

## BOOK REVIEW

### A Book Review on: A Short Introduction to Persian Medicine

#### Introduction

The World Health Organization recognizes the potential of traditional and complementary medicine in providing safe healthcare services, advocating for their integration within global health systems. As part of this trend toward rational and scientific use of traditional medicine, Iranian Medicine, or “Persian Medicine,” has garnered worldwide attention due to its rich millennia-old history and recognition as one of the most authoritative medical traditions based on historical sources. Iranian Medicine adopts a patient-centered approach, emphasizing diagnosis, etiology, and treatment while acknowledging individual differences. It also prioritizes health preservation and disease prevention through lifestyle changes, spiritual growth, and ethical principles, aligning with the most advanced modern medical schools.

The book “*A Brief Introduction to Iranian Medicine*” serves as a concise and coherent resource for understand-

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ing the fundamental principles of Iranian medicine. Organized into eleven independent chapters, along with an introduction, preface, and index, it offers valuable insights into Iranian Medicine's essential characteristics and principles. While maintaining a concise nature, the book successfully covers the core aspects of Iranian Medicine. The strategic sequence of chapters provides readers with a general understanding of the subject, making it a helpful resource for those seeking to explore Iranian Medicine's rich tradition and its approach to healthcare. (Zargaran, and Naghizadeh, 2024) (Figure 1)

The first chapter of the book presents a concise history of Traditional Iranian Medicine, tracing its origins back approximately 10,000 years. The chapter then delves into Iranian Medicine's historical position, beginning with the role of medicine in Iranian mythology. In the search for Iran's earliest medical texts, this section highlights the influence of pre-Islamic Iranian Medicine on the medical achievements of the Islamic Empire and the evolution of medicine in Iran during the post-Islamic period. Thus, the reader is made aware of the position of Iranian Medicine in ancient and Medieval times.

Chapter Two delves into the nature of complementary and alternative medicine, comparing the methodology of Iranian Medicine with that of other ancient medical systems. This chapter highlights the robust and logical methodology of traditional Iranian Medicine, demonstrating its compatibility with modern medical science's quantitative and qualitative standards. The book provides readers with a unique understanding of the fundamental principles of Iranian Medicine by distinguishing it from the traditional practices of other nations. To this end, Chapter Three focuses on natural philosophy in Iranian Medicine. This chapter examines the philosophical foundations of Iranian medical thought, introducing various theoretical principles that underpin Iranian Medicine. According to the author, Iranian medical knowledge is intertwined with numerous other fields, including philosophy, logic, anthropology, astronomy, and natural philosophy. During their education, physicians studied various sciences that served as the basic sciences of modern medicine. Natural philosophy, logic, and ethics were particularly vital for physicians. The author asserts that natural philosophy, or the philosophy of nature, was a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of the world. It encompassed sub-branches such as natural hearing (*sama-e tabi'i*), astronomy (the study of heaven and earth), generation and corruption (the study of creation and decay), actions and reactions, minerals and celestial effects, plant biology, animal biology, and the study of the soul. As such, natural philosophy formed an essential foundation for Iranian medical thought and practice.

Building upon the discussions in Chapter Three, Chapter Four is dedicated to the concept of temperament, a cornerstone of Iranian Medicine. This chapter illustrates how the attention given to individual temperaments demonstrates the patient-centered approach of Iranian Medicine. It shows how treatments are tailored to each patient's unique characteristics and constitution, an approach also acknowledged by some modern medical schools.

Chapter Five delves into another core concept of Iranian Medicine: The Six Essentials Principles of Health. As previously highlighted, disease prevention and health preservation are of paramount importance in Iranian Medicine. To this end, six principles are considered essential: air and environment, eating and drinking, movement and rest, sleep and wakefulness, purification (excretion and retention), and emotional states (Psychological



factors). This chapter introduces these principles and explores their practical applications, drawing on detailed examinations found in Iranian medical texts.

The book's organization reflects the interconnectedness of the Six Essentials and diet, with the latter being addressed in Chapter Six. Diet is considered a form of treatment in Iranian Medicine, where food is utilized as a therapeutic agent, and dietary strategies are employed, ultimately forming a nutritional engineering based on available resources. This chapter illustrates how Iranian physicians practiced a form of nutritional therapy, emphasizing the link between diet and lifestyle.

Chapter Seven focuses specifically on the principles of treatment in Iranian Medicine. This chapter is strategically placed in the middle of the book to emphasize the centrality of treatment throughout the history of medical sciences. The authors of Chapter Seven argue that Iranian Medicine is grounded in three primary components of treatment: lifestyle modification, natural herbal medications, and manual interventions. These principles are elucidated in detail with diagrams, providing readers with a comprehensive overview of Iranian Medicine.

Chapter Eight, "Principles of Diseases Classification in Persian Medicine," continues the focus on disease classification in Persian Medicine. The author highlights several methods of disease classification within Persian traditional medicine, including classification based on the affected organ, classification based on the primary origin of the disease, and classification based on curability. This chapter provides valuable insights into the diverse approaches to understanding and managing disease within the framework of Iranian Medicine.

Chapter Nine, "Materia Medica: Simple Drugs," focuses on pharmacy and pharmacology. While acknowledging the intertwined history of pharmacy and medicine, the authors suggest that Iran's pharmaceutical history dates back approximately 4,000 years, based on historical evidence. Although the chapter does not delve into mythological aspects of ancient Iranian pharmacy, a brief exploration of these beliefs could enrich the content. The chapter provides an overview of pre-Islamic Iranian pharmacy and valuable insights into post-Islamic developments. The history of early Persian and Arabic pharmaceutical texts written by Iranian authors, accompanied by images, helps readers become familiar with ancient pharmaceutical books. Diagrams and tables contribute to understanding the structure of Iranian pharmacy. A particularly interesting section, "Disadvantages and Modifiers," explains that a drug modifier is a medicine or action that mitigates or rectifies medication complications. The authors note that Persian physicians documented the side effects of simple drugs in their case reports and provided examples.

Continuing the pharmacy discussion, Chapter Ten explores compound medications, or 'qurabadin,' in Iranian pharmacy. It introduces significant texts and includes images of important pharmaceutical books to engage readers. The chapter highlights Iranian pharmacists' achievements in formulating compound medications and describes various pharmaceutical methods and forms. An intriguing image depicts the traditional method of distilling aromatic waters in Iran.

The final chapter, "Manipulation in Persian Medicine," explores therapeutic techniques in traditional Persian Medicine. It categorizes treatment methods into dietary measures, medicaments, and manipulations. The authors describe various hands-on techniques, such as Dalk, Ghamz, cupping, and rag-giri. Like previous chapters, figures and photos



illustrate these treatment methods. Interestingly, the final chapter highlights the close physician-patient relationship, providing a befitting conclusion to the book. As previously emphasized, the patient-centered approach in Iranian Medicine necessitates a strong physician-patient connection.

In sum, “An Introduction to Iranian Medicine” is a well-structured and coherent work that starts with ancient historical and mythological discussions before delving into the theoretical foundations of Iranian Medicine. It then explores various aspects of Iranian Medicine, including its therapeutic methods, pharmacology, and drug preparation. The book ends with a focus on the direct physician-patient relationship, offering a tangible and practical conclusion. This commendable work successfully navigates the complex task of presenting a 10,000-year history of Iranian Medicine, covering various subjects from scientific and philosophical theories to treatments, pharmaceuticals, and practical medical procedures. The carefully chosen topics and clear organization make this book an excellent resource for understanding the rich and diverse history of Iranian Medicine.

A significant strength of the book lies in its strategic use of diagrams, tables, and images throughout the well-structured chapters, transforming it from a potentially dry academic piece into an engaging and visually appealing read. The consistent use of clear and concise prose, free from jargon, further enhances readability. Notably, the book maintains a consistent writing style across all chapters, a testament to the diligent work of the editors in ensuring cohesiveness. Each chapter is well-supported by evidence and primary sources, establishing the book as a scholarly work and a valuable resource on Iranian Medicine. The inclusion of an index is another helpful feature, enabling readers to locate specific information with ease. Overall, the combination of a well-organized structure, clear writing, and thoughtful inclusion of visual aids contributes to the book’s success in providing a comprehensive and accessible overview of Iranian Medicine.

Despite its many strengths, there are a few areas where additional content could have further enhanced the book’s comprehensiveness. Although the preface states that the book serves as an introduction to Iranian Medicine, the absence of a chapter highlighting the contributions of prominent Iranian physicians who developed unique medical theories and significantly influenced both Iranian and global medicine in antiquity is notable. Including a chapter on the various schools of Iranian Medicine and their evolution would have provided a broader perspective and deeper understanding of its impact on global medical advancements. Moreover, the book’s lack of attention to medical education in Iran, with its long history dating back to pre-Islamic times, and the significance of institutions like Jondishapour is another significant omission. Addressing the role of these institutions in promoting Iranian medical principles and practices could have enriched the book’s content.

Additionally, the absence of a discussion on the history of Iranian hospitals and their advanced systems is an oversight. Finally, the book’s neglect of Iranian practical achievements in pharmacy, such as significant discoveries and innovations in pharmaceutical tools and medical instruments, could have been explored to provide a more comprehensive account of Iran’s contributions to the field of medicine.

The book’s design deserves recognition for its elegance and visual appeal, distinguishing it from similar works. The meaningful and aesthetically pleasing cover design and an innovative page layout that enhances readability demonstrate attention to detail and



a commitment to creating a visually attractive and functional product. While the overall production quality is high, the choice of glossy paper, while luxurious, poses a minor challenge as it can sometimes create glare and hinder readability.

In conclusion, 'A Brief Introduction to Iranian Medicine' is a remarkable work that offers a coherent, accurate, and evidence-based introduction to Iranian Medicine. It is an excellent resource for anyone seeking an initial understanding of this subject. One can only hope that the dedicated scholarly team behind this work continues their efforts to explore other aspects of Iranian Medicine, leaving a lasting legacy of outstanding contributions and playing a vital role in introducing this rich aspect of Iran's culture to the world.

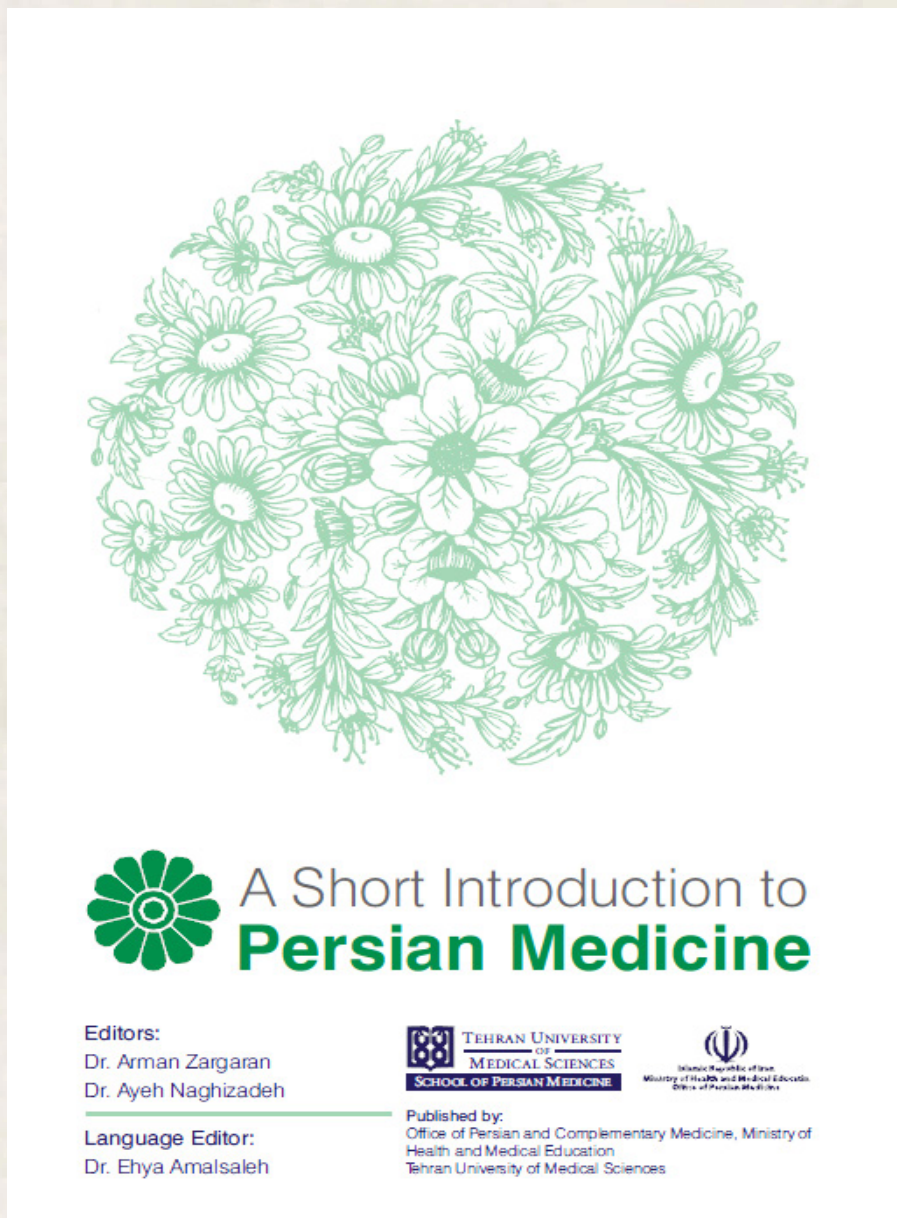


Figure 1. The Cover of the Book (Zargaran, and Naghizadeh, 2024)



**Conflict of Interest**

None.

**References**

Zargaran, A., Naghizadeh, A., eds., 2024. A Short Introduction to Persian Medicine. English Edited by Amalsaleh E. Tehran: Chogan Publication. ISBN: 978-622-7686-97-5.

