

Comprehensive Description of Massage and Its Applications in Unani Medicine - An Updated Review

Dr. Manumula Rajaram¹, Dr. Manumula Komala², Dr. M. Ashok³,
Dr. Mohd Nazeer⁴, Dr. Makula Swathi⁵

^{1,2,3} Research Officer Unani, ⁴Senior Research Fellow Unani, National Research Institute of Unani Medicine for Skin Disorders (NRIUMSD), Hyderabad, India.

⁵ Medical Officer, Government Nizamia General Hospital, Charminar, Hyderabad

Corresponding Author: Dr. Manumula Rajaram

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ABSTRACT

Unani system is one of the oldest medical systems in use worldwide, both in India and globally. In Unani medicine, *Ilaj-bil-Tadbeer* or regimenal therapy is a crucial treatment paradigm. The vast majority of the aforementioned regimes can be utilized on their own or in combination with other medications. Regimenal therapies are physical forms of care in which the body's constitution is improved by eliminating unhealthy substances. Since ancient times, Unani doctors have been using a variety of regimens. The most widely known and frequently adopted regimen, massage serves both as curative and preventive functions in traditional medicine. Almost all ancient civilizations have employed *Dalk* (massage) to treat a wide range of ailments. Among the procedures of *Ilaj-bil-Tadbeer* (Regimenal therapy) for neurological and musculoskeletal disorders, *Dalk* is one of the most crucial regimens. *Dalk* was suggested by several Unani doctors as a prophylactic as well as a therapeutic strategy. One of the key components of Unani medicine's *Ilaj-bil-Tadbeer* (regimenal therapy) protocols for treating neurological and musculoskeletal conditions is *Dalk* (massage). Many Unani doctors employ *Dalk*, or massage, as a preventative

and therapeutic technique. This paper has examined the latest scientific reports on the use of *Dalk* (Massage) and provides a detailed updated description along with its application in various ailments.

Keywords: Massage; Unani Medicine; Traditional Medicine; Musculoskeletal; Neurological Disorders

INTRODUCTION

Unani medicine, which originated in Greece and spread throughout the ancient world, is used in India and other parts of the world. The Unani medical system uses a variety of therapies, including *Jarahat* (surgery), *Ilaj-bil-Tadbeer* (regional therapy), *Ilaj-bil-Ghiza* (diet therapy), and *Ilaj-bid-Dawa* (pharmacotherapy), to restore health. ^{1, 2, 3} In Unani medicine, *Ilaj-bil-Tadbeer*, or regimenal therapies, are primarily non-pharmacological methods that occasionally include medications for health promotion. Unani doctors have employed a variety of regimens, but the most popular and extensively used one is *Dalk* (massage), which serves both curative and preventive functions. The Arabic word *mass*, which means "to touch," or the Greek word *massein*, which means "to knead," are the sources of the word massage. Hippocrates used the phrase "anatripsis," which means

"to rub down." This term was translated into Latin as "frictio," which means "rubbing" or friction.³ The term "massage" was first used in French colonies in India between 1761 and 1773. It was first listed in a French-German dictionary in 1812. The Oxford Dictionary states that this word first appeared in English literature in 1879.⁴

Unani Concept of Massage

In Unani Medicine, *Dalk* is considered as the method where pressure or friction, kneading, rubbing, tapping, pounding, vibrating or stimulating against the external soft parts of the body with hands or other objects like rough cloth with or without oils, creams, lotions, ointments or other similar preparations.⁵ Hippocrates (460 BC–370 BC), the father of medicine, stated that "The physician must be experienced in many things, but assuredly also in rubbing, for things that have the same name have not always the same effects. For rubbing can bind a joint that is too loose, and loosen a joint that is too rigid, rubbing can bind and loosen". He prescribed a combination of massage, proper diet, exercise, rest, and fresh air etc. to restore the health.⁶

According to Ibne Rushd, massage is a type of exercise and used for the removal of waste metabolites of digestion (*Hazme Uzwi / Hazme Akheer*).⁷ Various Unani physicians advocated the use of different types of *Dalk* for the preventive as well as the curative purpose in various diseases.

Mechanism of Action of Massage

Table. 1 - On the basis of *Kaifiyat* (pressure exerted on the part)

S. No.	Type of the <i>Dalk</i> (Massage)	Definition
1.	<i>Dalk Sulb (Hard Massage)</i>	It is a type of massage where firm pressure is applied while stroking is done with hands.
2.	<i>Dalk Layyan (Smooth Massage)</i>	In this type, massage is done slowly and softly with hands, without exerting much pressure.
3.	<i>Dalk Moatadil (Moderate Massage)</i>	In this type of massage pressure is applied moderately between <i>Sulb</i> and <i>Layyan</i> .

Table. 2 - On the basis of *Kammiyat* (duration of massage)

S. No.	Type of the <i>Dalk</i> (Massage)	Definition
4.	<i>Dalk Kaseer (Prolonged Massage)</i>	This type of massage is done for longer duration.
5.	<i>Dalk Qaleel (Short Massage)</i>	This type of massage is done for shorter duration.
6.	<i>Dalk Moatadil (Moderate Massage)</i>	The duration of this massage is in between <i>Kaseer</i> and <i>Qaleel</i> .

According to Unani Medicine the mechanism of action of *Dalk* (Massage) is based on holistic approach of two fundamental concepts, such as,

1. *Tanqiyae Mawad* (Evacuation of morbid humour)

Tanqiyae Mawad means the resolution and excretion of morbid humors and excess fluids from the body, thereby maintaining the homeostasis in the quality and quantity of four bodily humors, which is actually responsible for the maintaining normal health.

2. *Imalae Mawad* (Diversion of abnormal humour)

Imalae Mawad refers to the diversion of the morbid fluids from the site of affected organ to the site where from it is easily expelled out from the body tissues. It also induces sedation, analgesia and increases blood circulation.⁸

Classification of Massage

In Unani system of medicine, various physicians have recommended different kinds of massage for different purposes. Precisely, Ibn-Sina and Ibn Rushd have classified *Dalk* as *Dalk Baseer* and *Dalk Murakkab* and they again divided the *Dalk Baseer* on the basis of *Kaifiyat* (quality) and *Kammiyat* (quantity) into six types.^{3,9}

Dalk Baseer (Single Massage)

On the basis of *Kaifiyat* (pressure exerted on the part) and *Kammiyat* (duration of massage) it is again classified into six types.

Dalk Murakkab (Compound Massage)

Dalk Murakkab is the combination of different types of *Dalk* and it is divided in to nine types [15, 16].

1. *Dalk Sulb Kaseer*
2. *Dalk Layyan Kaseer*
3. *Dalk Moatadil Kaseer*
4. *Dalk Sulb Qaleel*
5. *Dalk Layyan Qaleel*
6. *Dalk Moatadil Qaleel*
7. *Dalk Sulb Moatadil*
8. *Dalk Layyan Moatadil*
9. *Dalk Moatadil Moatadil*

Table. 3 - Apart from the above types of massage, there are also few other types of massage mentioned in classical Unani literature, such as,^{8,9}

S. No.	Type of the <i>Dalk</i> (Massage)	Definition
1.	<i>Dalk Khashin</i> (Rough Massage)	This type of massage is done with a rough piece of cloth. It draws the blood rapidly to the surface.
2.	<i>Dalk Amlas</i> (Gentle Massage)	This type of massage is carried out softly with hands or piece of cloth. It increases blood flow in the treated area.
3.	<i>Dalk Istedad</i> (Preparatory Massage Before Starting Exercise)	It is a special type of massage which is done gently in the beginning and then vigorously towards the end. It is done before exercise in order to prepare the body for undergoing different movements during exercise.
4.	<i>Dalk Isterdad</i> (Relaxing Massage)	It is also known as <i>Dalk Musakkin</i> . It is done towards the end of exercise and should be carried out gently and moderation preferably with oil.

Objectives of *Dalk* (Massage)

- To make the body firm, if it is loose and flabby; to soften it, if the body is hard and vice versa;
- To eliminate the *rutoobat* (fluid) from the body that is left after purgation;
- To develops the body as well as to improve and to maintain blood circulation of the particular organ;
- For dissolution of *riyah* (morbid gases) from the body;
- To remove the *barid mizaj* (cold temperament);
- For *imalah* (to divert the matter from one organ to another);
- Massage is done by using oil with an aim to retain the *rutoobat* (moisture of the body);
- Massage is done to relieve pain.
- By applying massage therapy one get relief from symptoms of anxiety, depression, stress, tension and insomnia.
- It is also found to be very effective for treating backache, headache, arthritis muscular pain post stroke management and some other forms of chronic pain.¹⁰

Time of *Dalk* (Massage)

Several eminent Unani physicians has emphasized more on the time of massage. It is very important to know when to perform the massage in order to get better effects and better results. Time of massage depends on the type and nature of massage required.

- It should be done in the morning.
- It can also be done in the evening, 3-4 hours post lunch
- Do not massage immediately after eating.
- Massage should not be done in empty stomach.

Time of massage also varies according to changes in weather, in *Mausam e rabee* (Spring season) and *Mausam e khareef* (Autumn) massage should be done at Noon, in *Mausam e Saif* (Summer season) massage should be done in the morning, and in *Mausam e Shitaa* (Winter season) in afternoon.¹⁰

Duration of *Dalk* (Massage)

In classical *Unani* literature, duration of massage is not exactly mentioned in terms of minute or hours, but it has been extensively discussed depending upon various conditions as follows:

1. Strength of organ.
2. Mizaj of organ to be massaged.
3. Type of oil used.
4. Mizaj of diseases.
5. Mizaj of a person.
6. Condition of diseases (acute, subacute, and chronic.)
7. Condition of patients (obese, lethargic, lean and healthy)
8. Seasons.
9. Desired outcome.
10. Temperature of massage cabin.

Duration of *Dalk* (Massage) may also depends up on several other factors, such as,

1. In healthy individuals with no pains just for relaxation: massage for 30 to 40 minutes;
2. In pains and aches: for longer duration;
3. In physically weak: 15-20 minutes in beginning slowly then increased to 30-35 minutes;

4. For those who are habitual to it, daily massage: 25-30 minutes;
5. Old people need massage for one hour or more.⁴

Physiological Effects of Massage

1. Increases Venous and Lymphatic Flow
2. Increases Arterial Blood Flow to the Muscle and Skin
3. Assists Removal of Secretions from Lungs
4. Assists in Removal of Wastes Products of Metabolism
5. Increases Excitability of Alpha Motor Neuron
6. Modulates psychosomatic arousal.
7. Breaks the soft tissue adhesions.
8. Accelerates various metabolic processes.
9. Increases gaseous exchange across pulmonary capillaries.
10. Increases activity of sweat and sebaceous glands.^{3, 11, 12}

Table. 4 - Therapeutic applications of Massage in various diseases ^{9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20}

Diseases	Areas to be massaged	Medicine used, if any
Hemiparesis	Affected side of the body	<i>Roghan-e-Qust</i>
<i>Laqwa</i> (Bell's palsy/ facial paralysis)	Face and cervical vertebrae	<i>Roghan-e-Qust</i> , <i>Roghan-e-Banafsha</i> , <i>Roghan-e-Khatmi</i>
<i>Tashannuje Muzmin</i> (Chronic Spasm)	Affected part of the body	lukewarm <i>Roghan-e-Banafsha</i> or <i>Roghan-e-Kaddu</i>
<i>Sarsaam</i> (Meningitis)	Scalp	With vinegar mixed with <i>Roghan-e-Banafsha</i> and milk
<i>Irqun Nasa</i> (Sciatica)	Portions inflicted with the symptoms	<i>Roghan-e-Kunjad</i> , <i>Roghan-e-Sosan</i>
<i>Sakta</i> (shock)	Whole body	Warm tempered oil with sulphur
<i>Sidr</i> (vertigo)	Limbs	With or without any oil
<i>Malikholiya</i> (Melancholiya)	Ribs and hands	Olive oil and <i>Roghan-e-Sosan</i>
<i>Muraaqiyya</i> (A type of Melancholiya)	Scalp	<i>Roghan-e-Banafsha</i> and <i>Roghan-e-Gul</i>
<i>Fasad-e-Zik'r</i> (Dementia)	Scalp	<i>Roghan-e-Khiri</i> and <i>Roghan-e-Sosan</i>
<i>Ikhtelaaj</i> (Fasciculation)	Face	<i>Roghan-e-Farbiyoon</i> and <i>Roghan-e-Aaqar Qarha</i>
<i>Sara</i> (Epilepsy)	spasmodic body parts, whole body, then lower portion of head and cervical vertebrae	Oils, water and emollients
<i>Mustarkhi Mafasil</i> (Flaccid Joints)	Flaccid Joints	<i>Roghan-e-Qust</i> , <i>Roghan-e-Zaitoon</i>
<i>Istirkhaa</i> (flaccidity)	Affected parts of the body	<i>Roghan-e-Sosan</i> , <i>Roghan-e-Nargis</i>
The Acute Management of Paralysis	Affected parts of the body	<i>Roghan-e-Qust</i> and <i>Aaqar Qarha</i>
<i>R'asha</i> (Tremor)	On the manifested parts	<i>Jund bedastar</i>
<i>Khidr</i> (Paraesthesia)	Diseased part	<i>Roghan-e-Farbiyoon</i> mixed with Castor oil and hot wax
<i>Tashannuje Haad</i> (Acute Spasm)	Affected parts of the body	<i>Roghan-e-Suddab</i> and <i>Roghan-e-Qisa-ul-Himaar</i>

<i>Nafsuddam</i> (Haemoptysis)	On the chest	<i>Roghan-e-Qisaa-ul-Hemaar</i>
<i>Zeequnnafas</i> (Asthma)	lateral parts of the thorax	<i>Roghan Naardeen, Roghan Gaar, Roghan suddab</i>
<i>Niqras wa Wajaul mafasil</i> (Gout & Arthritis)	Affected parts of the body	<i>Roghan-e-Sosan</i>
<i>Waja-ul-Unq</i> (Cervical Spondylosis, Frozen Shoulder)	Affected parts of the body	<i>Roghan-e-Shibbat, Roghan-e- Baboona and Roghan-e-Murakkab</i>
<i>Waja-uz-Zohar and Waja-ul-Warik</i> (Backache)	Upper and lower back	<i>Roghan-e-Joz Ma'sil, Roghan-e-Tukhm-e-Injeer, Roghan-e-Qurtum and Roghan-e-Qust</i>
Wrist Joint Pain /Carpel tunnel syndrome	Wrist joints	<i>Roghan-e-Haft Barg, R.babooba and R. murakkab</i>
In the Treatment of Pain	Affected parts of the body	With or without any oil
Pain Due to <i>Galba-e-Buroodat</i> (Excessive Cold)	Affected parts of the body	<i>Roghan-e-Nargis/Roghan-e-Sosan</i> mixed with <i>Dhatoora</i> oil
Pain Due to <i>Galba Haraarat</i> (Excessive Heat)	Affected parts of the body	<i>Roghan-e-Hina</i>
Acute Neurologic Pain	Affected parts of the body	<i>Roghan-e-Sosan, Roghan-e-Nargis and Roghan-e-Gaar</i>
Headache	Scalp and soles	<i>Roghan-e-Banafsha</i> , lukewarm oils
Generalized Weakness	Whole body	<i>Roghan-e-Zaitoon</i> and hot wax
Sexual Disorders	Male sexual organ	<i>Roghane Soosan, Roghane Zambaq, Roghane Nargis, roghane yasmin, Roghane Kheeri, Roghan Punba Dana with Aqar Qarha</i>
<i>Swollen Limbs</i>	Affected limbs	<i>Zoofa Khush'k, Kamoon and Sa'atar</i> in <i>Roghan-e-Naardeen</i>

CONCLUSION

Unani System of Medicine is providing effective health care facilities since an ancient time. *Dalk* is one of the most important regimenal therapies in Unani system of medicine. *Dalk* plays a vital role in evacuation of morbid material out of the body and normal health is restored. The main purpose of this article is to make people aware and update the knowledge about the *Dalk*. From the above discussion, it can be concluded that *Dalk* plays an important role in maintaining normal health, and it is the best preventive and a curative regimen. *Dalk* removes toxins from the body and enhances the blood circulation and there by helps in restoration of health. *Dalk* is used effectively for the management of diseases like musculoskeletal and nervous disorders where medical treatment is of less value. However, *Dalk* is a physical method of treatment in which the general constitution of the body is maintained by removing the waste products of the body. The greater use and greater visibility of

massage therapy has also motivated more research on effectiveness and means of use. Yet, often, knowledge from both clinical experience and research has continued to remain diffusely known and obscure. It can be a research effort in itself to determine the best available knowledge on an application of massage therapy or on massage in the presence of comorbidity. Clinical trials show its efficacy in various diseases of different system, still more studies should be conducted to validate its mechanism of action by modern parameters.

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