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Concept of Siman Mufrit (obesity) and its management in unani system of medicine

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Abstract

Obesity is a condition in which there is abnormal growth of adipose tissue due to enlargement of fat cell size or an increase in fat cell number or in combination. According to WHO, a person is known as overweight if his/her BMI (Body Mass Index) is 25 and obese if BMI is ≥ 30 . The epidemic of obesity is now being recognized as the major health issue facing the world today. It reduces life expectancy by 7.1 years in men and 5.8 years in women. Obesity is the major risk factor for various diseases like Type2 diabetes Mellitus, Cardiovascular diseases, degenerative joint diseases, etc. In Unani System of Medicine Siman Mufrit also connoted as obesity is related to *food* of Hazme Kabidi. Ibn e Sina described that excessive intake of diet and sedentary lifestyles are the major contributory factors of Siman Mufrit. The conventional system of Medicine has developed many drugs to treat obesity, but the overall results are not satisfactory. Unani system of medicine is endowed with enormous single and compound drugs and various regimens (*Ilaj bit Tadbeer*) for the management of obesity that are safe and effective.

Keywords: Siman mufrit, BMI, Ilaj bit Tad beer

Introduction

The term Obesity has been derived from the Latin word "Obedere" which means 'to devour' and in English means very fat [1]. It is defined as a state of abnormal growth of adipose tissue, due to enlargement of fat cell number or an increase in fat cell number or in combination [2]. The direct measurement of body fat is difficult, so it is simply gauged by body mass index (BMI) which is equal to weight/height in square (in kg/m^2). BMI is used to differentiate between the overweight and obese persons. According to WHO a person is said to be overweight if his/her BMI is ≥ 25 and obese if BMI is ≥ 30 [3].

Obesity is emerging as an important health problem in India. As per the National Family Health survey, 12.1% men and 14.8% women in India are either overweight or obese [4]. This is mainly due to reduced level of physical activity, rather than by other factors. Obesity may lead to different types of ailments like hypertension, diabetes, gall bladder diseases and coronary heart diseases and certain types of cancers, especially hormonally related and large bowel cancers and also infertility [2]. It has been increasing at an alarming stage throughout the world over past two decades and nowadays it is a global health problem. It has global impact in terms of human suffering and economic burden, resulting from the chronic disease and disability associated with it [3]. There are many drugs available for the treatment of obesity in modern medicine, but side effects have limited their role in the treatment. There is an urgent need for an effective understanding of obesity and its management, including the use of natural strategies that are affordable and effective. Unani system of medicine offers valuable insights and practical applications in this regard.

In the Unani system of medicine obesity is connoted as Siman Mufrit which is defined as the accumulation of excess fat in the body [1]. Fat is *Shaham* and this concept is present since Greco-Arab period [1, 5]. Siman Mufrit occurs due to decrease in *Hararate ghareezia* (innate heat). *Hararate ghareezia* of obese persons become weak due to narrowing of vessels [6]. It is due to *Burro at of Miah* (cold temperament) as *Burro at* is dominant over the *mizaj* of obese person with lack of *dam* and excess of *balgam* [7]. Excess of *shaham* and *sameen* denote the *rutoobat* because *asbabe maddi* (material causes) of *dam* are *maiyyat* (fluidity) and *dusoomat* (viscosity) and this is well known that this *maiyyat* of *dam* is more *ratab* than other constituents of *dam*. Excess of *shaham* is due to *rutoobat* and *buroodat*. *Rutoobat* causes excess of *shaham*. *Buroodat* also causes excess of *shaham* because *sababe faili* (active cause) of *shaham* is *buroodat*, as *buroodat* consolidate the *maiyyat* of *dam*. So this is reason why *barid ratab* body has excess *shaham* and *sameen* and *har yabis* body lacks them [8].

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Detailed description of obesity including its complications, prevention and management has been well described by *Buqrat* (420 BC) in his famous book “*Fasoole Buqratia*”. Galen has well differentiated between morbid and non-morbid Siman Mufrit and has also given concepts of pathogenesis of Siman Mufrit [1, 9, 10]. Shaham provides nutrition to *a'za* and also responsible for maintenance of *hararat* in the body if it is within normal limits. It has capability to accumulate into those organs which have the same temperament as that of *Shaham* which is *Barid Ratab* [1, 5].

Two types of Siman Mufrit are described in Unani literature; *Maqami* (Local) and *Umoomi* (General). When *Shaham* deposits in a particular organ it is called local obesity i.e., protrusion of abdomen or breast due to the deposition of fat. When the deposition of fat is generalized in the body, it is called general obesity [11]. Unani scholars have mentioned that obese people are more prone to diseases as their *Hararate Ghareezia* becomes very weak due to *Baroodate Mizaj* and constriction of vessels (*Tangi Urooq*). Due to vasoconstriction, *Hararate Ghareezia* becomes weak and slow, and weakness of *Hararate Ghareezia* causes itself vasoconstriction. Both these factors leads to decrease in the passage of “*Rooh*” to the organs and finally death ensue [6, 11, 12]. *Ibne Sina* (980-1037 AD) focuses on the *taqleel ghiza* (decrease in food intake) as the important tool for obesity treatment. He has prescribed the *advia Mulattifa* and has described detailed pharmacological action of these drugs about how they decrease the fat of the body. In fact, he described mechanism of non-absorption of food from intestine is the same as the modern drugs, used in the treatment of obesity. *Ibn Hubal Al Baghdadi* (1121–1213 AD) suggested that obese persons should avoid taking fatty diets. He has stressed on the gradual decrease in diet, otherwise, adverse effects will be observed in the patient.

Ibne Baitaar in his book *Kitabul jame le Mufradatil Advia wal Aghzia* enlisted some *Muhazzil* drugs to be used in the management of Obesity [1, 9, 10]. Unani systems of medicine offer numerous single and compound drugs along with other regimens for the safe and effective management of Siman Mufrit.

Causes

Obesity is due to excess eating especially *Shaham* and *Sameen* (fat and oil), sweet, carbohydrates and butter, use of milk especially of buffalo and living luxurious life [13, 14].

It is also caused by the *buroodat* of *Mizaj*. Various causes which produce *buroodat* of *Mizaj* are summarised as: [15]

- Excessive activity destroys the innate heat.
- Excessive repose which produce cold by suppressing the heat.
- Excessive intake of food and drinks.
- Retention of excretions by suppressing innate heat.
- Cold medicines.

Causes which produces *rutoobat* are as follows: [15]

- Excessive Rest
- Excessive Sleep
- Elimination of dry matters.
- Moisturizing food.
- Hydrating measures eg: *hammam* especially after meal.

Pathogenesis

Siman Mufrit is a disease caused by *Sue Mizaj* of *Balgham*. it is related to *fasaad* of *hazam e kabidi*. Excessive *buroodat* in

kabid causes *ghalbae balgham* (dominance of phlegm) in blood which leads to disturbed metabolism [5, 8].

Unani physicians have clearly mentioned that all the white and colorless fluid of the body comes in the category of *balghami khilt*. When this *balghami khilt* became abnormal in quality and quantity, this will lead to *balghami amraz* and will cause pathological changes in the body [16]. In Siman Mufrit, *hararate ghareezia* is severely compromised due to increased *buroodat* and in turn causes vasoconstriction that may result in early death. Decreased *hararate ghareezia* itself promotes narrowing of vessels and contributes to obstructed propagation of *rooh* in the body, and thus may predispose to the death in advanced stage of disease [17].

Complications of Siman Mufrit

- *Falij* (paralysis) [7, 11, 12, 18]
- *Sara* (Epilepsy) [7, 11]
- *Arq muntan* (odorous sweet) [11].
- *Wajaul fawad* (heart burn) [11].
- *Zeequnnafas* (dyspnoea) [7, 11, 12, 18, 19].
- *Ghashi* (faintness) [7, 11, 12, 18].
- Hypertension [2, 19].
- Diabetes [2, 19].
- Gall bladder diseases [2, 19].
- Varicose veins [2, 19].
- Osteoarthritis of knee, hip and lumbar spine [2, 19].
- In woman – problem in conceiving, abortion, difficulty in delivery, infertility.
- In men – infertility and loss of libido [6, 11, 18, 20].

Usoole Ilaj (Line of treatment)

The treatment of Siman Mufrit is based on the following principles:

1. **Tadeele Mizaj:** for correction of the *Sue mizaj* with the drugs having opposite temperament i.e. *Haar* and *Yabis Mizaj*, are prescribed.
2. **Izalae Sabab:** Elimination of the existing causes.
3. **Tanqiyah Mawad:** In case of abnormality in *Khilt e balgham*, drugs having the following properties should be administered- *Munaffis Balgham* (expectorant), *Mushil Balgham* (purgatives), *Mudir* (diuretics), *Muarriq* (diaphoretics), *Mujaffif* (desiccant).
4. **Modification in diet:** To reduce increased fat, fibrous foods having less nutritive values should be used. Such foods occupy the space of stomach and appetite is compromised.
5. **Other measures:** The following *tadabeers* (Regimen) are used which produce *hararat* and *yaboosat* like:
 - Use of *haar yabis* foods.
 - Heavy exercise.
 - Use of *muarriq advia*.
 - Stay in hot and dry places [2, 6, 11, 12, 18].

ILAJ (Management)

Unani management is broadly classified into following headings:

1. *Ilaj bil Ghiza* (Dietotherapy)
2. *Ilaj bil Dawa* (Pharmacotherapy)
3. *Ilaj bil Tadabeer* (Regimenal therapy)

Ilaj bil Ghiza

1. Foods which are *Kaseef qalilul taghziya* such as dry beef meat should be used.
2. Avoid all *roghani ghizayen* (oily Foods).

3. *Ghiza* should be increased in *Kaifiyat* (quality) not in *Kammiyat* (quantity) i.e., low calorie foods should be used.
4. Use dry and dessicating food.
5. Hot spices should be added in *ghiza* because they have *mulattif* property.eg. *piper longum*, *carum carvi*, *allium sativum* etc.

6. Meat, milk and liquor restricted [1, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14].

Ilaj bil Dawa

In Unani System of medicine there are many single and compound drugs which are used in the treatment of Siman Mufrit. Some of them are as follows:-

Table 1: Single Drugs: [21, 22, 23, 24, 25]

S. No	Drugs	Scientific name	Mizaj	Afaal	Dose
1	Anisoon	<i>Pimpinella anisum</i>	Haar Yabis	Mulattif, Muhallil, Muarriq, Muftteh Sudad, Munaffite balgham	2-5gm
2	Afsanteen	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i>	Haar Yabis	muhallil, Muarriq, Mulattif, Muftteh Sudad and beneficial in Balghami Amraz	3-5gm
3	Asarun	<i>Asarum europium</i>	Haar Yabis	Muharrike asab and Mudire boul. It excretes Balgham from the body hence beneficial in Balghami Amraz	3-5gm
4	Filfil Siyah	<i>Piper nigrum</i>	Haar Yabis	Muqawwie jigar wa meda, beneficial in Balghami Amraz	4-6gm
5	Lehsun	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Haar Yabis	Musakhin, Muqattae akhlate ghaliza and Munaffise balgham.	3gm
6	Zanjabeel	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	Haar Yabis	Muharrik, Munaffite balgham, Dafa e buroodat	1gm
7	Ajwain	<i>Ptychotis ajowan</i>	Haar Yabis	Musakhin, Muhallil, muftteh sudad	1.5-1gm
8	Elva	<i>Aloe barbadensis</i>	Haar Yabis	Mulaiyan, Mushil, Muqawwie meda and jigar	Upto 6gm
9	Badiyan	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Haar Yabis	Muhallil, Muqawi e meda wa jigar	5-7gm
10	Naana	<i>Mentha arvensis</i>	Haar Yabis	Musakhkhin, Mulattif	3-5gm
11	Soya	<i>Anethum sowa</i>	Haar Yabis	Mufatteh Sudad, tahleel e riyah, Musakkin	2-3gm
12	Kishneez	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Haar Yabis	Muqawwi e qalb, dimagh, meda, Mufarreh,	5-7gm
13	Karafs	<i>Apium graveolens</i>	Haar Yabis	Mufatteh Sudad, Muhallil, Mudir e bol wa hez.	3-5gm
14	Luk	<i>Coccus lacca</i>	Haar Yabis	Jaali, Muhallil, Munaqqie Akhlat	0.5-2gm
15	Murmaki	<i>Commiphora myrrha</i>	Haar Yabis	Munaqqi e dimagh, Mudir e bol wa hez, Mujaffif	1-2gm
16	Tukhme Sudaab	<i>Ruta graveolens</i>	Haar Yabis	Dafe hararat, Musakkin e Safra	3-5gm
17	Zravand	<i>Aristolochia rotunda</i>	Haar Yabis	Mulattif, Munaqqie dimagh wa meda	3-5gm
18	Zeera	<i>Carum carvi</i>	Haar Yabis	Muhallil, Musakkin, Mulattif	3-5gm

Compound Formulations

The compound formulations which are used for the treatment of obesity are as follows [6, 11, 12, 13, 18]:

- Sufoof e muhazzil
- Majoon e Muqil
- Jawarish kamooni kabir
- Anqarudiya.
- Asanasiya
- Dawa ul Luk
- Itrifal Sagheer.
- Majoon Falafali.
- Sikanjabeen Unsuli
- Ayarij Faiqra

Ilaj bil Tadbeer

- Reduce sleeping hours.
- Use of *haar wa mohallil* drugs like *falafali* etc.
- Heavy exercise.
- Reduce Diet.
- Use of *haar yaabis* food.
- Stay in hot and dry places.
- *Ishaal* (purgation)
- *Idraar* dieresis
- Increased physical activity and exercise [6, 11, 17, 18, 20].
- *Hammam Muarriq* – it is mode of excretion. Steam bath is being used which may be considered similar to third room of traditional *hammam*. Mizaj of third room of *hammam* (Turkish bath) is described as *haar yaabis*. Prolong stay in *hammam* causes profuse sweating, which results in heat and dryness. This heat is due to hot air and

yaboosat is due to excessive sweating resulting in loss of *rutoobat* from the body [17].

Conclusion

Obesity is emerging as a global health problem. Unani system of medicine is endowed with enormous single and compound drugs and regimes for the management of obesity. Thus, it is the need of the time to re-evaluate the work done by Unani physicians in managing obesity. In recent years some studies have also scientifically validate the claims of Unani physicians. Hence this system of medicine can be a better option to control the progress of obesity.

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