

Research Notes

# Health and Healing In The Qur'an

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“We reveal from the Qur'an that which is healing and a mercy for the believers”  
Qur'an 17:82

This statement is a statement of fact, declared in the Qur'an and confirmed by the sayings and practices of Prophet Muhammad, (SAAS) The healing effect of the Qur'an is not limited to the ills of the society and the world. It extends to the human being and contributes to his physical and mental health and well-being. This question is: How does the Qur'an heal? and how does it promote health and well-being?

The Qur'an achieves its healing and health promoting effect by utilizing three different approaches: the legal approach, the guiding approach, and the direct healing approach. The legal approach is through the provision of legislation prohibiting matters which are hazardous to health and enjoining matters which promote health. This legislation has a direct impact on the health of the individual. The guiding approach is through the provision of general rules and regulations which guide the individual in the conduct of his or her daily affairs. This guidance has an indirect positive effect on the health and well-being of the individual. The third approach is through the direct healing effect of the Qur'an on the various organs of the human body.

The first two approaches, the legislation and guidance have been very much known and well understood for years, although some new discoveries have added an exciting twist in our understanding in these areas. The third approach, however, or the direct healing effect of the Qur'an on the organs of the human body is a completely new field of discovery where many new exciting facts are just beginning to emerge and come closer to the level of our understanding. Let us review these three approaches in some detail:

## **I Legislation:**

A few examples of health promoting legislation will be given just to make

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the point. It should be made clear that this is not in any way an exhaustive listing of health related injunctions in the Qur'an.

\*\*The most important legislation is probably the prohibition of kufr, or disbelief in God. The lack of recognition of God as the ultimate source of guidance, relief, protection, support, and sustenance can easily lead to anxiety, depression, and a host of other mental illnesses. It has also been recently discovered that mental stress and emotional instability lead to impaired immunity, which in turn reduces the body's ability to fight diseases such as infections and cancers. In a recent study, it was found that the incidence of a certain type of cancer was highest among atheists when compared to other groups that believe in God.

\*\*Another legislation is the prohibition of alcohol consumption which is now known to increase the incidence of several cancers and inflammatory conditions of the alimentary tract, liver cirrhosis, pancreatitis, heart muscle damage, and various disorders of the central and peripheral nervous system.

Other examples of prohibited matters include:

\*\*excessive eating, which leads to excessive obesity, which carries a higher risk of cancer, coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, stroke, liver cirrhosis, and a variety of metabolic and endocrine disorders;

\*\*sexual promiscuity, which leads to a high incidence of venereal diseases, several types of cancers, infertility, and a variety of inflammatory conditions;

\*\*homosexual relations, which lead to a high incidence of cancers, infections, and the most frightening, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS);

\*\*sexual intercourse during the menstrual period, which could lead to certain infections and inflammatory conditions;

\*\*any matter which proves to be impure, bad, or harmful (al-khaba'eth). Cigarette smoking can certainly be included in this category with its known causative link to cancer of the lung and alimentary tract, bronchitis, emphysema, peptic ulcer conditions, and atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) with all its serious complications.

Examples of legislation enjoining health promoting matters include:

\*\*prayers, which improve the physical condition of the musculo-skeletal and cardiovascular systems, in addition to controlling anxiety, depression, and other emotional problems;

\*\*fasting, which helps in the alleviation of several peptic and metabolic disorders. Most recently, our research at the Akbar Clinic has also shown that Islamic fasting improves the immunity of the human body.

\*\*ablution and bathing, which help in the reduction of occurrence or transmission of infections;

\*\*breast feeding, which is now proven to be the best and most suitable method of nutrition for the developing newborn baby;

\*\*and many other injunctions.

## II. Guidance

The basic description of the Qur'an is that it is a guidance for mankind. It contains teachings related to personal behavior, attitudes and dealings, and guiding the individual in conducting his or her daily affairs. It also contains teachings which deal with general matters of the society, and which would lead to the achievement of general goals such as freedom, justice, and improved economic conditions. All of these lead to the making of a balanced, emotionally stable and successful individual who is able to make better decisions and realize better achievements in life. Such an individual will enjoy a much higher degree of well-being. As mentioned earlier, such as individual, with a better emotional set-up, will also have a better immune system, leading to a healthier physical condition.

## III. Direct Healing Effect

Since the time of its revelation, the Qur'an has been used by Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) and many of his followers as a direct healing modality by reciting it to the sick person. This is called "Ruqya." There were always many questions, however, regarding the nature of the healing power of the Qur'an.

How does the Qur'an achieve its healing effect? Is it achieved through its effect on the spirit and mind alone or does it have direct effect on the human body? Does the Qur'an act through the effect of its meaning on those who understand it or through the effect of the sound of its words on anyone who hears them? Does it work only on those who believe in it as the word of God or could it work on anyone, regardless of his or her faith? Which illnesses will be best affected by the Qur'an? Should the Qur'an be used by itself or should it be combined with other treatment modalities? And, how much of it should be used in each situation and for how long?

These and many other questions were the reason for the Qur'an research program at the Akbar Clinic, which was started in the early part of 1984. The purpose of this research program is not to prove that the Qur'an is the word of God because we know it is; and it is not to prove that the Qur'an has a healing effect, because we know it does. The purpose of this research

is to try to discover all or at least some of the details of the healing effect of the Qur'an so that it may be used as a regular treatment modality wherever applicable, and so that it can be presented as such to the medical community of the world. The research is still in its beginning stages, and this paper will present the results available at present.

### **Nature of the Research During its First Three Stages:**

Healthy volunteers were monitored for a variety of physiologic changes or responses while listening to recitations from the Qur'an.

### **Correlation Between Stress and the Monitored Physiologic Functions:**

Stress leads to increased muscle tension with increase of its electrical activity, increased sweat production resulting in increased electrical conductivity of the skin and vasoconstriction resulting in decreased blood flow of the skin, as well as decreased of skin temperature and increase of heart rate. Reduction of stress leads to opposite changes, i.e. relaxation of muscles with decrease of their electrical activities, decrease of sweat production resulting in decreased electrical conductivity of the skin, and vasodilation with improved blood flow of the skin, as well as rise of skin temperature and decrease of heart rate.

According to the available data, there is a definite and obvious stress reducing effect of the Qur'an on the various organs of the body, possibly through the central and autonomic nervous systems. The specific physiologic changes achieved by the Qur'an vary from one organ to another. These include relaxation of skeletal muscles with reduction of the electrical potential in monitored muscles; reduction of sweat production with decrease of electrical conductivity of the skin; relaxation of smooth muscles in blood vessels with vasodilation and increased blood flow and perfusion in tested areas; as well as reduction of heart rate and increase of skin temperature. These were only the functions which were measured in these studies. It is assumed that equivalent responses can be detected in other organs if measured, since these effects seem to be all triggered through the nervous system.

These physiologic effects of the Qur'an are achieved through two mechanisms. One is through the meaning of the Qur'an for those who understand it, even if it is conveyed through a translation to those who do not understand the Arabic text. The other mechanism is through the sound of the Arabic Qur'anic words, even in those who do not understand their meaning. Within the Qur'an itself, there appears to be a different effect of the different verses of the Qur'an, where there is more stress-reducing effect of verses promising reward (verses of Targheeb) and less stress-reducing effect of verses promising punishment (verses of Tarheeb).

The physiologic effects of the Qur'an which have been reported so far are all very basic and very real. The question may be asked: Is this all the Qur'an can do to the body? I feel that what we see now is only the tip of the iceberg, and is only the superficial manifestation of an otherwise much more profound effect on the human body. This is not to belittle the value of the effects we were able to document so far. The listed effects on skeletal muscles, on the cardiovascular system, and stress in general could contribute to the healing of a large number of conditions related to spastic muscles, vasopastic disorders, or for that matter any condition, be it psychologic or somatic, which is caused or aggravated by stress. However, I strongly feel that the matter is much more serious than that. There is good reason to assume that the Qur'an would have a favorable effect on the immune system of the body. This assumption is based on an already known fact that prolonged stress leads to impaired immunity, possibly due to the production of Cortisol or to some other neuroendocrine mechanisms. Conversely, the relief or reduction of stress is expected to improve immunity, and the Qur'an is already known to reduce stress and its manifestations. However, this assumed link between the Qur'an and improved immunity has to be proven, documented and standardized.

We should like to know whether it affects humoral immunity, or cell mediated immunity. How much of the Qur'anic treatment must be given in order to achieve such an effect, and how long will the effect last? These and many other questions will be the subject of the fourth stage of our Qur'anic research programs, inshAllah. If such a favorable effect on immunity is found to be true and could be made available for practical use, it will have a far-reaching effect in the prevention and healing of so many diseases, including infectious diseases, many chronic disorders, and cancer.

The question will arise, could illnesses be completely eliminated if we utilized the Qur'an to the fullest extent? The answer is no! We may be able to deal with illnesses in a better way: physically by controlling them better, and mentally, by tolerating them better.

After all, illnesses are also of some benefit to us! From an economic point of view, illnesses provide jobs for millions of health care professionals: doctors, nurses, aides, and all other support personnel. From a non-economic point of view, they provide a challenge to the afflicted person to see whether he will persevere, as well as to the treating person to see whether he will find the cure. Thus, illness may be viewed as a way of gaining forgiveness of one's sins, or as an investment to accumulate reward for the suffering one, or as an educational experience to make one feel how others suffer and to make one appreciate the blessings of good health.

At any rate, with the Quran, we can definitely deal with illness in a much better way. Indeed, in it there is healing and mercy for the believers.

## Bibliography

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