

TIBB - A SCIENCE OF MEDICINE

THE ART OF CARE



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Over the past decade, interest in complementary and integrative systems of healing has seen a surge the world over. People are becoming increasingly interested in finding health solutions free from unnecessary ill side-effects. The use of natural and herbal remedies has steadily gained popularity as self-awareness and empowerment of individuals to take charge of their own well-being have become more apparent. One such system of healing which recognizes the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical causes of illness or health, and embodies the belief that “it is more important to know what sort of person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has”, is Tibb.

Tibb medicine, also known as Unani-Tibb is a comprehensive healing system based on scientific data and taking every aspect of the individual into account. By knowing yourself, your personality, as well as the environmental and emotional factors that influence you – you are able to empower yourself by creating conditions that favour your disposition. Tibb has journeyed through many teachers, philosophers and countries with principles that can be traced to Egyptian, Greek, Arabic and Western Medicine. Unani is a Persian word for ‘Greek’, and Tibb an Arabic word meaning ‘medicine’. Approaching health maintenance holistically yet scientifically, Tibb is ideally suited to alleviate some of the burdens facing the South African healthcare scenario as it has a great deal in common with both modern medicine as well as Traditional African medicine. It has the advantage of being tested over time yet being able to work in synergy with the techniques of modern science and medicine. One of the beliefs of the Tibb philosophy is rather than handing total responsibility for your health to a doctor, each individual should take responsibility for their own health through empowerment of your body’s unique needs.

The Tibb Philosophy

One of the greatest strengths that Tibb provides is the insight into the creation of man, his nature, constitution and his relationship to the environment. Teachings from many of the great philosophers like Hippocrates (the “father of Western medicine”) and Galen as well as the Arab physicians Rhazes, Ibn Nafees and Ibn Sina or Avicenna dominate its philosophy and practice. Modern day use of this system is seen in countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. An important part of Unani-Tibb is the emphasis it places on primary healthcare, education of individuals as well as health practitioners and a dedication to social responsibility.

Tibb philosophy is based on the theory that everything in the universe comprises of four elements symbolically represented by fire, air, water and earth. These elements have corresponding qualities of heat, moistness, coldness and dryness. Everything in the universe be it mineral, plant, animal or man, contains these elements and qualities in specific ratios. Depending on the ratios of these elements every object, compound or living entity has a state of equilibrium that reflects the qualities of heat, moistness, coldness and dryness. This balance of qualities is called ‘temperament’.

Temperament

The overall temperament of the human being is hot and moist, which stands to reason, when we know that the body has an ideal temperature of 37°C, and contains between 60-70% water.

However, slight variations exist within this hot and moist category, which explains why some of us feel colder or hotter than others. The temperament of an individual can be identified by observing the particular characteristics of physical appearance as well as the mental, emotional and spiritual attributes - body, mind and soul. Believe it or not, the differences in skin and hair texture, body type, emotional reactions and etc, offer important information about our personal temperaments.

The four Temperaments as recognized in Tibb are:

Sanguinous: Hot and Moist

Phlegmatic: Cold and Moist

Bilious: Hot and Dry

Melancholic: Cold and Dry.

Each of us will have a dominance of one Temperament depending on our individual combination of qualities.

As long as we are able to maintain an ideal temperament, health will prevail. Our body fluids, also known as humours, produced from the food and drink we consume, are responsible for maintaining our ideal temperament. It is as simple as knowing that illness results from the imbalance of humours and treatment involves correcting imbalances.

Lifestyle Factors

We are all aware that lifestyle plays an important role in the state of our well being. Tibb has a checklist consisting of six factors to consider when examining the relationship between you and your environment. Making sure that each of the following factors are given appropriate attention will help you to monitor the quality of your life. Environmental Air and Breathing: considering the quality of air and whether we are breathing efficiently or not. Sleep and Wakefulness: getting the right amount of undisturbed quality sleep, feeling alert during waking hours. Food and Drink: are you regularly eating food that sustains you, and drinking enough water? Movement and Rest: regularly doing exercise that is suited to your body and the pace of your life, having enough leisure time. Elimination: effective elimination on a regular basis. Emotions: expressing and feeling emotions appropriately. Each of these six factors affects our Temperaments and either raise or lower heat, moisture, dryness and coldness. For example, weather is either hot or cold or moist or dry. Similarly, sleep increases moisture in the body and exercise produces heat. Once you are aware of your temperament and the influence that it has over your state of health, you can take suitable measures to correct imbalances when you are ill.

Treatment

Tibb's approach to holistic health is effective in treating any illness. It is a completely integrative medical system working in tandem with other treatment methods and health care professionals.

The Tibb method of treatment includes preventative and curative measures aimed at restoring and maintaining health and for coping more positively and pro-actively with illness. Tibb treats all chronic illnesses and recurring symptoms including heart disease, tension headaches, arthritis, diabetes, cancer, allergies, sleep disorders, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, hypertension, back pain, premenstrual syndrome, painful menstrual periods, pelvic pain, infertility, irritable bowel syndrome and eating disorders, amongst others.

Predominantly natural in origin, Tibb medication is safe and has fewer side effects. Hundreds of years of trials as well as clinical tests have resulted in extremely effective herbal solutions. Treatment may consist of diet therapy, lifestyle adjustment and health education, herbal medicine and regimental therapies - including purgation, cupping, massage, enema's and perspiration.

Ultimately Tibb encourages the restoration and maintenance of health through taking correct measures to help the body to heal itself. One of the key aspects of the Tibb philosophy is the belief that each and every one of us has within us an inherent wisdom which allows the body to overcome illnesses. This internal 'doctor' is known as Physis and it is constantly at work to help maintain the ideal temperament within each of us. By being aware of your temperament, you can speed up the healing process by assisting your physis through correct lifestyle adaptations in conjunction with suitable diet and medication.

Each individual has the right to be healthy, we have the responsibility to ourselves to respect our bodies as our temples. Tibb encourages an integrative approach to achieve this state of well-being through recognition of body, mind and soul by encouraging each and every person to 'Know Thyself.'

Further reading

For a more complete understanding of Tibb, its philosophy, the link between each individual's temperament and illness, Tibb's diagnostic techniques and the restoration of health as well as the treatment of illnesses, refer to the book, "Tibb - Traditional Roots of Medicine in Modern Routes to Health", published by the Ibn Sina Institute of Tibb in July 2000. The second book "Cooking for Your Body Type - Everyday Meals to suit your Temperament" is not only a gastronomical delight but provides valuable insight into the Philosophy of Tibb and the importance of eating correctly to suit your individual make-up.

The latest addition is a lifestyle paperback book entitled "4 Temperaments, 6 Lifestyle Factors", was published in January 2006. It is an interesting and motivating read aimed at the consumer and gives clear, explicit instructions on how to identify ones temperament, as well as offering a lifestyle programme for each temperament.

For further information call The Ibn sina Institute of Tibb 011 495 0300 or e-mail . To find out more on the Tibb range of products ask your pharmacist or call Tibb Health Sciences on 0800 00 2457, alternatively you can visit the Tibb Herbal Sciences website at www.tibbherbals.com.