

## LETTER TO EDITOR

### A Case for Historical Inaccuracy in Medicine: Fact and Document

**Dear Editor,**

Maintaining health is highly recommended by both Persian and Unani medicine. This is reflected throughout their extensive corpus of works. Although there are signs of preventive medicine and health preservation of diseases in Unani medicine, notably in Galen's works (Galen, 1988, p. 35), Iranian sages appear to be the early pioneers of health education, establishing the core principles of *Sith darūryh*, a medical doctrine followed by subsequent generations. These sages often used to educate people on the subject of six main principles for preserving health and improving quality of life.

Despite all documentation, there are some historical inaccuracies in crucial issues of Traditional Persian medicine. We recently read the published article

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entitled “An Example of Health Education in the Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century: Natural and Artificial Directions for Health by William Vaughan” (Charlton, A, 2005, pp. 656-664) (See <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyh030>) in Health Education Research wherein the author introduced William Vaughan, a Doctor of Civil Laws as a pioneer of health education.

Anne Charlton’s report (Department of Epidemiology and Health Sciences of the University of Manchester) provides a valuable insight into the role of Vaughan’s health education manual, first published in 1600. The manual covers six primary areas of health:

- (1) Air, fire, and water;
- (2) Food and drink;
- (3) Sleep and early rising;
- (4) Evacuations;
- (5) Infirmities and death; and
- (6) Restoration of health.

Having analyzed Vaughan’s health education manual, Charlton provides a historical perspective on the foundations of health education and traces its evolution over the past four centuries.

According to Charlton, Vaughan’s manual reveals that his numerous recommendations are still valid and pertinent in today’s health education materials.

This is an important finding that written health education advice given by Vaughan at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was based on the knowledge and theories available at that time, yet after conducting further investigations, we query some aspects of the result that we believe impact the conclusions of this article.

Health education theories left by Persian physicians, such as Rhazes (864 or 865–925 or 935 CE) (Rhazes, 2002, pp. Vol 6: 270-273), Avicenna (980 – June 1037 CE) (Avicenna, 2005, pp. 113), and Haly Abbas (died between 982 and 994) (Haly Abbas, 1968, p. 37) indeed predates William Vaughan’s health education manual by around eight centuries, demonstrating that health education theory had been proposed and developed much earlier.

The six main principles for preserving health and ensuring a high quality of life, according to Traditional Persian medicine (*Sith darūryh*), are as follows: *al-ahwyh* (environmental conditions), *al-aṭ‘mh wa al-ashrabh* (water and food), *al- harikah wa al-sukūn al-jismānī* (exercise and repose), *al- hari- kah wa al-sukūn al-nafsānī* (spiritual moods), *al-nūm wa al-yaqidh* (sleep and wakefulness), and *al-ihṭibās wa al-istifrāgh* (retention and evacuations) (Figure 1).



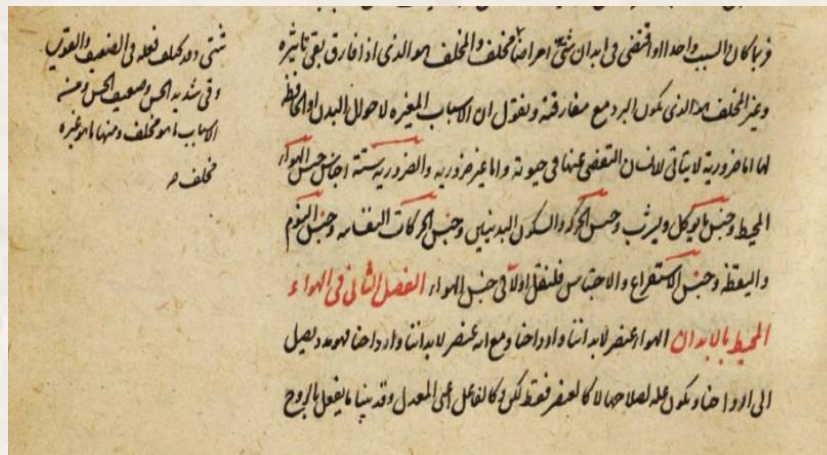


Figure 1. This is a portion of the original Arabic manuscript of Avicenna written ca. 1015 AD. The third line implies an understanding of six main principles for the preservation of health and quality living from one thousand years ago. “And essential principles are al-ahwyh, al-at'mh wa al-ashrabh, al-harikah wa al-sukun al-jismānī, al-harikah wa al-sukun al-nafsānī, al-nūm wa al-yaqīḍh, and al-ihtibās wa al-istifrāgh” (Available in the personal library of Dr. Mohsen Baghbani and Mr. Hasan Kommar)

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### Authors' Contribution

Mohsen Baghbani conceived and designed the analysis. Hasan Kommar, Tavala Safari and Mahdiah Asadi collected the data. Farzaneh Zare performed the analysis and wrote the paper. All authors read and approved the final version of the work.

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### Conflict of Interest

None.

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[in Arabic]

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