



The Effect of Tastes in Treating Atherosclerosis

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In Traditional Persian Medicine literature, besides other factors, tastes are known to be an analogy parameter to predict the action of food and materia medica [1,2]. Tastes have been categorized into 9 main groups of acrid, astringent, sour, sweet, greasy (umami), tasteless, pungent (spicy), bitter and salty. The diversity was believed to derive from the type of substrate material and the quantity of the processing heat involved in its formation [2].

To be more precise, the four basic tastes of spicy, umami, sour and acrid received more fire, air, water and earth elements respectively and the next five tastes were composed from their combination [3]. Neglecting the exceptions, subsequently each taste has its unique temperament and functions [1]. For example, acrid herbs - containing more soil element- are known to be cardio-tonic [4]. Also sweet, bitter and astringent tastes originating from the acrid taste (soil essence),

may also have tonic effects [3].

Several articles have discussed appreciable topics about tastes and their effects on cardiac function and other issues [3-5]. In this article we intend to discuss briefly another aspect of the role of taste in cardiovascular system according to Persian Medicine (PM).

Considering the works of Avicenna - the most eminent PM physician - atherosclerosis may be comparable with his model of vessel obstruction "Sodde" due to abnormal humor accumulation [6]. In PM literature, anti-obstructive drugs are known as openers "Mofatteh". From Avicenna's point of view, drugs with spicy, bitter or sour taste have anti-obstructive effects [7]. Because of the fiery essence in substances with spicy taste, they have a hot temperament and thus intensive penetration. They can therefore separate accumulated material from its place by cutting and vaporizing [8]. Bitter taste has a similar effect, yet with less intensity due

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to its milder warmth and higher density [9]. Despite the cold temperament of sour taste, it penetrates the accumulated material and spoils it apart into small pieces due to its lower density resembling the penetration of a cold fork in a raw potato [8]. These functions will finally result in excretion of the obstructing materials.

Therefore, according to PM, taste could be considered as a factor for identification and selection of drugs which may have anti-obstructive and anti-atheroma effects, though further research is needed to prove the above hypothesis.

Conflicts of interest

None.

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