

Review Article

The value of Avicenna's heritage in development of modern integrative medicine in Uzbekistan



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ABSTRACT

The heritage of Abu Ali al-Husayn ibn Abd Allah ibn Sina (known in Europe as Avicenna, hereinafter referred to as Avicenna; around 980-1037 CE) has been used in the practice of doctors of various specialties in the treatment of various diseases for many centuries. Extensive clinical experience accumulated over a long time is actively used in modern medicine. Avicenna has had an invaluable contribution to world medicine. He is the largest representative of advanced sociohumanitarian ideas among the peoples of Central Asia. He was a philosopher and physician, scientist and mathematician, poet, and specialist in literature. The rich heritage of the scientist takes a worthy place in the history of medicine in particular, and world civilization in general. Avicenna introduced the main contribution to the treasury of the universal culture by his work in medicine. Avicenna brought together the achievements of Hippocrates (c. 460-370 BCE), Galen (c. 130-200 CE), and healers of Egypt, Persia, and India, and he supplemented them with own research results, brilliant discoveries, and hypotheses. Avicenna left many works, among them the especially popular *Canon of Medicine*. He paid great attention to the prevention of diseases rather than their treatment, which is important today. In his works he gives advice on the use of herbal medicines and biologically active points for various diseases. This article highlights some topical issues of multifaceted heritage of Avicenna for modern medicine and identified promising areas for the development of integrative medicine in Uzbekistan.

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1. Introduction

At the present stage of the medical development, the treatment of disease can be achieved with a combination of modern classical methods of treatment with the most effective methods of Oriental medicine. Integrative medicine—combining traditional and folk direction—is a medicine of the future. An ideal image of the integrative physician has

long existed in the history of mankind. Hippocrates, Paracelsus, Avicenna, and others are its real incarnation. Progressive representatives of the Uzbek medicine obtained from folk medicine experience all the best, rational especially relating to medicinal plants, and prepared pills from them and introduced them into the practice of scientific medicine.

Avicenna was a physician of the Middle Ages and numerous books that discuss his achievements have been published.^{1–7} In his functional encyclopedia *Canon of Medicine*, he

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summarized many centuries' experience of Greek, Indian, and Central Asian medicine and medicine of other peoples of the Middle Ages, as well as pharmacology, pharmacy, and pharmacotherapy.⁸⁻¹⁴ Many medicinal plants described by Avicenna are firmly established in the practice of traditional medicine in many countries, and—some of them—even in scientific medicine.¹⁵

Western medicine considers external factors as the cause of the disease, such as viruses and bacteria^{16,17}, whereas oriental medicine considers the nature of diseases through internal factors such as the weakening of the protective function of the body. Therefore, the main method of treatment is destruction, prevention of external factors in Western medicine, and the strengthening of internal defense response in oriental medicine.

In Uzbekistan since 1996 the departments of the folk medicine have been organized in all medical schools where senior students receive primary knowledge on treatment methods of traditional medicine. Currently, the total load on traditional medicine for students is 76 hours, including 6 hours of lectures, 54 hours of practical exercises (9 day cycle), and 16 hours of individual work. Particular attention is paid by students to acquiring practical skills in the application of oriental medicine in emergency cases.

The Department of Traditional Medicine of the Tashkent Medical Academy (TMA) annually holds a faculty in training professors, associate professors, and assistants of other medical schools of the country. In 1997, at the First Tashkent State Medical Institute (now TMA) the center of the Oriental Medicine of the Republic of Korea was opened according to the international program of KOICA, which is the base of traditional medicine of the TMA.

2. Scientific heritage of Avicenna

Avicenna was a great scholar of Central Asia, the founder of the world of medicine. In various foreign and domestic literature and other sources, there is a large amount of information about the life and creative heritage of Avicenna.¹⁸⁻²⁵ He was born in the village Afshona near to Bukhara (in Bukhara region, current Uzbekistan) According to ancient sources, he was credited with ~470 works ranging in size from a single sheet to 20 volumes in 29 fields of study, 23 in Persian, others in Farsi and Arabic—the language of science and literature of the time. Many of them are lost forever, and only 274 survive and have been preserved.^{21,26,27,28-31} In the judgment of Professor U.I. Karimov, the fullest and sufficient bibliographic source is the work of Iranian scientist Jahji Mahdavi (1954) *Catalogue of manuscripts of products of Avicenna*, which includes 242 works of Avicenna divided into two groups: the first group includes works that were undoubtedly written by Avicenna; the second group embraces works attributed to Avicenna or representing parts of separate compositions of the scientist.³²

Avicenna summarized the scientific achievements of his time and developed them further in encyclopedic works on philosophy, logic, mathematics, astronomy, physics, mineralogy, jurisprudence, linguistics, and musicology.^{18,20} However, Avicenna acquired most fame as a physician, pharmacist, and scientist.³³ The Avicenna era—the era of the Samanid

dynasty, the heyday of science, culture, and Bukhara, according to many historians—“became a place of greatness, the sanctuary of the kingdom, the dawning-place of stars in the center of literature and scientists of the time.”³⁴ From a very young age Avicenna showed his exceptional intellectual abilities, studying medicine and philosophy, and had an interest in the works of Aristotle. It is noteworthy that at the age of 16 years he became a famous court physician who healed the Emir of Khorasan.³⁴

Avicenna grew up in Bukhara, the capital of the Samanid dynasty, whose rule extended to the territory of Maverannakhr and Khurosan in 892-999 CE, and Maverannakhr is the territory of modern Uzbekistan.^{3,6} Desire “to untangle the knot of death”—to unravel the secrets to defeat the ailments do everything possible to make life easier for people—moved Avicenna when he created his major work on medicine: *Al-kanun-fi-tibb (Canon of Medicine)*.^{6,9,18-20,25,31,32,35,36} This work, written in 1013-1021, brought him fame for centuries and is considered the foundation of medicine, not only in the Islamic world, but also in Europe.^{37,38,39,40} This is truly a medical encyclopedia, in which a logical harmony outlines everything that relates to the prevention and treatment of disease. It is the most important work in his era and incredibly raised a high level of medical science, and 100 years after the death of Avicenna was widely recognized in Western Europe. Thus, until the 18th century the central universities in France, Spain, Italy, England and Germany, had studied the *Canon of Medicine*. The first translation from Arabic into Latin was made by Gerard from Cremona (1114–1187) in the 12th century (by order of Frederick Barbarossa). The first printed edition of the *Canon* was published in 1473. In 1476–1479 the *Canon* was published at Padua, and in 1482–1500 at Venice. In 1543 at Rome, it was published in Arabic, and in 1593 in French. About 40 completed editions had been made by the 17th century. In XIX–XX centuries it has been translated and published in Russian and Uzbek language.^{27,28,41,42} Within 650 years this book had become a handbook for doctors and was equal to half of the curriculum of medical schools in the world.

Canon of the Medicine consists of five books¹⁹:

The first book is devoted to medicine theory, disease prevention, and treatment.

The second book is devoted the doctrine about simple medicines and ways of their action.

Separate illnesses and their treatment are described in the third book.

The fourth book is devoted to surgery, doctrine about fevers, etc.

Complex medicines and poisons are described in the fifth book.

Drugs (Al-Adviyat al kalboya) was written during the first visit to Khamadan. The work presented in detail the role of the heart in the emergence and manifestation of air, especially the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease. *Removing harm from manipulation by various fixes, errors, and warnings (Daf al kulliya an al-abdon al insoniya bi-tadorik anvo khato an-tadbir), Poem on the medicine (Urdzhusafit-tib). Urdzhuza (Al urdzhusafit-tibb)* - this work is in second place after the *Canon of Medicine* in content and coverage of the material. The doctrine about *Misadgi* is the base of Avicenna's concepts about health and illnesses, and on all systems of its medical sights. The term

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