

UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE- GLOBAL STATUS AND CAREER PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Unani system of medicine originated in Greece and later adopted by the Romans then during the Middle Ages it travelled to Arab, Central Asian countries and parts of the Europe. 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 has 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. Unani medicine is popular among the masses of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Islamic Republic of Iran and others. However, India is the global leader in Unani Medicine having a wide, very well organised and functional network of educational, healthcare, research and pharmaceutical system. 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.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy (ISM&H) were given an independent identity in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare by creating a separate department in 1995 [1]. The Department of ISM&H was re-named as the Department of AYUSH in November 2003[2].The Ministry of AYUSH was formed on the 9th of November 2014 with a vision of reviving the profound knowledge of our ancient systems of medicine and ensuring the optimal development and propagation of the Ayush systems of healthcare. Ayush is an acronym for Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa and Homeopathy [3]. The Unani System of Medicine is a medical system that deals with the management of health and diseases. It provides preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative healthcare and holistic approach [4].

The Unani System of Medicine, as the name suggests, owes its immediate origin to ancient Greece(Yunani).Since the Greeks adopted Medicine from Egypt, the roots of this system go to Egypt and its sister civilization Mesopotamia. It was further adopted by the Romans and in the Middle Ages it travelled to the Arab world, Central Asian countries and parts of the Europe where it developed to great heights. In India, Unani System of Medicine came from Arab and Iran and made a long journey to establish itself as one of the preferred Medical Systems in the country [4]. The Government of India facilitated the growth and development of Unani Medicine by recognizing its utility and scope and integrated it into healthcare delivery system. With its wide network of quality educational institutions, comprehensive healthcare facilities, state-of-the-art research institutions and quality drug manufacturing industries and on account of its utilization by a large number of people for their healthcare needs, India has emerged as the global leader in Unani System of Medicine. The practice of Unani system is prevalent mainly in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Jammu & Kashmir, Bihar, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Rajasthan [3].

The Unani System of Medicine is a comprehensive medical system that deals with the various states of health and disease. Its fundamental framework is based on deep philosophical insights and scientific principles. Unani medicine states that disease is a natural process and that symptoms are the reactions of the body to disease. It employs the humoral theory which presupposes the presence of four akhlaat (humours) in the body – dam (blood), balgham (phlegm), safra (yellow bile) and sauda (black bile). Each humour has its own temperament: dam is hot and moist; phlegm is cold and moist; yellow bile is hot and dry; and black bile is cold and dry [5]. Health is a state of body in which there is equilibrium in the humours and functions of the body are normal in accordance to its own temperament and the environment. When the equilibrium of the humours is disturbed and functions of the body are abnormal, in accordance to its own temperament and environment, that state is called disease [6]. Dominance of one of the humours in the body gives each person his or her individual temperament-Sanguine (damvi), phlegmatic (balghami), choleric (safravi) and melancholic (saudavi). Unani system of medicine has four modes of treatment-Dietotherapy (Ilaj bil Ghiza), Regimenal therapy (Ilaj bit Tadbeer) , Pharmacotherapy (Ilaj bid Dawa) and Surgery (Ilaj bil Yad).

II. GLOBAL STATUS OF UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

World health organization (W.H.O) has recognized the Unani System of Medicine as an alternative medicine to cater health care needs of human population .The system is presently practiced in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Srilanka, Nepal, China, Iran, Iraq , Malaysia, Indonesia, Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries, some African and European countries, etc. .Unani system is popular in different parts of the world with different names. In India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and South Africa it is known as Unani Medicine or Unani tibb. In Iran it is called as Tibb sunnati (traditional Medicine), in Pakistan as Eastern Medicine and in China as Uyghur Medicine. In some countries it is known as Islamic Medicine or Arab Medicine. Unani Medicine has institutional framework in some of the Asian countries. In Pakistan, there are about 34 Unani colleges imparting a four year diploma course –Fadil-i-Tibb o Jarahat and a Five –year degree course –Bachelor of Eastern Medicine and Surgery (BEMS).National Council for Tibb is a regulatory body for Unani System of Medicine. There are about 500 dispensaries in private and government sectors and about 100 Unani drug manufacturing units. Bangladesh offers a Five year degree course in Unani System of Medicine recognized by University of Dhaka and other universities. The country has 19 Unani colleges and about 20000 registered practitioners. In Sri Lanka,a five year degree course in Unani System of Medicine is run by the Institute of Indigenous Medicine, affiliated to the University of Colombo. There are nearly 750 registered practitioners of Unani system of Medicine in the country. In South Africa, the School of Natural Medicine, Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of Western Cape offers a Four year degree course in Unani Tibb.In Iran, Unani Medicine is practiced as Traditional Medical System, and the Government is keenly interested in its revival and development and a number of programmes have been initiated for this purpose. There is a Traditional Medicine and Materia Medica Research Center (TMRC) established at Shaheed Beheshti Medical University, Tehran. In Kuwait,Unani System of Medicine is practiced as Islamic Medicine and an Islamic Medicine Centre is established. In United Arab Emirates (UAE) ,practice of Unani System of Medicine is allowed officially after qualifying the examination of Traditional Complementary and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) conducted by the Ministry of Health, Government of UAE [4].

Table-1 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, affiliated to the University of Colombo
SOUTH AFRICA	Unani Tibb	4 years	School of Natural Medicine, Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of Western Cape

A-UNANI EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA

Education and practice in Unani system of Medicine is presently monitored and regulated by National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Indian Medicine (NCISM), a statutory body constituted under NCISM Act 2020. In India, the Five and half years undergraduate course in Unani System of Medicine leading to the award of degree of Bachelor of Unani and the three year postgraduate courses leading to the award of Doctor of Medicine (Mahir-i-Tibb) and Master of Surgery (Mahir-i-Jarahat) degrees are being run by the Government and private colleges and Institutions.

As per the report of NCISM on dated 25-05-2022, there are 57 academic/research institutions that impart Unani medical education. Of them, Fifteen offer both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, 3 offers only undergraduate courses, and one-National Institute of Unani Medicine (NIUM), Bengaluru- two Research Institutes namely- Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine (RRIUM), University of Kashmir, Srinagar and Central Research Institute for Unani Medicine, Hyderabad, Telangana offers only postgraduate courses[7].

The NIUM, Bengaluru, Government Nizamia Tibbi College (GNTC), Hyderabad and Central Research Institute for Unani Medicine, Hyderabad in collaboration with Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi have also started PhD programme in Unani Medicine. All educational institutions are affiliated to different universities and provide healthcare services as well.

Registration of Unani practitioners is carried out by the State Councils/Boards of Indian Medicine in the provinces and by the NCISM at central level .As on April 2015, India has 48,213 registered Unani practitioners under the Central and state Boards, 265 Unani hospitals and 141 dispensaries[4].

Table 2. 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

III. GLOBALISATION OF UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

Traditional medicine has a long history of use in health maintenance and disease prevention and treatment. Unani medicine is one of the popularly applied health resources throughout the world. According to the Second WHO 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.

According to World Health Organization (W.H.O) global survey, Unani medicine is a popular form of traditional and complementary medicine. WHO has played an instrumental role in the development of traditional medicine at the global level. In year WHO has brought This document provides benchmarks of what the community of Unani practitioners, experts and regulators consider to be adequate training of Unani practitioners; training programmes for trainees with different backgrounds. It also includes a review of what the community of Unani practitioners and experts considers to be contraindications, so as to promote safe practice of Unani and minimize the risk of accidents. Together, these can serve as a reference for national authorities in establishing systems of training, examination and licensure that support the qualified practice of Unani [5]. In order to support the use of relevant benchmarking document and other technical document, WHO has published WHO Standard Terminology on Unani Medicine in the year 2022 .Such publication is an essential tool for working on other standards, guidelines, classifications and regulations, as well as integrating Unani medicine into health systems. Internationally accepted common terms on Unani medicine will enable us to compare, assess, and evaluate the data internationally. This document will facilitate Unani medicine and useful reference point for Unani medicine professional, policymakers, health workers, service providers, researchers and the general public to use the same concepts, understanding and definitions in communications, health care services and medical records. It will support international cooperation in research, information exchange, standards and classifications in Unani medicine [8].

In 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Government of India signed an agreement to establish the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine with the aims to harness the potential of traditional medicine from across the world through modern science and technology to improve the health of people. Very recently, the First WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023 “Towards health and wellbeing for all” held in Gandhinagar, Gujrat, India on 17-18, August, 2023. Such summit has served as a platform for all stakeholders, including traditional medicine workers, users and communities, national policymakers, international organizations, academics, private sector and civil society organizations, to share best practices and game-changing evidence, data and innovation on the contribution of traditional medicine to health and sustainable development [9]

In order to promote the integrated approach, Department of AYUSH, Govt of India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the department of Pharmacognosy, University of Mississippi's and established the National Center for Natural Products Research, where scientists are researching the efficacy of many Indian plants and herbs. Global Unani Medicine and research Foundation (GUMRF) are incorporated under the Law of United States of America. The headquarter of the foundation is at Chicago and has 5 regional offices in Asia, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Australia. The basic aim of the GUMRF is to provide platform to Unani scientists, Practitioners and well-wishers from all over the world to give financial support to Unani medicine research and Health care programs in order to popularize the importance of Unani Medicine worldwide [10].

The Ministry of AYUSH is an initiative by the Government of India to promote the propagation and development of AYUSH systems of health care and medicine. Government of India initiated as Department of ISM & H, later renamed as Department of AYUSH and currently it is functioning as Ministry of Ayush. This shows the great interest, feeling of recognition and acceptance. By the Government. The Ministry of AYUSH has established Research Council to promote research activities in Unani System. Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine is working with the aim to initiate, aid, develop and coordinate scientific research on fundamental and applied aspects of Unani medicine. The drug standardization research programme by the Government is mainly concerned with evolving 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 incorporation in Unani Pharmacopoeia of India [11]. Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) is a pioneering initiative of India to protect Indian traditional medicinal knowledge and prevent its misappropriation at International Patent Offices. It is systemically and scientifically converting and structuring the available contents of the ancient texts on Indian Systems of Medicines[12]. As on April 2016, the TKDL contains details of 2,2,662 medicinal formulations from the texts of Indian System of Medicine, of which 1,75,150 formulations pertain to Unani system of Medicine[4].

IV. CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN UNANI SYSTEM OF MEDICINE

Few decades earlier, due to lack of awareness and unavailability of job opportunities majority of Unani graduates were limited to the field 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:

1. Academics
2. Indian administrative services
3. Clinical Practice-Medical Officers/ Unani Consultant in Government and Private Sector.
4. Research
5. Hospital and Health Management
6. Drug Manufacturing Unit/Company
7. Unani Drug Cultivation
8. Third Party Administrator (TPA) in Health Insurance
9. Medical Tourism
10. Health Informatics
11. International Opportunities

A. 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 pursue a career in academics 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).

B. 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, making crucial decisions, and overseeing the administration at

various levels, including the district, state and central government.. 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 clears both round are called for interview. Top rank holders are selected for IAS officers' roles.

C. 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 use expert knowledge and skill to diagnose and treat patients. 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. Regimental Unani Centres (Ilaj bit Tadabeer Centres) are also boon for Unani private practitioners. Patients at global level are being attracted towards regimental procedures which are either drugless or medicines are used at minimal level. Private practitioners can open centres and apply various procedures or techniques such as massage (Dalk), cupping (Hijamat), leeching (Ta'liq), Nutool (Irrigation) etc for health promotion and mental & physical well-being.

D. 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 conducting scientific research on the applied as well as fundamental 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).This unit is engaged in the protection and preservation of India's vast traditional knowledge present in ancient texts by converting the information into modern languages. It provides opportunity to the Unani scholars as Research Associate and Project Assistant-III in the project-“Digitising Traditional Indian System of Medicine”.

E. 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 the tools and techniques of management to the field of healthcare or individually to hospital sector, or public health sector. One can perform leadership role through proper training in managing financial, material and human resources as well as planning and managing information system in hospital settings. The job opportunities are much more because of the rapid expansion of health care industry in India with endeavours from public and private stakeholders.

F. 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.

G. Unani Drug Cultivation:

Due to rich biodiversity, India is rich in medicinal plants and also listed as exporter. The demand for medicinal plants is growing worldwide and has the potential to fetch 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.

H. 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. With increasing trends in health Insurance policy, the use of third party administrators are becoming more common. A Hospital or Health provider organization that sets up their health plan outsource the administrative responsibility to a third party.

I. Medical Tourism:

Unani graduates can choose an emerging field of Medical Tourism as career. Medical Tourism is defined as when consumers elect to travel across international borders with the intention of receiving some form of medical treatment. 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]. Recent studies has showed that India has emerged as one of the leaders in promoting medical tourism [14]. Unani system of medicine has a lot of potential to contribute in this field. Regimenal therapy is an exclusive branch of Unani system of Medicine which comprises mostly non-medicinal procedures to eliminate 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.

J. Health Informatics:

For Unani graduates Health Informatics is another option in which they can make their career. Health informatics is also known as healthcare informatics, biomedical informatics or medical informatics. It is considered to be the intersection of computer science, health care and information science. Healthcare informatics essentially uses technology to organize and analyse health records to improve healthcare outcomes through better collaboration among the healthcare providers to improve the quality and safety of patient care. Data analytics and informatics both have become essential for the success and reputation of healthcare organizations (IJRCH). 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.

K. 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 provide health care services limited to their area of training and expertise.

V. Conclusion:

The acceptance of Unani System of Medicine at National and international level is increasing day by day. Earlier included in the Department of Indian Medicine & Homeopathy (ISM & H), now it has become integral part of Ministry of Ayush, Government of India. It has been practised, taught and scientifically documented in different parts of country and flourished as a scientific medical system. 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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