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## **Lumbar Spondylosis and Its Unani Management: A Review**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Lumbar spondylosis is a degenerative condition affecting the vertebral column in the lower back, leading to pain, stiffness, and reduced quality of life. Unani medicine, an ancient holistic healing system, offers a comprehensive approach to manage lumbar spondylosis. This review aims to explore the etiology, pathophysiology, clinical presentation, and Unani management strategies for lumbar spondylosis. Various Unani interventions, including pharmacological agents, dietary modifications, lifestyle changes, and regimental therapies, are discussed in detail. The utilization of Unani medicine in the management of lumbar spondylosis provides a valuable and integrative perspective in addressing this prevalent condition.*

**Keywords:** *Lumbar spondylosis, Unani medicine, Dietary modifications, Regimental therapies*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Lumbar spondylosis is a prevalent musculoskeletal condition that affects the lumbar spine, leading to pain, stiffness, and functional limitations. It is characterized by degenerative changes in the intervertebral discs, facet joints, and other structures of the lumbar spine [1]. The condition is commonly associated with aging, mechanical stress, genetic predisposition, and lifestyle factors. The management of lumbar spondylosis involves a multidimensional approach that encompasses various treatment modalities, including conventional medicine and traditional systems of medicine.

Unani medicine, also known as Greco-Arabic medicine, is an ancient system of medicine that originated in Greece and was later enriched by the contributions of Arab, Persian, and Indian scholars. It is based on the principles of humoral theory, which emphasizes the balance of four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) for maintaining health [2]. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in exploring the potential of Unani medicine in the management of various health conditions, including musculoskeletal disorders such as lumbar spondylosis.

The management strategies employed in Unani medicine for lumbar spondylosis include pharmacological interventions, dietary modifications, lifestyle changes, and physical therapies. Herbal remedies play a prominent role in Unani pharmacology, with various medicinal plants and formulations used to alleviate pain, reduce inflammation, and promote tissue healing [3]. Some commonly used herbs in Unani medicine for musculoskeletal conditions include *Commiphora mukul*, *Boswellia serrata*, *Zingiber officinale*, and *Withania somnifera*, which possess anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antioxidant properties [4].

Apart it, pharmacological interventions, Unani medicine emphasizes the importance of dietary modifications in managing lumbar spondylosis. Specific dietary recommendations aim to include anti-inflammatory foods and herbs while avoiding pro-inflammatory foods [4]. The integration of a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can provide essential nutrients and antioxidants to support tissue repair and reduce oxidative stress.

Furthermore, Unani medicine recognizes the significance of lifestyle changes in the management of lumbar spondylosis. Regular physical activity, including exercises that strengthen the core muscles, improve flexibility, and promote proper posture, is advocated. Lifestyle modifications such as avoiding prolonged sitting, maintaining good posture, and practicing proper body mechanics during daily activities are emphasized to prevent further damage to the lumbar spine.

Regimental therapies are an integral part of Unani management for lumbar spondylosis. Therapeutic modalities such as Hijamah (cupping therapy), Dalk (massage), and Riyazat (exercises) are employed to improve blood circulation, relieve muscle spasms, reduce pain, and enhance overall well-being [3].

This review paper aims to provide an overview of lumbar spondylosis and its Unani management strategies. By critically reviewing the available literature, this paper will explore the etiology and pathophysiology of lumbar spondylosis, the clinical presentation of the condition, and the role of Unani medicine in its management. The paper will also discuss the various Unani interventions including pharmacological interventions, dietary modifications, lifestyle changes, and physical therapies, and their potential benefits in the management of lumbar spondylosis.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This review paper utilized a comprehensive search strategy to identify relevant literature on lumbar spondylosis and its Unani management. A systematic search was conducted in electronic databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and relevant Unani medicine databases. The search terms included "lumbar spondylosis," "Unani medicine," "traditional medicine," "herbal remedies," "dietary modifications," and "physical therapies." The search was limited to articles published in English from the year 2000 to 2023. Apart from it, relevant books, book chapters, and authoritative sources were consulted to gather comprehensive information.

The identified studies and sources were critically evaluated for their relevance and quality. The inclusion criteria encompassed studies and literature that focused on the etiology, pathophysiology, clinical presentation, and Unani management strategies for lumbar spondylosis. The exclusion criteria involved studies that did not pertain to lumbar spondylosis or did not specifically address Unani management approaches.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Etiology and Pathophysiology**

The etiology of lumbar spondylosis involves a combination of genetic factors, age-related changes, mechanical stress, and lifestyle factors [5]. Genetic factors, such as collagen gene mutations, have been associated with intervertebral disc degeneration, while aging

contributes to the deterioration of intervertebral discs [6]. Mechanical stress from repetitive activities, poor posture, and obesity further accelerate degenerative changes.

**Clinical Presentation**

Lumbar spondylosis typically presents with chronic low back pain, stiffness, radiating leg pain (sciatica), and limited range of motion [7]. Neurological symptoms like tingling, numbness, and muscle weakness may also be present. Accurate diagnosis through clinical examination and imaging techniques is essential for effective management.

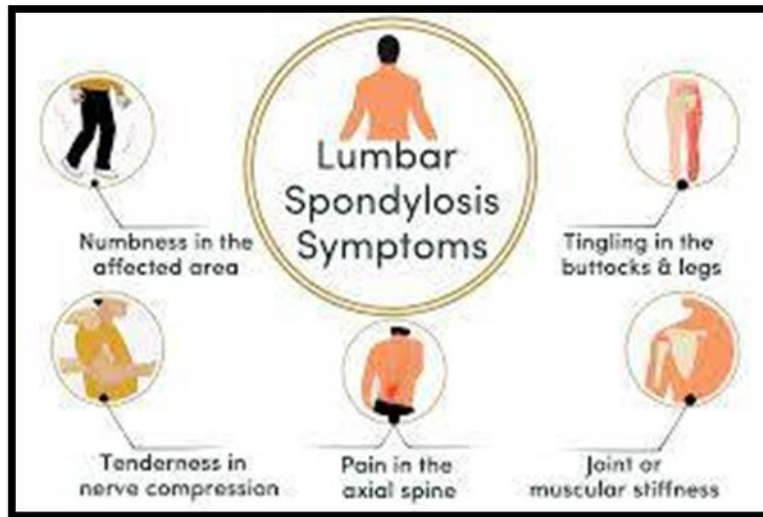


Fig 1: Lumbar Spondylosis Symptoms

**Unani Management of Lumbar Spondylosis**

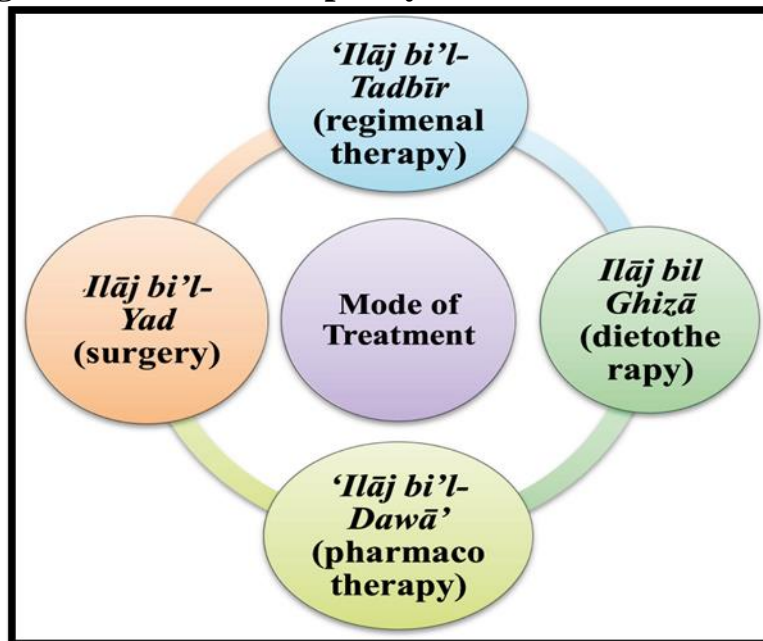


Fig. 2: Modes of Unani treatment

**Ilaj Bil Dawa (Pharmacotherapy)**

Various herbs and herbal formulations are prescribed based on their anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and muscle relaxant properties. Commonly used herbs include Shallaki (*Boswellia serrata*), Sonth (*Zingiber officinale*), Erand (*Ricinus communis*), Commiphora mukul,

Suranjan Shirin (*Colchicum luteum*) and *Withania somnifera*. These herbs help reduce pain, inflammation, and muscle spasms associated with lumbar spondylosis [8-9].

### **Ilaaj Bil Ghiza (Dietary Modifications)**

Unani medicine emphasizes the role of diet in maintaining overall health and managing musculoskeletal disorders. In the case of lumbar spondylosis, dietary modifications are recommended to reduce inflammation and support joint health. Unani physicians may advise patients to consume anti-inflammatory foods such as ginger, garlic, turmeric, and omega-3 fatty acids found in fish and flaxseeds. Avoidance of processed foods, excessive salt intake, and foods high in saturated fats is also recommended. [10].

### **Lifestyle Changes**

One important aspect of Unani management for lumbar spondylosis is the integration of lifestyle modifications. These modifications aim to improve overall well-being and reduce the impact of daily activities on the lumbar spine. The following lifestyle changes are commonly recommended in Unani medicine for individuals with lumbar spondylosis:

#### **Regular Physical Activity**

Regular physical activity is crucial for individuals with lumbar spondylosis. Engaging in appropriate exercises helps strengthen the muscles that support the spine, improves flexibility, and promotes overall spinal health [11]. Regular exercise also helps in maintaining a healthy weight, which reduces the stress on the lumbar spine.

#### **Core Strengthening Exercises**

Core muscles play a significant role in supporting the spine and maintaining proper posture. Strengthening these muscles helps stabilize the spine, reduce strain on the lumbar discs and joints, and alleviate pain associated with lumbar spondylosis [12]. Examples of core strengthening exercises include abdominal crunches, planks, bridges, and pelvic tilts.

#### **Avoidance of Prolonged Sitting**

Prolonged sitting can lead to increased pressure on the lumbar spine and exacerbate the symptoms of lumbar spondylosis. Taking short walks, stretching, or performing simple movements throughout the day helps relieve stress on the spine, improve blood circulation, and prevent stiffness [12]. Ergonomic considerations such as using supportive chairs and maintaining proper posture while sitting are essential to reduce the strain on the lumbar spine.

#### **Adoption of Proper Body Mechanics**

This includes techniques for lifting objects, bending, and carrying loads. Using the legs and the strength of the lower body to lift objects instead of relying solely on the back muscles can prevent undue stress on the lumbar spine [12]. Maintaining a neutral spine position while performing activities such as bending, reaching, or carrying heavy items can also help reduce the risk of injury and strain.

### **Ilaaj Bil Tadbeer (Regimenal Therapy)**

Regimenal therapies are an integral part of Unani medicine for managing lumbar spondylosis. Regimes, such as Hijamah (cupping therapy), Dalk (massage), and Riyazat (exercises), play a significant role in managing lumbar spondylosis [8-11]. These therapies improve blood circulation, relieve muscle spasms, reduce pain, and enhance overall well-being.

The integration of Unani medicine in the management of lumbar spondylosis provides a holistic and comprehensive approach. By addressing the underlying causes and symptoms of the condition, Unani interventions offer potential benefits in alleviating pain, reducing inflammation, improving mobility, and enhancing the overall quality of life for individuals with lumbar spondylosis.

Further research, including well-designed randomized controlled trials, is needed to validate the efficacy and safety of Unani interventions in the management of lumbar spondylosis. Integration of Unani medicine with conventional healthcare systems requires collaboration, standardization of practices, and adherence to evidence-based guidelines to ensure optimal patient care.

### **Ilaaj Bil Mawad (External Applications)**

External applications in the form of herbal oils, poultices, and ointments are used in Unani medicine to alleviate pain and inflammation [9]. These topical preparations are applied directly to the affected area and provide local relief. Commonly used external applications include Roghan-e-Surkh, Roghan-e-Babuna, Roghan-e-Zaitoon, and Roghan-e-Malkangni.

## **Integration of Unani Medicine into Conventional Healthcare**

Integration of Unani medicine into conventional healthcare systems is essential to ensure comprehensive and patient-centered care for individuals with lumbar spondylosis. Collaboration between Unani practitioners and conventional healthcare providers can lead to improved treatment outcomes, enhanced patient satisfaction, and a holistic approach to managing lumbar spondylosis. Two key aspects of this integration are the collaboration between practitioners and the standardization of diagnostic criteria, treatment protocols, and quality control measures.

### **Collaboration between Unani Practitioners and Conventional Healthcare Providers**

Collaboration and communication between Unani practitioners and conventional healthcare providers can lead to a more integrated and coordinated approach to patient care. By sharing knowledge, expertise, and experiences, both sides can benefit from a broader understanding of the condition and explore synergistic treatment strategies. Unani practitioners can provide valuable insights into holistic management approaches, including herbal remedies, dietary modifications, and lifestyle interventions. Conventional healthcare providers, on the other hand, can contribute their expertise in diagnostics, imaging, and surgical interventions when necessary. This collaborative approach ensures that patients receive the best of both worlds, combining evidence-based conventional treatments with the holistic principles of Unani medicine.

### **Standardization of Diagnostic Criteria, Treatment Protocols, and Quality Control Measures**

To ensure the effective integration of Unani medicine into conventional healthcare, standardization of diagnostic criteria, treatment protocols, and quality control measures is crucial. This standardization enables consistent evaluation and comparison of treatment outcomes, facilitates research, and enhances patient safety.

**a) Diagnostic Criteria:** Collaborative efforts should be made to develop standardized diagnostic criteria that can be used by both Unani practitioners and conventional healthcare providers. This allows for accurate and consistent identification of lumbar spondylosis, ensuring appropriate treatment interventions are implemented.

**b) Treatment Protocols:** Standardization of treatment protocols involves defining the recommended interventions, dosage, duration, and follow-up guidelines for Unani interventions. This standardization helps ensure uniformity in patient care, allows for better comparison of treatment outcomes, and facilitates the integration of Unani medicine into mainstream healthcare settings.

**c) Quality Control Measures:** Quality control measures are necessary to ensure the safety and efficacy of Unani interventions. This includes establishing quality standards for herbal preparations, ensuring proper sourcing and processing of medicinal plants, and implementing quality assurance protocols in the manufacturing and distribution of Unani medicines.

By implementing standardized diagnostic criteria, treatment protocols, and quality control measures, the integration of Unani medicine into conventional healthcare can be facilitated. This integration promotes a patient-centered approach, harnesses the strengths of both systems, and provides individuals with lumbar spondylosis access to a comprehensive range of treatment options.

## CONCLUSION

Lumbar spondylosis poses a significant burden on individuals and society, impacting the quality of life. Unani medicine offers a holistic and integrative approach to manage lumbar spondylosis, targeting the underlying causes and symptoms. The utilization of pharmacological interventions, dietary modifications, lifestyle changes, and physical therapies provides a comprehensive management strategy. Further research, including randomized controlled trials, is needed to validate the effectiveness of Unani interventions for lumbar spondylosis and facilitate its integration into conventional healthcare systems.

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