

EDITORIAL

Persian Medicine and Unani: Historical Roots and the Way Forward for Collaborations

Traditional medicines are among the important outputs of the history of medicine, with therapeutic and health applications. Therapeutic methods and medicine, as well as health maintenance strategies, have evolved through the efforts of physicians and scholars over time, generation by generation throughout history. The World Health Organization emphasizes that many of these historical approaches are not included in current biomedicine, but they could be applicable to health promotion through an evidence-informed approach (Wong, et al., 2026, p. 715). These historical achievements follow their own philosophical paradigms rooted in the cultures and histories of the civilizations in which they grew.

Persian Medicine is one of the oldest and richest medical traditions, rooted in antiquity in Persian civilization and developed in Middle Eastern and Hellenic cultures and later in the Islamicate world (Zargarán, and Naghizadeh, 2024). Persian medicine was developed in pre-Islamic Persia as a humoral paradigm based on four elements: fire, wind, water and soil. During the Sassanid Kingdom (224 –627CE), Persian medicine was raised in a scientific atmosphere. The Sassanids played a significant role in the advancement of medicine and the integration of Persian, Greco-Roman, and Indian teachings on the

Arman Zargarán (Pharm.D., Ph.D.)¹

1- Department of History of Medicine, School of Persian Medicine, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Correspondence:

Arman Zargarán
Editor in Chief, Research on History of Medicine Journal, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

e-mail: azargarán@sina.tums.ac.ir

Citation:

Zargarán, A., 2026. Persian Medicine and Unani: Historical Roots and the Way Forward for Collaborations. *Res Hist Med*, 15(2), pp. 87-88. doi: 10.30476/rhm.2026.51920.

Copyright: © Journal of Research on History of Medicine. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited non-commercially.



humoral paradigm by establishing a free, safe, and supported scientific community of scientists, regardless of their religion and nationality, in scientific centers, particularly Jondishapur, the first teaching hospital in history (Zargaran, Fazelzadeh, and Mohagheghzadeh, 2013, pp. 2002-2004; Zargaran, 2019). Later, in the Islamicate era, Persian medicine flourished through the significant impact of mostly Iranian scientists like Akhawayni, Rhazes, Haly Abbas and Avicenna during the 9th to 13th centuries (Jalilian, and Mortazavi, 2025, pp. 91-100; Taqi, and AlNasrallah, 2025, pp. 19-32). It was also adopted in Europe through Latin translations of Persian Medicine books, such as the *Canon of Medicine* as well as Hellenic sources, and after centuries, it is now called Traditional European Medicine.

Later, Persian Medicine was transferred to India with the migration of many Persian physicians who settled there (Haneda, 1997, pp. 129-143; Mousavi, Chelongar, and Abbasi, 2021, pp. 49-64). This paradigm developed separately in Persia and India for five centuries, and Indians called it Unani in the 20th century. Currently, Persian Medicine in Iran and Unani in India are both well integrated into the Iranian and Indian national healthcare systems, respectively. Although Unani medicine was born from Persian Medicine and both have the same origin, five centuries of separate development have created many differences, advancements and opportunities for both to learn from each other. In recent years, there have been good collaborations between Iran and India on the subjects of Persian and Unani medicines, and three MoUs have been signed by both sides at the ministerial and academic levels. This is an excellent common topic for developing cooperation between Iran and India in the field of medical history and health.

Therefore, we, in the *Journal of Research on History of Medicine*, decided to dedicate a special issue to “History and Philosophy of Unani/ Persian Medicine,” with the aim of collecting a series of informative articles on theoretical aspects of Persian and Unani Medicines.

Funding

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

References

- Haneda, M., 1997. Emigration of Iranian Elites to India during the 16-18th centuries. *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 3(4), pp. 129-143.
- Jalilian, S., and Mortazavi, M.S., 2025. Ali Ibn Abbas/Haly Abbas and the Transmission of Perso-Islamic Medicine to the West. *J Res Hist Med*, 14(2), pp. 91-100.
- Mousavi, S.H., Chelongar, M.A. and Abbasi, A.A., 2021. Investigating the Role of Immigrant Shiite Physicians in the Development of Persian Medicine in Deccan (10th-11th Century AH/16th-17th Century AD). *J Res Hist Med*, 10(1), pp. 49-64.
- Taqi, K.M., and AlNasrallah, N., 2025. A Journey in Time; Muslim, Arab, and Persian Physicians and the History of Surgery. *J Res Hist Med*, 14(1), pp. 19-32.
- Wong, Y.M.A., Ahn, S., Bana, A., Dua, P.K., Eggers, R., Kuruvilla, S., Li, Y., Liu, Q., Shen, Y., and Kim, S., 2025. Policy implications of WHO's global traditional medicine strategy 2025–2034. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 103(11), p. 715.
- Zargaran, A., 2019. An introduction to medicine during the Sassanid era. Tehran: Choogan Publication.
- Zargaran, A., Fazelzadeh, A., and Mohagheghzadeh, A., 2013. Surgeons and surgery from ancient Persia (5,000 years of surgical history). *World J Surgery*, 37(8), pp. 2002-2004.
- Zargaran, A., and Naghizadeh, A., eds., 2024. *A Short Introduction to Persian Medicine*. English Edited by Amalsaleh E. Tehran: Chogan Publication. ISBN: 978-622-7686-97-5.

Received: 1 May 2026; Accepted: 2 May 2026; Online published: 25 May 2026
Research on History of Medicine/ 2026 May; 15(2): 87-88.

