



Unani Management of Pediatric Iron Deficiency Anemia with Sharbat Foulad – A Case Report

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ABSTRACT

Background:

Iron deficiency anemia is common in children. In Unani medicine, it corresponds to Fasad-e-Khoon or Qillat-e-Khoon and is managed with iron-rich tonics like Sharbat Foulad.

Case:

An 8-year-old male presented with fatigue, poor appetite, mild pallor, and reduced concentration. Baseline Hb was 9.6 g/dL, ferritin 12 ng/mL.

Intervention:

Sharbat Foulad 10 mL twice daily for 8 weeks, with dietary and lifestyle advice.

Outcome:

At 4 weeks, appetite and energy improved (Hb 10.2 g/dL). At 8 weeks, pallor resolved, Hb rose to 11.6 g/dL, ferritin to 22 ng/mL. No side effects reported.

Conclusion:

Sharbat Foulad with diet and lifestyle modification effectively improved hemoglobin and iron stores in a pediatric anemia case, showing good tolerability.

Keywords: Sharbat Foulad, Unani medicine, pediatric anemia

1. Introduction

Anemia is a common pediatric health problem characterized by reduced hemoglobin concentration, leading to decreased oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood. In Unani medicine, anemia can be correlated with Fasad-e-Khoon or Qillat-e-Khoon, which is considered a derangement in the quality or quantity of blood humor (Dam). Unani physicians have described several compound formulations to restore blood quality, among which Sharbat Foulad is a classical iron-rich preparation widely used in children for its hematinic and tonic properties.^{1,2}

2. Case Presentation

Patient Details:

Age/Sex: 8 years / Male

Weight: 22 kg

Address: Bhopal, MP

Date of first visit: 15th April 2025

Chief Complaints:

Fatigue and weakness for 2 months

Poor appetite

Mild pallor noticed by parents

Reduced concentration in school

History of Present Illness: Symptoms were gradual in onset. No history of chronic illness, recurrent infections, or bleeding disorders. Dietary history revealed low intake of green leafy vegetables and iron-rich foods.

Past History: No known chronic illness

Immunizations up to date

Family History: No family history of hemoglobinopathies.

General Examination:

Pallor: Mild to moderate

Pulse: 90/min, regular

BP: 100/60 mmHg

No edema, lymphadenopathy, or hepatosplenomegaly

Laboratory Investigations (15/04/2025):

Hemoglobin: 8.6 g/dL

MCV: 74 fL (microcytic)

MCH: 24 pg

Peripheral smear: Hypochromic, microcytic RBCs

Serum ferritin: 9 ng/mL (low)

Diagnosis: Iron Deficiency Anemia (Mild to Moderate)

3. Unani Management Plan

Principle of Unani Treatment:

Islah-e-Khoon (Correction of blood quality)

Taqwiyat-e-Meda (Improving digestion for better absorption)

Taqwiyat-e-Aam (General body strengthening)

Prescribed Medicine:

Sharbat Foulad

Sharbat Foulad – Contents & Actions

1. Foulad (Iron Filings – Loha)

Unani Action: Muqawwi-e-Khoon (blood strengthener), Muqawwi-e-Badan (general tonic), Musaffi-e-Khoon (blood purifier)

Modern Action: Source of bioavailable iron; increases hemoglobin synthesis; improves oxygen-carrying capacity of blood

2. Amla (*Emblica officinalis*)

Unani Action: Muqawwi-e-Meda (stomachic), Muqawwi-e-Jigar (hepatotonic), Musaffi-e-Khoon, Mufarreh (refreshing)

Modern Action: Rich in vitamin C, enhances iron absorption, antioxidant, hepatoprotective

3. Bala (*Sida cordifolia*)

Unani Action: Muqawwi-e-Aaza (strengthens body organs), Muqawwi-e-Asab (nerve tonic)

Modern Action: Anti-inflammatory, adaptogenic, supports recovery from weakness

4. Nabq (Ziziphus jujuba – Jujube)

Unani Action: Muqawwi-e-Badan, Mulaffif (demulcent), Mulattif (mild laxative) Modern Action: Rich in vitamins and minerals, immune modulator, digestive support

5. Unnab (Ziziphus mauritiana)

Unani Action: Muqawwi-e-Qalb (cardiac tonic), Musaffi-e-Khoon, Mufarreh Modern Action: Antioxidant, improves digestion, supports hemoglobin formation

6. Asal-us-Soos (Glycyrrhiza glabra – Licorice)

Unani Action: Muqawwi-e-Meda, Muqawwi-e-Aaza, Mulattif, Mulaffif

Modern Action: Anti-inflammatory, gastroprotective, enhances absorption of nutrient^{3,4}

Dose-Sharbat Foulad — 10 mL orally, twice daily after meals with water

Duration: 8 weeks

Source: National Formulary of Unani Medicine (NFUM)

Dietary Advice (Ghiza):

Increase green leafy vegetables, dates, figs, pomegranate juice

Use of Harira (milk with almonds and dates) in morning

Avoid tea/coffee close to meals to improve iron absorption

Lifestyle Advice (Tadbeer):

Adequate rest and outdoor activity for sunlight exposure

4. Follow-up & Outcome

Follow-up 1 (4 weeks):

Improved appetite

Reduction in fatigue

Hb: 10.2 g/dL

Follow-up 2 (8 weeks):

Child active, no pallor

Hb: 11.6 g/dL

Ferritin: 22 ng/mL

No side effects were reported. The child tolerated the medicine well.

5. Discussion

In Unani literature, Sharbat Foulad is described as a Muqawwi-e-Khoon (blood tonic) and Muqawwi-e-Badan (general tonic) containing iron in bioavailable form along with herbs that improve digestion and assimilation. The improvement in hemoglobin and ferritin values in this case suggests its efficacy in pediatric iron deficiency anemia.

Classical Unani physicians like Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hakim Kabiruddin have recommended iron-based syrups like Sharbat Foulad in cases of Fasad-e-Khoon and Qillat-e-Khoon in children, emphasizing gentle action and better palatability compared to modern iron salts.

6. Conclusion

This case demonstrates that Sharbat Foulad, when used with dietary and lifestyle modification, can effectively improve hemoglobin and iron stores in children with iron deficiency anemia without significant side effects.

References

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