

UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE-GLOBAL STATUS AND CAREER PROSPECTS

Abstract

The Unani medical system that originated in the Greece was later on taken up by the Romans. Thereafter, it reached land of the Arabs and from there to Central Asia and parts of Europe during the Middle Ages. It reached to India from Arab and Iran and developed into comprehensive medical system. In order to promote and propagate Unani system of medicine worldwide, various efforts have been made and strategies have been formulated by Government of India and the International organizations such as World Health Organization. Ministry of Ayush and WHO have given recognition to this system and are doing their best in the upliftment of system. Although Unani medicine is popular among the masses of Islamic Republic of Iran, South Africa, and some other countries but it has a special status in Indian subcontinent. With a vast, functional network of institutions of higher learning, medical facilities, and research and development, India is currently leading the world in the field of n Unani Medicine. Few decades earlier, due to lack of awareness and information access, the Unani graduates were confined to the field of private practice only. Rapid expansion of healthcare industry, opening up of new colleges, institutions, hospitals, research unit has open the path of utilisation of Unani scholars. Various career opportunities available to Unani graduates in general or with specialisation can be classified as academics, civil services, hospital and health management, Research and Development, Drug Manufacturing Unit, Medical tourism, Medical informatics etc. Through qualifying TCAM exam, they can get license to practice in UAE. An attempt has been made in this chapter to explore the global status of Unani system of Medicine and career opportunities available for Unani scholars.

Keywords: Unani, AYUSH, Global status, scope, Career opportunities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1995, a separate department was established in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare by the Government of India, which gave an independent identity to the Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy (ISM&H). [1]. This Department of ISM&H was then renamed as Department of AYUSH in November 2003. [2]. In order to ensure the promotion and propagation of AYUSH systems of healthcare, the Ministry of AYUSH was established on November 9th, 2014 with the goal of restoring the profound understanding of our traditional medical systems. AYUSH is an acronym of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa and Homeopathy [3].

Unani System of Medicine has a holistic healthcare approach that essentially focuses both on preserving the health as well as on the management of diseases. [4]. As the name suggests, origins of this system can be traced back to the Greece or Unan. However, since the Greeks adopted Egyptian medicine, its roots can also be found in Egypt and its sister civilisation Mesopotamia. The Greek civilisation was then followed by the Roman and as a result their system of also got adopted by the latter. During the medieval period, Unani Medicine spread far and wide to the Arab world, Central Asia, and parts of Europe, where it reached the pinnacle of its development. The Unani System of Medicine reached India from Iran and the Middle East and became one of the most popular medical systems among the general population. [4]. The effectiveness and scope of Unani Medicine has also been appreciated by the Indian government, which incorporated this system into the country's healthcare delivery system to ensure its growth and development. India is now thus, leading the world in the field of Unani System of Medicine with its extensive system of high-quality educational institutes, integrated healthcare system, research facilities, and quality drug manufacturing industries, as well as the fact that a huge bulk of population uses it for their medical needs. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are the main states where the Unani system is practiced [3].

Unani Medicine is an all-encompassing medical system that deals with various states of human body. Deep philosophical understandings and scientific theories form the foundation of this system. According to Unani medicine, disease is a natural process and symptoms are the body's responses to it. Unani Medicine believes in humoral theory, which assumes that there are four akhlaat (humors) in the body: Dam (blood), Balgham (phlegm), Safra (yellow bile), and Sauda (black bile). Each of these four humours has a specific temperamen, viz., Dam is hot and moist, phlegm is cold and moist, yellow bile is hot and dry, and black bile is cold and dry [5]. When the body's humours are in balance and its functions are normal in accordance to its own temperament and surroundings, it is said to be in a healthy state. Disease is a state in which the humours' equilibrium is disturbed and the body's functions are aberrant in relation to its own temperament and surroundings [6]. Dominance of any of the four humours in the body is reflected in an individual's temperament as Damvi (Sanguine), Balghami (Phlegmatic), Safravi (Choleric) and Saudavi (Melancholic). Ilaj bi'l Ghiza (dietotherapy), Ilaj bit Tadbir (regimenal therapy), Ilaj bid Dawa (pharmacotherapy), and Ilaj bi'l Yad (surgery) are the four treatment modalities used in the Unani medical system.

- 1. Global Status of Unani System Of Medicine:** The World Health Organization (W.H.O.) approves Unani System of Medicine as an alternative mode of treatment to meet the healthcare needs of the human population. Unani system is popular in different parts of the world but with different names. Presently, it is being practiced in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Indonesia, Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries, some African and European countries, etc.

Table 1: Unani System of Medicine and its Counterparts in various Countries

Unani System of Medicine Popular with the name/ Name of the practising system	Country
Unani Medicine/Unani Tibb	India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, South Africa
Persian Traditional Medicine (Tibb Sunnati)	Iran
Eastern Medicine	Pakistan
Uyghur Medicine	China
Islamic Medicine/Arab Medicine	Saudi Arabia
Ottoman Medicine	Turkey

There are approximately 34 Unani colleges in Pakistan that offer the Fadil-i-Tibb o Jarahat, a four-year diploma program, and the Bachelor of Eastern Medicine and Surgery (BEMS), a five-year degree program. These are regulated by the National Council for Tibb. There are roughly 500 dispensaries and nearly 100 Unani drug manufacturing units in private and Government sectors. Likewise, Bangladesh also runs a five-year degree program in Unani medicine which is affiliated to the University of Dhaka and some other universities. There are roughly 20000 registered practitioners and 19 Unani colleges in the country. A five-year degree program in Unani Medicine is offered by the Institute of Indigenous Medicine in Sri Lanka, which is associated with the University of Colombo and there are near about 750 registered Unani practitioners. In South Africa, a four-year degree program in Unani Tibb is offered by the School of Natural Medicine, Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of Western Cape. The government of Iran is very much interested in the revival and advancement of Unani medicine, which is being practiced as traditional medicine in the country. The Government has initiated several programs in this direction. The Shaheed Beheshti Medical University in Tehran has established Traditional Medicine and Materia Medica Research Center (TMRC). In Kuwait, Unani Medicine is being practiced under the name of Islamic Medicine and an Islamic Medical Centre has also been established there. In UAE, a Unani physician is officially allowed to practice after clearing the Traditional Complementary and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) examination conducted by the Ministry of Health, Government of the United Arab Emirates [4].

Table 2: Details of International Unani Colleges

Name of the Country	Name of the Course	Duration of the Course	Other Details
Pakistan	Bachelor of Eastern Medicine and Surgery	5 years	Regulatory body-National Council for Tibb. First launched in the Hamdard University and then in Islamic University, Pakistan.
Bangladesh	Bachelor of Unani Medicine & Surgery	5 years	Affiliated by University of Dhaka and other Universities.
Sri Lanka	Bachelor of Unani Medicine & Surgery	5 years	Institute of Indigenous Medicine, University of Colombo
South Africa	Unani Tibb	4 years	School of Natural Medicine, Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of Western Cape

- 2. A-Unani Educational Infrastructure in India:** The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM), a statutory body constituted under NCISM Act 2020, monitors and regulates education and practice in the Unani system of medicine. The government as well as private colleges and institutions in India offer a five and a half year undergraduate program in the Unani System of Medicine for Bachelor of Unani Medicine & Surgery and a three year postgraduate program for the award of degrees of Mahir-i-Tibb (Doctor of Medicine) and Mahir-i-Jarahat (Master of Surgery). According to an NCISM report of 25-05-2022, currently, a total of 57 academic/research institutes are providing Unani medical education. Of them, fifteen are engaged both in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, whereas 3 colleges offer only undergraduate courses. One National Institute of Unani Medicine (NIUM) in Bengaluru and two Research Institutes viz., Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine (RRIUM), Srinagar and Central Research Institute for Unani Medicine, Hyderabad, Telangana are solely dedicated for postgraduate courses only [7].

A PhD program in Unani medicine has also been started by the educational institutes like National Institute of Unani Medicine (NIUM), Bengaluru and Government Nizamia Tibbi College (GNTC), Hyderabad. Additionally, Central Research Institute for Unani Medicine, Hyderabad in collaboration with Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi has also initiated a PhD program in Unani Medicine. All these educational institutes affiliated to various universities also actively provide affordable healthcare services to the masses.

Both the NCISM and the State Councils/Boards of Indian Medicine register Unani practitioners at national and state levels respectively. As of April 2015, India had 265 Unani hospitals, 141 dispensaries, 48,213 registered Unani practitioners under the Central and state Boards. [4].

Table 3: Number of colleges/institutions running UG, PG and PhD Courses

Status of college	UG College	PG College	Both UG & PG College	Institute running PhD Course
Number of College	39	01	15	03

II. GLOBALISATION OF UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

The use of Traditional medicine for health maintenance and treatment has a long history. Unani medicine is among the most widely used health resources across the globe. According to World Health Organization's second global survey, Unani Medicine is a popular form of traditional and Complementary medicine [8]. Various efforts and strategies has been formulated by international and national organizations in promoting and propagating Unani medicine across the globe.

WHO has played a noteworthy role for the promotion and development of traditional medicine at global level. In the year 2010, WHO brought forth the standards for training in Unani Medicine. This document outlines criteria for what the fraternity of Unani practitioners, professionals and regulators consider adequate for the training of practitioners in the field; training programmes for trainees with different backgrounds. In order to encourage safe Unani practice and reduce the possibility of mishaps, it also provides a review of what is considered to be a contraindication by the Unani community of practitioners and experts. These when combined together can be used as a reference by the national authorities when establishing systems of training, examination and licensure to assist the legitimate practice of Unani [5]. In 2022, World Health Organization has published WHO Standard Terminology on Unani Medicine to promote the use of relevant standard document and other technical document. Such publication is a crucial resource for developing standards, guidelines, classifications and regulations, as well incorporating Unani medicine into healthcare systems. Internationally accepted common terms on Unani medicine will enable us to compare, assess, and evaluate the data internationally. Using the same concepts, understanding and definitions in communications, health care services and medical records will be made easier by this document, which will also serve as useful reference for Unani medicine professional, policymakers, health workers, service providers, researchers and the general public. In context to Unani medicine, it will encourage international cooperation in research, information exchange, standards and classifications [8].

An agreement has been signed between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Government of India in 2022 to establish the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine with the goal to enhance the potential of traditional medicine around the world through contemporary science and technology topromote people's health. Very recently, the First WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023 "Towards health and wellbeing for all" was held in Gandhinagar, Gujrat, India on 17-18, August, 2023. This summit has served as a platform for sharing best practices and game-changing evidences, data and innovation regarding contribution of traditional medicine to health and sustainable development among

all stakeholders, including traditional medicine workers, users and communities, national policymakers, international organizations, academics, private sector and civil society organizations [9].

Another step for the promotion of integrated approach, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between department of AYUSH, Govt of India and department of Pharmacognosy, University of Mississippi's and National Center for Natural Products Research has been established to conduct research on the efficacy of many plants and herbs of Indian origin. The headquarter of the Global Unani Medicine and research Foundation (GUMRF) is at Chicago and the five regional offices are in Asia, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Australia. The main aim of the GUMRF is to provide a global platform to Unani scientists, Practitioners and well-wishers and to garner financial support for conducting research in Unani medicine and healthcare programs in order to create worldwide awareness regarding the significance of Unani Medicine [10].

The Government of India has established the Ministry of AYUSH to encourage the development and advancement of AYUSH systems of health care and medicine. Initially known as the Department of ISM & H, the Government of India later renamed as Department of AYUSH and is now known as Ministry of Ayush. This shows the intense interest, feeling of recognition and acceptance through the Government. The Research Council was created by the Ministry of AYUSH to promote research activities in Unani System. The goal of the Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine is to initiate, develop and organize scientific research on theoretical and practical aspects of Unani medicine. The drug standardization research programme by the Government is primarily focussed on the development of pharmacopeal standards for single drugs and compound formulations of Unani Medicine included in various volumes of National Formulary of Unani Medicine (NFUM) and Essential Drugs List for their inclusion in Unani Pharmacopoeia of India [11]. In order to protect Indian traditional medicinal knowledge and prevent from being misappropriated at International Patent offices, Government has initiated Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) project. The contents of the accessible ancient writings on Indian Systems of Medicines are being systematized and scientifically organized [12]. As on April 2016, the TKDL has information on 2,2,662 medicinal formulations from the texts of Indian System of Medicine, of which 1,75,150 formulations are related to the Unani system of Medicine [4].

III. CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

Few decades earlier, lack of awareness and unavailability of job opportunities has confined most Unani graduates to the area of clinical practice. But currently, increased information access and awareness has created various job opportunities and Unani scholars on the basis of their interest, skills and available resources can choose different career options. Various career options available in Unani Medicine can be broadly classified into following categories:

- Academics
- Indian administrative services
- Clinical Practice-Medical Officers/ Unani Consultant in Government and Private Sector.
- Research

- Hospital and Health Management
- Drug Manufacturing Unit/Company
- Unani Drug Cultivation
- Third Party Administrator (TPA) in Health Insurance
- Medical Tourism
- Health Informatics
- International Opportunities

1. **Academics:** Unani scholar as an academician in the college/institutions has the responsibility of teaching and delivering lectures, imparting knowledge of Unani Medicine, demonstrations and practical teaching to the students along with working as Unani consultant in the hospital attached with the college. They also contribute to curriculum development, engage in research activities, and provide guidance and mentorship to students. In order to become academician in Unani System of Medicine, one must have Post Graduate Degree. Teaching profession includes posts of Assistant Professor/Lecturer, Associate Professor/Reader and Professor. The minimum eligibility criteria for such posts has been laid down by the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM).
2. **Indian Administrative Services:** Having interest in administrative career in civil services, Unani graduate can opt for Indian administrative Service (IAS). An IAS officer is responsible for implementing and administering the policies formulated by the central and state government, deciding on important matters, and managing at district, state and central government level. The minimum educational requirement to appear in the IAS Examination, conducted by Union Public Service Examination is successful completion of undergraduate –level degree. UPSC examinations are conducted in two phases: Prelims and Mains. Those who clear both round are called for interview. Top rank holders are selected for IAS officers' roles.
3. **Clinical Practice:** In clinical practice, BUMS degree holders can work in both private and government sector as Medical officer and Unani Consultant. The role of Medical officer is to contribute clinical expertise to patient care and perform administrative duties. The responsibility of consultant is to diagnose and treat patients using their specialized knowledge and skills. Recruitment as Medical officer is done by UPSC in Unani dispensaries under Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) .State Government also appoints Unani Graduates as Medical Officer Unani) and Medical Officer (Community Health) through public service commission.. Preference is given to Post Graduate Unani degree holders. In order to strengthen Unani Infrastructure under the National Ayush Mission (NAM). National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)., Unani physicians are also being appointed in PHCs and CHCs on contract basis. Moreover AYUSH services like AYUSH Gram, Health and Wellness centres are also great opportunities for Unani graduates. Hospitals attached with Unani colleges /Institutions also open the path of career for unani graduates and post graduates as Clinical Registrar, Resident Medical Officer and Assistant Hakim. In case of private clinical practice, Unani Consultants can work in clinics, hospitals, or wellness centres, offering consultations, and providing healthcare services based on principles of Unani Medicine. Regimnal Unani Centres (Ilaj bit Tadabeer Centres) are also boon for Unani private practitioners. Patients at global level are being attracted towards regimnal procedures which are either drugless or

medicines are used at minimal level. Private practitioners can open centres and apply various procedures such as massage (Dalk), cupping (Hijamat), leeching (Ta'liq), Nutool (Irrigation) etc for health promotion and mental & physical well-being.

- 4. Research:** The increasing demand for research in Unani system of Medicine provides ample opportunities for BUMS graduates to contribute in the advancement of this field. They can work in research institutions, pharmaceutical companies, or academic settings, focusing on areas like medicinal plant research, drug development, and clinical trials. Central council for research in Unani medicine (CCRUM) an autonomous organization under Ministry of Ayush, Government of India appoints Unani scholars as Research Associate and Research officer for carrying out scientific studies on theoretical and practical aspects of Unani medicine. The CSIR-Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) is also a good platform for Unani graduates and postgraduates. CSIR-TKDL is unit under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), an autonomous body with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (Ministry of Science and Technology).By translating the information into modern languages, this unit works to maintain and preserve India's vast traditional knowledge present in ancient manuscripts. It provides opportunity to the Unani scholars as Research Associate and Project Assistant-III in the project-“Digitising Traditional Indian System of Medicine”.
- 5. Hospital and Health Management:** BUMS graduates can explore opportunities in Hospital and Health Management and can take up the positions such as Hospital manager, Hospital administrator and Health Manager. The role is to apply management strategies to healthcare industry or to hospital sector, or public health sector. One can perform leadership role through providing adequate instructions in planning and administering information system as well as managing financial, material and human resources. Rapid expansion of health care industry in India has open more job opportunities for hospital and health manager.
- 6. Drug Manufacturing Unit/ Company:** Pharmaceutical and drug manufacturing Unani companies has made tremendous progress in the recent decades. For Unani Graduates Government has created post of Drug Inspector to inspect premises licensed for manufacture of Unani drugs and to send a detailed report after each inspection forthwith to the controlling authority. Thus Unani scholars can choose the career option as Drug Inspector. On private basis Bums graduates and Postgraduates can take license of manufacturing Unani products through establishing pharmaceutical company. Rising health concern and awareness about the side effects of Allopathic Medicine, the market value of Unani products are high .Unani scholars can choose career in manufacturing and production of Unani Medicines such as General health products and cosmetic products as per the need.
- 7. Unani Drug Cultivation:** Due to rich biodiversity, India is rich in medicinal plants and also listed as exporter. There is an increasing global demand for medicinal plants and thus it has the potential to bring good income. Unani drug cultivation is another prominent area to explore as huge demand of Unani drugs across the globe. In order to encourage and support the Government of India has also announced schemes for the medicinal plants cultivation.

- 8. Third Party Administrator (TPA) in Health Insurance:** Now a day's health insurance sector is emerging branch and Unani graduates can also choose it as career plan. TPA third party administrator in health insurance, is an entity which coordinates between the hospital and the insurance company. They play important role in ensuring that the claim process has been carried out in smooth and hassle-free manner and provide support to the policy holders. Increasing trends in health Insurance policy has increased the demand of TPA. A Hospital or Health provider organization that sets up their health plan outsource the administrative responsibility to a third party.
- 9. Medical Tourism:** Unani graduates can choose an emerging field of Medical Tourism as career. Medical Tourism is defined as when consumers choose to cross international borders in order to receive medical care. The low cost of medical treatments, availability of high quality of healthcare services at affordable rate, affordable international air fares, availability of internet and communication channels, are the reasons for the growing popularity in medical tourism in India [13].According to recent studies India has emerged as leader in encouraging and promoting medical tourism [14].Unani system of medicine has a lot of potential to contribute in this field. Regimenal therapy, a mode of treatment in Unani system of Medicine, comprises of mostly non-medicinal procedures to remove the morbid humours from the body. Use of certain regimenal procedures like Dalk(Massage), Pashoya (Foot Bath), Ta'liq (Leeching), Hammam (Turkish Bath), Riyazat (Exercise), Shamum and Lakhlakha (Aromatherapy), Inkebab (Inhalation Therapy) , Nutool (Irrigation), Aabzan (Sitz bath), Takmeed (Fomentation),Cupping (Hijamat) etc can be source of attraction for foreign tourists seeking medical treatment.
- 10. Health Informatics:** For Unani graduates Health Informatics is another option in which they can make their career. Healthcare informatics, biomedical informatics or medical informatics is the terms that are currently being used in place of health informatics. It is considered to be the intersection of computer science, health care and information science. It primarily makes use of technology to arrange and analyse medical records in order to enhance the quality and safety of patient care. Data analytics and informatics both have become essential for the success and reputation of healthcare organizations[15].Government and private hospitals, Diagnostic centres, Health Insurance companies; Health organisations etc that generate data related to health require the help of data analytics. Trained and skilled Unani graduates can get opportunity as Health Informatics or Data analysis professionals.
- 11. International Opportunities:** BUMS graduates can also explore job prospects in countries where Unani medicine is practiced or where there is a demand for alternative medicine. They can also contribute to healthcare systems abroad or engage in research collaborations with international institutions. For example, UAE Government has given permission to Unani graduates as practitioners after qualifying TCAM exam. In order to practice in UAE as TCAM practitioners, one has to pass the licensing exam. After issuing the license, UAE government permits Unani practitioners to offer medical services limited to their area of training and expertise.

IV. CONCLUSION

The acceptance and popularity of Unani System of Medicine is increasing day by day at global level. Earlier included in the Department of Indian Medicine & Homeopathy (ISM & H), now it has become integral part of Ministry of Ayush, Government of India. Unani system of Medicine is a scientific medical system that is not only being practised, taught and scientifically documented in India but also in different parts of world. World health Organization has taken various essential steps in the promotion and propagation of Unani Medicine. Earlier majority Unani graduates due to lack of awareness and information access confined themselves to the private practice. With the increase in demand for traditional medicines and healthcare services, a career in Unani system of Medicine offers excellent job prospects and a wide range of opportunities both at national and international level.

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