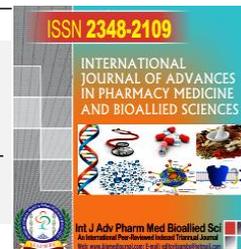




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Traditional Arab and Islamic medicine (TAIM): An overview

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The World Health Organization defines traditional medicine as “the sum total of knowledge, skills and practices based on the concepts, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures and civilization that are used to maintain wellbeing, as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve or treat physical and mental illnesses”. A number of traditional therapies are being practiced in world that includes Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Ayurvedic medicine. Another vivacious and expansive system of healing traditions thrives and pervades modern life in the Arab and Muslim world that is called Arabic medicine/Islamic medicine/Arab-Islamic medicine/Traditional Arab and Islamic medicine (TAIM) that refer to medicine developed during the Golden Age of Arab-Islamic civilization (seventh to fifteenth century), which extended from Spain to Central Asia and India.

The development of TAIM occurred in three phases. The first phase started with the translation of medical works of Galen and Hippocrates, philosophical works by Aristotle and Plato, and mathematical works of Archimedes and Euclid into Arabic (8th Century). Hospitals and medical schools flourished in the Middle East, and several Muslim scientists reached a stature in medical science that exceeded that of their predecessors. Of these, notable scholars, Rhazes (Al Razi, 846-930) and Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980-1037), were instrumental in commemorating this period as the Golden Age. The final phase of the development of Arab medicine started in the 12th century when European scholars studied Arab works and translated them into Latin. The most noteworthy example is the translation of Avicenna’s ‘Canon of Medicine’ in addition to Rhazes book ‘The Comprehensive’, which continued to dominate medical teachings in Europe and, was a mandatory text book for more than 300 years (Until 16th century)!! Google Scholar search using the terms “Arab herbal medicine” reveals thousands of citations. Examples include the use of traditional Arab herbs for treatment of diabetics (18,300 citations), cancer (20,600 citations), liver diseases (19,700 citations), inflammation (19,000 citations), and infertility (11,400 citations). Herbal-derived compounds need a deep assessment of their pharmacological qualities and safety issues due to the widespread and growing use of herbal-derived medicines all over the world.

Due to fact of popularity of Arab medicine, there is a need to explore medicinal benefits of TAIM through proper scientific validation and exhaustive studies on each plant that is used by traditional Arab Attar. Some institutions of higher learning expressed great interest in the field of TAIM. As a result, numerous medicinal plants and their traditional uses have been documented and published. I wish that this journal will also support and encourage publishing the findings on TAIM.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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