

Dalk (Therapeutic Massage) & Their Indication for Musculoskeletal Disorder in Unani Medicine

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Abstract Massage is one of those terms, which are easily understood then expressed. Throughout the history massage has been used not only by sick but also by the healthy people for therapeutic, restorative as well as preventive purposes. Massage is probably one of the oldest healing therapies known to mankind. The message of massage is universal: you can use your hand to help literally anyone. One of the many reasons for its increased popularity is that massage allows us to reach out and to touch each other. It is a formalized touches; giving us a licence to touch within clearly defined boundaries¹. In Unani system of medicine (USM) massage is called as “*Dalk*” and is frequently used as preventive, curative and rehabilitative purposes since centuries. Here we will discuss the indication of massage for the musculoskeletal disorders.

Keywords *Unani System of Medicine, Massage, Dalk, Musculoskeletal Disorders*

1. Introduction

Massage therapy dates back thousands years. It can be traced back farther than 5000 years of recorded history. Pre historic cave paintings have indicated the “laying on of heads” of the sick and injured. References to massage practice appear in Hebrew, Egyptian, Persian, Rome, Greece, Arabian, Indian, Chinese and Japanese medical practice. An Egyptian papyrus written approximately 1700 BC portrays an impressive knowledge of the relationship between spinal alignment and proper muscular functions [2]. The earliest recorded reference appearing in the Nei Ching/ Nei Jing, a Chinese medical text written before 2600 BC, had mentioned the use of massage in paralysis and in cessation of circulation. Later writing on massage come from scholars and physicians such as Hippocrates (460-357BC) in the fifth century BC and Avicenna and Ambrose Pare in the 10th and 16th (some say 17th) century AD, respectively. Two missionaries named Hue, Amiot translated a very famous book on massage, “the book of Cong-Fou”, and this created great interest and influenced the thinking of many massage practitioners. The expression for massage in India was Champ, Mardan,

Abhyang and shampooing; in China it was known as Cong-Fou, and in Japan as Ambouk. The word therapeutic is defined as “of or relating to the treatment or cure of a disorder or disease”. It comes from the Greek therapeutikos, and relates to the effect of the medical treatment (therapy) [1].

Initially there was dispute regarding the origin of this word (massage). Few authors claimed it derived from the Arabic word- Mass (to touch), others said it was from the Greek word- Massein (to knead). The Hebrew word- Mashesh (to touch, to feel, to grasp), and the Sanskrit word-Makesh (to strike, to press) were also said to have been the original from which the word massage came. The Arabic and Greek origin proposed by Savery in 1785 and Piory in 1819 respectively, has been considered more authentic, due to widespread use of massage in east and ancient Rome. This word, according to Oxford dictionary, entered in the English literature in 1879. French colonies in India first used the term “massage” during 1761-1773 and included it for the first time in 1812 in French-German dictionary. In ancient Syria, Babylon and Assyrian massage was believed to be capable of expelling spirits from a person’s body. Hippocrates was the first person, who discussed the qualities and contraindication of massage. He recognized massage as a therapeutic agent. Another Greek physician Asclepedius who was great advocate of massage and physical therapy, had recommended this technique as the third most important treatment modality [3].

Considering a low risk of harm and high benefits massage is a perfect regimen for the treatment of pain. Research has confined the use of massage therapy as an effective tool for pain management without producing adverse reactions that can occur with medication. Massage is among the most common alternative therapies for relieving the pain [4].

Massage involves physician manipulation techniques to make various parts of the body, such as muscles, connective tissues and vertebrae, work together and functions properly [5]. Massage has been regarded for a long time as having a variety of physiological and psychological effects. In recent years, the therapeutic trend is even more towards evidence-based practice and this has led to an ever-growing body of research seeking to establish scientifically the effects of massage [6].

2. Therapeutic Massage

The basic goal of massage therapy is to help the body heal itself and to increase health and well-being. Performing therapeutic massage requires a firm background in pathology and utilizes specific treatments appropriate to working with disease, pain, and recovery from injury. Massage is a pleasant and desirable intervention and is safe when delivered by trained practitioners using standard techniques.

Massage therapy is one of the most popular CAM techniques in the USA. Between 2002 and 2007, the 1-year prevalence of use of massage by the US adult population increased from 5% (10 million) to 8.3% (18 million). Massage is generally used, with some research support, to relieve pain from musculoskeletal disorders and cancer, rehabilitate sports injuries, reduce stress, increase relaxation, decrease feelings of anxiety and depression, and aid in general wellness [7].

More and more, massage therapy is being utilized to relieve health problems. Massage therapy is considered a form of medical treatment in several countries where it is covered by national health insurance, including China, Japan, Russia, and West Germany. On the European continent, massage has been a routine form of therapy for acute and chronic lower back pain for many decades. In Canada, massage therapy still is considered an alternative therapy. Nonetheless, its popularity seems

to be growing. The treatment and prevention of injury and pain of muscles and joints by manual and physical methods to develop, maintain, rehabilitate, or increase physical function to relieve pain and promote health [8].

3. Massage Treatments Aim To

- Develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment physical function - Massage therapy has become a staple of many professional athletes' training regimens. But not just athletes. Lifestyle factors, such as long work hours or physically taxing tasks, lead many members of the workforce to seek the assistance of a massage therapist.
- Relieve or prevent physical dysfunction and pain - By alleviating or preventing pain, dysfunction can be combated.
- Relax tight and tense muscles - Many people don't realize how much a tight muscle impacts on vital things such as posture. A tense muscle can throw off your body's balance. Before long, muscles that were not initially tight begin to tense as they compensate for other parts of the body. It becomes a chain reaction that can spread far from the initial problem spot.
- Improve circulation, recovery time and immune system function - The movements of massage cause blood to flush in and out of muscles and joints. This flushing process - enhancing circulation in the affected areas - can, in some cases, aid recovery time from injuries.
- Reduce overall stress - Stress, for example, increases the risk of heart disease.
- Massage therapy is also effective in the control of pain, chronic or acute, in stress reduction, and in creating a sense of relaxation and well-being [9].

4. Definition

Massage is one of those terms, which are easily understood and expressed. Throughout the history massage has been used not only by sick but also by the healthy people for therapeutic, restorative as well as preventive purposes; but people still find it difficult to define massage although they are confident of its meaning.

In *USM*; massage is considered as a type of exercise [10]. A number of Unani physicians advocate use of *Dalk* for the preventive as well as the curative purpose in various diseases. In spite of this, not even a single definition has been given yet. On the basis of description of *Dalk* in Unani text, it can be appropriately defined as

“Dalk is a type of exercise practiced with palm and digits by a skilled person on the body surface in varieties of ways to dissolve the morbid matters and to assist the quwa (faculties) for therapeutic and preventive purpose” [11].

According to Unani System of Medicine *Dalk* comes under the heading of Regimenal therapy (*Ilaj-Bit-Tadbeer*). It helps in excretion of byproduct of *Hazme Uzwi / hazme akheer* (digestion in organ) [10].

5. Types of Massage

Several varieties of *Dalk* have been recommended in Unani system of Medicine e.g. *Dalk e sulb* (hard), *Dalk e layyin* (soft), etc. prolonged or moderate massages. Hard friction or massage is *Mufatteh-e-Sudad* (deobstruent) and makes the body firm. Soft massage is sedative and relaxes the

body while prolonged massage (*Dalk kaseer*) reduces the fat of the body; moderate massage (*Dalk motadil*) develops the body as well as improves and maintains blood circulation of the particular organ; rough friction with a rough cloth (*Dalk khashin*) enhances vasodilatation of the particular organ etc. Ibn Sina describes 19 (25) different types of *Dalk* that are listed below [12].

I. Baseet Mufrad (Single) types: 6 types

(A). According to kaifyat (quality) - according to pressure exerted on the part

1. Dalk Sulb (Hard massage)
2. Dalk Layyin (Smooth massage)
3. Dalk Motadil (moderate massage)

(B). According to Kammiyat/ Miqdar (quantity) - for how long massage is given

4. Dalk Kaseer (Prolonged massage)
5. Dalk Qaleel (Short massage)
6. Dalk Motadil (moderate massage)

II. Murakkab (Compound) are made by combining the above basic types: 9 types

7. Dalk Sulb Kaseer
8. Dalk Sulb Qaleel
9. Dalk Sulb Motadil
10. Dalk Layyin Kaseer
11. Dalk Layyin Qaleel
12. Dalk Layyin Motadil
13. Dalk Motadil Kaseer
14. Dalk Motadil Qaleel
15. Dalk Motadil Motadil (Dalk motadil in all respects in kammiyat and kaifiyat)

Few More Types

16. Dalk Khashin (rough massage) - with rough cloths.
17. Dalk Amlas (Gentle massage) - with soft and smooth cloths/oil.
18. Dalk Istedad: (Warm up/preparatory massage before starting the exercise)
 - (1) Qawi
 - (2) Zae'ef
 - (3) Motadil
 - (4) Taweel
 - (5) Qaseer
 - (6) Motadil
19. Dalk Isterdad/musakkin (Relaxing massage)- at the end of exercise [12]

6. Time and Duration of Massage

Time: Same as mentioned for the exercise. Massage should preferably be done in the early hours of morning, when the stomach of the patient is empty. It can also be done in the evening 3-4 hours after lunch. It should not be done immediately after taking food.

- **Rabee** (Spring): noon
- **Saif** (Summer): morning
- **Khareef** (Autumn): noon
- **Shitta** (Winter): after noon [12]

Duration: The duration of massage is not exactly mentioned in any Unani text in terms of minute or hours, but it has been extensively discussed about the choice of massage can accurately be chosen by keeping following in mind

- Strength and type of organ to be massaged,
- Mizaj of organ to be massaged
- Type of oil
- Mizaj of disease
- Mizaj of person
- Condition of disease
- Condition of patients
- Seasons
- Desired outcome
- Temperature of the massage cabin

Some Other Factors

- In healthy individuals for just relaxation and has no pain: 30 to 40 minutes
- In pains and aches: more longer time
- In physically weak: 15-20 minutes in beginning slowly increased to 30-35 minutes
- For those who receive daily massage: 25-30minutes.
- Old people: need one hour or more

7. Therapeutic Indications of Massage in General

In USM, massage is indicated in a number of musculoskeletal and neurological disorders, which are as follows;

- For general weakness
- **Disorders of joints:** all types of arthritis – Wajaul mafasil (R A, OA, Gout/Niqras) and **spondylosis**.
- **Diseases of muscles** like myositis associated with pain, spasm, muscular weakness, muscular dystrophy, hemiparesis, atrophy and various types of myopathies.
- **Nervous system disorder-** neuralgia, sciatica (irqun nissa), poliomyelitis, Falij (hemiplegia, paraplegia, quadriplegia), Laqwa (facial/ bell's palsy)

- **Disease in sportsmen** – Muscular injury, tennis elbow, lumbago, frozen shoulder, backache, sprains and aches, Tensosynovitis, tendinitis, and fibrositis.

8. Major Musculoskeletal Disorders and Indication of Therapeutic Massage

(For more details See Table 1)

I. Neck Pain (Wajaul unuq) / cervical spondylosis

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj barid sada
2. Sue mizaj barid maddi (Kham Balgham)
Dalk: Layyin kaseer
Oil: Roghan shibbat, R.baboona, R.murakkab
Duration: 20 minutes

II. Frozen Shoulder

Cause: Sue mizaj barid Yabis
Dalk: 1. Layyin kaseer or
2. Motadil kaseer
Oil: R. Babooba, R. Zaitoon, R. Murakkab,
Duration: 10-15 minutes

III. Back Pain (Wajaul Zohar) / LBP (Wajaul khasra) / Hip Joint Pain (Wajaul warak)/Lumbar Spondylosis

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj barid sada wa maddi (Balgham Kham)
2. Sue mizaj haar
3. Riyaah barid
Dalk: Dalk Khashin followed by Dalk Sulb kaseer
Oil: Hot oil having jundbedastar,
R.narjeel kohna, R.kharu, R.habbe utraj, R.joz kohna, R.sosan,
R.tukhme anjeer, R.qurtum, R.qust. R.farfiyun, R.qust, R.suddab R. kunjud.
Duration: 20 minutes

IV. Rheumatism (Arthritis/ Rheumatoid arthritis) Wajaul mafasil hadar, tahajur mafasil

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj barid (balghami)
2. Sue mizaj haar
Dalk: Sulb kaseer
Oil: Balgami: - R. bedanjeer, R.nardeen, R.Qust, R.badam talkh, R.baboona,
R.haft barg/awraaq), R.murakkab, R.haft barg, R.biskhapra,
R.arand [16], R.sumbul. R.qust, R.badam talkh
Duration: 10-15 minutes

V. Sciatica/ Gout

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj maddi (Balghami, Safrawi and damwi)
2. Sue mizaj Yabis sada

Dalk: 1. Sulb kaseer
2. Motadil kaseer (gout)

Oil: Aromatic Oil having jundbedastar, farfiyoon and Miya saila, R.hanzal, R.jundbedashtar, R.khardil, R.joz rumi, R. Qust, R.farfiyun, R.aqarqarha, R.hina

Duration: 20 minutes

VI. Carpel tunnel syndrome / Wrist joint pain

Cause: Sprain

Dalk: Motadil

Oil: Roghan haft barg, R.babooba, R. murakkab

Duration: 15 minutes

VII. Paralysis (fali): Hemiplegia (Faliye Nisfi)/Quadriplegia (faliy aam), Facial paralysis (laqwa)/palsy (istarkha)

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj barid sada wa maddi (Balghami)
2. Sue mizaj haar maddi (Damwi)
3. Rooh ke nafooz me rukawat
4. Sudda (masalik rooh/ sharayeen)

Dalk: 1. Sulb kaseer (khoob dair tak)
2. Layyin motadil/kaseer (facial palsy)

Oil: R.qust, nardeen, kaknaj, kalkalanaj, R.badam, R.zambee, R.balsan prepared with jundbedastar, farfiyoon Miya saila. R.turab, R. shibbat, R.zait, R.sosan, R.bedanjeer, R.nargis, R.utraj

Duration: 20 minutes

VIII. Muscular Spasm/Tashannuj aaza

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj maddi Ratab (Imtela mawad)
2. Sue mizaj Yabis sada

Dalk: Dalk Qawi shadeed wa kaseer

Oil: Imtelai: R.suddab, R.qust, R.balsan, R.yasmeen- all are prepared with Jundbedastar & Farfiyun, R. Bedanjeer, Yabsi: R. Neelofar, R.banafsa, R.kaddu, R.farya, R.badam shirin, R.Shibbat, R.surkh

Duration: 15-20

IX. Wasting of Muscle

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj Yabis sada
2. Qillat ghiza (uzwi)
3. Rooh ke nafooz me rukawat

Dalk: Sulb kaseer

Oil: Roghan malkangni, R. Badam shirin, R.Qust (usually by mixing all of three in ratio of 1:2:2) R. Banafsha,
Duration: 15-20 minutes

X. Kyphosis/Scoliosis/Lordosis (Hadba/Riyahulafrasa)/Disc Prolapsed

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj maddi barid (Imtela Ratubat)
2. Sue mizaj Yabis sada (Ghaleez Riyaah)

Dalk: Sulb kaseer

Oil: Ratabi: R. arand [17], R.azad- all prepared with jundbedastar, farfiyoon & Miya saila.
R.mom [17], R.qust [17], R.baan [17], R. kheeri asfar [17],

Riyaahi: (haar+qabiz) R. Saru, R.suddab, R.aqirqarha, R.jundbedastar,
R.anjeer, R.Qust

Duration: 20 minutes

XI. Funny Turns/ Rasha

Cause: 1 Sue mizaj barid Sada
2. Sue mizaj barid Ratab
3. Buroodat aasab

Dalk: Motadil kaseer

Oil: R.sosan, R.qust, R.biskhapra, R.qasa-ul-hammar.

Duration: 10-15 minutes

XII. Erectile dysfunction

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj Yabis sada
2. Rooh ke nafooz me rukawat

Dalk: Motadil kaseer

Oil: Roghan gul, R.banafsa, R.zaitoon

Duration: 10 minutes

XIII. Muscular Fatigue/Pain (aiyaa)

Cause: 1. Sue mizaj Yabis (due to istafragh Ghair tabai)
2. Sue mizaj maddi (Imtela mawad)

Dalk: Dalk motadil (Dalk Isterdad)

Oil: Yabis: R.banafsa, R.nelofer

Ratabi: R. kheeri R.asfar, R.Qust, R.baan, R.baboona, R.zaitoon,
R.murakkan, R.shibbat

Duration: 10 minute

Table 1: Musculoskeletal Disorders with Type of Massage, Duration and Oils Used

S. No.	Disease Name	Cause (s)	Types of Dalk	Duration (Minute)	Oil (s)
1	Neck pain (wajaul unuq) /Cervical spondylosis	Sue mizaj barid sada/maddi(kham Balgham)	Layyin kaseer	20	R.Shibbat ^{13,11} , R. Baboona, R.murakkab
2	Frozen shoulder	Sue mizaj barid yabis	Motadil kaseer	10-15	R.babooba, R.zaitoon, R. Murakkab,
3	Back pain(Wajaul Zohar)/LBP(Wajaul khasra)/Hip joint pain (Wajaul warak)/Lumbar spondylosis	Sue mizaj barid (Balgham khaam) wa haar ¹⁴ , riyaah barid.	Dalk khashin ¹⁵ followed by Sulb kaseer	20	(Hot oil with jund, R.narjeel kohna, kharu, R.habbe utraj, R.joz kohna, R.tukhm anjeer, R.qurtum, R.qust ¹⁶) ¹⁵ , R.farfiyun ¹⁴ , R.qust ¹⁴ , R.suddab ^{14,16} , R.sosan ¹⁴ , R.kunjud ¹⁶ .
4	Rheumatism (Arthritis/ Rheumatoid arthritis) Wajaul mafasil-hadar, tahajur mafasil	Sue mizaj barid(balghami)/ha ar	Sulb kaseer	10-15	Balghami:-(R. bedanjeer, R.nardeen, R.qust, R.badam talkh, R.baboona, R.haft barg/awraaq) ¹⁵ , R.murakkab, R.haft barg, R.biskhapra ¹⁴ , R.arand ¹⁶ , R.sumbul ¹⁶ , R.qust ¹⁶ , R.badam talkh ¹⁶ .
5	Sciatica/ Gout	Sue mizaj maddi (balghami, safrabi wa damwi) ¹⁸ , yabusat ¹⁸	Sulb kaseer/ Motadil kaseer(gout)	20	Aromatic Oil (+ jund bedastar, farfiyoon Miya saila ^{14,18} , R.hanzal ¹⁴ ,R.jundbedashtar ¹⁴ ,R.khardil ¹⁴ , R.joz rumi ¹⁴ , R.qust ^{14,16} , R.farfiyun ¹⁶ , R.aqarqarha ¹⁶ , R.hina ¹⁶
6	Carpel tunnel syndrome/ Wrist joint pain	Sprain	Motadil	10	Roghan haft barg, R.babooba, R. murakkab
7	Paralysis(falij): Hemiplegia (Falije Nisfi) / Quadriplegia (falij aam)/Facial paralysis(laqw a)/palsy (istarkha)/ khadr	Sue miza barid(balghami) wa haar(damwi) ^{16,17}	Sulb kaseer (khoob dair tak) ¹⁹ , facial-Layyin motadil/kaseer	10 ²¹ (FN) 20	R.qust, ^{17,19} , R.nardeen ^{14,18,19} , kaknaj ¹⁹ , kalkalanaj ¹⁹ ,R.badam ¹⁹ , R.zambeeq ¹⁹ , R.utraj ¹⁹ , R.balsan ^{18,19} ,(+ jund bedastar, farfiyoon Miya saila) ¹⁹ , R.turab ¹⁴ , R.soya/shibbat ¹⁸ , R.zait ¹⁴ ,R.sosan ¹⁴ , R.bedanjeer ¹⁴ , R.nargis ¹⁴ . R. seer ²⁰ ,(R malkangni:R.Badam shirin:R.Qust=1:2:2)
8	Spasm/ Tashannuj(con vulsion)	Imtela ratubat or Yabusat ^{10, 18,19}	Qawee shaded wa kaseer ¹⁹	15-20	Imtela: R.suddab ¹⁵ , qust ^{15,16} , balsan, yasmeen, (+ jund bedastar,

					farfiyoon) ¹⁹ , R. Bedanjeer ¹⁵ , Yabis: R. Neelofar, R.banafsa, R.kaddu, R.farya, R.badam shirin, R.soya, R.surkh ¹⁶
9	Wasting of muscle	Sue mizaj Yabis.	Sulb kaseer	15-20	Roghan malkanghni, R. Badam shirin, R.qust, R. Banafsa.
10	Kyphosis/Scoliosis/ Lordosis (Hadba/Riyah-ul-afraza)/ Disc prolapse	Imtela/Ratoobat, ghaleez riyah ¹⁵	Sulb kaseer	20	<u>Ratab</u> :R. arand ¹⁷ , R.azad (+ jund bedastar, farfiyoon Miya saila) ¹⁸ , R.mom ¹⁷ , R.qust ¹⁷ , R.baan ¹⁷ , R. kheeri asfar ¹⁷ , <u>Riyaah</u> :(haar+qabiz) R. Saru ¹⁵ , R.suddab ¹⁵ , R.aqirqarha ¹⁵ , R.jundbedastar ¹⁵ ,R.anjeer ¹⁵ , R.qust ¹⁵
11	Funny turns/rasha	Sue mizaj barid or barid Ratab ¹⁷ , Buroodat aasab ¹³	Motadil kaseer	10-15	R.sosan ¹⁸ , R.qust ¹⁸ , R.biskhapra ¹⁴ , R.qasa-ul-hammar ¹⁴ .
12	Erectile dysfunction	Sue mizaj yabis	Layyin kaseer	10	Roghan gul ¹⁶
13	Muscular fatigue/pain (aiyaa)	Yabusat (istafragh ghair tabai) ¹⁷ wa imtela ¹⁷	Motadil (Dalk Isterdad)	10	(R. kheeri R.asfar, R.qust, R.baan ¹⁷ , R.babuna, R.zaitun, R.murakkan, R.shibbat, R.banafsa(Yabis)

R= Roghan (oil)

9. Conclusion

Massage holds an important place as a therapeutic modality in Unani Medicine. Preventive and therapeutic massage is the mainstream treatment of unani medicine since centuries and it is being indicated for range of musculoskeletal diseases since then. The author of this article admits that, although the unani writings contain observation based but scattered sayings about massage, their apparent simplicity hides deep healing wisdom that only becomes apparent after years of experience in massage therapy. Unani medicine considers "Giving a massage, the masseur has to not only consider who the massage is for, but also when it's given, how much & how it should be given and for what purpose". In this article simply basic information of massage like definition, type and indication of massage has described, but this therapy still need more observational trials so as to it can be standardized and its rational use can be justified more profoundly.

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