

## Health Care Practice in the Islamic Ethos: A Brief Historical Review

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### Abstract

**Background:** The evolution of healthcare practices has been shaped by various cultural, spiritual, and philosophical traditions, with the Islamic civilization playing a pivotal role. The Golden Age of Islam marked a significant turning point in medical history, preserving and expanding upon Greek and Roman medical texts, integrating empirical observation with philosophical principles, and influencing modern medical practice.

**Methodology:** This critical review is based on a comprehensive analysis of primary and secondary sources related to the history of medicine, focusing on Islamic civilization's contributions. The review process includes systematic literature review, thematic analysis, and synthesis to trace the historical trajectory of medical practices and Islamic civilization's role.

**Results:** The Islamic Golden Age witnessed remarkable contributions from scholars like Rhazes, Ibn Al-Nafis, and Avicenna, laying the foundation for modern medicine. Ethical lessons from Islamic medicine, emphasizing honesty, empathy, and holistic patient care, have influenced global medical ethics. Contemporary practice continues to integrate Islamic principles, and there is an ongoing need for research and alignment with Quranic teachings.

**Conclusion:** The review reveals the rich legacy and enduring influence of Islamic health care practices on global medicine. It underscores the interconnectedness of medical science, ethics, spirituality, and cultural heritage within Islamic civilization, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of Islamic health care practices. This historical review provides insights that may guide a more inclusive and ethically grounded global healthcare system.

**Keywords:** Islamic Medicine, Ethical Lessons, Pioneers of Medicine, Holistic Healthcare, Historical Review.

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### Introduction

**Background:** The journey of medicine and healthcare is as old as humanity itself, tracing its roots through different epochs and various cultural, spiritual, and philosophical traditions. The Egyptian civilization's interlacing of medicine with religious mysticism, the humoral theory emphasized by the Vedic Indian and Greek cultures, and the dark periods of the Dark Ages all illustrate the complex evolution of medical practice.

However, the emergence of Islamic civilization, particularly during the Golden Age (8th to 14th centuries), signifies a watershed moment in medical history. This era saw Islamic scholars and practitioners take the helm of medical advancement, safeguarding, translating, and building upon the Greek and Roman medical corpus. The marriage of empirical observation and philosophical reasoning laid down what was to become the modern scientific methodology. Islamic medicine's contributions endure to this day, echoing not

only across various cultures but also providing a continuous refining process and fueling new avenues of exploration <sup>[1]</sup>.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this review is multifold:

1. **Historical Overview:** Mapping the evolution of medical practices, commencing with Ancient Egypt, journeying through diverse civilizations, and culminating in the present era, highlighting the milestones and specific contributions of Islamic civilization.
2. **Islamic Influence:** Scrutinizing the impact of Islamic ethos on medical ethics, practices, and methodologies, including an in-depth analysis of Islamic scholars and their enduring global influence.
3. **Contemporary Relevance:** Examining the continued applicability of Islamic medical principles in modern healthcare, understanding how these principles integrate into today's healthcare systems, and elucidate their role in comprehensive patient care.

### **Methodology**

The methodology for this review adopts a multifaceted approach, drawing upon a plethora of primary and secondary sources

related to medical history, especially the contributions from the Islamic civilization.

1. **Literature Review:** A rigorous systematic review was conducted to identify pertinent texts, studies, and scholarly articles that provide insights into the Islamic context's historical medical developments.
2. **Thematic Analysis:** This involved identifying and scrutinizing recurring themes, patterns, and principles within Islamic medical history, including the methods, philosophies, and unique practices intrinsic to Islamic healthcare.
3. **Synthesis:** The findings were synthesized to create a coherent narrative that charts the historical trajectory of medical practices, spotlighting Islamic civilization's pivotal role, and evaluating its persistent influence in contemporary times.

The critical review thus strives for a well-rounded comprehension of the progression of medical practices within the Islamic historical ethos, shedding light on the integral role of Islamic civilization in shaping global healthcare practices.

### **Results/Discussion**

Pioneers of Islamic Medicine

During the Islamic Golden Age, notable scholars substantially contributed to the field of medicine, intertwining Greek and Roman principles with Islamic values:

- Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariyya Al-Razi (Rhazes): Acclaimed as the father of pediatrics and a trailblazer in pharmacology. Al-Razi achievements include pioneering, scientific method, clinical trials and comprehensive studies on diseases such as smallpox and measles<sup>[1]</sup>.

- Ibn Al-Nafis: He was noted for his groundbreaking discovery of pulmonary circulation and far-reaching contributions to anatomy and physiology (i.e. human dissection and post-mortem autopsies) set the stage for modern medical practice<sup>[2]</sup>. He also published a comprehensive book on Medicine.

- Rufaida Bint Sa'ad Aslamiya: She is the first nurse, social worker and first female surgeon in the world.

- Abu Ali Al-Hussein Ibn Abdullah Ibn Sina (Avicenna): The "Canon of Medicine" by Ibn Sina, a monumental work in medical literature, has profoundly influenced various medical fields, including pharmacology, psychology, mental health and surgery<sup>[3]</sup>. His greatest published work is perhaps the Book

of Healing, a precursor to modern self-help book.

- Abu Al-Qasim Khalaf Ibn Abbas Al-Zahrawi (Albucasis): Greatest surgeon of Islam and designed many surgical instruments and introduce CATGUT

These scholars' innovative endeavors not only propelled medical practices during their era but also laid the groundwork for contemporary medicine<sup>[4]</sup>.

#### Ethical Lessons from History

The evolution of Islamic medicine bestows invaluable lessons in ethics and values that transcend religious boundaries:

- Moral Conduct: Islamic medical ethics accentuated values like honesty, empathy, confidentiality, and respect for patient dignity<sup>[5]</sup>, forming the foundation for modern medical ethics.

- Mind-Body Connection: The Islamic holistic approach to treating patients, encompassing mind, body, and soul, resonates with the burgeoning interest in integrative medicine today<sup>[6]</sup>.

- Patient-Practitioner Relationship: Trust, communication, and shared decision-making within the Islamic medical framework mirror modern principles of patient-centered care<sup>[7]</sup>.

These ethical lessons illustrate the core values ingrained in Islamic medical practices' ongoing influence on global medical ethics.

#### Future Perspectives in Islamic Health Care

Preserving and understanding Islamic medical history is pivotal for its continuous evolution and relevance:

- **Historical Recognition:** Acknowledging Islamic contributions to medicine nurtures identity and pride among Muslim healthcare professionals and informs a balanced historical narrative<sup>[8]</sup>.

- **Research Opportunities:** A pressing need exists for academic exploration of Islamic medical ethics, practices, and historical texts to enrich current medical curricula and foster patient care's holistic approach<sup>[9]</sup>.

- **Quranic and Sunnatic Guidance:** Future progress in Islamic healthcare must align with Quranic teachings and the Sunnah, guaranteeing that medical practice adheres to Islamic principles<sup>[10]</sup>.

This perspective accentuates the continuous importance of Islamic medical history and the prospects for growth and implementation in modern contexts.

#### Implementation in Modern Practice

The incorporation of Islamic principles into today's medical practice necessitates a comprehensive approach:

- **Belief Systems:** Aligning healthcare practices with Islamic beliefs promotes spiritual well-being and enhances patient satisfaction<sup>[11]</sup>.

- **Guidance and Prescriptions:** Implementing Islamic ethical guidelines ensures that medical practice maintains principles of compassion, justice, and respect for human dignity<sup>[12]</sup>.

- **Modeling and Motivation:** Encouraging Muslim healthcare practitioners to embody Islamic values fosters a nurturing environment benefitting both patients and practitioners<sup>[13]</sup>.

By infusing these principles, modern medical practice can reflect Islamic medical traditions' richness and depth.

The pursuit of healthcare excellence within the Islamic ethos is deeply intertwined with a profound commitment to ethics and patient-centered care. The review highlights that these principles have not only shaped the practice of medicine during the Islamic Golden Age but have also laid a robust ethical foundation that continues to influence contemporary medical practices across the

globe. It invites reflection on how a convergence of spiritual, ethical, and scientific principles could create a healthcare paradigm that is at once innovative, compassionate, and resonant with the complexities of the human condition. The lessons gleaned from this historical review signal a direction that may lead to a more inclusive, empathetic, and ethically grounded global healthcare system, thereby fulfilling the universal mandate of medicine to heal, comfort, and dignify human life. All these have been promoted in the contemporary works and practice of Prof. Dr. Umar Kasule, Prof. Dr. Aly Mishal, Prof Musa Borodo, Prof. Dr. M. Ihsan Karaman, Dr Ibrahim B. Suleiman, Dr M. Habeeb etc.

### Conclusion

The authors concluded the review as one that unveils a rich legacy of pioneering scholars, ethical teachings, future perspectives, and practical implementations resonating into modern times. It underscores the interconnectedness of medical science, ethics, spirituality, and cultural heritage within Islamic civilization. This synthesis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Islamic healthcare practices and their enduring influence on global medicine. The review not only shines a light on a chapter

often overlooked in Western narratives but also invites contemplation of how ancient wisdom can still be applied in modern contexts. This historical lens provides a platform for further exploration and integration of Islamic principles in modern medical education and practice, potentially leading to more empathetic, holistic, and culturally aware healthcare delivery.

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