



Review Article

DALK (MASSAGE) AND ITS IMPLICATION IN THERAPY ACCORDING TO UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

According to classical literature of Unani Medicine, management of any disease depends upon the diagnosis of disease. In the diagnosis, clinical features, i.e., signs, symptoms, laboratory investigations and Mizaj (temperament) are important. Any cause or factor is countered by Quwwat Mudabbira lil-Badan (medicatrix naturae: the power of body responsible to maintain health), the failing of which may lead to quantitatively or qualitatively derangement of the normal equilibrium of *Akhlat* (humors) of body which constitute the tissues and organs. After diagnosing the disease, *Usul-e-Ilaj* (principle of treatment) of disease is determined on the basis of etiology. The principle of management is decided which may be one or more of the four types of treatment lines such as *Ilaj bil-Tadbeer* (Regimental therapy), *Ilaj bil-Ghiza* (Diet therapy), *Ilaj bil-Dawa* (Pharmacotherapy), *Ilaj bil-Yad* or *Jarahat* (Surgery). *Ilaj bil-Tadbeer* is most preferred one. *Dalk* is one of the most important parts of *Ilaj bil-Tadbeer*. Details about *Dalk* have been mentioned in Unani Literature, some of them are described in this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

Ilaj bi'l Tadbeer (regimental therapy) is the first method which is applied in the treatment followed by others if needed. It is a type of therapy which is given in the form of regime to maintain the health of a person. This therapy creates changes in the obligatory causes of health i.e. *Asbab Sitta Daruriyya* (six essentials of health) on the principle of *'Ilaj bi'l Didd* (heteropathy). It deals with the rules of diet, exercise etc. for improving health and physical or mental well being or any intervention other than medicine that restores the health.²⁴

It consists of following methods, *Riyazat* (exercise), *Dalk* (massage or friction), *Takmeed* (fomentation), *Natul* (Irrigation), *Hammam* (Turkish bath), *Hijamah* (cupping), *Fasd* (venesection), *Tareeq* (sweating), *Idrar-e-Baul* (diuresis), *Ishaal* (purgation), *Qai* (emesis), *Huqna* (enema), *Ilam* (Pain induction), *Imala* (diversion of morbid material), *Taleeq* (leeching), *Kaiyy* (cauterization).

Among them *Dalk* (massage) is the most common and widely practiced regimen that is used for restorative, preventive as well as for therapeutic purposes. Massage which has been used in almost all the civilizations in the history, evidence of this is present in several manuscripts. Now in modern times physiotherapy has been most popular to cure various diseases which is a modern version of *Dalk*.

Dalk (massage or stroke): *Dalk* is very important and comfortable of all types of regimental therapy because it involves noninvasive technique producing no

harm. It refers to manual kneading or manipulating the soft tissues to relieve pain, spasm, discomfort, stress and to preserve or promote health and wellness. *Dalk* is a general term for pressing, rubbing and manipulating the skin, muscles, tendons and ligaments. It may range from light stroking to deep pressure.

There are many different types of *Dalk* were recommended in Unani System of Medicine:

1. *Dalk Qasir* (short massage): A type of massage, done for a short duration. This massage produces less heat and is less resolving. In summers, it is beneficial for weak persons who have less viscous fluids.
2. *Dalk Sulb* (firm massage): A type of massage in which hard strokes with pressure are used. It makes the body hard and firm.
3. *Dalk Khashin* (rough massage): A type of massage done with the help of rough cloth. It draws the blood rapidly to the body surface.
4. *Dalk Tawil* (prolonged massage): A type of gentle massage done for a longer duration. It shows more resolving action while its heat producing effect is lesser. It is beneficial for stiff bodies, fatty obese persons and in autumn season.
5. *Dalk Layyin* (soft massage): A type of soft massage done to relax the body.
6. *Dalk Qalil* (short massage): A type of massage, in which body is rubbed for a short duration. It is done to enhance the blood circulation, make the body parts shiny and produce heat in the body

7. *Dalk Kathir* (heavy massage): A type of massage done for a long duration at frequent intervals in each sitting. It helps in reducing the fat of the body.

8. *Dalk Amlas* (smooth massage): A type of massage which is done gently with the palm or with a soft cloth. It draws and retains the blood in the muscles and skin of the treated area.

9. *Dalk Mu'tadil* (moderate massage): A type of massage, in which the body is rubbed moderately in every aspect, such as strokes and duration. It helps in the growth and development of the body.

10. *Dalk-i-Isti'dad* (preparatory massage): A type of massage, done before starting an exercise session. It is started in a gentle manner which gradually becomes vigorous towards the end.

11. *Dalk Qawi* (vigorous massage): A type of massage in which vigorous strokes are used. It is done for short duration and produces more heat in the body which is good for people having muscular body.

The hard rub or massage is Mufatteh-e-Sudad (deobstruent) and makes the body firm. Soft massage is sedative and relaxes the body while prolonged massage reduces body fat. Moderate massage develops the body as well as it improves and maintains the blood circulation of the particular organ; rough friction with a rough cloth enhances vasodilatation of the particular organ etc.¹⁶

Recently it has been classified more comprehensively such as:^{16,20}

Swedish Dalk: This is a gentle form of Dalk that uses long strokes, kneading, deep circular movements, vibration and tapping to help relax and energize you.

Deep Dalk: This Dalk technique uses slower, more-forceful strokes to target the deeper layers of muscle and connective tissue, commonly to help with muscle damage from injuries.

Sports Dalk: This is similar to Swedish Dalk, but it's geared toward people involved in sport activities to help prevent or treat injuries.

Trigger point Dalk: This Dalk focuses on areas of tight muscle fibers that can form in your muscles after injuries or overuse

Benefits of Dalk⁹

1. In an age of technical times massage offers a drug-free non-invasive and humanistic approach based on the body's natural ability to heal itself. So what exactly are benefits to receiving regular massage and or bodywork treatments?
2. It increases circulation, allowing the body to pump more oxygen and nutrients into tissues and vital organs.
3. It stimulates the flow of lymph, the body's natural defense system, against toxic invaders. For example, in breast cancer patients, massage has been shown to increase the cells that fight cancer.
4. It increases circulation of blood and lymph systems, improves the condition of the body's largest organ-the skin.

5. Relaxes spasms and cramping
6. Increased joint flexibility
7. Reduces recovery time, help prepare for strenuous workouts and eliminates subsequent pains of the athlete at any level.
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9. Release endorphins- the body's natural painkiller- and is being used in chronic illness injury and recovery surgery to control and relieve pain.
10. Reduces post- surgery adhesions and edema and can be used to reduce and realign scar tissue after healing has occurred.
11. Relieves pain for migraine sufferers and decreases the need for medication.
12. Provides exercise and stretching for atrophied muscles and reduces shortening of the muscles for those with restricted range of motion.
13. Assists with shorter labor for expecting mothers, as well as less need for medication less depression and anxiety, and shortly hospital stays

Other benefits

1. Reducing or eliminating pain
2. Improving joint mobility
3. Improving Circulation
4. Improving lymphatic drainage
5. Reducing muscular tension
6. Weight gain in premature infants
7. Pregnancy and labor support: In females who were given massage therapy during the delivery showed less agitation, faster delivery and less postpartum psychosis.
8. Relief from symptoms of anxiety, tension, depression, insomnia and stress as well as back pain, headache, muscles pain and some form of chronic pain, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, dislocation, fractures and edema, multiple sclerosis, muscle spasm,³
9. Post-surgical rehabilitation
10. Helpful in Sports injuries, tendinitis, strains and sprains, Fibromyalgia, Arthritis, bursitis, Kyphosis and Scoliosis¹²

Contraindications of massage⁹

1. Skin disorders which would be imitated by either increase in warmth of the part or by the lubricants which might be used e.g. eczema, ulcer, and inflammation.
2. When superficial infections of skin are suppurating or in case of ulcer
3. In the presence of malignant tumor
4. In the presence of recent, unhealed scars or open wounds
5. Over joints or other tissue which are inflamed, especially joints with tubercular infection.
6. Congestive heart disease, kidney failure

7. Hyperpyrexia
8. Hypersensitive state of person
9. Malignancy
10. Open wound
11. Ligament injury
12. Vein varicose
13. Bleeding disorders or take blood-thinning medication
14. Burns or healing wounds
15. Deep vein thrombosis
16. Fractures
17. Severe osteoporosis
18. Severe thrombocytopenia

Mechanism explaining the effect of Dalk ^{12, 13}

Mobility of soft tissue:

Any injury or inflammation of the soft tissue leads to adhesion formation which decreases their mobility and causes pain. To and fro movement of *Dalk* mechanically breaks down the adhesion and facilitates the free movement of the adhesion structure. The various conditions in which massage is used for mobilization of the soft tissue are tendonitis, fibroids, muscular injury, ligament sprain, post surgical, scar and post burn contracture. Massage is also found responsible for activation of lipolysis by the release of catecholamine

Muscle spasm and pain

Spasm is the increased muscle tone in a localized area. In the presence of spasm there is capillary constriction which reduces the blood flow that results in limitation of flow of nutrients and oxygen to the area and retention of waste products that produces more spasm. This spasm can be broken by massage by the following mechanism.

Massage stimulates the sensory nerve endings and production of mild pain, massage blocks the pathways of this pain.

The mechanical movement of massage stretches the individual fibers of tissue and reduces their tension. Massage helps in the removal of metabolic waste product as these substances are noxious to the tissue and imitates the free nerve ending these result in reduction of pain.

All these factors together aid to reduce the spasm. Massage is employed in unspecified back pain and post exercise muscle soreness etc.

Enhancements of circulation

Massage has been used since long time for the treatment where the blood supply is decreased due to vasoconstrictions in response to cold. The rubbing action releases histamine like substance from mast cells causing local vasodilatation and increased circulation of the part, Massage is prescribed in nerve palsies and in various lower motor neuron lesions. The purpose of this is to improve the atrophic condition of the paralyzed part, utilizing the circulatory effect from the massage. This improved arterial circulation following massage

stimulates the exchange of nutrients into paralyzed extremities.

Mobilize secretion in the lungs:

Dalk finds a major role in the treatment of those chest disorders where increased and viscid secretions are the source of problem for e. g. chronic bronchitis, emphysema, cystic fibrosis bronchial dilatation etc, there is increased production of sputum which accumulates, stagnates, dries up and blocks the small respiratory pathways. The various manual and mechanical respiratory techniques of massage i. e. vibration, shaking, percussion, etc, produces a jarring effect on the lung tissue. The mechanical energy transmitted to the lung tissue through the chest walls, leads to the loosening up of the viscid secretion.

Reduction of edema

Massage is an important aspect of edema reduction program. Massage reduces edema utilizing its mechanical effect of forcing the fluid in the drainage channels. When the edema is caused by mechanical factors such as muscle inactivity as in paralysis, valve insufficiency, lymph node blockage etc. Massage procedures are helpful in the reduction of swelling.

Improves the general appearance of the skin

Massage in general improves the nutritive status of the skin. Massage facilitates the movement of skin over the subcutaneous structures. As a result it becomes soft and leaner. Furthermore, after prolonged massage, the skin also becomes tough, more flexible and elastic and its sensitivity is reduced, so that it can be handled roughly without causing much discomfort. It has a soothing effect on the highly sensitive and vascular papillae. The dead cells are removed by the constant contact of the head over the skin. The sweat glands, hair follicles and sebaceous glands, thus become free from obstruction and can function more effectively.

General and local relaxation

Psychologically and emotionally *Dalk* has been used since ages to enhance a feeling of well being and relaxation.

Tiredness after prolonged work, anxiety of a feverish child as well as pain and apprehension of an arthritic elderly responding well to massage. Massage has been shown a beneficial influence on development, altitudes and emotional status of the body

Dalk Hissi (Sensuous massage) is the use of massage techniques by a person on another person's erogenous zones to achieve or enhance their sexual excitation or arousal and to achieve orgasm. Massages have been used for medical purposes for a very long time, and their use for sensual purposes also has a long history. In the case of women, some focal areas are the hands, inner parts of thighs; nipple of breasts and pubis, while in case of men, the focal area is the male genitals. When the massage is of a partner's genitals, the act is usually referred to as mutual masturbation.

Today, sensual massage is used by some people on occasion as a part of sex, either as foreplay or as the final sex act, or as part of sex therapy.

Sex therapy: Sensual massage may be used in sex therapy as a means of stimulating the libido or increasing the ability of a person to respond positively to sensual stimulus. In some cases, sensual massage can be a form of foreplay without sexual gratification, intended to heighten the sensitivity of an individual prior to another engagement where sexual arousal and fulfilment is intended. In other cases, sensual massage may be used professionally to help men address issues of premature ejaculation. Methods employed may teach the recipient to relax the musculature of his pelvis and thus prolong arousal and increase pleasure.

Hysteria

In ancient Unani medical tradition, genital massage of a woman to orgasm by a physician or midwife was a standard treatment for female hysteria, an ailment considered common and chronic in women. In al-Havi the patient was advised the technique of genital massage for a disease called "womb disease" to bring the woman into "hysterical paroxysm".¹⁹

Such cases were quite profitable for physicians, since the patients were at no risk of death but needed constant treatment. However, the vaginal massage procedure (generally referred to as 'pelvic massage') was tedious and time-consuming for physicians. The technique was difficult for a physician to master and could take hours to achieve "hysterical paroxysm". Referral to midwives, which had been common practice, meant a loss of business for the physician, and, at times, husbands were asked to assist.

In Pregnant Women

It is strongly recommended to massage back, abdomen and pubic area, few days before the delivery with lily oil as it helps in easy passage of fetus at the time of delivery.⁴

Therapeutic application

Dalk is done with suitable oils for faster results in many diseases:¹⁶

Headache: Apply oil of Banafsha on soles in acute headache and lukewarm oils in chronic headache on the scalp and massage for few minutes. The head is massaged with dill oil cooked with mint

Nervous System

Apoplexy and paralysis: The foot is massaged with oils, hot water and salt. Whole body is massaged with Qust oil daily and with oil of Nardin.

In case of constriction, soft massage with relaxant substances is done. In case of flabbiness, rigorous massage with olive oil is done

If flaccidity occurs in extremities then after general treatment it is best to give mobility, contraction, stretching and *Dalk* (massage) to the organs.

Rasha (Tremor): Hard massage with strong calorific oils is done.

Oil prepared from Roman walnut and Billot (oak) gum is very beneficial in pain.

The affected part should be massaged with oil of Suddab, oil of Qust, oil of squirting cucumber, oil of Jundbedastar and Farbiyun

In severe neuralgic pain, massage of Ghar oil or lily oil should be done.

When tremor becomes persistent then rarefy or lessen the density of the body with massage with soft like Qust oils.

If memory loss is due to coldness and dryness then massage with oil of Khairy and lily.

For facial paralysis due to dryness, massage the vertebra and angle of jaw with the duck's fat. Massage the temples with butter, grease, and duck's fat.

Massage with Habbatul Khazra oil is good for facial palsy.

Massage with oil of Banafsha, Nilofer and pumpkin and wax in the spasms caused by dryness.

Guide the patient of congestive spasms to massage with lily oil mixed with Jundbedastar and castor oil, honey water.

Apoplexy: Massage the pubes with oil of Suddab and squirting cucumber with Jundbedastar.

Qaranitus: Massage the head with Natrun, borax, vinegar and mustard.

Foot massage abolishes heaviness of the head and stomach pain.

CONCLUSION

Thus, *Ilaj bil-Tadbeer* is a method, through which care of the sick person and maintenance of general health is attained through modulation or modification in six essential factors for life. In other words, regimental therapies are mostly non medicinal techniques/procedures by which we modulate the life style, dietary habits and habitat of the patient and practice some other therapeutic regimens for the treatment of various diseases. The eminent Unani scholar, *Ibn Sina* has mentioned 36 regimes in his famous book "Canon of Medicine". These regimes are actually meant for the evacuation of morbid fluids, from the body. These morbid humors are true culprits responsible for the genesis of disease. As soon as these morbid humors are removed from the body, normal health gets restored. It has been utilized for preventive as well as therapeutic measures for thousands of years by ancient Unani physicians.

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