



Review Article

ISSN: 2454-5023
J. Ayu. Herb. Med.
2019; 5(1): 22-24
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www.ayurvedjournal.com
Received: 08-02-2019
Accepted: 13-03-2019

Concept of Depression and Insomnia in Greco-Arab medicine

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ABSTRACT

Depression is a common mental disorder, characterized by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness, and poor concentration. Nowadays, Depression becoming an emerging cause for worldwide disability as well as a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease. The outmost result is SUICIDE. Globally, more than 350 million people of all ages suffer from depression especially seen in women. At its most severe, depression can lead to suicide. In Unani system of medicine, Depression comes under Amraze Nafsani (psychiatric disorders) where it is called as Melancholia, a disease caused by excess of black bile in body. Sleep disturbance or Insomnia is an important vegetative sign of depression. The condition of Insomnia is called Sehar or Bekhwabi in Greco-Arab medicine. There are six essential factors (Asbabe-Sitta Zarooriyah) which are necessary at its optimum to maintain the healthy life. Fifth one of them is Naum wa Yaqza (sleep and awakening). Imbalance between these two conditions leads to disease state known as Sehar (Insomnia). The basic etiology for Insomnia is considered to be dryness. All those factors that produces dryness in body are responsible for causing Insomnia. These includes Akhtayari Asbab (voluntary causes), Aarzi Asbab (temporary causes) & Marzi Asbab (pathological causes). Management of Insomnia focused on all the regimens that helps in removing the factors causing dryness i.e. Moisturing the brain or *Tarteeb e Dimagh* by *Nutul, Saoot, Tila, Zimad, Tadheen, Lakhlakha, Shamoom, Qutoor/Taqteer, Hammam & Riyazat*. This article discuss the most common symptom arising out of Depression i.e. Insomnia.

Keywords: Depression, Insomnia, Sehar, Akhtayari Asbab, Aarzi Asbab & Marzi Asbab, Melancholia..

INTRODUCTION

Depression is an emotional response to everyday challenges of life which last for short duration. But when it lasts for long it may become a serious health condition. It not only affects an individual emotionally but also affects physically which ultimately hampers the personal & professional life of an individual. Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease. 80% people of low and middle income countries suffer from depression.⁽¹⁾ The Reports of World Mental Health Survey found that on average about 1 in 20 people experiences an episode of depression in the previous year. Around 3000 suicides are reported worldwide everyday due to depression. That's why it has been chosen as the theme of the year for 2017 by WHO so that it can be controlled globally by effective management.⁽¹⁾

Insomnia or sleep problem is an important symptom of depression. Psychological struggles can make it hard to sleep. Improper sleeps itself alters body's hormones and physiology, which in turn further exaggerates the mood fluctutaions and worsen the depression.⁽²⁾

Depression in Unani system of medicine has explained under Amraze Nafsani (psychiatric disorders) where it is called as Melancholia, a disease caused by excess of black bile in body. The literal meaning of the term melancholia is "black humour" which is the predominant causative factor of this disease. Sleep disturbance or Insomnia is an important vegetative sign of depression. Insomnia is a sleep disorder characterized by having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. In Greco Arab medicine Insomnia is known as Sehar/Bekhwabi - Ibn-e-Hubul Baghdadi explained Sehar as excess of awakening which produces dryness in the body.⁽³⁾

Insomnia

Insomnia is a term applied collectively to complaints involving chronic inability to obtain adequate sleep-

- Sleep onset insomnia (difficulty in falling asleep)
- Frequent nocturnal insomnia (interrupted sleep characterized by frequent awakenings)
- Early morning insomnia (wakening up early in the morning) OR
- Taking longer than 30 min to fall asleep or awakening during night more than 30 min of wakefulness

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- Taking longer than 30 min to fall asleep or awakening during night more than 30 min of wakefulness WHO ⁽⁴⁾.

To understand insomnia lets understand in brief what actually sleep is??

Sleep is the natural periodic suspension of consciousness during which the powers of the body are restored. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine divided sleep pattern into two types: Rapid eye movement (REM) and non-rapid eye movement (NREM).

NREM further divided into three stages: N1, N2, and N3. Sleep pattern follows the stages as N1 → N2 → N3 → N2 → REM → Natural awakening. Deep sleep is seen in stage N3 whereas dreams are seen in REM. In the early night, the NREM-REM cycles vary in length from 70-100 min, whereas in late night the duration varies from 90-120 minutes. Insomnia is unable to achieve these stages completely. (5)

Types of Insomnia ⁽⁶⁾

- **Primary(Unknown etiology)**
- **Secondary (as a symptom or side effect of some other problem) eg. Medical illness like** pain due to arthritis, headache, asthma, heart failure, Hyperthyroidism, Gastrointestinal disorders, Stroke, Restless legs syndrome and Menopause.

In Unani system of medicine, Asbabe Sitta Zarooriyya (six essential factors) has been described. An equilibrium / balance between these factors, is essential for maintaining both physical and mental health. These are:

- Hawa' muheet (Ambient air)
- Ma'kul-o-Mashrub (Food and Drinks)
- Harkat-o-Sukun Badani (Bodily movements and Repose)
- Harkat-o-Sukun Nafsani (Psychic movements and Repose)
- Naum-o-Yaqza (Sleep and Wakefulness)
- Istifragh-o- Ihtibas (Evacuation and Retention)

The fifth one Naum wa Yaqza-

Yaqza (awakening/wakefulness) is a condition in which rooh-e-nafsani (neural pathway) enables the human body to perform physical activities. During this phase, due to physical activities energy is utilized, as a result of this hararat-e-gharizia (innate heat) and ratubat-e-badania (body fluid) get exhausted leading to fatigue, lethargy and dryness.

Naum (sleep) is a condition in which rooh-e-nafsani (neural pathway) as well as badan-e-insani (human body) remains at rest thus restore as well as strengthens quwwat-e-haiwania (physical power) by regaining ratubat and barudat in the body, hence sleep rejuvenates the body and refreshes it.

Imbalance between these two factors may lead to different sleep disorders including Insomnia, **Sehar** or **Bekhwabi**.

Causes (Asbab)

- **Akhtayari Asbab (voluntary causes)**

- Excessive of work
- Small amount of diet
- Excess of muharrik drinks (tea, coffee, qahwa),
- Intake of flatulent producing food stuffs (brinjal, cauliflower etc.) or gastric irritant,
- Excess of light in the room or noise pollution.

➤ **Aarzi Asbab (temporary causes)**

- Excess of emotions like fear or pessimistic, sadness or happiness
- Nightmares
- Over thinking or worrying

➤ **Marzi Asbab (pathological causes)**

- Su-e-mizaj barid dimaghi (ill dry temperament of brain)
- Su-e-mizaj barid yabis dimaghi (ill cold and dry temperament of brain)
- Ghalba-e-sauda (excess of black bile)
- Su-e-mizaj har yabis (ill hot and dry temperament of brain)
- Ghalba-e-safra (excess of bile)
- Ghalba-e-balgham-e-shor (excess of acrid phlegm in brain)
- Ghalba-e-akhlat-e-fasida (excess of bad/ morbid humours) in the body
- Fasad-e-dam (impurity of blood)
- Istifragh qawi (post excessive evacuation)
- Shiddat-e-hararat (Post pyrexia)
- Indigestion

Sign & Symptoms

- Heaviness on eyelids & eyeballs
- Heaviness & uneasiness in the head
- Salty taste in the mouth and
- An intense urge to sleep that could not be met out.
- In case of excessive dryness, the patient's perception of heat and cold is reduced along with all the sensory perceptions.
- There is dryness and burning sensation in eyes, nostrils and tongue.
- Insomnia may lead to abnormality in thought process.
- Excess of insomnia may lead to convulsive disorders and mental irritative disorders (*Hippocrates*).

Management of Insomnia

The line of management of Insomnia based on to rule out the cause and its treatment accordingly, following the three basic principles of Unani system of medicine i.e. Ilaj bil ghiza, ilaj bil dawa and ilaj bil tadbeer. Dryness is an important factor in the etiology of the disease which should be addressed first and rest of the management depends on the Mahiyate Marzi (pathogenesis) and should be treated accordingly.

➤ Ilaj bil ghiza (Dietotherapy)

Dietary items that produces ratoobat and baroodat (cold and moist) in the body eg. Increase fluid intake, kaddoo (pumpkin), khurfa (common purslane), luab-e-asaphgol (mucilage of isapgol husk), Sheera Tukhm-e-Khashkhash (poppy seeds), Sheera Tukhm-e-Kahu (garden lettuce), Aab-e-Bed Mushk (goat willow water), Palak (spinach), Soya, Barg-e-Khas (vetiver leaves) etc.

➤ Ilaj bil tadbeer (Regimental therapy)

According to Ajmal Khan, *Tarteeb e Dimagh* (moisturing of brain) by different regimens is found to be very effective in various types of Bekhwabi. Different types of regimens mentioned in Unani system of medicine for Bekhwabi are as follows-

- 1) Annonation/ *Tadheen*: Applying oil over the effected part of the body is termed as *Tadheen*. For Insomnia, anonation of roghan e kaddu (Pumpkin oil), khashkhash (Poppy seeds), roghan e laboob sabaa & roghan e kahu (lettuce) over the scalp found to be effective.
- 2) *Hammam*: with sweet and Luke warm water is been mentioned by *Zakaria Razi* in insomnia.
- 3) Irrigation/ *Nutool*: Decoction, infusion, oil or solution (either hot or cold) is poured from a particular height over the affected part of the body to cure a disease is called as *Nutool*. *Nutoolat e Murattiba* prepared with banafsha (*Viola odorata*), neelofer (*Nymphae lotus*), gul e surkh (rose), tukhm e kahu (lettuce), kishneez sabz (coriander), aabe shibbat sabz (anethum sowa) and tukhm e khashkhash (poppy seeds) are very effective for Insomniacs.
- 4) Nasal drops/ *Su'oot*: Oils of Rose, Pumpkin, Almonds, Nymphae & Viola single or in combination used for inducing sleep.
- 5) Liniments/ *Tila*: For *Tabreed e Dimagh*, Qurs e Musallas with aab e kishneez sabz or Qurs e Anzaroot used as tila on forehead.
- 6) Paste/ *Zimad*: Applying paste of ushna (stone flower), leaves of hemp and goat milk over soles. OR sandal safaid with aab e kishneez sabz or aab e koknar (*Papaver somniferum*) also helps inducing sleep.
- 7) Inhalation/ *Lakhlakha*: Aromatic based preparation of drugs used as *Lakhlakha*. *Lakhalakha* of aab e barg kaahu sabz, sheera tukhm e khashkhash and roghane neelofer is beneficial in Bekhwabi
- 8) *Qutoor/Taqteer*: Instillation of roghane neelofer into ear is also effective.
- 9) Sniffing/ *Nashooq*: Oils of shibbat are used for this purpose.
- 10) Massage/ *Dalk*: Massage of soles, legs and head helps inducing sleep. Oils used for this purpose are-

qinnab (cannabis), kaddu, banafsha, baadam, neelofer, kaahu and roghane khashkhash.

- 11) Exercise/ *Riyazat*: Light exercise before sleep is also considered beneficial for inducing sleep.

➤ *Ilaj bil dawa* (Pharmacological management)

- Munzij-e-sauda (concoctive for black bile) drugs like bisfaj fistaqi (polypody), baadrnjboya (cat's foot), maweez munaqqa (seedless dried grapes) aftimoon (dodder), injeer zard (yellow fig) etc., followed by
- Mushil-e-sauda (melanogogue) like ghariqoon mugharbal (processed larch agaric), barg-e-sana makki (senna leaves), sibr (aloe vera) etc. along with
- Mufarreh (exhilarants) & muqawwi dimagh (brain tonic) eg. Mufarreh shaikhur-raees, Mufarreh azam, Hareera maghz badam wala, dawaul misk motadil. ⁽³⁾

CONCLUSION

The burden of depression is on the rise globally and diseases or conditions arising out of it, itself complicate the management. However efficacious and cost-effective treatments are available to improve the health and the lives of the millions of people around the world. Life style modification mentioned in Greco Arab medicine, is one of the best regimes to be followed to combat with Insomnia. Apart from it, Unani drugs can also be used efficiently for the treatment of Insomnia as the allopathic drugs produces drug dependence and worsen the condition. The article highlights the possible ways of the management of Insomnia. However, we still need to explore a lot as advancement in tools and technologies in medical science taking place day by day.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Parveen A, Saqlain M. Concept of Depression and Insomnia in Greco-Arab medicine. J Ayu Herb Med 2019;5(1):22-24.