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Review Article

**THE VIEWPOINT OF IRANIAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE
(PERSIAN MEDICINE) ON OBESITY AND ITS TREATMENT
METHODS**Elham Parsa¹, Morteza Mojahedi², Armin zareyan³, Mahmood Khodadoost^{4*}¹ Department of Traditional Medicine, School of Traditional Medicine, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, 1516745811, Iran.² Department of Traditional Medicine, School of Traditional Medicine, Babol University of Medical Sciences³ Department of Public Health, School of Nursing, Aja University of Medical Science, Iran⁴ Department of Traditional Medicine, School of Traditional Medicine, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, 1516745811, Iran.**Abstract:**

Overweight, obesity and the accumulation of excess fat in the body are signs of chronic imbalance between the amount of food taken and the amount of energy consumed. Diet and exercise play an important role in weight loss and success requires changes in behavior. Taking weight loss medicines along with lifestyle changes may be beneficial for some patients. because of high costs and significant side effects, these are not highly effective on the treatment of obesity. Therefore, medicines and other methods with less complications and greater effectiveness are needed for obesity and overweight treatment this.

In this study after reviewing the Iranian Traditional Medicine books and the modern books and articles, since traditional medicine has a particular view of the problem of obesity, the definition of obesity and its treatment, have been expressed in traditional medicine.

In traditional medicine, obesity has been cited as "Samane mofrat"; in this medicine, treatment for obesity is based on lifestyle modifications; orders are given for How to live; eating and drinking; physical activity; sleep and awakening; relaxation; bathing; wearing clothes; etc. so by modifying the lifestyle; in case of need for medicine therapy; we can get an appropriate response from the treatment; reduce the side effects of the medicines and, in the long term, treat the patient.

Compared to synthetic medicines, very few studies have been conducted on the effectiveness and safety of other weight-reducing treatments, and for this reason no one can be definitely recommended for the treatment of obesity and overweight. Therefore, conducting further research on the effectiveness and safety of these treatments is considered necessary

Key words: *obesity, temperament-Iranian Traditional Medicine [Persian medicine]*

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INTRODUCTION:

Overweight, obesity and the accumulation of excess fat in the body are signs of chronic imbalance between the amount of food taken and the amount of energy consumed [1,2]. The prevalence of overweight is rising at an alarming rate in virtually all societies and age groups around the world. Overweight and obesity have become one of the most important preventive factors that have caused diseases and death. The risk of developing diseases such as arthritis, pulmonary disease, sleep apnea, type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, thromboemboli, Gallbladder disease, reflux, non-alcoholic liver steatosis, gout, infertility, cardiovascular disease, urinary incontinence, cataract and cancer, is increased proportional to overweight intensity in men and women [1,3-5]. The body mass index [BMI] is the weight in kilograms divided by square of height in m², which is in the normal state is 18.5-24.9 kg / m², if the index is greater than 25; it is overweight and, if it is more than 30 it is obesity [1].

Pathophysiology of obesity and overweight involves the interaction of various genetic, metabolic, environmental and behavioral factors. The various causes associated with obesity include: the environmental factor: the lifestyle and the amount of calories that plays an important role in children gain weight, computer games, sleep: sleep disorders and apnea cause obesity due to insulin resistance, medicines, viruses: like adenoviruses, toxins, genetic factors, and endocrine: like cortisol disorders; hypothyroidism; growth hormone deficiency [6].

Diet and exercise play an important role in weight loss [7][1] and success requires changes in behavior. Taking weight loss medicines along with lifestyle changes may be beneficial for some patients. These medicines, as well as changes in lifestyle are recommended for patients with body mass index of more than 30 kg / m² without diseases associated with obesity and overweight or body mass index equal to or greater than 27 kg / m² with diseases associated with obesity and overweight. Usually, if patients do not lose weight by 1 pound [0.5 kg] per week after 6 months of lifestyle interventions, weight loss medicines can be tested. If patients do not lose weight by 4 pounds [2 kg] in the first 4 weeks after starting the medicines it is highly unlikely that they will respond to medicines. Synthetic medicines of orlistat and sibutramine have been approved for long-term use in the treatment of obesity and overweight, which, in addition to high costs and significant side effects, these are not highly effective on the treatment of obesity. Therefore, medicines and other methods

with less complications and greater effectiveness are needed for obesity and overweight treatment.[1]

Given that traditional medicine of Iran is one of the richest medical schools in the world and it has a deep root in the vast Iranian-Islamic civilization, and considering the diversification and distribution of herbal medicines in Iran, and considering the special view of traditional medicine to the problem of obesity, methods of treatment of obesity have been studied in Iranian traditional medicine.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

In this study, after reviewing the Iranian Traditional Medicine texts and books [such as al-Qanun fi al-tib; Tohfa al-momenin; akbari teb and etc.], the modern books (such as the book of Nutrition and Supplementary Medicine by Dan Lauon Jay and etc.) and articles, since traditional medicine has a particular view of the problem of obesity, the definition of obesity and its treatment, methods of treating obesity have been expressed in traditional medicine.

In traditional medicine, obesity has been cited as "*Samane mofrat*"; in this medicine, treatment for obesity is based on lifestyle modifications; orders are given for How to live ; eating and drinking; physical activity; sleep and awakening; relaxation; bathing; wearing clothes; etc. so by modifying the lifestyle; in case of need for medicine therapy; we can get an appropriate response from the treatment; reduce the side effects of the medicines and, in the long term, treat the patient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

In the Iranian Traditional Medicine, the body consists of four elements [*akhlat, humours*]:

1) Blood that is hot and wet; 2) Yellow Bile that is hot and dry; 3) Phlegm that is cold and, and 4) Black bile [Soda], which is cold and dry [8]

Due to the combination of these elements, the organs of the body are formed, and the organs of the body are characterized by a specific temperament [*mizaj*] relative to the dominant element involved.

The belief is that the sum of these organs' temperament and some other influential factors in the fetal period provides each person with a particular temperament is called *Jebli* or *Molodi*.

In general, any organ can be small or large in size. If the organs, and especially the entire body, are grown in three dimensions, namely length, width, height, is said to be growth. The age of growth is up to the age

of 30. If the organs or body are enlarged in one or two directions, it is called increasing body volume. If the increase in body volume is without increasing the matter, i.e. without increasing weight, is called "*Takhalkhol*" and if it is accompanied by weight gain, it is called "obesity".

To increase body volume, whether it is accompanied by weight gain or not, the body needs the "wet quality". To reduce the body volume, without weight loss, the body needs the "cold quality", and in order to reduce the body volume by weight, the body needs the "dry quality".

In traditional medicine, obesity has two types: allowed and not allowed obesity. The purpose of allowed obesity is to increase the body weight in such a way that it does not interfere with the normal work of the body, and not allowed obesity or "*Samane mofrat*" is an increase in weight that disrupts the normal work of the body that causes the onset of many diseases, including cardiovascular, respiratory, diabetes, sexual dysfunction, infertility, and so on[9]. For each person, two types of "normal weight" and "fitness weight" are considered. In fact, the normal weight of one person may be obesity in another person, or "fitness weight" in a person is the normal weight and in another is an abnormal underweight[9,10].

The Iranian Traditional Medicine experts believe that the normal weight of each person, regardless of age group or type of skeletal system, is a weight in which the weight of all organs of a body performs its own work well and with full force and if the body deviates that weight, that is, weigh less or more, the work is defective or changes. The first state is weight loss and the second one is referred to as weight gain or obesity.

A person of normal weight should have at least the following symptoms:

- Lack of feeling heavy during physical activity;
- The feeling of inner joy due to natural work of natural tracts;
- The existence of sexual joy that represents the perfection of health.

Written numbers in fitness tables as well as proposed calculations from research centers are accepted to the extent that they fit with signs of normal or health weight, but whenever such numbers and calculations cause defects in symptoms of weight, from the view of Iran school of medicine is unacceptable, and the person who asks for health should try to reduce weight or weight gain until symptoms of normal weight appear[9].

According to Iranian Traditional Medicine experts, obesity has 2 forms:

Obesity caused by the production and accumulation of fat; and

Obesity caused by the production and accumulation of muscle.

If a person obesity is due to the increase in muscle he is "*Lahim*", and if a person obesity is due to the increase and accumulation of fat in the body, he is "*Samin*"[9,11]

In order to make a person thin, we first need to determine which obesity is, fat or muscle and in the next step we should determine what the cause of obesity is.

Both types of obesity share a certain quality, namely, "being wet", because the temperament of the muscle is hot and wet; and the temperament of the fat is cold and wet. So both have "being wet" in common. It is clear that the wet quality contributes to the obesity of the body, and if we can fight it, we have taken an effective step in losing weight.

The Iranian Traditional Medicine experts have mentioned the following eleven causes:

1) Lack of mobility and austerity i.e. exercising, excess body moisture. Therefore, immobility or reduced mobility can increase the moisture content of the body.

Mobility and exercise cause reducing the body's moisture that is caused by nutrition and liquids' intake and preventing the accumulation of liquids in the body. When someone fails to complete daily exercise, or completely quits, he becomes obese due to the lack of moisture reduction and the accumulation and increase in the body.

2) Plenty of sleep

Another factor of increased moisture in the body is long sleep. Sleep causes reducing the body temperature and, like the first cause, reducing the secretion and increases the moisture content of the body[9].

3) Accumulation of waste matter

The body excessive and waste matter is removed from the natural tracts. The matter, such as urine, sweat, menstrual bleeding in women and etc. should be removed from the body. Also, a person who is giving blood if delayed in this affair, is also subject to its accumulation and increase in the body[9][10].

4) Excessive yellow bile excretion

Bile is one of the factors that causes body temperature and moisture reduction. The presence of the necessary amount of bile in the body causes the

body to reach a level of temperature that can naturally cause reducing moisture. In the event of excessive excretion of bile from the body, such as excessive use of bile marrow or serrate, its temperature and drying power is reduced, resulting in increased moisture production and making the body moist.

5) Overeating and overdrinking

The food eaten does not have the nutritional quality until it becomes a blood element.

If food exceeds the amount of food reduced, the wet quality of the blood element increases the body's moisture. In the case of overeating, it is digested incompletely and causes appearing matter that its reduction for the body is not simply possible. This leads to higher moisture levels in the body. Therefore, intake of food beyond the body's needs, if well digested, leads to a higher moisture and, if digested badly, also causes another increase in the body moisture[9].

6) Eating plenty of foods and fruits

Excessive consumption of moist foods and fruits [such as cucumber and lettuce] results in moisture accumulation in the body. This is due to the fact that the moisture reduces temperature and, as mentioned, the reduction in temperature has always reduces the moisture reduction. For this reason, moisture accumulates and increases in the body[9,10].

7) Moderate bath

A moderate bath that does not have high temperature, does not excite and reduce the body moisture. In this case, only the surface of the body becomes moist by the moderate bath. This will prevent reducing moisture and increase it in the body. If moderate bathing is after a meal, it increases moisture accumulation in the body.

8) Use of water bath [Abzan]

Sitting in water that is neither hot nor cold to extremes, especially in temperate weather, increases the body's moisture due to the body's surface moisture and lack of moisture reduction.

9) Cold weather and compress

Other factors that cause higher level of body moisture is the cold weather and compress. These factors cause closing the skin pores. When the skin pore is closed, which is one of the ducts of the body moisture excretion, it actually holds the moisture in the body and prevents its excretion. Therefore, the body moisture increases.

10) Moderate weather and compress

Moderate weather and compress also increase the body's moisture. This is due to the fact that moderate temperature causes increasing moisture.

11) Moderate joy

Observing the above points is necessary to prevent moisture accumulation and reduce the moist quality. But for the reduction of existing moisture and waste of the body, it is necessary to reduce and dry the moisture.

Now that we have listed the causes - the most important factors of obesity - we need to know the anti-case i.e. dry the moisture so that we can use it as anti-moisture.

The cases of dry the moisture like the causes of moisture are 11 cases as follows:

1) Move to extreme

Excessive mobility and exercise, due to the high temperature, causes reducing moisture. When moisture is reduced in the body, wetness is also reduced and the physical causes of fatty and muscular obesity are reduced.

2) Sleeplessness to extreme

Severe sleeplessness is one of the factors that reduce the body moisture. Sleeplessness causes the brain discomfort and overload and cause drying the body, by temperature, and reducing the moisture content of the body.

3) Excessive exhaustion of the body

Vomiting is the excretion of the body matter. Sexual intercourse with semen excretion, sweating, menstruation blood, bloodletting, blood giving and etc. are considered as exhaustion of the body. Excessive exhaustion of the body would cause dryness of the body.

4) Avoid food to extremes

The body's nutrition depends on blood element. Blood element comes from eating a variety of foods. On the other hand, the element is rapidly reduced, because it is hot and wet and the body needs new foods. If the food is not provided, the food in the body will be permanently consumed by the body, and as a result, the moisture stored due to the presence of blood element in the body will be reduced and cause dryness of the body.

5) Dry foods and medicines

Due to the lack of moisture in dietetic foods and dry spices, the moisture is not added to the body, but the use of dry foods and medicines reduce the body moisture.

6) Plenty of anger and thought

Sensual movements such as anger and thinking if reach the extreme, cause the heat and reduce the moisture of the body.

7) Cold to extreme

If the coldness in an organ reaches to a degree that afflicts the organ in cold malady, the organ is unable to absorb food and the lack of absorption of food by the organ causes dryness.

8) Wash with some water like Sulfuric waters (*Abhay Ghabez*) drying the temperament

Washing with this water drying the temperament, this, in addition to closing the skin pores, causes in the organs' contraction, disturbs the nutrition of the organs and dries them.

9) Blockage [*Soddeh*]

Complete or incomplete blockage in the tracts causes dryness.

10) Watm balm [*Zemade garm*]

11) Being in the bathroom for a long time Being in the bathroom for a long time causes excessive sweating and reducing the moisture and dryness.

One of the fundamentals of traditional medicine is that it treats diseases by anti-treatment. Obesity is either due to an increase in muscle or fat. The muscle temperament is hot and wet and the fat temper is cold and wet. So, in muscular obesity, measures should cause coldness and dryness, and in fatty obesity measures should cause heat and dryness[9].

Five measures have been proposed in the treatment of obesity in traditional medicine; these measures include: 1) food measures; 2) exercise; 3) comfort removal; 4) use medicine; and 5) reinforcement[9][12].

Choosing the right food is the first step in the success of the slimming program. Those who have muscle obesity should avoid all hematopoietic foods [hot and wet], but those who have fat obesity should avoid cold and wet food[9].

Obese people daily eat normally at least three times, so there is no chance to consume their stored mucus in the body. This will result in no weight loss in these people. Refusing to consume foods that are *Balgham* [*Phelegma*] generators [cold and wet] is essential for these people.

Other cases that should be considered in determining the type of food is the amount of food that is required according to the needs of the body of each person at different times, such as observing the year seasons, as well as the type of physical activity, exercise, and etc. appropriately to help the person in the process of weight loss. So, when choosing foods, you should pay attention to the amount of food nutrition from the aspect of high, low or moderate level.

Other things to keep in mind when choosing food is the stomach state and volume and eating habits[9]. In the case of a diet, a person needs to reduce the intake of food[12][13] and take low quality and high quantity, such as *Khoushkaar* and oat bread[13][14].

Eating very fatty food also helps lose weight because the person quickly becomes full[13].

Continuing to eat hot, dry, salty and sour foods and using hot and dry spices also causes weight loss. It is recommended to use a meal for 24 h and thirst and hunger as well as the use of hot water instead of cold water also help become slim[13][12][14].

Exercise in Traditional Medicine

"*Riazat*" or exercises are physical movements that cause increasing the body temperature. lack of comfort, plenty of tiredness, intense toes and pre-meal movements in the sun, recommended[12][13][14].

Physical movements include two movements:

- 1) General movements that make all the organs of the body slim;
- 2) Specific movements that make a part of the body organs slim.

The purpose of general physical exercise is to reduce the volume of the organs of the body. General physical exercises sometimes reduce volume and sometimes lead to weight loss.

Those who do not have the habit of exercising should initially start exercises in less time and frequency, and as they gain more talent in the body, they will add to the time and frequency of these movements so that they can do it for a long time and benefit from it. Among them, we have:
Skip, swim and walk.

The purpose of doing certain exercise is to make the abdomen and hips small. Always pay attention to minimizing the size and size of the abdomen and hips in the treatment of obesity, and once the size of these organs becomes sufficiently small, weight loss is achieved to reach the normal weight of the person. Treatment for obesity in the abdomen and hips is very difficult because of the distance from the body's temperature centers, such as the heart, liver and stomach. If an organ is far from the temperature centers, it requires more time and energy to become hot.

To get better results from specific exercise, the use of sudorific gels such as *Arnebia euchroma* [*Abukhalsa*] gel is recommended around the area and closing it with cellophane.

Exercise for the abdomen while standing and lying, walking with great step and going up the steps are special exercises[9].

Other recommended cases for weight loss are dry bath when hungry and frequent bath, especially with less water and bath before meals, and regular massage, as well as rubbing the oils that create sweat, such as dill and galanga oil are recommended. It is recommended to remove comfort, not comfortable, even wear rough dress, low sleep and sleep on tough floor. The use of laxative and diuretic matter for drying and sweating, as well as sadness and thought, and anger are also the causes of slimming[13,12,14]. Other cases that help slimming is moving to areas with high temperature. To become slim in the winter and summer, do not cover yourself, do not wear so many clothes in the winter so tiny skin pores are closed, the skin becomes stiff and shaking occurs when the body cannot accept food. Do not cover the body in the summer, so the body of the person who is fat under the sun is reduced and becomes thin[13].

CONCLUSION:

Obesity and overweight are global epidemics. Certified synthetic medicines for the treatment of obesity overweight have little effect, and have important side effects that limit their intake. Alternative treatments such as the use of medicinal herbs, traditional medicine, and etc. are recommended for patients with obesity or overweight that the treatments for many patients replace the unsuccessful attempts to lose weight using more conventional treatments. These patients are often discouraged by previous failures and are likely to use these treatments as combined with other treatments[1]. Compared to synthetic medicines, very few studies have been conducted on the effectiveness and safety of other weight-reducing treatments, and for this reason no one can be definitely recommended for the treatment of obesity and overweight. Therefore, conducting further research on the effectiveness and safety of these treatments is considered necessary.

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