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## Unravelling the significance of immunity in disease prevention and health promotion within the Unani system of medicine

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### Abstract

The Unani system of medicine is a comprehensive discipline that addresses the well-being and illnesses of the human body from preventive, promotive, and curative perspectives. It adopts a holistic approach, considering the entire individual rather than focusing solely on the disease in a reductionist manner. The fundamental concept of this system, introduced by Buqrat (also known as Hippocrates, 460-377 BC), emphasizes the presence of a unique innate capacity within each individual known as "*tabiyat*" or *Quwwat-e-mudabbira badan*, which acts as the body's defence mechanism. The role of *Tabiyat* in health and disease is crucial and should be understood. *Tabiyat*, often referred to as nature, acts as the body's best physician, regulating and restoring physiological mechanisms, enhancing immunity, and resisting ailments. Therefore, there are ways and means of immunostimulation and immunomodulation in Unani system of Medicine which offers a novel approach for promoting and restoring health and to treating various diseases.

**Keywords:** Unani System of medicine, *tabiyat*, immunity, *akhlata*, holistic

### Introduction

The Unani system of medicine is a comprehensive discipline that addresses the well-being and illnesses of the human body from preventive, promotive, and curative perspectives. It adopts a holistic approach, considering the entire individual rather than focusing solely on the disease in a reductionist manner<sup>[1]</sup>. The fundamental concept of this system, introduced by Buqrat (also known as Hippocrates, 460-377 BC), emphasizes the presence of a unique innate capacity within each individual known as "*Tabiyat*" or *Quwwat-e-mudabbira badan*, which acts as the body's defence mechanism<sup>[1, 2]</sup>.

The Unani System of Medicine elucidates the concept of *Tabiyat*, which is a supreme planner of the body, creating a harmonious internal environment and equipping it to combat diseases. When *Tabiyat* is robust, an individual is less susceptible to illness, whereas its weakening renders one vulnerable to various ailments<sup>[2-4]</sup>. *Tabiyat* encompasses the physical, functional, and psychological aspects of an individual and plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance of the body's four *akhlata* or humours. Rather than focusing on a single system, it considers the holistic well-being of an individual, encompassing physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional, and social aspects. The quantity and quality of *akhlata* or humours should align with the body's innate chemical composition<sup>[5-7]</sup>.

*Tabiyat*, often referred to as nature, acts as the body's innate physician, regulating and restoring physiological mechanisms, strengthening immunity, and warding off diseases. It is the responsibility of physicians to employ treatments that stimulate the body's inherent healing response, thereby reinforcing *tabiyat*<sup>[7-9]</sup>. This can be accomplished by invigorating the body's natural heat, known as *Hararat-e-ghariziyah*, which tends to diminish in individuals with illnesses, rendering them susceptible to environmental and pathological challenges<sup>[10-14]</sup>.

Renowned Unani scholar Rabban Tabri, in his treatise *Firdousal Hikmat*, identifies *Tabiyat* as the administrative power of the body. The administrative function of the body is carried out by *Tabiyat* through various powers known as *Quwwa*, such as *Quwwat tabaiyya* (Physical faculty), *Quwwate haiwania* (Vital faculty), and *Quwwate nafsania* (Nervous faculty). Thus, the primary role of *Tabiyat* is to provide general administration as well as defense or immunity to the body.

Immunity is an integral component of *Tabiyat*. Unani physicians recommend enhancing or strengthening *Tabiyat* to restore health and manage diseases [15].

Unani medicine places a strong emphasis on the well-being of the individual and promotes measures for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, going beyond simply prescribing medicine [13, 16]. The classic text *Al Qanoon fil Tib* discusses epidemic management and defines immunity as the body's ability to prevent and control disease, maintaining a state of balance. Strengthening the mind and body to cope with various stressors, including infections, is a fundamental principle in Unani practice [12].

The Unani System of Medicine takes a holistic approach to describing concepts of immunomodulation and managing health conditions to prevent diseases [16, 17]. Its primary goal is to help individuals lead healthy lives with minimal or no sickness. This approach is based on improving immunity through the use of immunomodulators, maintaining a balance in the quality and quantity of bodily humours, moderating the six essential factors of life, and implementing regimental and dietary therapies that promote positive health maintenance, as well as disease prevention and cure [16-18].

Immunostimulation and immunomodulation refer to any changes in the immune response that can involve inducing, expressing, amplifying, or inhibiting any part or phase of the immune system [19, 20]. An immunomodulator is a substance used to affect the immune system. There are two main types of immunomodulators: immunosuppressants and immunostimulators. The use of Unani Medicine for immune system modulation offers a novel approach to treating various diseases. Many drugs in the Unani system of medicine have been found to be effective and safe in modulating the immune system like for example *Kalonji* (*Nigella sativa*) [21], *Mulethi* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) [22], *Haldi* (*Curcuma longa*) [23], *Amla* (*Phyllanthus emblica*) [24], *Filfil siyah* (*Piper nigrum*) [25], *Zanjabeel* (*Zingiber officinalis*) [26-27] and many more but their immunomodulatory activities need further validation. As discussed earlier, in the Unani System of Medicine, *QuwwateMudabbara-e-Badan* primarily acts as immune stimulants. They serve as prophylactic and promoter agents in healthy individuals by enhancing immune responses. In individuals with weak immunity, they act as immunotherapeutic agents [17-18, 28].

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of immunomodulation not only exists in the Unani System of Medicine but has been practiced by Unani physicians for centuries. One of the preventive strategies in the Unani System of Medicine is to enhance the body's natural resistance to disease-causing agents. The emphasis on the role of Akhlat and their imbalance as the main causative factor of diseases in the Unani System of Medicine is important because the mere presence of causative organisms in the environment does not necessarily result in the manifestation of the disease.

The Unani system of Medicine documents the role of many drugs that act as potent rejuvenators and strong immune modulators. If taken regularly as part of the daily dietary routine, these medicines can have remarkable effects on the human body along with other regimens mentioned above. They not only strengthen and improve overall health but also help prevent diseases.

Extensive literature reviews on "*Tabiyat*" in the Unani

system of medicine have been conducted to enhance health and well-being. While this review covers some preventive regimens in Unani medicine, it is important to note that it is not exhaustive, as it was not possible to cover all aspects comprehensively. Nevertheless, this review provide valuable insights for scientists in the field and serve as a foundation for further studies on the role of Unani medicine in disease prevention and health promotion through immune enhancement.

## Conflict of Interest

Not available

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