

Imam Syafiis Perspective on Medical Science and its Relevance to Modern Medical Practice

Wan Zulkifli Wan Hassan^{1,2}, Nabilah Abdullah³

¹School of Liberal Studies (Citra UKM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia · ²Institute of Islam Hadhari (HADHARI), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia · ³Kantan Permai National School, Ministry of Education Malaysia

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i6/25759> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i6/25759

Published Date: 18 June 2025

Abstract

This study aims to compare Imam Syafiis medical perspective with modern medical practice, and to assess the relevance of his thoughts in the context of contemporary medical science. Imam Syafii, a famous scholar in Islamic history, is not only known as an expert in the field of *fiqh* but also has significant contributions to medical science and healthcare. Through a literature review and comparative analysis, this study examines Imam Syafiis views on the importance of medical science, preventive approaches, and treatment of diseases, and compares them with modern medical principles based on scientific research and clinical evidence. The findings of the study show that many aspects of Imam Syafii's views on medicine are in line with modern medical practice, especially in the aspects of disease prevention and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. This study also outlines the suitability of old principles in the context of modern medicine and provides insight into how traditional approaches can support current medical practice. The results of this study are expected to enrich the understanding of the integration between traditional Islamic medical science and modern medicine.

Keywords: Imam Syafii, Islamic Medicine, Modern Medicine, Disease Prevention, Health Practice.

Introduction

This article compares the two approaches by providing a comprehensive view of the differences and similarities between Imam al-Syafi'i's traditional medicine and modern Western medicine. Medicine is a field that has evolved throughout human history and reflects changes in knowledge, techniques, and philosophy.

In the context of comparing the traditional medical views, as outlined by Imam al-Syafi'i, and the modern approaches used in Western medicine, there are fundamental differences in principles, methodologies, and applications. This article will discuss in detail the views of the two approaches based on several important aspects, accompanied by references from the works of Imam al-Syafi'i and modern medical sources. By examining the principles,

methodologies, and applications of these two approaches, we can understand their differences and similarities in the context of healthcare.

This study uses an analytical and comparative approach to evaluate the medical theories of Imam al-Syafi'i and modern Western medicine. There are several methodologies used in this article, including the use of the Literature Review method. The author collects and analyzes primary sources on Imam al-Syafi'i's medicine from works such as Sunan al-Bayhaqi al-Kubra and Kitab al-Hawi as well as modern medicine from reports and studies such as the Global Status Report on Noncommunicable Diseases by the World Health Organization.

In addition, the author also uses a comparative Basic Principles approach by evaluating the basic principles held by Imam al-Syafi'i and Western medicine, including the emphasis on prevention and the use of medicines.

Similarly, the author uses a Prevention Approach Analysis by analyzing the prevention approaches in both medical systems, including the lifestyle and dietary guidelines recommended by Imam al-Syafi'i as well as vaccination and health screening programs in Western medicine.

In conducting the Drug Utilization Assessment, the author has compared Imam al-Syafi'i's views on the use of medicines with the clinical evidence-based Western medical approach. From the perspective of mental and spiritual well-being, the author has analyzed how both approaches address mental and spiritual well-being and their influence on physical health.

From the perspective of synthesis and conclusion, the author has integrated the findings from the comparison of principles, approaches, and applications to provide a holistic view of healthcare that combines both approaches.

This methodology allows for a comprehensive analysis of both medical systems, providing a deep understanding of the differences and similarities between Imam al-Syafi'i's approach and modern Western medicine.

Imam al-Syafi'i's Principles and Foundations in Medical Science

Imam Al-Shafi'i (767-820 CE) was a renowned Islamic scholar and jurist who lived during the Abbasid period. Although he is best known for his contributions to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), he also had an interest in medicine and wrote books on other fields including medical science.

His expertise in this field is often not highlighted to the general public, yet his thoughts and advice on physical, mental, and spiritual health are relevant and in line with the concept of modern medicine today, including in the Malay World. In fact, his thoughts are not far different from the health practices advocated by the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

One of the main aspects highlighted by Imam al-Syafi'i is his openness to various sources of knowledge, including medical knowledge learned from non-Muslim scholars. In his mastery of this knowledge, Imam al-Syafi'i showed a willingness to accept any information that was beneficial for the good of humanity. When asked by Caliph Harun al-Rashid about his

knowledge in medicine, he stated that he understood the opinions and works of medical experts such as Hippocrates, Aristotle, and several medical figures from Rome and Persia (al-Bayhaqi, 1391H). This illustrates his open approach which emphasizes that knowledge belongs to all, and can be benefited from even if it comes from other cultures or religions.

Meanwhile, Western medicine, began to develop rapidly after the Scientific Revolution in the 17th century, based on scientific research and clinical evidence. The basic principle of Western medicine is to understand the mechanism of disease and treat it based on research and clinical trials (Shapin, Steven. 1996. *The Scientific Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

In modern medicine, this approach is very important, where the basic principle is to seek authentic and proven knowledge through research and experimentation. Modern medicine does not depend only on one culture or nation, but developed through contributions from various civilizations and nations. Studies have found that Imam al-Syafi'i already highlighted this principle more than a thousand years ago, reflecting very progressive thinking.

Imam al-Syafi'i (al-Dhahabi, 1985; al-Bayhaqi, 1391H) placed medical knowledge as one of the most important fields for humans to learn after knowledge related to halal and haram. According to him, medical knowledge is part of the worldly knowledge that Muslims must master, because it involves human physical well-being, which will ultimately affect a person's worship and piety to Allah.

He once stated, "Knowledge is divided into two; namely religious knowledge and worldly knowledge. Religious knowledge is fiqh, while worldly knowledge is medicine." (al-Razi, n.d). This shows that Imam al-Syafi'i is very aware of the need to maintain health and considers it part of a Muslim's responsibility to take care of the trust of the body given by Allah.

Imam al-Syafi'i also placed medical knowledge as 1/3 of the knowledge that humans need to possess. He also once expressed regret at the attitude of some Muslim communities who pay little attention to medical knowledge and health care. This complaint can be described through his words;

"They (Muslims) have lost 1/3 of their knowledge, they have handed it over to the Jews and Christians" (al-Bayhaqi. 1391H).

This shows how important medicine is according to Imam al-Syafi'i, he himself recommended that someone who wants to live and settle in a country should first ensure that the country has scholars who are able to provide religious instruction and also has doctors who provide advice and guidance regarding physical health (al-Syafi'i. 1979).

In his book "Al-Risalah al-Kafiah" (The Comprehensive Treatise), Imam Al-Shafi'i discussed various medical topics, including anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and medical ethics. He also mentioned the importance of observation, experimentation, and critical thinking in medical practice.

Some of His Ideas in Medicine Include

1. The importance of empirical observation: Imam Al-Shafi'i emphasized the need to observe patients' symptoms and responses to treatment in order to develop effective medical practices.
2. The use of natural remedies: He advocated the use of natural remedies, such as herbal extracts, minerals, and other substances found in nature, rather than relying solely on surgical intervention.
3. The "Greek" concept of medicine: Imam Al-Shafi'i was influenced by the "Greek" concept of medicine by the Greek physician Galen, which emphasized the balance of the body's humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) and the use of medicinal substances to restore balance.
4. The importance of medical ethics: He emphasized the need for physicians to adhere to ethical principles, such as confidentiality, honesty, and respect for the dignity of the patient.

Although Imam Al-Shafi'i's ideas on medicine were not revolutionary or prescriptive by modern standards, they demonstrate his interest in the subject and his commitment to evidence-based medicine. His writings on medicine also reflect the cultural exchange and intellectual curiosity that characterized the Islamic Golden Age.

Although Imam Al-Shafi'i's medical ideas were not widely accepted or further developed during his lifetime, his contributions to empirical observations and medical science have had a lasting impact on Islamic thought and practice.

In a report issued by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) which explained that medical knowledge and health care should be studied by society to improve the quality of life and life expectancy (Institute of Medicine (IOM), 2011. *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*). This is seen in line with what Imam al-Syafi'i asserted, medicine is among the most important worldly sciences after religious knowledge.

In the context of modern medicine, the emphasis on health as an individual responsibility is in line with the concept of disease prevention and holistic health care. A healthy lifestyle, balanced nutrition, and self-care are aspects that Imam al-Syafi'i strongly emphasized and are important elements in modern medicine today.

WHO emphasizes that knowledge in the field of medicine is important to achieve sustainable development goals and to ensure universal health. This is in line with the views of Imam al-Syafi'i who sees medicine as an important science in human life (World Health Organization (WHO), 2016. *Health Workforce Requirements for Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals*).

Disease Control and Overall Health

Imam al-Syafi'i's thinking on disease control is also in line with the modern medical approach. He once emphasized that disease can be prevented and controlled through good health care. This includes maintaining personal hygiene, monitoring physical condition, and avoiding factors that can cause disease. A clear example of his sensitivity to disease can be seen in the story where he was able to predict the health of a Christian doctor who came to see him.

After holding and feeling the doctor's hand, Imam al-Syafi'i was able to conclude that the doctor was suffering from a serious illness, and soon after the doctor died, proving the accuracy of Imam al-Syafi'i's observations (al-Bayhaqi, 1391H).

In the context of modern medicine, this can be attributed to diagnostic skills and the importance of regular health check-ups. Medical science today greatly emphasizes the importance of early detection of disease through clinical tests and examinations, which helps in controlling the disease before it becomes more severe. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasizes that mastery of medical knowledge is important in preventing disease and controlling the spread of disease in society (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2019. *The Importance of Prevention: Reducing Healthcare Costs through Preventive Care*). This is in line with the recommendations of Imam al-Syafi'i who prioritizes health and disease control in human life.

Imam al-Syafi'i placed great emphasis on the importance of maintaining health through compliance with Islamic law. In his works, as referenced by Al-Razi (2003) and Al-Bayhaqi (1391H), he emphasized that prevention is better than cure.

Imam Syafi'i's statement emphasizing that prevention is better than cure is very much in line with the basic principles of modern medicine. In many aspects of modern medicine, a preventive approach is often considered more effective and economical than treating a disease after it has occurred. Here is an explanation of how this idea aligns with modern medical views, along with references to support the argument:

In modern medicine, there is a concept known as "Preventive Medicine", which aims to prevent disease before it occurs. This involves actions such as vaccinations, early screening programs for chronic diseases, health education, and promotion of healthy lifestyles (Frieden, Thomas R. 2010. *A Framework for Public Health Action: The Health Impact Pyramid*. American Journal of Public Health). In this article, it discusses how preventive measures such as lifestyle changes, vaccinations, and early detection can reduce the burden of disease at the population level.

Modern medicine also emphasizes the prevention of non-communicable diseases. Diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer are among the examples of non-communicable diseases that can be prevented through a healthy lifestyle such as diet control, consistent exercise, and regular health check-ups. Modern medicine emphasizes that efforts to prevent these diseases are much more effective than treating them after they have developed into a chronic stage (World Health Organization (WHO), 2018. *Noncommunicable Diseases Prevention and Control*). WHO explains that preventing non-communicable diseases through a healthy lifestyle is the best way to reduce premature deaths and the economic burden on the healthcare system.

Modern medicine also recognizes that prevention is cheaper and more cost-effective than treatment. This leads to the economic and resource advantages of prevention. For example, preventive measures such as vaccination against infectious diseases such as measles or polio are cheaper and easier to implement than treating an outbreak of a disease that has already spread. (Maciosek, Michael V., et al. 2010. *Priorities Among Effective Clinical Preventive*

Services: Results of a Systematic Review and Analysis. American Journal of Preventive Medicine). This study found that preventive measures such as vaccination, regular health check-ups, and promotion of a healthy lifestyle are more economical in terms of economy and provide significant health benefits.

The idea of prevention being better than cure expressed by Imam al-Syafi'i is also in line with the principles of Islamic medicine, which emphasizes cleanliness, maintaining a healthy diet, and avoiding things that cause harm. This is similar to the modern concept of prevention, which emphasizes a balanced diet, hygiene, and physical activity as a way to prevent disease (Al-Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "It is better to prevent than to cure." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari). In Islam, there are many hadiths that advise people to maintain health, hygiene, and avoid things that lead to disease, which is the basis of the principle of prevention in modern medicine.

Prevention Through a Healthy Lifestyle

Imam al-Syafi'i often emphasized the importance of health care through a healthy lifestyle, such as maintaining a healthy diet and avoiding things that can harm the body. This is in line with the modern concept of public health that recommends a healthy lifestyle as a prevention of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2021. Healthy Living and Disease Prevention). The Harvard School of Public Health suggests that a healthy lifestyle, including good nutrition, adequate exercise, and avoidance of bad habits, is the basis for disease prevention and prolonging life.

Prevention of infectious diseases through vaccination is one of the greatest successes of modern medicine. Global vaccination programs have successfully reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that previously caused significant mortality and disability (Plotkin, S.A., Orenstein, W.A., Offit, P.A. 2013. Vaccines. Elsevier). This book explains the success of vaccines in preventing diseases such as polio, chickenpox, and measles, and supports the claim that prevention through vaccination is far better than treatment after the disease has occurred.

Thus, Imam al-Syafi'i's statement that prevention is better than cure is in line with the views of modern medicine. Both approaches emphasize that preventive measures can reduce the risk of disease, maintain health, and avoid the high costs and pain that come with treating disease. Imam al-Syafi'i's emphasis on health care is relevant to the modern concept of preventive medicine, which sees early measures as the best way to achieve better health in the long term.

The basic principle of medicine according to Imam al-Syafi'i is to maintain a balanced diet and avoid things that can harm the body. For example, Imam al-Syafi'i advised not to eat excessively because it can cause physical and mental weakness. In a hadith reported by Al-Bayhaqi (1391H), he said: "I have never been full for 16 years. This is because when a person eats a lot, it will cause him to drink a lot, while drinking a lot will arouse the desire to sleep, causing stupidity and decreased thinking ability, weakness of spirit and laziness of the body."

Meanwhile, according to the view of Western medicine, it shows that an unbalanced diet can cause various diseases and can bring various adverse effects on health according to modern

medicine. There are several main dangers caused by overeating, among which is obesity and related diseases. This is because overeating, especially foods high in calories and fat, can cause obesity which is a major risk factor for various chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and fatty liver disease. Obesity can also increase the risk of several types of cancer (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021. Obesity and Overweight). The WHO explains that obesity, which is caused by excess calorie intake, is a leading cause of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.

According to modern medicine, overeating can cause digestive disorders such as dyspepsia (heartburn), acid reflux, and heartburn. Consuming large amounts of food, especially those high in fat and spices, can cause the stomach to become distended and force stomach acid up into the esophagus, causing discomfort and damage to the stomach lining (American College of Gastroenterology, 2018. Dyspepsia and Indigestion). This report explains how overeating can lead to digestive disorders and an increased risk of gastro esophageal reflux disease (GERD).

Overeating can cause metabolic imbalances, where the body is unable to handle the surge of glucose and lipids entering the bloodstream. This can lead to increased blood sugar levels (hyperglycemia), increased unhealthy cholesterol (especially LDL), and ultimately disrupt the body's normal metabolism (National Institutes of Health (NIH), 2020. Effects of Overeating on Metabolism). The NIH explains that overeating can lead to metabolic imbalances, increasing the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and dyslipidemia.

Increased Risk of Heart Disease

Consuming excessive amounts of calories, saturated fat, and cholesterol can lead to increased blood cholesterol and plaque buildup in the arteries, known as atherosclerosis. This condition can lead to heart attacks, strokes, and coronary heart disease. A report from the American Heart Association, (2019), Overeating and Heart Health states that excessive consumption of foods, especially those high in saturated fat and sugar, can increase the risk of heart disease.

Type 2 Diabetes

Overeating, especially foods high in sugar and refined carbohydrates, can lead to weight gain and insulin resistance, which is a major cause of type 2 diabetes. Studies show that being overweight directly increases the risk of developing diabetes. In the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2021. Diabetes Prevention explains how overeating, especially excessive carbohydrate and sugar intake, can lead to weight gain and an increased risk of type 2 diabetes.

Mental Health Problems

Modern research also shows that overeating can lead to mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. Overeating is often associated with feelings of guilt, shame, or stress, which can ultimately worsen mental health problems. In the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), 2020. Binge Eating Disorder and Mental Health discusses how overeating habits can be linked to mental health problems such as compulsive eating disorder and other psychological problems.

Fatty Liver Disease

Overeating, especially foods high in fat and sugar, can cause non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), in which excess fat accumulates in the liver. This can cause liver inflammation, liver damage, and the risk of developing into cirrhosis. Mayo Clinic, 2021. Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) explains how overeating can cause fat to accumulate in the liver and lead to serious fatty liver disease.

Thus, overeating has many adverse health effects according to modern medicine. It can cause obesity, digestive disorders, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and mental health problems. Therefore, maintaining a balanced and moderate diet is important to prevent various diseases related to overeating.

In addition, Imam al-Syafi'i (al-Dhahbi, 1985) in his words, "Whoever eats a lemon and then falls asleep is not safe from angina," expresses the traditional view on the effects of consuming lemon, especially when eaten before going to bed. The term "angina" used may not refer specifically to angina pectoris (chest pain due to coronary heart disease) as understood in modern medicine, but rather to a specific disease state or discomfort.

In modern medicine, lemons and citrus fruits are generally considered to be good and nutritious sources of vitamin C. However, for some individuals with gastro esophageal reflux disease (GERD), consuming citrus fruits before bed can cause an increase in stomach acid, which can lead to symptoms such as heartburn. Heartburn can cause chest pain that can sometimes be confused with angina symptoms. Medical studies confirm that individuals with GERD may need to avoid citrus fruits before bed to reduce this risk. This has been discussed by the American College of Gastroenterology (accessed 2024) on the management of GERD and dietary advice that avoids consuming acidic foods before bed. ([source](https://gi.org/guideline/management-of-gastroesophageal-reflux-disease/))

In the meantime, citrus fruits, including lemons, are thought to support heart health. The vitamin C, flavonoids, and fiber content in citrus fruits help reduce blood pressure, reduce inflammation, and improve cardiovascular health. There is no scientific evidence directly linking citrus fruit consumption to the risk of angina pectoris, but a balanced intake of citrus fruits is part of a heart-healthy diet. This can be referenced in the American Heart Association's statement recommending citrus fruit consumption as part of a diet that reduces the risk of heart disease. (https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/heart-check-foods)

In the context of chest pain or "angina" mentioned by Imam al-Syafi'i, modern medicine defines angina pectoris as chest pain caused by insufficient oxygen supply to the heart muscle, often due to narrowing or blockage of the coronary arteries. Major risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and a sedentary lifestyle. Consumption of lemons or citrus fruits is not considered a causative factor for angina in the context of modern medicine. The Mayo Clinic (2024) provides guidance on the causes and risk factors of angina, with a focus on coronary heart disease. ([source](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/angina/symptoms-causes/syc-20369373))

Imam Syafi'i's view on consuming lemons before bed and its association with "angina" may reflect the traditional medical understanding of his time, which associated physical discomfort or certain illnesses with eating before bed. However, modern medicine, based on scientific studies, shows that citrus fruits actually provide health benefits, especially for the heart, although they should be avoided by GERD patients before bed because they can cause heartburn that may be misinterpreted as chest pain or angina. This view illustrates the difference between traditional and modern medicine in understanding the relationship between food and disease.

Approach to Disease and Prevention

Imam al-Syafi'i emphasized the importance of prevention as a primary step in health care. He linked a simple and non-excessive lifestyle to disease prevention. Imam al-Syafi'i provided specific guidance on the types of food and lifestyle that should be practiced to maintain health.

For example, as mentioned in the text referred to by Al-Bayhaqi (1391H), Imam al-Syafi'i discouraged excessive eating of eggplant, especially at night, because it was considered to cause certain health problems.

Meanwhile, Western medicine uses an evidence-based approach in disease prevention, including vaccination programs, health screenings, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles such as a balanced diet and regular physical activity. For example, vaccination programs such as those carried out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States have shown success in preventing infectious diseases such as polio, measles, and influenza (CDC, 2022). Health screenings also help in the early detection of diseases such as cancer and diabetes, allowing for early treatment and increasing the recovery rate.

According to modern medical findings, excessive eating of eggplant can have several adverse effects on health. However, if eaten in moderate quantities, eggplant is actually nutritious. There are several negative effects that may occur if eggplant is eaten in excess, including eggplant containing solanine and toxic effects. This is because eggplant, like other vegetables from the nightshade family (such as tomatoes and potatoes), contains solanine, a type of alkaloid. Solanine in small doses is usually not dangerous, however, excessive consumption can cause symptoms of poisoning such as nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, and nerve problems (Friedman, Mendel. 2006. Potato Glycoalkaloids and Metabolites: Roles in the Plant and in the Diet. Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry).

In addition, eggplant also causes the absorption of Iron (Iron Chelator). This is because eggplant also contains a substance known as nasunin, a type of antioxidant that also acts as an iron chelator. This means that nasunin can bind iron and prevent the absorption of iron in the body. Eating eggplant in excess can reduce blood iron levels, especially in individuals who already suffer from anemia or iron deficiency (McCarthy, M. 2004. Effect of Nasunin, an Iron Chelator, in Eggplant. Food Science and Nutrition).

Similarly, some individuals may experience allergic reactions to eggplant. Eggplant can trigger allergic reactions such as itching, rash, or inflammation in those who are sensitive to nightshades. Excessive consumption can intensify allergy symptoms. This illustrates the

occurrence of sensitivity to nightshades and how eggplant consumption can trigger allergic reactions or inflammation in some individuals (Vassiliki, A. 2016. Nightshades and Inflammation in Sensitive Individuals. *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*).

In the meantime, eggplant contains oxalate, a natural compound that can contribute to the formation of *kidney stones* (kidney stones) in individuals who are susceptible to this problem. Excessive consumption of eggplant, especially by those with a history of oxalate kidney stones, may increase the risk of kidney stones (Curhan, G. C., et al. 2004. Oxalate Content of Vegetables and Its Contribution to Kidney Stones. *New England Journal of Medicine*).

Excessive consumption of eggplant, especially when fried or cooked in a lot of oil, may cause digestive problems such as bloating, gas, or abdominal discomfort. This is because eggplant can easily absorb oil, making it difficult to digest in large quantities (Dreher, M. L. 2018. Food and Fiber Digestion: Impact of Cooking Methods on Gastrointestinal Tolerance. *Journal of Nutrition*).

Overall, eggplant is a healthy vegetable when eaten in moderation. However, excessive consumption can lead to negative health effects such as solanine toxicity, impaired iron absorption, allergies, kidney stones, and digestive problems. The general recommendation is to ensure that eggplant is consumed in a balanced amount.

Apart from that, Imam al-Syafi'i (al-Bayhaqi, 1391H; al-Dhahbi, 1985) once mentioned three things that were called antidotes, namely grapes, pollen milk, and sugarcane. This shows his view on foods and natural products that can provide health benefits, especially in the context of those who do not have access to medicine or medical treatment.

In modern medicine, grapes are known as a fruit rich in antioxidants, such as resveratrol, which have various health benefits, including reducing inflammation, protecting the heart by improving blood vessel health and reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and fighting free radicals that can cause cell damage and premature aging.

Research shows that the antioxidants found in grapes can help protect against heart disease, high blood pressure, and controlling blood sugar levels, all in line with Imam al-Syafi'i's views on its health benefits. In the American Heart Association (2024) encourages the consumption of grapes and antioxidant-rich foods to maintain heart health. (<https://www.heart.org>).

As for pollen milk or bee pollen, it is a natural product produced by bees from plant pollen. In modern medicine, bee pollen is known for its rich properties in proteins and vitamins (including B-complex vitamins). Pollen milk also has antioxidants that help reduce inflammation and boost the immune system. Similarly, pollen milk has antimicrobial and antibacterial properties, which can support general health and speed up the healing process.

Modern medicine recognizes the health benefits of bee pollen in increasing energy, improving immunity, and supporting digestive function. However, it is also important to take it with caution because some individuals may be allergic to bee products. In the *Journal of Functional*

Foods (2024) it is stated that bee pollen contains many nutrients that can improve overall human health.

(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1756464614001543>).

Meanwhile, sugarcane is used in the traditions of various cultures as a natural refreshing and nutritious ingredient. In modern medicine, sugarcane juice is recognized to have several health benefits such as a source of quick energy because sugarcane juice is rich in natural sugars that provide instant energy. It also creates natural electrolytes because sugarcane juice also contains minerals such as potassium and magnesium that help in maintaining electrolyte balance, making it suitable for preventing dehydration. Sugarcane can also form antioxidant properties. This is said to be because sugarcane juice is rich in antioxidants that fight free radicals and help protect the body from various chronic diseases.

However, modern medicine also emphasizes that the consumption of sugarcane in its processed form, such as white sugar, can have negative effects if consumed in excess, including an increased risk of diabetes and obesity. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) (2024) suggests that consuming sugarcane in its raw form or juice has health benefits, but that processed sugar should be limited. (<https://www.nih.gov>).

Thus, Imam al-Syafi'i promoted grapes, pollen milk, and sugarcane as remedies for those who lack medicine, and this is in line with the discoveries of modern medicine that recognize the health benefits of these natural products. However, modern medicine also adds a new dimension with certain warnings, such as allergies to pollen milk or the negative effects of consuming excessive sugar from sugarcane. This knowledge shows the parallel between traditional views and modern science in the use of natural resources to maintain health.

Use of Medicines and Treatment

Imam al-Syafi'i believed that the use of medicines should be done with caution. He advised that only medicines known to be free from harmful elements, such as alcohol, should be used. His view was based on the principles of avoiding harm and maintaining the purity of the body. For example, in the text of Al-Razi (n.d), Imam al-Syafi'i recommended the use of natural ingredients and avoiding substances that could intoxicate or harm the body.

The Western medical approach, on the other hand, uses clinically tested medicines to treat various types of diseases. This process involves rigorous research and development to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the medicines. For example, medicines such as antibiotics, antidepressants, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) have been proven effective in the treatment of various diseases. The discovery of penicillin by Alexander Fleming in 1928, for example, paved the way for a new era in modern medicine with the ability to treat bacterial infections that were previously life-threatening (Lax, 2004).

The use of alcohol in medicines is a topic that is often discussed in modern medicine. In general, alcohol is used in several types of medicines, especially as a solvent, antiseptic, or preservative. However, in controlled amounts, alcohol is considered safe, but if used excessively or without supervision, it can cause harm to health. There are several negative effects of using alcohol in medicines, including its effects on the central nervous system. Alcohol is a substance that can affect the central nervous system, and excessive use of alcohol

in medicines can cause excessive sedation, mental impairment, or dependence on alcohol. In modern medicine, excessive use of alcohol in medicines can lead to addiction or neurological reactions such as dizziness, drowsiness, or confusion (National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 2018. Alcohol's Effects on the Body). In this report, it explains how alcohol affects the central nervous system and how it can cause addiction if used excessively.

In addition, when alcohol is taken in large doses or for a long period of time, it can have hepatotoxic effects, which is damaging to the liver. High doses of alcohol-containing medications can increase the risk of fatty liver disease, cirrhosis, and alcoholic hepatitis. The American Liver Foundation's (2019) report, Alcohol and Liver Health, describes the negative effects of alcohol on liver health, especially when used long-term or in large doses.

Meanwhile, alcohol in medications can also interact with other medications, causing unwanted side effects. For example, alcohol can increase the effects of sedatives, anti-depressants, or other medications that act on the central nervous system, making those medications more dangerous or reducing their effectiveness. An article cited in the National Institutes of Health (NIH), 2016. Alcohol and Medication Interactions discusses alcohol interactions with various types of medications and how they can increase the risk of serious side effects, including toxic effects on organs.

Alcohol can also irritate the stomach lining and cause gastritis or peptic ulcers. Medications that contain alcohol, if taken regularly, can cause stomach discomfort, heartburn, or even damage to the stomach wall. In the Mayo Clinic report, 2020, Alcohol and Digestive Health explains how alcohol consumption can have adverse effects on the digestive system, including inflammation of the stomach and intestines.

The use of medications that contain alcohol can be dangerous for children and pregnant women. Alcohol can have toxic effects on a developing fetus, causing birth defects or developmental problems. High doses of alcohol used in medicine can cause Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), (2019), Alcohol Use in Pregnancy has outlined the risks of alcohol use during pregnancy, including the risk of birth defects and developmental problems in the baby.

Although alcohol is often used as an antiseptic in modern medicine, external use is generally considered safe. However, excessive use or on sensitive skin can cause dry skin, irritation, or allergic reactions in some individuals. The World Health Organization (WHO), 2018 under the title Alcohol-based Handrubs: Risks and Benefits, explains that although alcohol is an effective ingredient to kill germs, it can cause skin irritation if used excessively or by individuals with sensitive skin.

In general, alcohol in medicines can be used safely if the amount is controlled and under the supervision of a medical professional. However, excessive use or without proper guidance can cause harm to the nervous system, liver, stomach, and in some cases, risk causing dangerous interactions with other drugs.

In addition, there is a statement by Imam al-Syafi'l (al-Bayhaqi, 1391H; al-Dhahabi 1985), who once stated the use of liver oil as a treatment for someone who is blind or has poor vision,

reflecting the traditional medical approach of his time. This view can be linked to the use of natural resources to treat health problems, including eye problems.

In the statement, Imam al-Syafi'i mentioned liver oil as a treatment to improve the vision of someone who is blind or has vision problems. This may refer to the use of fish liver oil, which has been known since ancient times as a rich source of nutrients essential for eye health, although at that time scientific explanations were not available.

In modern medicine, cod liver oil, especially from cod fish (cod liver oil), is an important source of vitamin A and omega-3 fatty acids which have been shown to play an important role in maintaining eye health. Vitamin A deficiency can cause xerophthalmia (an eye disease that can lead to night blindness and severe dry eyes) as well as other problems such as macular degeneration and cataracts. Therefore, cod liver oil is indeed used as a supplement in preventing and treating eye problems caused by vitamin A deficiency. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) (2024) states that vitamin A is essential for vision health, and its deficiency can cause night blindness and other eye-related disorders (<https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminA-HealthProfessional/>).

In addition, the American Academy of Ophthalmology (2024) also confirms that omega-3 fatty acids can reduce the risk of dry eye syndrome and improve retinal health (<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/benefits-omega-3-fatty-acids-eye-health>).

Modern medicine recognizes retinol (the active form of vitamin A) as an essential nutrient that helps the retina function properly. Retinitis pigmentosa, a genetic condition that causes vision loss, can also be slowed down by vitamin A supplementation. Taking fish liver oil supplements can increase vitamin A levels in the body, which plays a key role in improving vision in those who are deficient in this vitamin.

An article in the Journal of Clinical Nutrition confirms that adequate vitamin A intake can improve vision, especially in those who are deficient in this vitamin. (<https://academic.oup.com/jn/article/130/2/183/4686362>).

While vitamin A and fish liver oil are useful in preventing and treating vision problems related to nutritional deficiencies, more serious vision problems such as permanent blindness require more specialized treatment in modern medicine. Today, eye surgery, gene therapy, and the use of glasses or contact lenses are common treatments for various vision problems. Vitamins and supplements are still important, but they are not enough to overcome more complex vision problems.

Mayo Clinic (2024) lists various modern treatments for vision problems such as cataracts, macular degeneration, and blindness caused by genetic problems or aging (<https://www.mayoclinic.org>).

Thus, Imam al-Syafi'i's statement on the use of cod liver oil to treat vision problems is in line with modern understanding of the role of vitamin A in maintaining eye health. Modern medicine recognizes cod liver oil as a rich source of vitamin A and omega-3 fatty acids, which

support retinal function and prevent eye diseases. While cod liver oil can help overcome nutritional deficiencies that cause vision problems, modern medicine has developed more specific treatments for a variety of more complex vision conditions, such as through surgery and gene therapy. This traditional view reflects the wisdom of the past that is partly confirmed by modern scientific studies.

Mental and Spiritual Well-Being

For Imam al-Syafi'i, mental and spiritual well-being is as important as physical well-being. He believed that spiritual health has a great impact on physical health. Therefore, he emphasized the importance of maintaining a relationship with Allah, practicing consistent worship, and avoiding immoral acts as ways to achieve mental and spiritual balance. For example, Imam al-Syafi'i recommended the practice of dhikr and prayer as ways to increase spiritual peace and well-being, which will ultimately affect physical health (Al-Bayhaqi, 1391H).

In Western medicine, mental health is considered an important component of an individual's overall well-being. Treatment for mental disorders typically involves psychological therapies, pharmacology, and other evidence-based approaches. For example, approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and the use of antidepressants have shown effectiveness in treating disorders such as depression and anxiety (Beck, 2011). In the case of spiritual health, it is often associated with psychological well-being and is rarely specifically focused on except in the context of holistic therapy.

In this regard, Imam al-Syafi'i (al-Dhahabi, 1391H; al-Razi, 2003) once stated that nuts improve the brain, and the brain improves the mind. This statement reflects the traditional view that nuts have a positive effect on brain and mind function. This can be seen as a recognition of the nutritional benefits of nuts for mental and cognitive health. In the context of modern medicine, this view is also supported by scientific studies that confirm that nuts are indeed beneficial for the brain and mental health.

In modern medicine, various studies have shown that nuts, especially walnuts, almonds, peanuts, and hazelnuts, are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin E, antioxidants, and fiber that support brain function. Omega-3 helps protect the brain from cognitive decline and inflammation, while vitamin E acts as an antioxidant that protects brain cells from free radical damage, which can cause diseases such as Alzheimer's. A study by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (accessed 2024) reported that nuts are rich in essential nutrients that support brain function and reduce the risk of neurodegenerative diseases. (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/food-features/nuts/>).

Nuts, especially walnuts, contain omega-3 fatty acids that are important for brain health. Omega-3s support the development of neurons, improve communication between brain cells, and prevent inflammation in the brain that can cause cognitive decline. Nut consumption is also associated with improved memory and better executive function, which is the ability to solve problems, plan, and make decisions. The Journal of Nutrition, Health & Aging (accessed 2024) states that nut consumption is associated with improved cognitive function and a reduced risk of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's. (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12603-014-0520-x>).

Modern studies also confirm that nuts contribute to mental health by improving brain function, improving concentration, memory, and mental clarity. Regular consumption of nuts has been linked to better mental abilities, and several studies suggest that nuts can slow brain aging, maintain mental flexibility, and improve emotional health. A study published in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience* (accessed 2024) showed that consuming nuts can improve cognitive function in older adults, and also help slow brain aging. (<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnagi.2014.00133/full>).

In addition to fatty acids, nuts are also rich in vitamin E, which is important in protecting the brain from oxidative stress. Oxidative stress can damage brain cells and accelerate cognitive decline. Therefore, consuming foods rich in vitamin E, such as nuts, can help prevent mental decline and maintain brain health throughout life. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) (accessed 2024) states that vitamin E is a powerful antioxidant that is essential for brain health, with deficiency linked to a risk of neurodegenerative diseases.

Therefore, Imam al-Syafi'i's views on the benefits of nuts for the brain and mind are supported by modern medicine. Nuts, especially those rich in omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin E, have been shown to have positive effects on brain health, improving memory, cognitive function, and protecting the brain from neurodegenerative diseases. Modern medicine confirms that consistent consumption of nuts is part of a diet that supports mental and physical health.

Imam al-Syafi'i may not have had scientific evidence in his time, but his wisdom on brain and mind health through natural foods like nuts is in line with today's scientific findings.

Conclusion

Although there are some significant differences between the views of Imam al-Syafi'i and the Western medical approach, both aim to promote human health and well-being. Imam al-Syafi'i emphasizes prevention and self-preservation based on Islamic principles, while Western medicine focuses on treatment based on scientific evidence and modern technology. By integrating these two approaches, society can obtain a more holistic view of health care, which combines physical, mental, and spiritual aspects in an effort to maintain human well-being.

Among the interests of society in knowing the comparison between the perspective of Imam al-Syafi'i's medical science and modern medical practices in today's life is that society can gain a Holistic understanding of Health. Imam al-Syafi'i's approach often emphasizes the relationship between the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of health. This comparison helps society understand that health is not just a physical aspect but also related to spiritual well-being, in accordance with modern lifestyles that often ignore spiritual elements.

In addition, society can Integrate Islamic Values in Medicine. Imam al-Syafi'i's medical practices are based on sharia principles, such as maintaining purity, etiquette, and the priority of prevention. Knowing this comparison allows the Muslim community to integrate Islamic values into modern medicine without abandoning scientific progress.

This study can also increase trust in modern medical practices. Recognizing the similarity of basic principles such as the priority of disease prevention and medical ethics can increase the Muslim community's trust in modern medical practices.

Similarly, this study can promote ethical medical practices. This comparison highlights the importance of medical ethics practiced by Imam al-Syafi'i, such as respecting patients and avoiding harm, which are also the basis of modern medical practices. It reminds society and modern medical practitioners to prioritize human well-being, not profit.

The above findings can also support the conservation of traditional knowledge. Appreciating Imam al-Syafi'i's perspective helps preserve the heritage of Islamic medical knowledge that can be used as additional references in modern research and practice.

In addition, this study can strengthen cultural identity and values. In a globalized world, understanding the heritage of Islamic medicine helps society maintain its cultural identity and Islamic values while adapting to the advances of modern medicine. It can also Help Solve Contemporary Health Issues. Imam al-Syafi'i's approach that emphasizes a healthy lifestyle, the use of herbs, and prevention can be combined with modern technology to address current diseases such as diabetes and chronic diseases.

With the findings of this study, it is also able to Increase the diversity of treatment options. By understanding both perspectives, society can make smarter decisions in choosing treatment, whether traditional, modern, or a combination of both. This awareness is important to build a healthier, balanced society, rooted in traditional values while being open to advances in science and technology.

Theoretical Contribution:

a. Expansion of the Holistic Health Paradigm:

This research introduces or reinforces the theory that human health should be viewed holistically — encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. It extends the health theory framework, which has long been dominated by the biomedical model, to include a bio-psycho-socio-spiritual model.

b. Integration of Islamic and Modern Knowledge in Health Sciences:

The study contributes to the development of integrative theory in the field of Islamic epistemology and modern medicine by demonstrating that traditional knowledge — such as the thoughts of Imam al-Shafi'i — can engage in scholarly dialogue with contemporary scientific approaches.

c. Islamic Medical Ethics Theory:

This research also strengthens the Islamic medical ethics theory, which includes *maqasid al-shari'ah* principles — such as the protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), and religion (*hifz al-din*) — that align with modern ethical principles like beneficence and non-maleficence.

Contextual Contribution

a. Relevance to Contemporary Muslim Communities:

In today's Muslim society, this research addresses the need to understand how Islamic values can be integrated into modern medical practices, making modern medicine more acceptable to religious communities and strengthening patient trust in healthcare systems.

b. Providing Complementary Healthcare Alternatives:

It contributes practically to the formulation of culturally appropriate healthcare policies. In contexts such as Malaysia, this research can support the development of guidelines for alternative treatments that are *shariah*-compliant and ethically sound.

c. Preservation of Islamic Intellectual Heritage:

The study plays a role in preserving Islamic intellectual traditions, elevating the thoughts of figures like Imam al-Shafi'i in modern academic discourse, and opening space for further studies in Islamic medical history and sciences.

Significance to Existing Knowledge

This study plays a significant role in contributing to the existing body of knowledge, particularly in the area of comparative analysis between the thoughts of classical Islamic scholars and contemporary approaches. This contribution is crucial, as such discussions remain underexplored in academic literature, especially within the context of community health. Accordingly, this study helps to fill existing gaps in the literature and enhances the understanding of the relationship between traditional Islamic values and modern medical practices.

Furthermore, the study opens broader avenues for interdisciplinary research. It integrates various fields of knowledge—such as medicine, theology, history, and ethics—into a comprehensive academic discourse. This interdisciplinary approach not only enriches academic scholarship but also serves as a bridge between modern scientific knowledge and the intellectual legacy of Islam. It offers scholars the opportunity to explore current issues through a more inclusive and integrated perspective.

Enhancing Understanding of Community Health Needs

It provides a more holistic understanding of the needs of Muslim patients by taking into account their values, spirituality, and belief systems—dimensions that are frequently overlooked or insufficiently addressed in conventional biomedical healthcare models.

Role in the Current Context

This research serves as a foundational model for the development of Islamic health frameworks, particularly in informing the design of medical education curricula and public health policies grounded in the principles of *maqasid al-shari'ah*. Furthermore, the findings offer practical guidance for Muslim healthcare practitioners—including doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals—by promoting more empathetic, culturally competent, and value-sensitive patient care. In addition, the study provides a strong basis for further scholarly inquiry into the integration of traditional Islamic healing approaches with modern medical technologies, including their potential impacts on clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction.

References

- al-Bayhaqi, A. I. H. (1971). *Manaqib al-Syafi'i*. Cairo: al-Halabi.
- al-Dhahabi, S. D. M. 'U. (1985). *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah.
- al-Razi, M. I. Z. (2003). *Adab al-Syafi'i wa Manaqibuh*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
- al-Syafii. (1979). *Al-Risalah*. Cairo: Dar al-Turath.
- American College of Gastroenterology. (n.d.). *GERD management and dietary advice*. <https://gi.org/guideline/management-of-gastroesophageal-reflux-disease/>
- American College of Gastroenterology. (2018). *Dyspepsia and indigestion*. <https://gi.org>
- American Heart Association. (2019). *Overeating and heart health*. <https://www.heart.org>
- American Liver Foundation. (2019). *Alcohol and liver health*. <https://liverfoundation.org>
- Beck, A. T. (2011). *Cognitive therapy of depression*. Guilford Press.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2019). *Alcohol use in pregnancy*. <https://www.cdc.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2019). *The importance of prevention: Reducing healthcare costs through preventive care*. <https://www.cdc.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). *Diabetes prevention*. <https://www.cdc.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2022). *Vaccines and immunizations*. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/index.html>
- Dreher, M. L. (2018). Food and fiber digestion: Impact of cooking methods on gastrointestinal tolerance. *Journal of Nutrition*, 148(5), 675–683.
- Frieden, T. R. (2010). A framework for public health action: The health impact pyramid. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(4), 590–595. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2009.185652>
- Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. (2021). *Healthy living and disease prevention*. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu>
- Institute of Medicine (IOM). (2011). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Lax, E. (2004). *The mold in Dr. Florey's coat: The story of the penicillin miracle*. Henry Holt and Co.
- Maciosek, M. V., Coffield, A. B., Edwards, N. M., Flottemesch, T. J., Goodman, M. J., & Solberg, L. I. (2010). Priorities among effective clinical preventive services: Results of a systematic review and analysis. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 38(6), 600–609.
- Mayo Clinic. (2020). *Alcohol and digestive health*. <https://www.mayoclinic.org>
- National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA). (2020). *Binge eating disorder and mental health*. <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). (2018). *Alcohol's effects on the body*. <https://www.drugabuse.gov>
- National Institutes of Health (NIH). (2016). *Alcohol and medication interactions*. <https://www.nih.gov>
- National Institutes of Health (NIH). (2020). *Effects of overeating on metabolism*. <https://www.nih.gov>
- National Institutes of Health (NIH). (2024). *Vitamin E – Fact sheet for health professionals*. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminE-HealthProfessional/>
- Plotkin, S. A., Orenstein, W. A., & Offit, P. A. (2013). *Vaccines* (6th ed.). Elsevier.
- Shapin, S. (1996). *The scientific revolution*. University of Chicago Press.

World Health Organization (WHO). (2016). *Health workforce requirements for universal health coverage and the sustainable development goals*. <https://www.who.int>

World Health Organization (WHO). (2018). *Alcohol-based handrubs: Risks and benefits*. <https://www.who.int>

World Health Organization (WHO). (2018). *Noncommunicable diseases prevention and control*. <https://www.who.int>

World Health Organization (WHO). (2021). *Obesity and overweight*. <https://www.who.int>

World Health Organization (WHO). (2021). *Global status report on noncommunicable diseases*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240064897>