



Etiology of Cough in Avicenna's Canon of Medicine

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Dear Editor-in-Chief

The main part of this article was extracted from lung and chest diseases section of canon of medicine of Avicenna and then was studied. Avicenna (980 – 1037 AD) the great Islamic and Iranian Physician, in his masterpiece has stated etiologies of all diseases completely and comprehensively (1). Now, we present the brief etiology of all diseases specially coughs from the point of view of Avicenna. Knowing the etiologies of diseases can help us in correct treatment of patients.

Cough is a movement by which the body's Nature (the manager power of the body that does not have sense and will) throw the torment away from the lung and connected organs like trachea, bronchus or shared organs like esophagus, stomach, liver, spleen and breast (2, 3).

To understand the causes of cough from Iranian Traditional Medicine Hakims point of view like Avicenna, we point to the definition of health and disease, the kinds of disease, the definition of cause and kinds of it and then state the causes of cough from their point of view (4).

Health is a state of body in which all physical or physiological functions are naturally and completely (4). Disease is a state of body contrary to health (4). Disease can be divided into two kinds, single and compound (4). Single disease is divided into three classes, distemperament (Sui e Mizaj)

(5), composition disorders (Sui e Heyat e Tarkib) and connection disorders or interruption of the connection (Tafarrogh e Ettasal) (4). Compound disease is created by two or more single disease such as swelling which is created from three above mentioned single disease (4).

Cause is something initially created and causes a state of body like health or disease (4).

There are two kinds of causes of disease, external (originated from out of body) and internal (which is divided into two groups) (4). Connected causes that create diseases without a medium and previously existed causes, create diseases with a medium (4).

Iranian Traditional Medicine Hakims have divided diseases, from another point of view, into two groups. Original diseases, that originated from the very organ and not another one and dependent diseases that originated from another organ and not the very organ (4).

Regarding the above mentioned divisions we can say cough is originated from either lung or another organ. The latter can be a disorder in esophagus or lower esophageal sphincter (6) or liver (swellings of it) or spleen or breast (7, 8).

External causes of cough, like cooler causes (such as cold weather or cold water) or heater causes (such as warm weather) or dryer causes (like dry

weather) or aggressive causes (such as smoke, dust, the taste of sour or spicy or astringent foods and like fall of food or water in the trachea while speaking) and /or causes that create connection disorders in the lungs like drugs making wound in the lungs (7-9).

Finally we can conclude that Avicenna and other Hakims of Iranian Traditional Medicine knew physiopathology of diseases completely for example contribution of lower esophageal sphincter (LES) in creation of cough, is the same as gastro esophageal reflux disease (GERD) which is causes of chronic cough or contribution of liver inflammations in creation of cough, are the same as inflammations (such as liver inflammations) which are causes of cough. Since hakims believed that lung and liver are linked through diaphragm; and they regarded coldness of the lung's temperament as the cause of some kinds of cirrhosis; that the patient came to hakim having dry chronic cough and feet edema (10). And we can submit, with knowing the basis of Iranian Traditional Medicine about the kinds of diseases and causes, one can explain the cause and mechanism of the creation of cough in a number of mentioned illnesses in Modern Medicine and then deal with their suitable treatment. For example we can regard infectious causes of cough as a kind of distemperament in lung tissue, and/or we can regard bronchiectasis as a kind of composition disorder.

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