories or low calories and in this respect is classified as follows:

### I) Ghizae lateef

Easily digestible food. This is of two types

- **Ghiza e lateef qalil ul taghzia** (easily digestible low caloric food) such as fruit juices
- **Ghiza e lateef kaseer ul taghzia** (easily digestible high caloric food) such as half boiled egg, meat distillate and wine/ grape extract.

### II) Ghizae Kaseef

Not digested easily such as meat, pulses, fruit like mango, jackfruit etc This is of two types:

- **Ghiza e kaseef qalil ul taghzia** (difficult digestible low caloric food) such as dry animal meats/ fish
- **Ghiza e kaseef kaseer ul taghzia** (difficult digestible high caloric food) such as beef.
- **Ghiza e Mutawasit / motadil** (Moderate) in between the above Meat soup, Cow's milk and vegetables like pumpkin.

**According to production of Chyme due to metabolism of diet is classified as** <sup>2,3,4,7</sup>

- I) **Ghiza Jayyadal kaimoos:** Good chyme is formed - Eg Ma al Laham (Meat distillate), Aab e Anar (pomegranate juice), Aabe Seb (Apple juice) etc.
- II) **Ghiza Radi al kaimoos:** Bad chyme is formed Eg Kalijee (Liver), Laham al bat (duck meat), dry salted meat.

**Modern classification based on functions**<sup>1</sup>

- 1) **Energy giving food** - carbohydrates and fat rich food.
- 2) **Body building food** – Protein rich food.
- 3) **Protective/ regulatory food** – Vitamins and Minerals.

**Based on dieto therapy**<sup>1,2</sup>

- i. **Eliminative diet:** Liquids like lemon juice, tender coconut water, vegetable soups
- ii. **Soothing diet** – Fruits, Salads, boiled/ steamed vegetables, sprouts, vegetable chutneys etc
- iii. **Constructive diet** – Wholesome flour, unpolished rice, pulses, sprouts, curds etc.

As dietotherapy is the use of food as an agent in effecting recovery from illness. It is concerned with those receiving normal diet as well as those for whom modified diet has been

prescribed. Modified diets are the principal therapeutic agents in some metabolic diseases, it serves as a preventive measure as well as therapeutic aid.

The purpose of dietotherapy is to maintain good nutritional status, to correct deficiencies which may have occurred, to afford rest to the whole body or to certain organs which may have affected, to adjust the food intake to body's ability to metabolize the nutrients and to bring about changes in body weight whenever required.

Unani system has special dietary management by advising certain **Modified Diets** <sup>2,3,4,9</sup> in specific diseases like the following

1. **Mau sha'eer (Barley water)** is useful in acute conditions, it is cool and moist in nature, moderate, cleanses the system forms very good chyme.  
Method: whole barley is soaked in water for 4 hrs, then boil in twenty times water, boil till the colour of water changes to reddish colour. According to Buqrat (Hippocrates) barley water is most appropriate diet in diseases of Hot temperament according to him it eliminates the morbid matter, cleans the system, easily absorbable, palatable, moderate, quenches thirst and easy digestible.
2. **Jubn (Milk)** is moderate in temperament with little influence of cold and moist, it possesses three major qualities viz it is light, excess water content helps eliminate morbid matter, maintains body heat nourishes and energizes body increases body weight. Milk is useful in those conditions which produce dryness in the body.
3. **Maul jubn (Milk water)** it is considered as very good purgative, used in bilious condition like jaundice, it is dilute and light, easily absorbable and digestible, oil content keeps the organs soft prevents irritation,. This is prepared by boiling sheep/ goat's milk with equal quantity of water then some sour juice like grape juice or lemon is added to curdle the milk then filtered through a thick cloth and hanged for some time, then this water is collected boiled filtered cooled and mixed be with sikanjabeen
4. **Mau'llahm** Meat distillate this is prepared by process of distillation, this is rich in calories and easy digestible, advised in malnourishment and weak patients.

5. **Maurraib** (butter milk): cold and moist in temperament, easy absorbable, cool quenches thirst.
6. **Maul asl** (Honey water) honey is boiled with water or sometimes with herbal decoction. It is useful in fever, irritation, thirst and in dry cough.
7. **Maul usool** certain roots like beekh badyan, kasni, karafs etc are crushed and boiled.
8. **Maul fawakh** fruit juices
9. **Maul buqool** fresh vegetables and greens are crushed, pounded and juice is extracted
10. **Paneer maya** milk collected after the birth of young one is boiled and when cooled it solidifies mostly prepared from milk of camel, cow, sheep, it is nutritious, it strengthens heart, brain and useful in diarrhea
11. **Jullab** Prepared by boiling honey / sugar syrup and rose water,
12. **Sikanjabeen (Oxymel)** prepared by boiling 1 part vinegar and 2 parts honey. It is useful in purging out thick chime, it is a soothing medicine, it removes yellow bile, it act as emetic in hot water and anti emetic in cold water.
13. **Aabkama** (Mari / sirka hindi/ Kaanji) this is prepared by fermentation of mustard, salt ,zeera, ajwain or wheat roti, vinegar,salt, pudina, zinger,pepper.etc
14. **Asfeedaj** plain mutton soup without spices used in winter season, nutritious and energetic.
15. **Sikbaj** prepared with meat and vinegar, cool in temperament, antibilious used in inflammation of liver.
16. **Khamar (Sharab)** is obtained by fermenting starchy substances, it less quantity it is cardiac and brain stimulant and tonic, in large quantity it induces intoxication
17. **Fuqqa** it is a type of wine prepared with dates or Jau (Barley)
18. **Nabeez Arisht** / prepared with grapes, dates wheat this is also a type of wine it contains very less percentage of alcohol, it contains enzymes which are essential for maintaining health.
19. **Murabba** Seasonal fruits are preserved by boiling in sugar syrup or honey so that they can be used later, murabba amla, halela, bihi, adrak, Aam, Seb etc, strengthens stomach, removes Safra mirra (anti bilious)
20. **Gulkhand** similarly rose petals are preserved in sugar syrup or honey to form a jam, useful in fever, good laxative, liver and heart tonic and in large quantity is a purgative.
21. **Halwa** This is prepared with maida, soji, honey, ghee and dry fruits, herbs like aloe vera, carrot, onion, are prepared as halwa which are rich in calories, nutritious and energetic.
22. **Hareesa** A diet prepared by boiling meat and wheat, then pounded into paste, and spices are added for flavor.
23. **Hasarmiya** A diet prepared with grapes juice, lauki, palak, cucumber, useful in hot climate and hot temperament diseases, it is antibilious.
24. **Zeerbaaj** Soup prepared with vinegar, dryfruits, saffron, and spices useful in stomach and liver diseases.
25. **Mazeera** A diet prepared with curdled milk, it is cool, viscous and useful in hot temperaments.
26. **Masleeya** This is curds rice uses same as mazeera.
27. **Falooda** A nutritious diet which is prepared with starch, milk or water, which sets when cooled and can be cut into pieces.
28. **Alqabees** A halwa prepared with milk cream, maida and dates similar to falooda.
29. **Firni** A nutritious diet prepared with broken rice and milk.
30. **Maibah** It is prepared with quince fruit juice , grape wine and honey, powder of dried ginger, cardomum, cinnamon, and saffron is added. It strengthens the stomach, and useful in diarrhea, indigestion nausea and vomittings Wheat and various diets prepared from it are considered as most appropriate staple foods.
31. **Fateer** Rotis prepared with fermented or no fermented dough.
32. **Qashkar** Roti prepared without removing husk.
33. **Roti** prepared with jau (barley flour) is cool and easily digestible useful in acute diseases.
34. **Hareera** prepared with pieces of roti soaked in water is easily digestible and useful in acute conditions. Hareera prepared with fermented wheat flour is very cooling and easily digestible. Pieces of roti mixed with honey is nutritious and increases body's innate heat.
35. **Satto** wheat is soaked, pounded with dry fruits and made into sattsos, satto should be given along with plenty of cold water to make it easily digestible.

Eggs: Hen's and teetar eggs are most suitable to human beings, yellow yolk is hot and nutritious and difficult to digest, white yolk is cold and viscous. Diets containing roghan badam, honey, coconut, pista, badam, akhroot increase hararath the ghariziya (body's innate heat).

Some diets which are sweet in taste though nutritious and energetic should be used in limited amounts as too much is harmful.

#### CONCLUSION

Dietotherapy play an important role to treat and to prevent diseases. Dietotherapy minimizes the duration of treatment and improve the drug tolerance by slight modification in diet or proper management of diet. In chronic illnesses like diabetes mellitus, hypertension, renal diseases, modified diets helps in preventing complications and improve the health condition.

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