

The Importance of Swings in Humoral Medicine

Praise be to Allh, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon our Master Muhammad.

If people truly understood humoral medicine, they would become attached to it and make it a trusted reference for themselves and their families. Unfortunately, despite being a communal obligation (fard kifayah), only a few people recognize its strength. Most people either oppose it or do not trust it. This is largely due to the many individuals who treat people with herbs and similar remedies without returning to the principles and rules of this medical system, thereby causing more harm than benefit.

Another reason is the extensive campaign of distortion carried out by Western institutions for more than two hundred years in an effort to discredit and dismantle this form of medicine. They went so far as to claim that the theory of the four humors was merely Hippocrates' theory and that it was false and invalid, while asserting that the modern medicine they developed was the only

correct approach. In doing so, they disregarded what had been transmitted through revelation and assumed that diseases could be diagnosed independently of the four fundamental qualities: hotness, coldness, wetness, and dryness. One author even published a book about a century ago entitled “The Fall of Humoral Medicine and the Rise of Modern Medicine.”

To be fair, humoral medicine was not abandoned because it was weak. Rather, colonial powers imposed laws prohibiting its practice after taking control of medical institutions throughout the lands they colonized. Those who refused to comply were imprisoned, fined, or even killed. This was done, in part, to prevent people from recognizing that many of the major medical references were rooted in the Islamic tradition and to secure economic and social control over nations and peoples. This painful history, unfortunately, has harmed all of humanity.

Whoever truly knows medicine and its practitioners knows where the truth lies.

Medicine could have developed by building upon the ancient principles rather than abandoning them. Therefore, wisdom today lies in combining the old and the new by reconnecting useful modern discoveries to the foundational principles of hotness, coldness, wetness, and dryness.

I would now like to present a new example that demonstrates the strength of this medical system, which examines even the smallest details of human life and their benefits or harms.

In humoral medicine, the use of swings has remarkable medical importance. This explains why swings were once commonly found on balconies in many homes, both in cities and villages. Their use was recommended by physicians because they provide significant benefits in many illnesses where patients are too weak to move.

Gentle swinging—whether on swings, suspended beds, or cradles, while sitting, standing, or lying down—is suitable for those whose illnesses have weakened them and made movement

difficult. It is also beneficial for disorders involving the diaphragm. Furthermore, it helps remove the residual effects of diseases affecting the head because it encourages abnormal substances and humors to detach and move away. When combined with sleep, its benefits become even greater.

Swinging helps dissolve disease-causing substances more than it heats the body because it works gently without causing the intense movement that produces excessive hotness. As a result, breathing does not become labored, and the humors are not excessively stirred.

It is especially beneficial for convalescents—those recovering from illness—because it helps eliminate residual disease materials that medicine may not be able to reach. It also serves as a form of physical exercise for those who prefer comfort and rest.

According to humoral medicine, every food we eat leaves behind traces and residues in the body that can only be removed through exercise. If a person does not engage in exercise, swinging can help dissolve and eliminate these residues so that they do not accumulate over time and cause harm. Such accumulation, according to this view, may contribute to conditions such as blood clots, elevated harmful cholesterol, and high triglycerides.

Swings were also used as a specialized method for helping the body expel disease-causing substances, particularly during the later stages of certain illnesses such as lethargus (a phlegmatic, cold condition associated with forgetfulness) and sarsam (inflammatory disorders affecting the brain and its membranes), once the illness had passed its peak and entered the stage of decline and recovery. At that point, patients were encouraged to use swings, provided they avoided unhealthy environments, hot winds, desert hotness, and direct sun exposure, lest their condition relapse.

Likewise, in many illnesses whose later stages leave patients too weak for normal exercise, swings are recommended until strength gradually returns and more active forms of exercise become possible.

Conclusion

How beautiful, clear, understandable, and distinctive this medical system is. Its foundations, according to its adherents, originate from teachings revealed to our father Adam and practiced by prophets. It encompasses every aspect of human life: the surrounding air, food and drink, physical activity and rest, emotional movement and stillness, sleep and wakefulness, and what is expelled from or retained within the body.

Its beauty lies in the fact that its principles are based on the four humors with a comprehensive understanding of the causes, signs, and treatments of disease.

It is false to claim that humoral medicine is merely folk medicine incapable of understanding serious or complex illnesses. In reality, becoming a physician in this tradition requires studying both its foundations and branches for many years. Some practitioners spend as many as fifteen years mastering it because of the vast amount of medical knowledge recorded by physicians regarding every illness and condition.