

# Iranian Traditional Medicine as a Science Not Folkloric Medicine

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## Dear Editor,

Replying message to the interesting article “Viewpoints of patients in Qazvin towards complementary and alternative medicine published in biotechnology and health science”, which discussed the tendency of people to use three methods of complementary and alternative medicine including: Acupuncture, homeopathy and phlebotomy as a method of therapy in the Iranian traditional medicine (ITM) in 2012 in Qazvin, Iran (1); there are some important points which should be necessarily reminded:

What is ITM?

ITM is a medical school which has appeared in three forms: The first is folkloric medicine, the second is medicine of herbalists and bonesetters and the third is scientific medicine. Now, in Iran, the first and second forms of ITM are dominant and they are introduced as ITM whereas real ITM is the third form of it, scientific or academic ITM. Unfortunately, not only ordinary people but also many physicians and researchers think that ITM is the same as folkloric medicine and/or medicine of herbalists and bonesetters while the truth of ITM could be found in its valid references such as canon of medicine by Avicenna and Al-Havi by Rhazes. Many improvements in folkloric medicine and medicine of herbalists and bonesetters are different from those of scientific ITM anyway (2). In Iran since a few years ago many ITM centers are established that work on the basis of the first two forms of ITM and attract many fans even among some physicians who have no knowledge about the third form of ITM. In 2009 ITM colleges formally started teaching academic ITM in Tehran, Iran, as a result of which, legal and scientific ITM clinics were inaugurated in Tehran and then in other cities of Iran. However, nonscientific ITM centers are still active and practitioners work there without any legal and scientific basis.

Principles of treatment according to academic ITM:

According to ITM, treatment begins with nutritional orders. In the second step, drugs are used traditionally or in combination form; in the third step, other treatments such as surgery, massage, cupping, phlebotomy, etc. named as manual tasks may be used. Therefore, the third step is the final option that physician chooses. In ITM, there are very limited indications to drain blood from

body through cupping, phlebotomy and leech; in addition, draining blood is a manual task which is the last line of treatment. Phlebotomy is an aggressive method of bleeding in which a vein splits and a lot of blood drains out. Cupping is less aggressive than phlebotomy in which some superficial capillaries are scratched and a little blood drains out (3). Hippocrates said that blood is the most important element in body; therefore it should never be drained out from body except in some exceptional circumstances (4).

Traditional medicine treatment centers in Qazvin:

Despite the academic ITM, cupping is a very common method of therapy in nonscientific forms of ITM and even it is the first line of treatment however phlebotomy is done less than cupping. In Qazvin, unscientific traditional medicine treatment centers were established approximately 10 years ago and they are still actively working. In 2013, the first academic treatment center based on ITM was opened in Booali medical clinic where no cupping or phlebotomy is done yet!

It seems that some researches about ITM, are done on the folkloric form of it that give readers no correct and actual information about academic ITM which is based on viewpoints of Hippocrates, Rhazes, Avicenna and other famous scientists on ancient medicine; therefore, improving the knowledge about academic ITM and its valid and original references such as Canon of medicine, Al-Havi, Al-fosool, etc., among researchers is necessary.

## References

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