

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Prophetic Medicine (Twibb Nabbawi) Principles in Clinical Practice: Experiences From Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Prophetic medicine (Twibb Nabbawi) refers to the advice, the teachings and practices given by the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) regarding disease prevention and treatment as found in both the Quran and the hadith. These include preventive, promotive and therapeutics modalities. They range from hygiene and behavioral practices, dietary/nutritional practices as well as exercises among others. Several countries especially in the middle east, far east, some countries in Europe and America have embarked on the reactivation, research and practice of this noble principles in enriching the medical knowledge as well as the clinical practice of prophetic medicine. This current paper presents the experiences of use and practice of prophetic medicine principles and teachings in Uganda. They also range from preventive, promotive and therapeutic modalities and varies from various health facilities and individual Muslim health professionals under the umbrella of the Islamic Medical Association of Uganda. (IMAU).

In conclusion, prophetic medicine is a critical component of clinical care practice that should be adopted for healthcare delivery. Healthcare professionals should adopt its practice to ensure holistic healthcare service delivery.

Keywords: Prophetic medicine, Twibb Nabawi; clinical practice, Islamic Medical Association, Uganda

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INTRODUCTION

In 1983 Dr. Elkadi at an Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA) meeting defined **Islamic medicine** as “the most up-to-date medical science and technology combined and conforming with the Divine teachings of Islam. This is based on both the Islamic perspective (teachings and practices), and also incorporates modern medical techniques in the management of illnesses¹.

On the other hand, **Complementary medicine can be defined as** a term used to describe types of treatments you may receive along with traditional Western medicine. Examples include massage, meditation, biofeedback, tai chi, reiki, music therapy, guided imagery and dietary supplements².

Modern medicine is the most advanced, scientifically based, and statistically approved therapeutic system and diagnostic methodology³.

Prophetic medicine is the advice, teachings and practices given by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with regards to disease prevention and treatment as found in both the Quran and the Hadiths which include preventive measures, promotive and therapeutic modalities. (herbal medicine, hygiene, dietary practices, and exercise regimes among others⁴.

This paper outlines the principles of prophetic medicine and their application in clinical practices and shares experience from Uganda.

Scope and Extent of the Study

Sources of Islamic teachings: There are two primary sources of knowledge and guidance

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according to the Islamic belief that is the Quran and the Sunnah's of the prophet. The Quran are words of Allah and the Sunnah (are prophetic hadiths and traditions). In addition, we also have qiyas (the concept of analogical reasoning) and the Ijma' (consensus). These two concepts are used to legislate in the absence of rulings from the Qur'an and the Sunnah⁴. For purposes of this article, we shall stick to the Quraan and Sunnah's as the guidance for our presentation.

Prophetic Medicine is composed of all measures of disease prevention, health promotion and therapeutic/treatment.

Prevention and promotion measures include (Nutrition, hygiene, prohibition of intoxicants, good social practices, prayers, exercise etc.)

Treatment modalities include use of honey, dates, black seeds, olive oil, etc.

This paper discusses the application of all these prophetic medicine principles in clinical practice by sharing.

Uganda in a snapshot: Uganda is a land locked country located in the eastern region of Africa. It has an estimated population of 45.9Millions (UBOS 2024). It is predominantly a Christian country with 39% catholocs,32% Anglicans,14%muslims,11% Pentecostal and others. The Life expectancy is 63.8 years and has a mortality rate of about 5.6 per 1000 people. The Infant mortality is at 29.7/1000 and death below 5 years is at 40.3 / 1000live births.



Figure 1: Map of Uganda highlighting the boundaries and major cities.

Islamic Medical Association of Uganda (IMAU) and its practical approach to Prophetic Medicines:

One of the objectives of the Islamic Medical Association of Uganda (IMAU) in its constitution for which it was established is: "To provide the highest possible quality of health services to the people in Uganda through the delivery of **promotive, preventive, curative, palliative and rehabilitative** health services using continuous quality improvement principles in line with Islamic guidelines"⁶. I, therefore, share and examine experiences of Uganda in achieving the above objective while incorporating prophetic medicine principles in practice.

Experience of Twibb Al Nabbawi in Disease Prevention and Health Promotive Services:

1. Prayers: The prophet peace be upon taught and encouraged the praying of the five daily prayers (salat) to promote healthy living⁷. This act of worship has three health aspects including

- i). Wudhu (performing ablution): Washing all the exposed areas of the body, hand, feet, face, mouth, nostrils etc. These have been proven as essential aspects of infection prevention and control measures (IPC) implemented especially during the recent control of COVID-19 pandemic.
- ii). Prayers (salat) have a healing effect on the body, mind and heart (soul). These healing effects are due to the effect of sound (echo) and the meanings of the recitations of duas and the Quran.
- iii). The movement in Salaat are mild, uniform, and involve all muscles and joints. (Benefit of exercising). These movements help the person performing salat to exercise the different parts of the body⁷.

In fulfilment of this prophetic medicine principle, IMAU has encouraged all its branches and member facilities to have prayer places (mosques) for both health workers and clients. IMAU is also spearheading the formation and formulation of mosque management committees to ensure proper running and management of these mosques beginning with the National Referral Hospital of Mulago, Uganda.

2. Exercise In line with exercising the Prophet's (PBUH) advised all Muslims to teach their children Swimming, Archery Horse riding, He (PBUH) used to walk at fast pace He ran race with his wife, Ayesha (Ra) He (PBUH) used to work with his hands whether at home, in the kitchen,

or with his companions collecting wood for fire⁸.
Click or tap here to enter text.

3. Nutrition and Eating Habits: The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged moderation in feeding, and the eating of Fruits and Vegetables as stated in the following qur'anic verses as well as Prophetic traditions and hadiths:

On excessive eating habits (modulation): Allah says in the holly Quran **"O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters"**. Quraan 07.031 (Al-Araf)⁹

And the Prophet (PBUH) is quoted to have said in a hadith: **".... But if it must be, then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath."**^{10,11} Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasaa'I, Ibn Majah – Hadith sahih.

The above verse and hadith emphasize the issue of modulation in feeding habits which is critical in prevention of Malnutritional related diseases both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Emphasis on fruits and vegetables: Allah (S.A) mentions in the holy Quran in the following

"(Every) fruit (enjoyment) will be there for them; they shall have whatever they call for". Quraan 36.057 (Ya-Seen)¹²

"Ye shall have therein abundance of fruit, from which ye shall have satisfaction. 43.73 (Az-Zukhruf)"¹³

"And from the fruit of the date-palm and the vine, ye get out wholesome drink and food: behold, in this also is a sign for those who are wise." Quraan 16.067 (An-Nahl)¹⁴

The above three verses emphasize the importance of having a balanced diet with emphasis on fruits and vegetables which if it is well implemented will boost on people's immunity and help in disease prevention.

4. Hygiene practices: Islam is very critical and emphasizes the issue of hygiene in a number of ways ranging from body cleanliness, cleanliness of the environment menstrual hygiene among others as highlighted in the following qur'anic verses and prophetic hadiths and traditional:

"O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your



Figure 2. Mosque executive committee for Mulago National Referral Hospital.

heads and wash your feet to the ankles. And if you are in a state of janabah, then purify yourselves. But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it. Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favor upon you that you may be grateful. Quraan (5:6)¹²

Concerning Menstrual hygiene practices: “And they ask you about menstruation. Say, “It is harm, so keep away from wives during menstruation and do not approach them until they are pure, and when they have purified themselves, then come to them from where Allah has ordained for you. Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves. (2:222)¹³

Concerning Hand Washing: The prophet Peace be upon Him said, “Narrated by Salman al-Farsi: I read in the Torah that the blessing of food consists in ablution before it. So I mentioned it to the Prophet. He (SAW) said: The blessing of food consists in ablution before it and ablution (wash hands) after it. “Abu Dawud said: It is weak.”¹⁰

Concerning Oral hygiene: “Abu Hurairah (R.A) narrated that: Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) said: “If it were not that it would be difficult on my nation, then I would have ordered them to use

the Siwak (tooth brushing) for each prayer.”¹⁴

The above verses of the Quran and the prophetic traditional emphasize the issue of hygiene and its role in disease prevention and health promotion if it is well implemented.

Maternal and child health (MCH) Issues:

Concerning Reproductive, maternal and child health issues the prophet taught the following verses from the holy Quran:

“Let the women live (in ‘iddat) in the same style as ye live, according to your means: Annoy them not, so as to restrict them. and if they carry (life in their wombs), then spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their burden: and if they suckle your (offspring), give **them their recompense**: and take mutual counsel together, according to what is just and reasonable. And if ye find yourselves in difficulties, let another woman suckle (the child) on the (father’s) behalf.”¹⁵

Breast feeding for 2 years: “Mothers may nurse [i.e., breastfeed] their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period] ”

“..... And if you wish to have your children nursed by a substitute, there is no blame upon you as long as you give payment according to what is acceptable. And fear Allah and know that Allah is Seeing of what you do.”¹⁶

The above verses emphasize the issues of



Figure 3. Islamic University of Uganda (IUU) nursing students sensitizing and demonstrating to mothers the importance and proper ways of breastfeeding.

respecting pregnant mothers, breast feeding of children to a minimum of atleast two years among others. All these measures contribute to health and wellbeing of both the mother and the child through boosting immunity and ensuring hygiene.

5. Approaches in training and education:

The Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) has incorporated basic Islamic teachings and introductory Arabic in its curriculum for all

courses. In addition, students of medicine, nursing, public health and other health related courses do mandatory course units of “Islam and Medicine” as well as Islam and health care”. That curriculum introduces our professional graduates to basics of prophetic medicine.

Experience of Twibb Al Nabbawi in Preventive Services:

6. Concerning unhealthy social practices being prohibited: The Quraan says



Figure 4: IMAU members discussing drug and substance abuse at Saidina Abubakar Hospital in Wakiso, Uganda.

“They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: “In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit.” They ask thee how much they are to spend; Say: “What is beyond your needs.” Thus, doth Allah Make clear to you His Signs: In order that ye may consider”.¹⁷

In this verse Allah prohibits wine, swine, gambling, and all other forms of intoxicants. This is good in prevention of mental illnesses, alcoholic liver diseases, as well as cysticercosis

7. Concerning Sexual infidelity: The holy Quraan says

“..Do not even approach fornication for it is an outrageous act, and an evil way”. 32. “And do not come near to adultery”. This commandment is meant both for individuals and society as a

whole.”¹⁸ In its approach to prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission, IMAU emphasizes Abstinence from sexual intercourse and being faithful among couples using religiosity as a scientifically proven tool.

9. Concerning Circumcision: It is reported in a hadith that Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim also quote Muhammad saying that Abraham performed his own circumcision at the age of eighty. It is also reported by Abū Dāwūd and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal that Muhammad stated that circumcision was a “law for men and a preservation of honor for women”.¹⁹ This Islamic practice of circumcision has been scientifically proven to play a very big role in prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission, cancer of the penis and other sexually transmitted diseases.



Figure 5. Voluntary safe male circumcision being practiced in most of the health care facilities in Uganda.

Uganda’s Experience of Twibb Al Nabbawi in Curative and Palliative Services:

Several products that were recommended by the prophet (PBUH) including but not limited to honey, black seeds (Habat sauda) dates and others. These products have been incorporated in a number of pharmaceutical products especially cough syrups (honey and black seed oil) while dates are being used to provide energy during labor among others.

8. Care for the dead, body washing and swalat li janaez: IMAU – Kampala Branch through the Mulago hospital Muslim, community established a model Muslim dead body preparation facility. The preparations include, washing of the body, wrapping and praying for the dead body before being transported for burial. This is in addition to having set up a ‘mosque ambulance’

10. Charity programs for the disabled: Provision of clutches, wheelchairs among disabled persons are ongoing.



Figure 6. Rehabilitative services provided (e.g., wheelchairs) to the disabled persons.

Spiritual support during sickness and disability:

IMAU branches and member facilities have participated in a number of activities to spiritually support the terminally ill and the disabled, these activities include, organized hospital visits to pray for and encourage the sick, to give psychological counselling and support for the disabled and terminally ill patients, encourage patients to do Adhikari, to recite the holy Quran and to shahadah in the terminal stages of the illnesses. This is encouraged to be performed by the Muslim health care professionals

CONCLUSION

Prophetic medicine is an important component in clinical care practice, that should be adopted for promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services. It is relevant in today's clinical practice as it was during the lifetime of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH). We recommend all IMAs, Islamic Hospitals, Islamic Medical Colleges to spear head the Promotion and practice of Prophetic Medicine in all their activities for the benefit of our communities. This can be done through its incorporation in both training, research and clinical practice.

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