

# Traditional arabic medicine essay



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When the ancient Roman Empire came down, the Arabic world became the center of attention in terms of scientific and medical knowledge. The Arabs began refining the theories of people like Hippocrate together with the knowhow from the Islamic physicians. Then they commenced the use of this information into the prescription of medicinal herbs, diet and exercise in treating their patients. The Arabs located in the Baghdad region were the first to separate pharmacological sciences from medicine way back in the eighth century (Hassan, Saad, & Said, 2006). It is important to note that the first drug stores globally were equally established among the Arabs. The present day pharmacists employ some of the drug formulations that were anciently Arabic. In addition to this, the therapy processes that were used then are put to use in some medical procedures and still prove to be fruitful. The ancient Arabs who were well known for pharmaceutical sciences came up with the measures that up to date, are necessary for extraction and preparation of remedies for various ailments.

With this background this paper will analyze old Arabic medicines and then exhaustively discuss the uses as well as purposes of these medicines.

Fenugreek scientifically termed as *Trigonella foenum-graecum* is commonly known as helba among the Arabs. The chemical composition of this herb that makes it suitable for treatment of some ailments include its oily embryo that has diosgenin and saponin. With such components the herb is traditionally used in the treatment of bronchitis, coughs, abdominal colic as well as treatment after childbirth, labor complications and sprains. Furthermore, hilba relieves stomach congestion where by it is taken in gravy thus enhances appetite (Ghazanfar, 1994). Garlic which is scientifically known as

Allium sativum is among the oldest dietary vegetables. It has been employed in the treatment of intestinal disorders and is presently well known for its fibrinolytic activity. It has the capacity to lower the blood cholesterol.

The consumption of garlic aids in the treatment of atherosclerotic disease, inflammation and diabetes. Locally garlic relieves pain because it is simply crushed and put over the point of pain then bandaging is done especially in the Middle East as part of “conventional Arabic Medicine” (Al-Qattan, 2009). “Naturopathic physicians” are the ones who carry out this procedure.

Garlic has been used in the treatment of several ailments such as diabetes, dysentery, high blood pressure, fevers, bronchitis, rheumatism, internal ulcers, facial paralysis, colic pains, flatulence, intestinal worms, tuberculosis, colic and liver disorders (Kunnumakkara et al, n. d). Curcuma longa is a perennial herb that has a branched rhizome. In terms of the chemical composition that gives it medicinal ability, the rhizome when dry, has about 5% (Ghazanfar, 1994) curcuminoids, dihydrocurcumin, caffeoylferuloylmethane and dicaffeoylmethane. The curcuminoids are good antihepatotoxics. This is a traditional Arabic herb that serves in the treatment of eye and skin infections.

In addition, its rhizomes treat coughs, bronchitis, bruises and coughs.

Moreover, powdered rhizomes are thickened into a paste then applied on the face in a bid to protect it from the effects of the sun. Other medical uses of the herb include its application on bruises, wounds and sprains. Salt is taken along with this powder in the treatment of fever and among the infants the

ashes of the herb are mixed with turmeric so as to aid in treatment of abdominal colic.

In the medieval Islamic world which was between the mid-8th to the mid-18th centuries (Lozano, 2001), Arabic physicians employed the use of Cannabis sativa- medical cannabis for various purposes medically. There are properties that give Cannabis sativa a lot of medicinal value, for instance the herb has antipyretic properties thus aid in reducing fever. It also causes increases in temperature as a result of being induced by interleukin. This is eventually overridden by hypothalamus consequently reducing fever. Another property of cannabis sativa is that is diuretic.

It has the capacity to elevate the rate of urination thus providing a means of forced diuresis where by it increases the excretion of water from the body. This property makes the herb to be used in the treatment of certain kidney diseases, liver cirrhosis, hypertension and heart failure. Furthermore, it also has antiemetic properties making it very effective when it comes to vomiting and nausea thus making the drug equally efficient in the treatment of motion sickness. In addition to this, the drug aids in treatment of some side effects of chemotherapy and opioid analgesics. An analgesic is a term that refers to pain killers. Besides, the medical cannabis is used as an anticonvulsant especially in treating epileptic seizures (Lozano, 2001).

Lemons that thrive in the southern Arabian grass-lands have chemical composition of C<sub>26</sub> degraded triterpenes. These include eryodictyoside, hesperidoside and naringoside in addition to vitamin C. Some of the chemical compounds in the lemon affect the permeability of blood vessels via

decreasing the wall porosity which in turn improves the diffusion of proteins and exchange of fluids. With such capability, haemorrhoids and varicose veins are easily treated. In addition to this, the citroflavonoids are used as diuretic agents, anti-inflammatory and anti-histamines. Furthermore, the leaves of the lemon rein form inside the mouth of an individual thus relieve tooth-ache (Ghazanfar, 1994).

There are several other traditional Arabic medicines that equally have several uses such as Ginger-Zingiber officinale and is known as zanjabil in Arab. Kalonji is yet another traditional Arabic medicine scientifically called Nigella sativa and habbat albarakah an Arabic, among others. However some of the traditional Arabic medicines have been used for purposes that are not ethically acceptable to some segments of the society such as cannabis sativa, which is more often than not abused by people suffering from eating disorders, especially bulimics. This is usually in an attempt to loose weight. Considering that the Arabs were among the first well known people historically to come up with proper diagnosis for medicine that is still being used to date, their contribution to the medical world is worth appreciating.      References: Ghazanfar, S. A.

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