

## Parameters Contributing to Aging: Avicenna's Viewpoints

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Aging is a natural process accompanied by diminishing stamina, decreasing food intake, and disturbance of neurocognitive functionality (1). Regarding lower food intake, some environmental factors such as nutrition knowledge and social facilitation have been mentioned to be effective in increasing seniors' food intake (2). It has also been demonstrated that cognitive decline peculiar to aging is gradual. Accordingly, any health measure applied to postponing such decline and improving the cognitive function of the elderly should be initiated in the earlier stages of the life (3).

Avicenna (980-1037 AD), the great Persian physician of Islamic Golden Age, has invaluable recommendations about the context of the elderly's frailty, especially the anorexia of aging (1). In the Canon of Medicine, he has made mention of six principles for health, *sette-yezaroorieh*, including air, foods and drinks, sleep and wake, activity and rest, retention and release, as well as mood and mental states (4). He is of the belief that paying attention to these health measures would warranty a healthy life and increase life expectancy.

Based on these principles, he has cited some deteriorating parameters to health, that contribute to the pace of aging and the decline in neurocognitive function of the elderly (1,5). As far as air (quality) is concerned, living in the tropical climate with its hot, humid weather and/or being adjacent to marshland deteriorate healthy life and augment the pace of aging (5). The same can occur as in proximity to landfills.

When it comes to Avicenna's stance on foods and drinks, indulgence in eating, eating pickles and drinking too cold water [especially with ice cubes] not only accelerate the pace of aging but also impair neurocognitive functions of the brain (5). Sedentary lifestyle, sleep's poor quality and quantity, chronic constipation, and urinary retention as well as chronic stress, are other risk factors for accelerated aging (5,1).

Avicenna believes that the intrinsic heat would be diminished with increasing age, which would, in turn, lead to weakness and fragility. The essence of any living/nonliving being, as opposed to its accidents, lies at the heart of the Great Iranian Physician's thesis on innate them flowing heat specifically ship-shaped to His own mannerism of senility treatment (6). The intelligent force of the body (body's nature) compensates for senility weakness with decreasing the appetite. This actually brings into balance the heat-energy inflow/outflow. "Normal" to an old body to the extent that expected ordinary health would not be compromised is this very appetite-diminution mechanism.

Avicenna declares that any factor which has the capacity to increase the foreign heat to the body could be regarded as the cause of anorexia and aging acceleration. Foreign heat is defined as the unhealthy heat produced due to the presence of foreign germs; or, rather, using foods and drinks which increase the bile secretion. In addition to spicy, sweet, and fatty foods and drinks deemed as the causes of increasing bile secretion, stress as its MAIN cause decreases the appetite and increases the chances of having hot-tempered diseases (5).

The medical advice and health measures recommended by Avicenna comprise of decreasing the volume of the meals and increasing the number and quality of them. He also advocates mild to moderate physical activity, adequate rest as well as short durations of soft massage with olive and with lavender oil. He also prescribes, rather than medications, foods, and drinks that are considered to be boosters of *intrinsic heat*; foods and drinks like pea porridge spiced with cinnamon or ginger, porridge of *Spidbaj* (leak, parsley, and coriander with lamb broth), lamb stew, and rose syrup (1,5).

Considering the aforementioned health measures in the future studies may well lead to the establishment of new modalities to delay the pace of aging. It is also noticeable that the physicalistic, comparative

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interpretations of Shifa (the Book of Healing) be born in mind when trying to in detail elucidate Avicenna's strategies of how to deal with body weariness specifically in the context of old age.

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