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Shahnaz Bano
PG Scholar, Department of Mahiyatul Amraz, Govt. Tibbi College and Hospital, Kadam Kuan, Patna, Bihar, India

Shabistan Fatma Taiyabi
PG Scholar, Department of Mahiyatul Amraz, Govt. Tibbi College and Hospital, Kadam Kuan, Patna, Bihar, India

Fauzia Khatoon
PG Scholar, Department of Moalajat, Govt. Tibbi College and Hospital, Kadam Kuan, Patna, Bihar, India

Corresponding Author:
Shabistan Fatma Taiyabi
PG Scholar, Department of Mahiyatul Amraz, Govt. Tibbi College and Hospital, Kadam Kuan, Patna, Bihar, India

Phlegmatic diseases: A review

Shahnaz Bano, Shabistan Fatma Taiyabi and Fauzia Khatoon

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Abstract
Unani system of medicine is based on the doctrine of humoral theory. According to this concept, each individual has a unique humoral composition, consisting of a mixture of all four humours with an ascendance of one of them, which functions as the representative of all humours in the body, and is referred to as having a sanguine, phlegmatic, choloric, and melancholic temperament. Phlegm is regarded as the best after humour blood because, in the absence of blood, balgham transforms into blood and is replenishing the organs. Phlegm has a cold-moist disposition and might be normal or pathological. Normal phlegm tastes sweet. According to Galen, regular sweet phlegm does not have a particular reservoir. Because it is remarkably similar to blood and is required for every organ in the body, hence transported in the blood. When the demeanor and taste of phlegm alter, it becomes aberrant and causes a variety of ailments. The etiology, pathological alteration, appearances, and symptoms of aberrant phlegm have been reported by ancient Unani physicians. The study attempts to build a knowledge of abnormal phlegm and its accompanying diseases based on the description found in the Unani literature.

Keywords: Humours, akhlat, damavi, balghami, safrawi, saudawi

Introduction
The concept of humours (akhlat) has occupied a central place in Tibb. This is one of the distinguishing fundamental concepts of Unani medicine. This system is developed by Greek-Arab physicians to explain all physiological and pathological phenomena of the human body in terms of humours. Humours are fluid parts of the body that are produced after metabolism and transformation (of surat nau'iyah) of the aliments. It serves the functions of nutrition, growth, and repair; and they produce faculty (energy) for the preservation of the individual and their species [1]. Hippocratic authors (460 B.C.) proposed the humoral theory in the treatise the Nature of Man. He described that "The body contains four humours - dam (blood), balgham (phlegm), safra (yellow bile), and sauda (black bile). A right proportion, according to quality and quantity, and the mixing of these is what makes health; a un-right proportion and irregular distribution according to their quality and quantity is what makes disease [2]. Humors are the product of the second stage of the digestive process (hepatic digestion) [3]. If normal humour deviates from its normal characteristics and composition then it is called abnormal humours that are responsible for the pathological condition [4]. Normal humour, by itself or in combination with other humours, is taken by the tissues and finally integrated into them. It is used to fix the damage to the body [5]. Ingested food material undergoes four sequential stages of digestion in the body to become part of the body. These stages of digestion are - gastric digestion, hepatic digestion, vascular digestion, and the tissue digestion stage [5, 6]. The quality of ingested food material, temperament of season, age, and body, as well as organ temperament, influences the production of humours. For the good quality of humour production, the ingested food material should be of good quality along with the healthy digestive organs and their proper function up to the stage of hepatic digestion. If anything goes wrong, then the produced humours will be abnormal. These abnormal humours are called a gair tabai akhlat. The improper proportion and/or a gair tabai akhlat is responsible for pathological conditions [7, 8]. The humoral doctrine of sickness was harshly criticized in the early stages of the European Renaissance and rejected for being speculative. But afterward, some fresh information emerged that reignited interest in humoral theory. The humoral hypothesis was first the subject of modern scientific investigation by Garrod and Landsteriner in 1901, and ever since then, the scientific world has closely monitored the theory and its consequences [9].

Normal Phlegm (Tabai Balgham)

Before discussing abnormal phlegm, it is necessary to understand normal phlegm in consistency, temperament, and taste. Phlegm is the white and colorless fluids substances of the body performing diverse tasks, it is second to humour blood (Dam) in excellence. According to Ibn Nafis, it is the humour blood that has not yet undergone full maturation [7, 8, 10, 11]. Normal phlegm is a variety of sweet phlegm, it is slightly colder than the body but is much colder than the yellow bile and blood. According to Galen, the usual form of sweet phlegm does not have a particular reservoir since it is similar to blood and is required by nearly every organ; therefore, it is always carried in the blood. Ibn Nafis says that phlegm has a cold and moist temperament, and most of the scholars agree with him. The main reason is that most types of phlegm are cold and moist (barid-ratb). So, the rest of the kinds of phlegm, which are also hot (har) but less common, have been left out [4, 7].

Abnormal Phlegm (Ghair Tabai Balgham)

Abnormalcy in the phlegm takes place in the same manner as is developed in other kinds of humours. Thus, either the temperament of phlegm is itself altered, or some other normal or abnormal humour is mixed with phlegm to the extent of altering its temperament and making it abnormal, or its quantity is altered [12]. These abnormalities could be identified by various signs and symptoms caused by abnormal phlegm due to changes in its quantity, quality, and composition; or the abnormal forms could be identified by chemical and physical examination of various phlegm samples such as physical and chemical examination of cerebrospinal fluid to determine its amount and composition (kamiyat and kayfiyat); laboratory testing of synovial fluids, intraocular pressure, and various other parameters [13]. In contrast, Unani physicians focused solely on the physical examination of phlegm, in addition to considering the signs and symptoms of various phlegmatic disorders. Abnormal phlegm is of four varieties based on, consistency; Mucoid (Mukhati), Immature (Kham), Watery (Ma'i), and Thick (Jassi). It has four varieties based on taste, Salty (Maleh), Sour (Hamiz), Astringent (Jajazi), and Tasteless (Masikh) [4, 14]. The abnormal kinds of phlegm described by the ancient physician based on physical examination are mentioned below.

1. **Mucoid (Mukhati):** It is obviously of an abnormal consistency, resembling mucus in appearance.
2. **Immature (Kham):** It is apparently of normal consistency but not fully mature.
3. **Watery (Ma'i):** It is abnormally thin and watery.
4. **Thick (Jassi):** This is white and thicker than all the other varieties. The thinner portion of this phlegm gets dispersed while the remainder solidifies by stagnating in joint spaces and passages [6].
5. **Salty phlegm (Maleh):** It is excessively hot - dry in temperament. Phlegm must meet two requirements to be salty. If Mirrah Safra and Raqiq Balgham are admixed in the first scenario, the result will be salty. In the second situation, when the test-less phlegm is exposed to intense heat, then the heat causes it to burn and turn into putrefaction, which makes it salty. When the high heat acts on them with all of its force and intensity, the materials that are left over from being fully matured or ripened cause them to become salty. This is demonstrated by looking at the wastes (fuzula) that are mixed with urine and still present in the organs after the third digestion (Hazam Urooqi). Physis (Tabiyat) turns away from them since it has no nutritious value. Since it lacks the nutritional ability, the physis escapes, and the innate heat (hararat garizia) does not carry out this procedure. As a result, the heat is imposed and rides on it, causing a form of putrefaction and combustion that makes it salty. The situation is the same with sweat, but less salt is present since urine has a higher incidence of nuzuj and hazam than sweat. The temperament of salty phlegm is hot-dry because the development of it happens in a way that the safra mohtarqa is combined with the liquefied phlegm or that the tasteless phlegm is burned, and there is a state of putrefaction and combustion in it when this scenario occurs. If that is the case, it can be said that hot and dry (har and yabis) have no distinction from one another [7].
6. **Sour phlegm (Hamiz Balgham):** It is excessively cold - dry in temperament. Its bitterness results from two causes: (I) any additional cause of disruption, such as black bile mixed with phlegm. (II) If not, there is a modification to the phlegm itself. Consequently, the modifications occurring within the phlegm in the second scenario similarly involve the following conditions. If it is initially sweet, its sourness is caused by intense alien heat (Hararate gharibia), which suppresses its innate heat and causes fermentation. The innate heat dissolves due to this disturbance and fermentation. Because of this, the cold prevails and it becomes bitter. In the same manner that fruit extracts become bitter during the hot summer or cold winter, which suppresses the innate heat with its supremacy, the innate heat is vanquished and collapses causing bitterness. If it lacks taste or Vitreous phlegm, the reason it is sour is that the weak innate heat acts on it. Since it cannot nuzuj and ripen, just one type of its ingredient is created by this weak action of innate heat, which then becomes porous and ready to take the coldness (barudat), leading it to become sour. There are numerous varieties of sour phlegm described (and several causes of phlegm enumerated). It is usual to observe that the coldness in all of them (which is created by the addition of black bile) is evident. As for dryness, it is visible in the first type of sour phlegm as well (which is formed by the mixture of black bile). As a result of the coldness, densification, and consolidation occur in the material of the remaining types, and the difficulty in accepting impact and inactivity causes this material to transform into a sour component [8].
7. **Astringent phlegm (Afis Balgham):** It is cold - dry in temperament. Either an astringent black bile mixed with the phlegm, or the phlegm itself becomes so cold that it tastes astringent. It is because cold hardens moisture into heavy particles, and inadequate heat does not mature it into an assimilable state but instead renders it astringent [4].
8. **Vitreous phlegm (Masaikh Balgham):** It is excessively cold- moist in temperament. It is viscous and thick, like molten glass. It might be sour or flavorless. It should not be unexpected if immature phlegm turns out to be a thicker type of tasteless phlegm or if tasteless phlegm turns out to be an altered type of immature phlegm. This type of tasteless phlegm is originally cold, thin, and devoid of any putrescence

or mixing. Its increased temperature and viscosity are the outcome of local stagnation. [6,10]

9. **Kinds according to odour**: According to odour, there is only one abnormal kind of phlegm - balgham muntin (mephitic phlegm). This is caused by putrefaction. Phlegm provides a culture medium wherever there is an infection focus in the body. In other words, phlegm is the first to become infected [12].

Phlegm production is abundant in old age, winter, cold temperaments places, and lack of exercise. In addition to increasing affluence, the consumption of cold plums, and sweets, favours the formation of phlegm [5]. When an excess of phlegm is produced, it may lead to illness. It appears that as a result of this, a person's normal temperament (mijaz Tabai) changes, and symptoms of a dis-temperament become apparent. This dis-temperament disrupts normal organ function.

Sign of the dominant phlegm

Phlegm predominance is indicated by extreme pallor, flaccidity of the body, cold-moist skin, and excessive salivation of viscous saliva. Thirst is diminished, particularly in the elderly, unless, of course, acidic phlegm predominates. This illness is characterized by poor digestion with acid eructa tions, pale urine, excessive tiredness, flaccid muscles, mental dullness, and a lenient pulse with a sluggish rate and pace. Age, lifestyle, prior treatments, profession, place of living, etc. all aid in diagnosing phlegm dominance. Dreams involving water canals that are frigid, icy, drenched in precipitation, or raging with hailstorms are indicative of an excess of phlegm [7, 15].

Table 1: Certain diseases caused due to abnormal phlegm are listed below in the table: [5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 16]

Organ/ Organ System	Disease/Medical Condition
Central Nervous System	Sudā‘ Balghami:, Lethargy, Insomnia, Forgetfulness, Paralysis, Convulsion, Epilepsy, Muscular tension, Trembling limbs
Eye	Poor vision, Swollen eyelids, Shedding eyelashes, Conjunctivitis, Styes, Dilation of pupils, Dandruff of eyelids
Ear, Nose, and Throat	Ringing in ear, Foul odor from nose, Swelling of uvula, Diphtheria, Constriction of throat
Dental and oral cavity	Dull feeling in teeth, Ulcer of gums, Swollen palate, Bad breath
Respiratory system	Coughing, Pleurisy, Asthma
Cardio vascular System	Heart feels as if being pulled downward
Gastrointestinal Tract	Enlarged tongue, Bad taste in the mouth, Canker sores, Esophagitis, Vomiting, Deficient appetite, Corrupted appetite, Upset stomach, Spasm of stomach, Obstruction of liver, Swelling of liver, Swelling of spleen, Gripe, Colic, Constipation, Hemorrhoid
Urinary Tract	Ulcers of kidneys, Swelling of bladder, Retention of urine
Disease of Male reproductive system	Inability to get an erection, Swelling of testicles
Disease of female reproductive system	Excessive menstrual flow, Sour mother’s milk, Swelling of womb
Skin	Sebaceous cysts, Sever perspiration, Pimples, Acne, whiteness of lips, Boils, Scabs, Dandruff, Baldness, No nail grow
Diseases of Joints	Backache, Joint ache, Arthritis
General Disease	Humma e Balghami, Warme sulb wa layyn, Edema

Discussion

The humoral theory is the first theory of scientific medicine. The word humor is a translation of the Greek word χυμός, meaning chymos (vital fluids of the body). In Arabic medical text, it is translated as ‘Akhlāt’ meaning an 'admixture'. There are four humours in the body blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile [4]. Good health is the result of harmony of humours with their normal qualities. [1, 17] It is a highly speculative idea articulated in physical terms as an antecedent concept to contemporary biochemical understanding. The numerous biochemical products that are formed from the digestion of food in the liver, blood, and tissue may be used to identify the studies and research that have been conducted. There are two categories of humor - normal and abnormal [6]. Normal humour, either on its own or in conjunction with other humours that have comparable properties, can be assimilated by the tissue and completely integrated into it. It is a substance that may be used to restore the normal wear and tear that occurs on the body. The abnormal humour, in the absence of correct digestion or conversion, is unable to be assimilated and is consequently expelled from the body [3, 18]. If one specific humour is not mixed with other humour, then the disease will emerge in the same location that this humour has previously inhabited or where it has been forced to move. The positions of humour are vacated in that area are prone to disease because the humour that is diametrically opposed to this one predominates at this location. From what Hippocrates has said, it is possible to conclude that the sickness is not only caused by the prevalence of abnormal phlegm but also due to the absence of normal phlegm in a specific location. One further illustration is knee pain, which may be traced back to a deficiency of synovial fluid. Furthermore, we are aware that synovial fluid is a phlegm. Now there is a need to look at the disease caused by phlegm imbalance from a new perspective to treat it precisely.

Conclusion

According to humoral theory, disease is due to imbalance in humoral composition. If any of the four humour deviates from its normal properties and quantity may cause disease. Phlegmatic diseases predominate in conditions that fovours phlegm production that can be diagnosed by physical examination, pulse examination and analysis of excreta.

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