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Iranian Traditional Medicine: The Need for Evidences Provided by Modern Medical Research to Prove Usefulness

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Dear Reader,

The history of science is an attractive area of interdisciplinary knowledge and research in humanity. Medical sciences are among fascinating areas pertinent to the history of science. Iran, as an old civilized country has a long history of medical sciences, with celebrities appreciated and acknowledged worldwide. These icons have introduced themselves as elites who have sincerely contributed to the promotion of Pre- and post-Islamic civilization of Persia and related countries, specially in the turning points of historical crises [1].

It is not only the methods of medical practices of old Iranian physicians which is interesting to modern physicians. They have done their bests according to what they knew regarding the pathophysiology and clinical aspects of the diseases. Surely, if they were practicing today, they incorporated the modern findings of medicine to their methods. Flexibility toward accepting new logical findings of science is the main background of the scientific thinking. However, there are many aspects of their work as traditional practitioners that might be rediscovered. Case registration and presentation [2], teaching methods to next generations, pharmacological and surgical interventions [3] and professionalism issues are among their methods that have been gradually adopted to modern medicine. However, there

are many others of their attitude to be rediscovered and used to promote the quality of research and practice in medicine. One example is to see a patient as a whole organism with different physical and psychological needs. In their view, if a single need would be missed by the physician, even though others satisfied, the imbalance could emerge as a barrier to treating the patient. Another privilege over modern medicine is the extraordinary emphasis on traditional medicine on preventive measures. As a proven issue in the prevention of diseases including non-communicable diseases, nutrition is of extraordinary importance. However, their definitions about nutrients are different from our understanding of modern clinical nutrition.

To get the benefits of traditional medicine, we have to invest in studying the major elements of this medicine. Investigations in traditional medicine have to be guided by academic authorities to prevent misunderstandings and folkloric superstitions. Good evidence should be introduced at high levels through modern methods of research as clinical trials and cohort studies. Bioethical issues are of special concern in tailoring these studies. Without substantial evidence, the conflict of “Modern” or “western” medicine against “traditional” medicine will continue to cause misuse of traditional medicine by some people who want to make money and gain fame through the gap

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of knowledge and misguiding the patients who need treatment but lack knowledge.

To elucidate this concept, we had better remember the methods Chinese and Indians have implemented to introduce ginseng [4] and curcumin [5, 6] from their traditional medicinal herbs to the biomedical society worldwide. Till now, about 7300 articles have been indexed in PubMed in relation with ginseng. In the case of curcumin, this record is around 9330. These two herbals have been originated from the traditional medicine of those countries. However, the modern scientific work on these two herbs has converted traditional medicines of China and India to be the origin

of huge amounts of research, getting leadership and citations in these two fields and many economic profits by the production of these medicines.

We can make the same approach to different aspects of our traditional medicine. With sincere scientific work, we hope our traditional medicine would prove itself to be fruitful in answering some unanswered questions in health.

To contribute to this mission, Galen Medical Journal (GMJ) has published some peer-reviewed accepted papers in the field of traditional medicine, which has used modern tools of research in medicine.

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