

The Role of Hadith in Islamic Medical Ethics

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Abstract

The major influence of Hadith on Islamic medical ethics and education is examined in this article. In addition to the Qur'an, the Hadith serves as a fundamental source of guidance in Islamic tradition, giving moral principles and recommendations for those working in the medical field and in education. It gives a summary of the fundamental ideas behind Islamic medical ethics and education, placing special emphasis on how religious teachings can be used to cultivate moral behavior, compassion, and knowledge.

In order to show the applicability of prophetic traditions to current medical and educational conundrums, the article highlights a few hadiths that speak to ethical issues in healthcare and education. It investigates the legitimacy and interpretation of the Hadith while taking into account the function of scholars and the significance of scholarly agreement. The paper also addresses how Hadith is being included in the medical ethics and education curriculum, demonstrating how it can help students develop their moral judgment, professionalism, and character. It acknowledges probable objections and difficulties, such as misunderstandings, and suggests solutions to these issues.

The article's methodology is a synthesis of qualitative and descriptive research methods. In order to highlight the continued significance of Hadith in directing ethical behavior and knowledge acquisition in medical and educational contexts, the paper finishes by offering studies that exemplify the practical uses of Hadith in medical ethics and education. To expand the comprehension and use of Hadith in Islamic medical ethics and education, it calls for additional research, integration, and discussion.

Keywords: Hadith, Islamic medical ethics, ethical principles, religious teachings.

Introduction

The term medical ethics has only recently gained popularity among Islamic scholars in the second half of the 20th century, sparking lively debates across the Islamic world. Bioethics is a discipline of study that examines the moral foundations of human behavior in the medical field.¹

Islamic guidance on practical issues related to life in general and human life in particular can be sought in Islamic bioethics. Islam holds that human life is a priceless gift from God that should be valued and secured.² From an Islamic perspective, three fundamental sources, intuitive reasoning, or al-fitra (innate nature), faculty of reasoning, or al-'Aql, and Divine revelation, or (Alwahi, Tanzil) are the origins of these moral and ethical orientations.³

Islam declares that everything is planned while advising believers to take care of themselves and never give up. Divine determinism's principles are essential to comprehending and applying medicine.⁴ Today, medical education is emphasizing medical ethics more and more. Students have the best chance to study, practise, and develop moral behaviour and thought throughout their clinical years in medical school.

The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, "The best among you are those who have the best manners and character."⁵ The Hadith underscores moral values in Islamic ethics, aligning with contemporary medical education's focus on moral conduct. During their clinical training, it encourages medical students to develop moral behavior and thought.

Religions aim to steer their followers towards making decisions that benefit both individuals and society. In Islam, the concept of "good character" has evolved from a blend of teachings found in the Quran, the Sunnah (the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad), precedents set by Islamic jurists (Sharia and Fiqh), the pre-Islamic Arabian tradition, and influences from non-Arabic sources incorporated into the Islamic framework.⁶

Islamic Medical Ethics

In Islam, decisions on bioethics are made within a framework of principles established through revelation and tradition.⁷ Islamic briefings on ethical issues related to medical and scientific fields, particularly those dealing with humans, based on the Quran and Hadith are suggested as Islamic bioethics.⁸

Islamic Medical ethics are directly related to the Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W.) tradition and the Qur'an's general ethical codes, and as a result, to how Islamic law is explained. The discussion of bioethics is closely connected to religion, which highlights connections between the physical and spiritual worlds, as well as between ethics and law.⁹

Islamic medical ethics are a part of Shari'ah (Islamic law), which itself is founded on two sources: the Sunnah (the tradition of Prophet Muhammad, which includes his sayings, acts, and approvals) which is the second source of law after the Qur'an.⁹ and the Qur'an (the holy book of all Muslims). "Ijtihad"—the law of deductive logic.¹⁰ or "Qiyas" are considered when the Quran or Sunnah do not include a clear rule. This type of reasoning, known as analogical reasoning, enables experts to derive new findings from a situation that has already been settled by the Qur'an or the Sunnah and has some parallels to the present problem that has to be answered.¹¹

Necessity of Islamic Medical Ethics

Medical ethics has gained increasing prominence in medical education today. The clinical years of medical student training present an opportune period for students to engage in learning, practicing, and nurturing ethical reasoning and conduct.¹² In Islam, ethics, morality, and law are inseparable. Contemporary medical issues like conception, abortion, organ donation, and end-of-life care must be openly discussed within Islamic ethical frameworks. Integrate these discussions into medical education and ongoing professional development for healthcare practitioners.¹³

The Role of Hadith in Islamic Law

The word shari'ah, which means "the correct path," refers to the way of life that Muslims are obliged to follow.¹⁴ It explains the rules and necessary factors for two different kinds of interactions: those between people and God, e.g., worship, and those between people, e.g., social transactions. The Sunnah and the Holy Qur'an are the primary sources of Shari'ah.¹⁵

Guiding Principles: Quranic and Hadith Perspectives on Medical Ethics

The Prophet's traditions and the Qur'an have established clear and precise ethical principles for dealing with a variety of medical difficulties.¹⁶ Allah says in the Quran, "And when I am ill, it is He who cures me."¹⁷ The belief in Allah as the supreme healer is informed in this verse. It accepts that Allah is the source of all cures and healing.¹⁸ It motivates people to acknowledge and seek benevolence of Allah and guidelines in things related to their health and wellbeing. The Holy Quran is not a medical textbook, but it does provide guidelines if followed and will support healing and good health. The Holy Quran refers to itself as a book of healing for this important reason.¹⁹ Islam considers that people are among Allah's most sacred creations, and as such, they should be valued, respected, and well protected. Islam completely views humans as biopsychosocial religious beings. Therefore, every effort shall be made to secure, respect, and fulfill mankind while using the entirety of the Islamic way of life.²⁰

The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "Allah has sent down both the disease and the cure, and He has appointed a cure for every disease, so treat yourselves medically, but use nothing unlawful."²¹

This Hadith emphasizes the view that both the illness and its treatment were created by Allah. It underlines how important it is to use legal treatments and go to the doctor for various illnesses. It suggests Muslims to actively take part in their own healing by utilizing legal medical procedures and therapies.

These moral principles, which are referenced in the Quran and Hadith, show how complete Islamic teachings on medical matters are. In keeping with the guidelines of Islamic law and ethics, they stress the significance of seeking both spiritual and bodily recovery. They motivate people to seek out permissible and helpful therapies, acknowledge the importance of medical interventions in the healing process, and to rely on Allah's blessings for the best possible recovery and state of health.²²

Privacy and Confidentiality in Medical Ethics

Dignity and privacy represent inherent rights of every individual, constituting foundational aspects of bioethics. Keeping secrets in healthcare is very important to make sure doctors can help patients well. It's seen as just as important as when a priest keeps secrets in confession.²³ Abu Huraira reported Allah's Apostle (ﷺ) as saying: The servant (who conceals) the faults of others in this world, Allah would conceal his faults on the Day of Resurrection.²⁴

Medical confidentiality ensures that patients' dignity is respected and protects them from potential harm that could arise if their private information were disclosed without their consent. This protects patients from getting hurt and it's not just doctors who have to follow these rules; everyone in healthcare has to do the same. This includes anyone who handles, records, stores, accesses, or encounters confidential information. Everyone who is involved in healthcare, including students and trainees should must follow these rules and ethical guidelines regarding confidentiality.²⁵ Narrated by Tirmidi (1959) from Jaabir bin Abdullah (RA) from the Prophet, prayers and peace are upon him. He said: "If a man tells you something then looks around, it is a trust."²⁶

Prohibited Substances in Medicine

The curriculum should address Islamic guidelines regarding the utilization of prohibited substances in medical treatment. This includes all types of forbidden substances such as alcohol in medications and medications that derived from porcine sources like porcine insulin or enzymes. The use of porcine-derived materials in medical procedures like heart valve replacements or organ transplantation is also included in it. Medical students should be equipped with a thorough understanding of Islamic concepts of halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden) food and beverages.²⁷

It was narrated from 'Abdullah bin 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"Every intoxicant is unlawful and whatever causes intoxication in large amounts, a small amount of it is (also) unlawful."²⁸

Guidelines for Examining the Opposite Gender in Medical Practice

Rules regarding examining the opposite sex and sensitive body parts, known as "awra," must be clarified. Patients often prefer providers of the same gender, especially during sensitive examinations. Scholar says if Muslim doctor examines patients of the opposite gender so a third party should be present to avoid concerns of sexual harassment. According to most Islamic scholars, if patients seeking non-urgent treatment they should prioritize providers in the following order, Muslim of the same gender, non-Muslim of the same gender, Muslim of the opposite gender, and non-Muslim of the opposite gender. Scholars agree that necessity permits actions typically forbidden, allowing male doctors to examine female patients when required, with a same-gender third party present. Similarly, female doctors may fully examine male patients in necessity, also with a same-gender third party present.²⁹

On the authority of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudree (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say, "Whosoever of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then [let him change it] with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart — and that is the weakest of faith." [Muslim]³⁰

Divine Medical Justification for Medical Treatment

The well-known hadith contains the religious evidence for seeking medical treatment: "Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment."³¹ This Hadith emphasizes the idea of looking for treatments for health issues and diseases. It expresses the knowledge that Allah, in His wisdom, has developed treatments for a wide range of illnesses and sufferings. When people are dealing with health problems, it represents the encouragement to actively seek out medical treatments and cures.³² Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "Make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely old age."³³ The need of using medical treatments and cures for various illnesses and disorders is emphasized in this Hadith. It conveys the idea that most illnesses and sufferings that people may experience have treatments, according to Allah's wisdom.

The Hadith advises people to significantly seek out and utilize safe and effective medical treatments. This Hadith highlights how crucial it is to seek treatment, follow to prescribed care, and work towards improved health. This Hadith gives people hope and faith in the success of medical treatments by declaring that Allah has appointed cures for illnesses. It encourages Muslims to take care of their health and take an active role in their own recovery. Islamic bioethics is intimately linked to the broad ethical teachings of the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, and thus to the interpretation of Islamic law.³⁴

Religious Affiliation Improves Patient's Satisfaction

From a biological standpoint, various studies have shown that religious affiliation improves patient satisfaction and treatment compliance.³⁵ Messenger of Allah Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said: Strange are the ways of a believer for there is good in every affair of his and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer for if he has an occasion to feel delight, he thanks (God), thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is a good for him in it.³⁶

From a biological standpoint, a person's total wellbeing, including their experience as a patient, can be influenced by their attitude, their thankfulness, and their patience. Patients' happiness and willingness to follow through on

recommended therapies can be affected by having a positive attitude about healthcare and being pleased with the treatment received. It serves as a reminder that thoughts of a believer and attitude can positively affect their general well-being, including their satisfaction and adherence to therapy.

Preservation of Life

The major principle of Islamic medical ethics is the holy Qur'an's focus on the sanctity of human life. Allah says in the Quran: "if anyone slew a person unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people"³⁷ It states that saving life is a duty and taking life without justification is a serious crime in Islam.³⁸

Debates Surrounding Futile Treatment in Islamic Bioethics

in Saudi Arabia, there are instances where futile treatment is requested by family members.³⁹ However, the matter of futile treatment is widely debated, even among Islamic scholars. Some scholars do not endorse treatment if its sole purpose is to prolong the final stages of life. In Islam, prolonging death with futile or hopeless treatment is considered unacceptable.⁴⁰

It was narrated from 'Ubadah bin Samit that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) ruled: "There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm."⁴¹

Muslims firmly believe that all healing originates from God, acknowledging that no remedy is achievable without His will. Within the Muslim faith, rejecting the potential for a miracle is viewed as a transgression and may be construed as a lack of faith in God's omnipotence. Nonetheless, this belief does not compel Muslims to insist on treatment if a qualified physician has determined it to be ineffective.⁴²

The Islamic religions concepts concerning DNR decision have been clarified by the Presidency of the Administration of Islamic Research and Ifta, Riyadh, KSA, in their Fatwa No. 12086 issued on 30.6.1409(Hijra) [1988 (AD)]. The Fatwa states that: "if three knowledgeable and trustworthy physicians agreed that the patient condition is hopeless; the life-supporting machines can be withheld or withdrawn. The family members' opinion is not included in decision making as they are unqualified to make such decisions".⁴³

Warning Against Killing Someone

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) said: "Whoever killed a Mu'ahid (a person who is granted the pledge of protection by the Muslims) shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise".⁴⁴

This Hadith emphasizes the value of life and warning against killing someone without their consent, especially in instances of calm and peace. It highlights the seriousness of intentionally hurting or murdering someone, and it serves as a reminder of the value of protecting and honoring life.

The Hadith highlights the importance of valuing human life as an ethical concept and stresses Muslims' need to uphold it. It inhibits actions of hostility, violence, or harm directed at others, particularly when a ceasefire or mutual understanding is in effect.

This Hadith serves as a powerful moral example for people, warning them of the dire repercussions of taking another person's life unlawfully. It supports and encourages peace, justice, and the protection of life, which are central to Islamic teachings.

Abortion

In the Islamic context, the practice of abortion is defined as the termination of a pregnancy before the fetus can survive outside the womb, has always been a contentious issue. Surgical sterilization, aimed at rendering individuals incapable of having children, is categorically prohibited, with harsh punishments prescribed for those who induce miscarriages. However, Islamic teachings allow for alternative methods of birth control with the consent of legally married spouses. Abortion is generally illegal, except in cases where the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother⁴⁵ or if a significant congenital anomaly is detected in the fetus.⁴⁶ In instances of rape, abortion may be permitted, but only within the first 40 days of pregnancy. Scholars permit its abortion only if the fetus is less than four months old, or if it endangers the life of its mother.⁴⁷

Sanctity of Life

Islam holds that everyone has a finite lifespan and that life extension is not possible. Scientists should support God in the process of creating human death, not take His place. Islamic morality begins during pregnancy. Islam also provides a great value to the sanctity of human life and on the reality of death.⁴⁸ Allah says; "No soul can die except by God's permission"⁴⁹ Thus, while Islam places a high value on preserving lives (via medical intervention or otherwise), it also makes it plain that death is a part of the contract (with God) and that God alone has the authority to determine how long someone should live. The quality of healthy life is just as important as the life span. The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: "Do not kill a decrepit old man, or a young infant, or a child, or a woman"⁵⁰

One of God's greatest gifts and bounties is life, which is why it needs to be valued and safeguarded. The Holy Qur'an and hadith both emphasize saving lives, which is the founding principle of Islamic medical ethics.

Conclusion

This article has examined the substantial influence of Hadith on Islamic medical education and ethics. It has been emphasized the significance of Hadith as an additional source to the Qur'an in supplying ethical principles and guidance for educators and the healthcare industry.

Additionally, using Hadith into medical ethics and education has the ability to advance moral judgment, professionalism, and character growth. The article addressed the continued significance of Hadith in directing moral behavior and information development in the contexts of medicine and education. To expand the comprehension and use of Hadith in Islamic medical ethics and education, it calls for additional research, integration, and discussion. Overall, the article emphasizes the importance of Hadith and the thoroughness of Islamic teachings about medical matters.

Recommendations

- Encourage the setup of educational programs to increase public knowledge of the ethical guidelines for biomedical ethics derived from the Hadith. Workshops, seminars, and public lectures that support comprehension and application of Islamic ethical precepts in healthcare decision-making can fall under this category.
- Formation and development of ethical committees inside healthcare organizations. These committees can assist in talks about the use of Hadith in biomedical ethics and offer advice to healthcare professionals regarding ethical issues.
- Encourage interaction and cooperation amongst Islamic scholars and specialists from all cultures and religions. As a result, healthcare workers and patients from many groups may benefit from a deeper awareness of common ethical ideals and the promotion of ideas and best practices in biological ethics.
- Highlight the value of continuing education and instruction in Islamic biomedical ethics for healthcare practitioners. Encourage organizations to regularly host conferences, courses, and workshops that include the Islamic perspective on the ethical issues surrounding healthcare.

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