



## Research Article

# Unveiling the Concept of *Nisyān* (Amnesia) in Unani Medicine- A Systematic Review

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Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p><b>Background:</b> The Unani perspective on <i>Nisyān</i> is rooted in humoral theory, which posits that cognitive dysfunction arises from an imbalance in the body's natural humors.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> To review the concept of <i>Nisyān</i> in the Unani context along with its management.</p> <p><b>Methods:</b> By exploring Unani classical books, NCBI articles, PubMed, Google Scholar, etc.</p> <p><b>Results:</b> The results showed that a vast literature on <i>Nisyān</i> was known in that ancient era as well and it advocates holistic treatment approaches to restore cognitive function.</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> The Unani concept of <i>Nisyān</i> emphasizes amnesia as a symptom of humoral imbalance, advocating a holistic approach through dietary and lifestyle interventions. This traditional framework offers valuable insights for addressing memory loss and enhancing overall cognitive health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ISSN No: 2583-7397</li> <li>▪ Received: 09-08-2024</li> <li>▪ Accepted: 22-09-2024</li> <li>▪ Published: 13-11-2024</li> <li>▪ IJCRM:3(6); 2024: 32-34</li> <li>▪ ©2024, All Rights Reserved</li> <li>▪ Plagiarism Checked: Yes</li> <li>▪ Peer Review Process: Yes</li> </ul>
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**KEYWORDS:** *Nisyān*, *Mizāj*, Amnesia, improvement of cognitive functions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**Global Prevalence of Amnesia:** Amnesia is often not reported as a distinct condition, as it typically arises as a symptom of other disorders such as dementia or brain injury. However, studies indicate that memory-related issues affect a considerable

segment of the population globally. For instance, a systematic review published in 2020 estimated that approximately 6-8% of older adults experience significant memory problems, including various forms of amnesia associated with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias <sup>[1]</sup>.

**Prevalence of Amnesia in India:** In India, the prevalence of memory disorders, including amnesia, is a notable concern. A study conducted in 2021 found that cognitive impairment was present in about 15% of the elderly population, with memory loss being a significant symptom reported [2]. Additionally, research suggests that traumatic brain injuries, which can lead to amnesia, are common in India, with estimates indicating that around 10 million individuals suffer from such injuries each year [3].

Amnesia, or *Nisyān* as it is referred to in the Unani system of medicine, is not just a modern-day affliction but a condition that has long been recognized and treated within traditional healing practices. Rooted in the ancient Greco-Arabic medical philosophy, Unani medicine views *Nisyān* as more than mere memory loss—it is a disruption in the balance of the body's vital humors. This imbalance, particularly in the cold and moist humor, *balgham* (phlegm), leads to cognitive impairment [3,4]. As the world grapples with memory disorders, Unani medicine offers a time-honored approach to understanding and treating amnesia that focuses on holistic healing, integrating dietary changes, herbal treatments, and lifestyle modifications.

### Understanding *Nisyān* in Unani Medicine

In the Unani framework, health is determined by the harmony between four primary humors: blood (*dam*), phlegm (*balgham*), yellow bile (*safra*), and black bile (*sawda*). Memory loss or *Nisyān* occurs when phlegm accumulates in the brain, obstructing the cognitive pathways and disrupting mental clarity [5]. Unlike the mechanical, biological view of modern Medicine, Unani physicians see amnesia as a reflection of deeper imbalances in both the body and mind, requiring a comprehensive approach to restore equilibrium.

### Pathophysiology of *Nisyān* (Amnesia)

#### 1. Dominance of *Balgham* (Phlegm) in the Brain

The excessive buildup of cold, moist phlegm in the brain leads to a slowdown of mental processes, clouding memory and thought [6]. The explanation of excess *Balgham* (phlegm) in the brain as the primary cause of *Nisyān* and its cold and moist properties impacting memory is based on the classical Unani texts, particularly in "*Kulliyat-e-Nafeesi*" which describes the theory of humors and the cognitive effects of imbalances, especially the role of phlegm in mental disorders [7].

#### 2. *Sawda* (Black Bile) and Its Impact

The role of *Sawda* (black bile) in causing cognitive disturbances like *Nisyān*, along with melancholic symptoms such as confusion and memory issues, is explained by Hakim Mohammed Azam Khan, in his famous book "*Akseer-e-Azam*" where *Sawda's* effects on the nervous system and memory are discussed in the context of Unani medicine's understanding of mental health [8].

#### 3. *Mizāj* (Temperament) Imbalance

The link between *Sui Mizāj* (imbalance of temperament) and cognitive disorders, including how excess cold and moist (phlegmatic) or cold and dry (melancholic) temperaments affect brain functions, is drawn from Hakim Ajmal Khan's, "*Haziq*", which provides a detailed description of the four humors and how

their imbalance causes various health conditions, particularly cognitive issues like *Nisyān* [9].

#### 4. Aging

With age, the body's ability to maintain balance diminishes, making memory loss more common as the humours fall out of equilibrium.

#### 5. Lifestyle and Diet

A sedentary lifestyle, combined with the overconsumption of phlegm-producing foods (e.g., dairy, cold drinks), can aggravate *Nisyān* [10].

#### 6. Emotional Stress

Mental strain and emotional turbulence can disrupt the harmony of the humours, accelerating memory loss.

### Symptoms of *Nisyān*

- **Memory Lapses:** Difficulty recalling recent events or familiar information.
- **Mental Confusion:** Struggling with clear thinking or decision-making.
- **Cognitive Decline:** Gradual loss of focus and problem-solving skills.
- **Physical Signs:** Cold extremities, lethargy, and headaches, often linked to phlegmatic excess [6].

### Unani Approach to Managing *Nisyān*

#### 1. Dietary Adjustments

In Unani medicine, diet is a cornerstone of treatment. To counter the cold, moist influence of phlegm, patients are encouraged to consume warm, dry foods such as ginger, black pepper, and honey. Foods that increase phlegm, like dairy and cold beverages, are restricted to minimize further mental fogging [6]. The recommendation of a light diet with warm and dry foods to counteract the cold and moist nature of phlegm is based on the dietetic principles mentioned in Hakim Ajmal Khan, "*Haziq*", which discusses the role of diet in maintaining humor balance and cognitive health [9].

#### 2. *Taqwiyat-e-Dimagh* (Strengthening the Brain)

The use of *Muqawwi Dimagh advia* (herbal brain tonics) like *Brahmi*, *Sankhaholi*, and *Unnab* to strengthen memory and cognitive function is found in "*Kulliyat-e-Nafeesi*", which emphasizes the use of medicinal plants for strengthening the brain<sup>7</sup>. *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*) is known for enhancing memory and concentration. Ginkgo biloba is Used to improve cerebral blood flow and sharpen mental clarity. *Ashwagandha* (*Withania somnifera*) is a calming herb believed to reduce stress and enhance mental function [10].

#### 3. Regimenal Therapy (*Ilaj bil Tadbeer*)

Traditional therapies such as cupping (*Hijama*) and massage help to stimulate circulation and eliminate excess phlegm. Regular moderate exercise, deep breathing, and meditation are also recommended to rejuvenate the mind and body [6].

#### 4. Lifestyle Modifications

Unani medicine stresses the importance of mental exercises to keep the brain active. Activities such as reading, puzzles, and social engagement are suggested to enhance cognitive function. Adequate sleep and stress management play vital roles in restoring mental clarity <sup>[10]</sup>.

#### Merging Ancient Wisdom with Modern Care

As modern medicine delves deeper into neurodegenerative diseases and cognitive disorders, the holistic approach of Unani medicine to *Nisyān* offers a refreshing complement. Its emphasis on the balance of body and mind, natural remedies, and lifestyle changes reflects an integrative strategy that can be harmonized with contemporary treatments for amnesia and memory loss.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Unani classical books were thoroughly explored, besides articles from NCBI, PubMed Google Scholar, etc.

## 3. RESULTS

The results reveal that extensive literature on *Nisyān* was present in ancient times, advocating holistic treatment approaches to restore cognitive function. As a result, this medical practice can greatly enhance the improvement of *Nisyān* in this current era as well.

## 4. DISCUSSION

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to investigate all available research on *Nisyān*; however, certain limitations were encountered due to the presence of literature in other languages and the lack of translated works. Recently, research has also focused on the efficacy of Unani herbal remedies in managing *Nisyān*. In a study conducted by J Jabeen, BA Ismail et al titled "Ethnopharmacological Profile of *Brahmi* (*Bacopa monnieri*)" *Brahmi* is shown as a brain tonic in Unani medicine, particularly its effectiveness against *Nisyān* (amnesia) <sup>[11]</sup>. Other study titled "Alzheimer's Disease in Perspective of Unani System of Medicine" by S Ahmer, SA Khan et al linking Alzheimer's Disease with *Nisyān* and detailing the underlying causes from a humoral imbalance view <sup>[12]</sup>. One more study titled "*Ustukhuddoos* (*Lavandula stoechas* Linn) - An Important Drug in Unani Medicine" explores *Lavandula stoechas*, known for its use in treating neurological disorders like *Nisyān* and its effects on cognitive health in Unani medicine <sup>[13]</sup>.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The Unani system of medicine offers a profound, time-tested understanding of *Nisyān* (amnesia) that goes beyond symptomatic treatment to address the root causes of cognitive decline. By restoring balance to the body's humours and nurturing mental health through diet, herbs, and lifestyle changes, Unani medicine provides a holistic blueprint for managing amnesia in today's fast-paced world.

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