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AS-SUYUTI'S

Tibb an-Nabbi



Medicine of the Prophet ﷺ

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In the Name of Allah the Merciful the Compassionate

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

Praise belongs to Allah Who has given existence to every self, and Who has inspired each one towards right actions and wrong actions, and Who has taught what is good for them and what is harmful for them, what causes sickness and what gives health, and Who has created death and granted new life.

And I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, and that He is One and without a partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His Prophet and His slave. He has sent him with mercy for whoever is worthy of mercy, and with punishments for whoever deserves punishment. May the mercy of Allah be on him and his family for ever and ever until the Day of Rising and the Day of Good News.

To continue, it is obligatory on every Muslim to draw as close to Allah the Almighty as he can, and to expend all his energy in paying attention to His commands and being obedient to Him, and to make the best use of the means that he has, and to be successful in drawing near to Him by acting in accordance with what is commanded and avoiding what is forbidden, and to strive for whatever gives benefit to mankind by preserving good health and treating disease – for good health is essential in order to fulfil the obligations of the deen and to worship Allah.

Truly I have relied on Allah in my collecting some of the wise sayings of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, which are concerned with medicine. Whatever is required to preserve good health and whatever is inimical to good health, are all to be found here. I seek the help of Allah. My aim is His glory and His acceptance. He is my support, the most excellent of protectors. There is no power and no strength except from Allah, the Beloved, the Wise.

*If you find any fault, then correct it, I pray,
for no one is faultless except Allah, you must say.*



PRINCIPLES OF TREATMENT

Whoever is given the right to practice the treatment of disease must pay attention to age, habit, function and occupation in his treatment. It will not be easy for him to treat a very old man, or a glutton, or a young child, or a person who is very tired, or someone who is in charge of a public bath, or someone whose faculties are weak, or a hypochondriac, or someone whose body is very weak, or a very fat person, or a dark person, or someone with an ulcer, or anyone in very hot or very cold weather, or anyone who is already accustomed to taking medicine – and of these things we have already spoken.

Medicine should not be taken before digestion is complete. Taking a hot bath before taking medicine helps the medicine. Sleeping after taking a weak medicine either stops its action altogether, or makes it even weaker – however after a strong medicine, it makes its action even stronger.

Avoid eating after taking medicine until it has taken effect.

If a man does not like the medicine, then he should chew some tarragon, or vine leaves, or smell some onion, before he takes his medicine – and if he fears that he may vomit, he should stretch his limbs as much as possible, or chew some bitter pomegranates, or rhubarb, or apples. Whoever gets the gripes should drink a little hot water, or walk about a little. And when the medicine has taken effect, then he should make himself vomit by using hot water. After he has vomited, he should take a few fleawort seeds in apple juice. Then after an hour he should have some soup.

No man should take two purges on the same day.

For diseases of the brain, a man should be bled from the cephalic vein; for diseases of the chest, from the basilic vein – and from the median vein for both of them. Bleeding from the salvatella vein is practised on the right side for diseases of the liver, and on the left for diseases of the spleen. The short saphenous vein is used to remedy the pain from sciatica and gout, and the long saphenous vein for producing a free flow during menstruation.

Scarification on the two thighs is almost like blood-letting. It increases the menstrual flow. It is performed on the back for ophthalmia, halitosis and headache.

Enemas are good for colic and stomach ache. The best time to administer them is in the cool of the evening, and in the cool of the morning.

Whenever it is possible to use a gentle remedy, do not use something more powerful instead. Go from the weak to the stronger, if the weak proves to be of no use. Do not content yourself with a single remedy in your treatment, for the constitution of the patient will grow accustomed to it, and so its benefit will diminish.

If you are in doubt about the diagnosis, do not attack the disease with any medicine at all, until the whole matter is clear.

When a dietary regime in itself is sufficient, then do not resort to medicines.

Hippocrates said, “May the physician be given strength from God the Almighty, and obedience towards Him, and good advice, and an understanding of the secrets of disease. Truly he must not administer any fatal drug, nor indicate it, nor point it out. He must not give anything to a woman to cause an abortion. He must keep well away from all pollution and defilement. He must not gaze at women. He must not go in search of excess, idling away his time in pleasure, sleep, eating and drinking, or play – but he must be eager to treat the poor and the people who have nothing. He must be gentle in his speech, kind with his words, and near to God.”

This is what Hippocrates said, and he was not one of the believers. I have already said that this Hippocrates was the founder of the Art of Medicine and its leader. He was a Greek physician and their father. He is regarded as having been perfect in the Art of Medicine. It is said that the tomb of Hippocrates is still visited to this day.

ANISUN – ANISEED

Aniseed is hot and dry. It soothes internal pains, dispels wind, increases the flow of menses, milk and semen, and removes all harm from poisons. When used as a collyrium for the eye, it improves the eyesight. This is why snakes go out in search of this plant during the first days of spring and wipe their eyes with it, for during the winter their eyesight grows weak.

AWAZ – GOOSE

The heat of the goose is very great, and it contains some wetness. Its nutritional value lies midway between good and bad.

BA'

BABUNAJ – CAMOMILE

Camomile is hot and dry, and in the first degree. It is a mild laxative, a carminative, and an emollient. It dissolves without traction. This is its specific property. When taken orally it increases the urine and the menses. To sit in a decoction of it causes the expulsion of the foetus together with the membranes. It can also be used as a paste, or as a warm enema.

BAQILA – BEANS

Beans are cold and dry. They produce a lot of wind and are difficult to digest. If a pigeon eats beans, it ceases to lay eggs. If the pubes of a young boy are plastered with mashed beans, the pubic hair will not grow. Beans result in flatulence and cause forgetfulness.

Hippocrates thought that beans were an excellent source of nourishment and good for keeping healthy.

The ill effects of beans can be avoided by eating them with thyme, olive oil and salt.

BADINJAN – AUBERGINES

The black variety generates spleen. A tisane sipped gently is good for piles. It is balanced by having it with meat fried in fat.

The white variety balances all foods.

BURDI – PAPYRUS

Papyrus is cold. It stops wounds bleeding when there is a strong flow of blood. When used for gargling, it neutralises the smell of garlic and onions. If anyone who has a nose-bleed sniffs up the ashes, the bleeding is stopped.

Ibn Sina said, “It is good for scabs and heals wounds.”

Al-Bukhari relates that when the Prophet, may the blessings and peace of Allah be on him and his family, broke a tooth, his daughter Fatima went and found some matting. She set fire to it so that it was reduced to ashes. These she sprinkled on the wounded gum, and the bleeding stopped.

The word ‘matting’ here means a reed mat, for its ashes, when dry, stop the bleeding.

Al-Bukhari compiled a section in his book specifically on this subject, and called it ‘The Healing of Wounds by Using Burned Matting’.

BURQUQ – PLUMS

The action of the plum resembles that of the peach (khukh). Please turn to the section on that fruit.

BUN – COFFEE BEANS

Coffee beans are cold and wet. Coffee is good for dysentery and enteritis. It relieves thirst and softens the constitution. It is said that coffee beans produce wisdom, and should be used with care.

BUSUR – UNFERTILISED FEMALE DATES

This type of date is hot and dry. It increases the flow of both spleen and phlegm. It has a cutting action when used in decoctions, enemas and suppositories.

BALAH – FERTILISED UNRIPE DATES

These dates are hot, whereas when they are ripe, they are cold. Both tan the stomach.

Ibn Maja said, “Truly the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, ‘Eat fresh and dried dates together, for shaytan has said that Adam, peace be on him, continued to live for as long as he ate fresh dates with dried ones.

According to another hadith, eating dates makes shaytan sad.

An-Nasa’i has also related this hadith, but adds that it is not an authentic hadith.

BASAL – ONIONS

The onion is hot and wet. Its virtue is that it remedies changes of water for whoever eats it. It makes food tasty, gives coction to semen, and cuts down phlegm. Sniffing an onion after taking medicine prevents vomiting. Eating meat with onions removes their unpleasant smell.

It has been related from Mu'awiyya that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, offered food seasoned with onions to some delegates and said, "Eat of this seasoning and say, 'Whoever does not eat of this seasoning, or whatever else diffuses the odour of the earth, will experience harm from its waters and will suffer injury.'"

Onions cause headaches and cloud vision. Too many onions affect the intellect and make a person forgetful. This kind of harm is only caused by raw onions.

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Whoever eats this vegetable, or whose breath smells of onion or garlic, should not come near us in our mosques, for the angels dislike everything that the sons of men dislike." Al-Bukhari has recorded this hadith. Nevertheless, this prohibition of the Prophet does not make eating onions absolutely forbidden.

BASAQ – SALIVA

It is said that if someone who is fasting spits on a scorpion, this will kill it.

BATIKH – MELON

The green variety is cold and wet, while the yellow tends to be hot. The so-called 'Abdullahi Melon is named after Abu 'Abdullah. The more sweet a melon is, the more hot it is.

When used in an eye lotion, melon makes the eyes shine. It is also a diuretic and is quickly digested. A melon embrocation helps to remove freckles from the face, especially if the embrocation is made from the seeds. It also helps to expel stones from the kidneys and bladder. It also acts as a laxative for any humour that happens to be in the stomach. If tough meat is cooked with the peel of a yellow melon, this makes it tender.

When melon is eaten, it must be fresh, otherwise it may go bad and cause illness. If it is eaten after it has begun to decompose, it must be expelled from the body, because it then takes on bad and poisonous qualities. If a hot sickness results, then the remedy is oxymel; if cold, the remedy is ginger.

The following ahadith about melon have been transmitted: The Prophet,

Treating Minor Ailments

HEADACHES

A headache may be due to Blood, or to Phlegm, or to Spleen.

We have already discussed its treatment in the section on remedies for fevers. In addition, however, in cases of a cold headache, the patient should sniff musk, amber and coriander. He should be given honey to eat. He should take hot ebullients and hot enemas. He should avoid drinking cold water and cold draughts. If he needs to take an emetic, he should have a hickory pill.

The regime described above should be followed when treating all cold diseases of the brain, such as epilepsy, apoplexy, palsy, facial paralysis, tremors, one-sided headaches, flaccid paralysis, coma, and catarrhal discharges from the brain, whether anterior or posterior.

To make a hickory pill, take one drachm of hickory, one drachm of white turpeth, one sixth of a drachm of scammony, and two parts of tragacanth. Prepare one pill from all of this, to be taken last thing at night.

We have already quoted the hadith which has been related by Abu Huraira that whenever the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had a sudden headache, he would dye his head with henna. Ibn Maja refers to this hadith also. And we have already discussed the benefits that henna has.

Anyone who wants to have good health must avoid extreme heat and cold, violent winds, smoke and dust, crying too much, straining the eyes when writing, and reading small writing for too long. This last activity should indeed be done, but not too often, for if it is done a little, it sharpens the eyesight. A person should also avoid looking at shining objects, at the orb of the sun, and at whatever is pure black or pure white.

The best colour for the eyes to gaze at is green. It has been related by Anas that of all the colours, the most pleasing to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was green. And Allah the Almighty Himself has said:

... and they shall wear green robes of fine silk and brocade ...
(Qur'an 18:31)

Green is said to be the colour of the clothes of the people of Syria in the Garden. It has been related by Ibn 'Abbas that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, admired anything that was green because it improved the eyesight. And, according to al-Bukhari, the same is true of looking at running water. It helps the eyes by strengthening them. It also

protects the health of the eyes, just like scented antimony does – a subject which we have already discussed.

NOSE-BLEEDS

Bleeding from the nose should not be stopped, unless it becomes copious and weakening, in which case, the patient should take apple syrup and camphor, and have his strength restored by eating chicken soup.

TEETH

Teeth can be protected by avoiding chewing the various kinds of gums, by not cracking hard objects with them, by not eating very cold foods, and by avoiding extreme cold, especially just after eating hot food. Similarly, hot food should be avoided just after drinking cold water. Excessive use of a tooth-stick ruins the teeth and hurts the mouth, as do all foods that need to be ground up. Eating the green leaves of leeks is bad for them, because of a particular property that they have.

COUGHS

The way to treat a cough is to take barley water, sweet ebullients, pomegranates prepared with almond oil, milky dishes, and soft boiled eggs. Eating snow, meat, and anything that is acidic or salty, should be avoided.

LIVER PAINS AND COLIC

Pain in the liver and colic is often caused by eating too much wind producing food, such as peas, lentils, dry beans, and the entry of food on food. These can be treated by vomiting, avoiding the above foods, eating a confection of roses with warm water, laxative and sour enemas if required, purgative quince syrup, rubbing the liver area of the belly with rose oil and mastic, or applying a hot bran poultice, and having a hot bath.

GRIPES AND TENESMUS

The way to treat the gripes and tenesmus is to boil mallow juice with apple syrup. Mix this while still hot with whole flea wort seeds, and stir the mixture into hot water in which poppy heads have been boiled. If the spasm is extreme, a tenesmus suppository should be inserted. The patient should drink a soup made from both old and unripe grapes. If the diarrhoea is excessive, take syrup of pomegranates combined with powdered pomegranate seeds.