

Effectiveness of Habb-e-Suranjan and Roghan-e-Farfiyun in the Management of Waja-ul-Rukba (Knee Pain): A Review

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Abstract

Introduction: Knee osteoarthritis is a painful condition that represents the degeneration of the cartilage and osteophyte formation in the knee joint, which affects millions of people worldwide. According to the Unani claimed text, accumulation of “madda” (substance) in joints, which is neither absorbed nor expelled, is due to the absence of *Quawwat-e-Jazibah* (power of absorption) and *Quawwat-e-dafia* (power of expulsion). Unani medicine presents a promising approach for managing knee osteoarthritis (*Wajal-ul-Rakba*) and reducing its progression. **Aim:** To evaluate the therapeutic effects of Habb-e-Suranjan and Roghan-e-Farfiyun in managing knee osteoarthritis. **Methods:** A literature review of classical Unani texts and electronic databases was conducted to gather information on the effectiveness of these formulations in treating knee osteoarthritis. **Conclusion:** This study highlights the effectiveness of Unani treatment in easing knee osteoarthritis symptoms. Further clinical research is recommended to validate its full potential. This paper also provides a detailed description of the Unani formulations used, including their ingredients, pharmacological actions, and therapeutic effects.

Keywords: Knee Osteoarthritis, *Wajal-ul-Rakba*, *Quawwat-e-Jazibah*, *Quawwat-Edafia*

INTRODUCTION

Joint pain is a widespread issue, especially among the elderly [1], and is broadly categorized under arthritis [2]. The term refers to over 100 different conditions that affect the joints [3], with pain being the most prominent symptom [4]. Various factors contribute to arthritis, including metabolic disorders (e.g., gout, adhesive capsulitis), immune-related conditions (e.g., rheumatoid and psoriatic arthritis),

degenerative diseases (e.g., osteoarthritis), lifestyle influences (e.g., gout, cervical spondylitis), occupational hazards (e.g., sciatica, lower back pain), and infections (e.g., syphilitic and tubercular arthritis) [5, 6]. One of the most prevalent forms of arthritis is osteoarthritis (OA), which frequently affects the knee joint, a condition known as knee osteoarthritis (*Wajal-ul-Rakba*). OA is commonly observed in middle-aged and elderly individuals and is a major cause of disability due to its impact on joint function [1]. As of 2024, approximately 24.5 million people were diagnosed with knee osteoarthritis worldwide, with an incidence rate ranging from 5 to 50 per 100,000 individuals annually in developed countries [7]. The condition typically develops between 20 and 40 years of age, with a global prevalence of 0.3% to 1% and 0.28% to 0.7% in India [5, 8]. Notably, women are 2.5 times more likely to develop OA compared to men [6].

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Projections indicate that osteoarthritis will continue to be one of the most prevalent chronic diseases worldwide, with a global prevalence estimated at 22.9% [1, 2, 7]. According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study, musculoskeletal disorders, including OA, contribute significantly to global disability. Currently, 20–30% of individuals worldwide suffer from chronic musculoskeletal conditions, leading to pain, mobility restrictions, and joint stiffness, particularly in the hands, feet, knees, and ankles [9–11].

UNANI MEDICINE AND KNEE OSTEOARTHRITIS (*WAJAL-UL-RAKBA*)

Unani medicine classifies knee osteoarthritis as *Wajal-ul-Rakba* (knee arthralgia), characterized by pain and inflammation in the joints, particularly in the upper and lower limbs. This condition can also affect surrounding muscles and ligaments, leading to restricted mobility [9, 10]. Unani scholars believe that OA develops due to the accumulation of "maddah" (morbid substances) in the joints, which are neither absorbed nor expelled due to the weakened *Quwwat-e-Jazibah* (absorptive power) and *Quwwat-e-Dafia* (expulsive power) [12].

Unani texts categorize *Waja-ul-Mafasil* (joint pain) alongside conditions like *Irq-un-Nasa* (sciatica) and *Nigras* (gout) [13, 14]. Although no distinct term exists for osteoarthritis, it is commonly referred to as *Wajal-ul-Rakba*, a condition that primarily affects adults and older individuals. The condition leads to joint stiffness, pain, and restricted movement, significantly impacting daily activities [15, 16]. Unlike other joint-related ailments, *Wajal-ul-Rakba* is rare in children but widely observed in older adults of both genders.

Conventional vs. Unani Approaches to Osteoarthritis Treatment

Modern medical treatments for OA include glucocorticoids, disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as cyclophosphamide, intramuscular gold, sulfasalazine, and methotrexate. However, these medications often cause serious side effects, including gastrointestinal ulcers, internal bleeding, kidney damage, liver toxicity, and hypertension [17]. Given these concerns, there is increasing interest in herbal and Unani medicine for osteoarthritis management. Unani formulations are known for their therapeutic benefits, minimal side effects, and affordability. In this study, the efficacy and safety of *Habb-e-Suranjan* and *Roghan-e-Farfiyun*, two widely used Unani compounds, were scientifically evaluated for their role in managing knee osteoarthritis [18–20].

Now, attention is diverted to herbal and Unani drugs due to their versatile role in the management of osteoarthritis with minimal side effects, besides being cost-effective [18, 10]. Keeping in view the above facts, the therapeutic efficacy and safety of a Unani compound drug—*Habb-e-Suranjan and Roghan-e-Farfiyun* was evaluated on scientific lines in the present study, Tables 1 and 2 [18–20].

PHARMACOLOGICAL ACTION

Habb-e -Suranjan

H Habb-e-Suranjan is a common Unani formulation which is first mentioned in qurabaddin majeedi pharmacopoeia of Majeed [21, 22]. Crude drug Aloe vera juice, Pistacia lentiscus resin (kaladana), Ipomoea turpenthum stem (jalap) an *Anethum sowa* fruits. All the plant drugs have different types of pharmacological activities such For colchicum luteum is used for the treatment of gout and arthritis. *Aloe* is having anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing activity. *Mastagi* is used in the treatment of arthritis [23]. *Anethum sowa* is used as an antimicrobial, anti-arthritic, and anti-inflammatory used in the treatment of constipation [24, 25]. Many studies deal with the standardization of the formulation, *Habb-e-suranjan Suranjan*, by using microscopically, physical, and safety profile parameters as per the WHO guideline [25–27].

ROGHANE FARFIYUN

Strychnos nux-vomica is known for its analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties, making it effective in reducing pain and swelling associated with osteoarthritis. It contains alkaloids, such as

strychnine and brucine, which modulate the central nervous system (CNS) and provide pain relief [23–25]. However, due to its potential toxicity, precise dosage is crucial for its safe application in medicinal formulations. *Allium sativum* exhibits anti-inflammatory effects by modulating cytokine activity and regulating T helper-1 (Th1) immune responses. Studies suggest that garlic extract inhibits pro-inflammatory cytokines while upregulating IL-10, which plays a vital role in resolving inflammation in osteoarthritis [23–25]. Additionally, garlic possesses antibacterial, antifungal, antioxidant, and anti-arthritis properties, making it beneficial in managing joint disorders [23]. *Farfiyun*, a resinous extract, has been studied for its anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties. It has been traditionally used in Unani medicine for reducing joint pain and muscular inflammation. Recent studies have demonstrated its ability to inhibit inflammatory pathways, supporting its use in arthritis management [23–25].

Table 1. Ingredients of *Habb-e-Suranjan* [27, 28].

Unani Name	Botanical Name	Temperament	Action	Quantity
SibrSaqtari	Aloe barbadensis	Hot and Dry in 2 nd degree 1	Deobstruent	140 gm
Post Halila Zard	Terminalia chebula	Cold and Dry in 2 nd degree 1	Purgative	70 gm
Suranjānshīrin	Colchicum luteum	Hot and Dry in 3 rd degree 1	Anti-inflammatory	70 gm

Table 2. Ingredients of *Habb-e-Suranjan*.

Evaluation Parameters	Observation
Volatile oils	Present
Iodine value	Present
Acid value	Present
Alkaloids	Present
Tannins	Present
Resins	Present
Crude fibers	Present
Total nitrogen	Present

Clinical and Traditional Uses of Roghan-e-Farfiyun

Historically, Roghan-e-Farfiyun has been extensively used in Unani medicine for managing various musculoskeletal disorders, including osteoarthritis, gout, and joint stiffness. Its unique combination of ingredients helps in reducing pain, improving joint mobility, and promoting overall musculoskeletal health. Traditional Unani practitioners have recommended its topical application for relieving stiffness and swelling, particularly in chronic inflammatory conditions [25].

Comparative Analysis with Modern Medicine

In conventional medicine, osteoarthritis is primarily managed using nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), corticosteroids, and disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs). While these treatments provide symptomatic relief, they are associated with side effects, such as gastrointestinal ulcers, kidney damage, liver toxicity, and cardiovascular risks [17]. On the other hand, Unani formulations, like Roghan-e-Farfiyun, offer a natural, holistic, and safer alternative with minimal side effects. Its bioactive herbal ingredients not only alleviate pain but also support joint health and immune modulation, making it a promising therapeutic option.

Standardization and Quality Control

To ensure efficacy, safety, and consistency, the standardization of Unani formulations, like Roghan-e-Farfiyun, is crucial. Standardization involves identifying active constituents, optimizing extraction methods, and maintaining purity to achieve consistent therapeutic outcomes [19, 22].

Quality control measures, such as phytochemical screening, toxicity studies, and clinical evaluations are essential to authenticate the formulation and establish scientific validation for its therapeutic claims.

Proper Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) should be followed to maintain their efficacy and safety in clinical applications.

Roghan-e-Farfiyun is a common Unani formulation mentioned in the national Unani formulation of medicine. It consists of *strychnos nux vomica* (Azraki), Farfiyun, and Lehssan (*Allium sativum*). All the plant drugs have different types of pharmacological activities, such as *Strychnos nuxvomica* is used for the treatment of Analgesic and anti-inflammatory actions (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Ingredients of Rogan-e Farfiyun [19, 22].

Unani Name	Botanical Name	Temperament	Action	Quantity
Rai Tel (Mustard Oil)	Brassica juncea	Hot and Wet in 3 rd degree	Neurotronic Analgesic	1000 gm
Azraki	Strychnosnuxvomica	Hot and Dry in 3 rd degree	Neurotronic	15 gm
Farfiyun	euphorbia Gum	Hot and Dry in 3 rd degree	Anti-inflammatory	15 gm
Lassan (Garlic)	Allium sativum	Hot and Dry in 3 rd degree	Neurotronic <i>Dafai balghami amraz</i>	40 gm

Table 4. Phytochemical evaluation of Roghan-e-Farfiyun [19].

Evaluation Parameter	Observation
Carbohydrate	Present
Protein	Absent
Amino acid	Absent
Steroids	Absent
Cardiac Glycosides	Absent
Anthraquinone	Absent
Glycosides	Absent
Saponin Glycosides	Present
Cyanogenic Glycosides	Absent
Coumarin Glycoside	Absent
Alkaloids	Present
Flavonoids	Present
Tannins	Present

Therapeutic Action of Roghane Farfiyun

Roghan-e-Farfiyun is known for its pain-relieving and anti-inflammatory properties, making it an effective remedy for joint stiffness and discomfort. According to Unani medicine, pain and restricted movement often result from the accumulation of excess humor (Maddah) in the joints and nerves, leading to inflammation and stiffness. This oil works by stimulating nerves and muscles, enhancing blood circulation, and reducing inflammation, which helps ease stiffness and restore flexibility. Improving vascularization in the affected area promotes healing and mobility, making it particularly beneficial for conditions like Wajal-ul-Rakba (knee osteoarthritis). Its natural analgesic effects provide soothing relief, allowing for better joint function and overall well-being [26, 27].

Local Application of Roghane Farfiyun

In Unani Medicine, massage therapy (Dalk) with Roghan-e-Farfiyun is used to manage Wajal-ul-Rakba (knee osteoarthritis) by following a holistic healing approach. This treatment is based on two key principles:

- *Removal of Harmful Substances (Tanqiya-e-Mawad Fasida)*: This process helps in clearing excess fluids and waste materials from the body, restoring the natural balance of humors (Akhlata), which is essential for maintaining good health and preventing disease progression.
- *Redirection of Morbid Humors (Imala-e-Mawad Raddiya)*: This method works by moving harmful substances away from affected joints to areas where they can be easily removed from the body, helping to reduce pain, swelling, and stiffness.

Additionally, massaging with Roghan-e-Farfiyun improves blood circulation, relieves muscle tension, and provides pain relief, making the joints more flexible and mobile. This natural remedy offers a safe and effective way to manage joint pain and stiffness while promoting overall joint health [28].

Uses

Patients with *Wajal-ul-Rakba* (knee osteoarthritis) often present with complaints of joint pain and stiffness. Instead of modern medicine, Unani treatment can be used as an alternative, with an effective combination being *Habb-e Suranjan* and *Roghan-e-Farfiyun*. The recommended dosage of *Habb-e Suranjan* is 2 tablets, taken twice daily for 15 days, along with the local application of *Roghan-e-Farfiyun* twice daily for the same duration. Follow-up consultations with the doctor are advised every 15 days. Classical Unani texts claim that these medicines relieve pain, and several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of *Habb-e Suranjan* in reducing pain and inflammation, as well as the benefits of *Roghan-e-Farfiyun*. However, this specific combination of drugs has not been studied for *Wajal-ul-Rakba*. Therefore, we propose promoting this treatment for knee osteoarthritis and conducting further clinical trials to establish its efficacy.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

A comprehensive literature survey was conducted to explore Unani formulations for knee osteoarthritis (*Wajal-ul-Rakba*). The review included classical Unani texts, such as *Kitab-ul-Hawi*, *Khazain-ul-Advia*, *Muheet-e-Azam*, *Bayaz-e-Kabeer*, *Qarabadeen Qadri*, *Kitāb al-Mukhtārāt Fi'l Tibb*, *Tib-e-Akbar*, and *Al-Qanoon Fit Tib*. Additionally, regulatory documents, such as the Unani Pharmacopoeia of India, National Formulary of Unani Medicine, and Essential Drugs List of Unani Medicine were examined to identify single and compound formulations traditionally used for osteoarthritis management. To ensure scientific accuracy, the traditional names of medicinal herbs were systematically cross-referenced with their current scientific names using a standardized botanical reference guide. Further, an electronic database search was performed in PubMed, ScienceDirect, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar to assess the scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of these Unani formulations in osteoarthritis treatment. A structured search strategy was implemented using Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and relevant keywords, including Arthritis, Stiffness, Analgesic, Anti-inflammatory, *Wajal-ul-Rakba*, Antifungal, Antioxidant, and Antibacterial. Each keyword was systematically combined with specific herbs and formulations to extract relevant studies. To refine the search, Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were strategically applied, ensuring the selection of high-quality, relevant research articles for further analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

Habb-e Suranjan and *Roghane Farfiyun* are widely used in Unani medicine for managing joint stiffness, pain, and inflammation associated with *Wajal-ul-Rakba* (knee osteoarthritis). These formulations are believed to enhance blood circulation in the affected area, facilitate the elimination of morbid matter (*fasid mawad*), strengthen the surrounding muscles, aid in detoxification, and alleviate inflammation. The oral use of *Habb-e Suranjan* is recognized for its analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties, while topical application of *Roghane Farfiyun* is thought to support *Imala-e*.

Mawad (diversion of morbid humors), provides localized pain relief and improved joint mobility. Together, these treatments offer a holistic and minimally invasive approach to managing knee osteoarthritis. Despite their traditional use, most existing studies on these formulations have been single-arm open-label trials, emphasizing the need for high-quality randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to validate their efficacy. Modern pharmacological treatments for knee osteoarthritis often come with significant side effects, making Unani medicine a promising alternative. Given the limited research on the combined application of *Habb-e Suranjan* and *Roghane Farfiyun*, further clinical studies are essential to establish their scientific credibility and therapeutic effectiveness in knee osteoarthritis management.

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