Healthy Ageing in Iranian Traditional Medicine’s Resources in the Occasion of the World Health Day 2012

Hossein Hatami

School of Health, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Correspondence to:
Professor Hossein Hatami,
School of Health, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.
E-mail: hatami@hbi.ir

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AGEING

Concerns each and every one of us – whether young or old, male or female, rich or poor – no matter where we live. Every year, World Health Day is celebrated on 7 April to mark the anniversary of the founding of World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948 and each year a theme is selected for World Health Day that highlights a priority area of concern for WHO. The topic in 2012 is Ageing and health with the theme “Good health adds life to years”. The focus is, how good health throughout life can help older men and women lead full and productive lives and be a resource for their families and communities.[1]

World Health Organization promotes a healthy lifestyle across the life-course to save lives, protect health and alleviate disability and pain in older age. Age-friendly environments and early detection of disease, as well as, prevention and care improve the wellbeing of older people. Population ageing will hamper the achievement of socioeconomic and human development goals if action is not taken today.[2]

DEFINITION OF AGEING /AGING

Most developed world countries have accepted the chronological age of 65 years as a definition of ‘elderly’ or older person, but the United Nations agreed cutoff is 60+ years to refer to the older population.[3] And, also in 3 of four main encyclopedias of Iranian Traditional Medicine [End notes]; Kamel-al-Sanaah,[4] Canon of Medicine,[5] Zakhireye Khawrazmshahi,[6] which are written by Ahvazi, Avicenna and Jorjani respectively, the mentioned cutoff is 60+ years.

Population ageing means the process by which older individuals become a proportionally larger share of the total population. It was one of the most distinctive demographic events of the 20th century and also will surely remain important throughout the 21st century. Initially experienced by the more developed countries, the process has recently become apparent in much of the developing world as well. For the near future, virtually all countries will face population ageing, although at varying levels of intensity and in different time frames.[7]

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HYGIENE AND PREMATURE AGING, FROM THE VIEWPOINTS OF RHAZES AND AVICENNA

Although aging is an inevitable phenomenon, and it is impossible to escape, but it can be delayed for a long time, with cleanliness, proper nutrition, adequate sleep and welfare.[8] It should be noted that the hygiene is not the art, which
might avert death or extraneous injuries. It also
does not secure the utmost longevity possible to
the human beings in general. But it guarantees
two things: a) initial prevention of putrefaction.
b) Safeguarding of innate moisture from too rapid
a dispersion. Every person has a certain limit in
resisting the inevitable desiccation according to
his temperament, innate heat and the quantity of
the innate moisture. He cannot cross that limit
but sometimes he may die even earlier owing to
causes which produce- early desiccation or to
cause which prove fatal in one way or the other.
Many persons assert that the former types of death
are natural and the latter are accidental. The art of
preserving health aims at guiding the human body to
reach the age, which is called natural span of life by
paying attention to things suitable for health.\[9\]

Although, geriatric medicine and health is one
of the branches of modern medicine, but there
is much in this regard in the main resources of
Iranian traditional medicine, which represents
the fact that this important subject has already
been noted before the increasing of elderly
population. But has wrongly been addressed to
as the scientific achievement of the second half
of the 20th century. For example, we encountered
with more than 500 related terms, including many
current geriatric medical topics/titles in various
chapters and main topics of Avicenna's Canon
of Medicine and more in another main resources
of Traditional Medicine. In addition, there was
detailed description of health issues, healthy
eating and drinking, sport and sleeping programs
of old people. Furthermore, other subjects such as
effect of environmental factors on early premature
aging, the effect of aging on the susceptibility and
resistance to infectious diseases, severe fevers, and
fatal pains were also addressed in these books.\[10\]

Considering the increase in our population life
expectancy, obvious changes happening to the life
pyramid that is leading to an increase in elderly
population, and their present and future medical and
health needs; it is required to paying more attention to
this important field of medicine and health (Geriatrics)
in our medical education and research policy at the
Ministry of Health, with a reference to leading ideas!
Views of our scientists of 1,200 years ago and recent
emphasizes made by WHO at the beginning of the
new millennium and in relation to the theme of World
Health Day of 2012 – Healthy Aging.

END NOTES

Rhazes (865-925) has written the first encyclopedia
of traditional medicine, called al-Havi. One of the
most appealing healers from a modern vantage point
was the Persian Razi, called Rhazes in the West.
Students and practitioners thronged to his lectures, and
apparently he was also a brilliant bedside teacher. He
was also an independent thinker, not afraid to rely on
his own observations when they contradicted the past;
he counseled others that “all that is written in books is
worth much less than the experience of a wise doctor.
His most celebrated work, al-Havi, summarized the
medical and surgical knowledge of his time. Rhazes's
fame rested on clear-cut clinical descriptions of illness,
original observations, and a pragmatic approach to
treatment. He advised proper food in preference to
drugs in treatment, and recommended simple rather
than complex remedies.\[1]\n
Akhazi or Ali ibn al-'Abbas al-Majusi al-Ahvazi
or Haly Abbas (930-994) as the writer of the second
encyclopedia of traditional medicine has written his
book, called Kamel-al-Sanaah by using monotheistic
literature. Ahvazi also from the eastern caliphate, in the
late tenth century wrote highly popular and perceptive
commentaries on Hippocrates, Galen and Rhazes,
which were standard Arabic texts before Avicenna’s
Canon came upon the scene. Early Christian translators
introduced Haly Abbas's works to the West, especially
his surgical writings. The name of Isaac Judaeus (Abu
Ya'qub Is-hag Sulayman al-Israili) is linked with Haly
Abbas because the translator Constantinus Africanus
erroneously attributed to Isaac Judaeus some texts that
may have been written by Haly Abbas.\[1 2\]

Avicenna (850-1037) is writer of the third
encyclopedia of traditional medicine, called Canon
of Medicine. He has born near Bokhara, ancient Iran.
He was a boy prodigy and is said to have mastered the
Quran by the age of ten. Aristotle’s ideas intrigued him,
and he also studied the commentators, such as al-Farabi.
The entire gamut of human knowledge was within
his purview: grammar, poetry, geometry, astronomy,
anatomy, physiology, materia medica, and surgery. In
fact, until the mid-seventeenth century, the medical
curriculum of the Christian universities, including those
in the British Isles, was based on Avicenna’s writings.\[1\]

Jorjani (1040-1136) has written the fourth
encyclopedia of Iranian Traditional Medicine. Is named
as Zakhireye Kharwarazmshahi. He did for Persian
science what the Bible did for English prose. By this
great encyclopedia of medicine He standardized medical
technical terms. The phrases which he borrowed from
the Arabic text-books of Rhazes, Ahvazi and Avicenna
came thereafter incorporated in the scientific
language of the Persians for the use of later writers.
After Rhazes and Avicenna this work became the most consulted and the most frequently quoted of all the text-books of medicine.1


REFERENCES

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