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Islamic Healing

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Islamic Healing

Islamic healing is synonymous with Islamic spiritual healing that is based on the knowledge derived and extracted from the Qur'an and the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Qur'an (also spelled Qur'aan or Koran) is the sacred book of the Islamic faith. Islamic scholars suggest that the word *Qur'an* comes from the Arabic root of *Qara*, which means "to recite." As such, the word *Qur'an* means "recitation." The recitation and use of the verses and meanings from the Qur'an are a key source of Islamic healing. The other foundation of this kind of healing are the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, who was the last prophet of Islam. Other spellings of his name include Mohamed and Muhamed. His sayings are called *hadiths*. The Prophet's actions in life are called *sunnahs*. Islamic healing is based upon the hadiths and sunnahs of the Prophet and the Qur'an.

The Fabric of Islamic Healing

The overarching theme of Islamic healing lies in the concept of seeking, sending, and healing through *noor,* or divine light. More specifically, Islamic healing is aligned with the branch of Islam that is known as Sufism, and is sometimes referred as Sufi healing. Sufis (people who practice Sufism) believe they are the true proponents of true Islam as it was meant to be hundreds of years ago—complete peaceful devotion to Allah. Their key tenets are those of peace, tolerance, and nonviolence. They believe in the purification and beautification of the inner soul through prayers and devotion to God. It is this view and practice of Islam that are key to Islamic healing, and are found in the Qur'an and the books of hadiths.

Although types of treatment and healing vary from practitioner to practitioner, common elements include prayers, reciting the Qur'an, *zikr* (chanting Qur'anic verses), and meditation. The Qur'an states this in chapter 10, verse 57:

> O mankind! There hath come
> To you a direction from your Lord
> And healing for the (diseases)
> In your breasts—and for those
> Who believe, a Guidance
> And a mercy.

This verse from the Qur'an talks about direction, healing, guidance, and mercy for the believers of the faith. "Direction" here refers to the process of using divine medicines and supplications. Healing diseases addresses the issues of the body, mind, and spirit. "Guidance" refers to the prevention and relief. Finally, mercy (*rahmat* in Arabic) points to the *noor* of Allah in this verse. *Noor* is the fundamental power, essence, and energy that exists in all things in the material and the spiritual world as created by Allah.

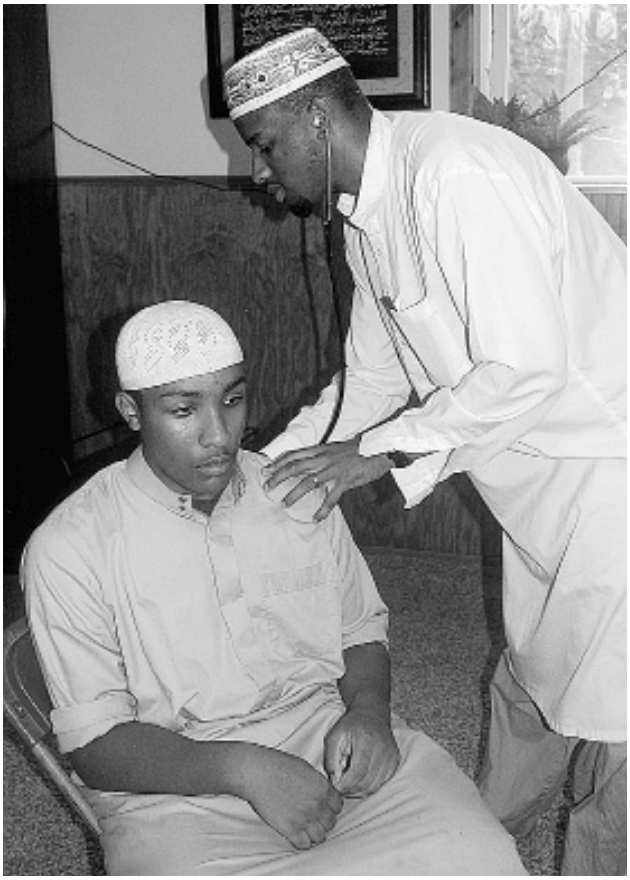
Illness in Islam

The Qur'an and the hadith include discussion about health, illness, and healing in many places, but do not provide a complete medical system. The Islamic cosmology of health and healing revolves around the spiritual and metaphysical aspects of human lives and living. Health and well-being is a collective and community-based concept in Islam, and so the moral structure of a community is a key indicator of health and wellness. Believers of the faith are supposed to follow the Prophet's sunnah and lead a life as guided by the Qur'an. The focus is on the believers' alignments with the will of Allah in their everyday living. Digressing from the teaching of the Qur'an and the hadith causes imbalances in life, and some of them manifest as physical or mental illness. Illness in Islam is a part of life as created by Allah. Muslims (people who follow the Islamic faith) do not consider illness as a punishment from Allah, rather as a test of faith from Allah. Illnesses are ways of purifying and realigning self with the teachings of Islam and washing away a person's sins.

Islam views mental illness as moral transgression or divine will. Some of the key elements of mental health values in Islam include family/group loyalty, piety, personal honor, dignity, reputation, and the belief that only Allah can decide what is right or wrong. Re-establishing and reconnecting intimacy with Allah is seen as a way of relieving mental stress. Therefore, illness is a state of disharmony in Islam. Here, physical, mental, and spiritual health are all intertwined into a straight path of following the preaching of the Qur'an and the Prophet. One key issue is that there is no concrete definition of what constitutes illness in Islam, and individual backgrounds directly influence this definition.

Healing and Treatment in Islam

Like any other religion, there is no such thing as a "typical Muslim." Muslims believe and practice their religion in combination with their geographic, cultural, ethnic, historical, racial, and linguistic backgrounds, among other factors. As such, just like the concept of illness, the concept of healing carries diverse meanings to diverse populations. Treatments vary widely among Islamic healers/practitioners. However, two facets are quite common in most practitioners—a basic physical examination and a metaphysical examination during the first consultation. Once a diagnosis is made, healing proceeds in either one of two ways. First, Islamic healing could work as a complementary process to conventional medicines (Western/biomedical model); or second, healing could work as a substitute for conventional medicines. Some experts in this field believe that Islamic healing works best when it works in unison with a traditional treatment process.



A doctor performs a health check on a participant at the Muslim Scout Summer Camp in Goshen, Virginia, July 2013. Islamic healing and biomedical healing are not competitors; they are more of a preference system for people who use them.

In the Qur'an, it is written that the Prophet Muhammad said that Allah has given mankind a cure for everything except death, and it is recommended that people seek a cure for their ailments. The history of Islamic medicine and medical researchers indicates seeking scientific solutions to health issues, such as everyday prescribed drugs by medical doctors. However, as alcohol and pork are forbidden in Islam, any medical drugs that use alcohol or pork as ingredients are restricted. Besides praying, reciting the Qur'an, fasting, *zikr,* and other practices, Islamic healing also recommends proper diet and lifestyle changes. Islamic healing also makes exceptions for people who cannot perform some duties (e.g., fasting) due to illness-related medicine routines. Some people believe in consuming water, honey, or dates as forms of medications that are "blessed" by religious leaders of societies. These sometimes work as a placebo for some people.

The biomedical (Western) model of health is a predominant model around the Islamic/Arab world. Islamic healing and biomedical healing are not competitors; they are more of a preference system for people who use them.

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See Also: Alternative and Complementary Medicine; Ayurveda, Yoga, and Meditation; Middle East; Religion and Spirituality.

Further Readings

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