

Neurological Health Measures in Viewpoint of Traditional Persian Medicine

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Introduction

Iranian *hakims* (sages) such as Avicenna believed that every remedy starts with prevention. Preventive measures in the field of neurology, as described head to foot's hierarchy in the school of traditional Persian medicine (TPM), are considered at the first step of health measures due to the importance of head either spiritually or physically.

Avicenna (980-1037 AD), one the great Persian scholars of *Islamic Golden Age* (9th-12th centuries AD) [1], has mentioned neurological disorders in the third volume of his masterpiece, Canon of Medicine. As a pioneer in neurology, he has described the anatomy and function of the nervous system and asserted that changing lifestyle is the first step of treatment [2].

Persian scholars designed interventional health plan based on a causal relationship, including causes of disease and health. Accordingly, medicine has been defined as maintaining health at the time of its presence and reestablishing it at the time of illness. Regarding this approach, neurological health is the result of observing health measures, including air, food and drink, sleep/wake, activity/rest, retention/release, and psychological status. The aforementioned six essentials of health –*Sette-ye-zaroorieh*– are considered as basics of preventive medicine in the TPM School [3].

Neurological diseases are classified to original (*aslīe*) and shared (*mosharek*) according their origin. If the origin is in neurovascular system, it is considered original otherwise it is called shared.

A brief mention of the main neurological health measures in each essential aspect of lifestyle is as follows:

- **Air:** Head should be protected from thermal changes, especially in autumn in which day-night temperature differences is high. Hot temperature of noon causes porosity of the body and scalp makes head vulnerable to the cold temperature of early morning. Covering head in the early morning and late night is a preventive measure for head protection against neurological disease.
- **Food and drink:** Flatulent food and drinks are prohibited in patients suffering neurological diseases and healthy people prone to disease that is who have weakness of the brain, *za'af-e-demaaq*. For instance, Leek, onion, garlic, garbage, soft drinks such as tea and coffee as well as spirits are considered flatulent in TPM [4].
- **Sleep/wake:** Insomnia, night work, and daily sleep jeopardize mental health and brain function which may lead to neurological disorders in the affected individuals.
- **Activity/rest:** Normal physical activity adjusted with age and sex as well as season and body stamina warrant mental health. Both strenuous physical activity and sedentary lifestyle threaten neurological health with different pathophysiologyes.
- **Retention/release:** Body wastes should be evacuated properly, otherwise the accumulation of morbid matter in the body is inevitable [5]. One of the most vulnerable organs to waste accumulation is the brain. For this reason constipation, bladder retention, and anhidrosis should be treated to prevent diseases, especially neurological and mental illnesses [3,6].

• **Psychological status:** *A'araz-e-nafsani* or psychological events comprise the most important aspect of lifestyle according to TPM sages because any psychological imbalance would disturb the function of body organs rapidly and deeply. Hence, a normal psychological status and avoiding characters such as jealousy, greed, excess anger, and depression are crucial to maintain a normal neurological function.

Traditional Persian Medicine is based on humeral medicine as a holistic medical system. Its theoretical basis as well as practical approaches could be used to set up an up-to-date version of "personalized medicine" applicable in different medical fields including clinical neurology.

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