

HONEY: A CURE FOR HUMAN BEINGS. A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: There has been a special attention to honey in Islam. A honey bee is a living creature mentioned in the holy Quran to have been inspired by God. God has placed blessing in honey and regarded it as a cure for all diseases. The holy prophet Mohamed (p.b.u.h) stated: "He who consumes honey three days a month would not be threatened by any severe disease". In traditional medicine, honey was used to cure wounds which had resisted against different types of microorganisms. In the body of research conducted in recent decades on honey and its features, honey has been found as a cure for different wounds such as surgical wounds or diabetic feet. Perusals of the related literature as well as that of highly valid academic websites have been used in this research to collect the required data. Findings of the present research confirm the Islamic instructions concerning the healing effect of honey which were put forth 14 centuries ago. New research findings have proved the effect of honey on curing infectious injuries.

Key words: Honey, therapy, Islam

INTRODUCTION

Islam has paid a special attention to honey. Honey bees are among creatures which have been stated in the holy book of Islam to be addressed and inspired by God(1) : "Go build houses in mountains, trees and scaffolds built by men. Then drink the juice of all fruits and flower nectar. Then pass through all routes God has ordered you to. Then you will produce a liquid of various colors which has a healing nature. This is also a fully instructive task of God for the thoughtful". Honey has also been referred to as a heavenly food(1-3).

The holy prophet Mohamed (p.b.u.h.) stated that everyone who consumes some honey three days a month in the morning would be harmed by no serious disease(1, 4). God placed blessings in honey and made it a cure for all diseases. There is no other material as medically effective as honey. He also stated: "God who possesses all our lives has said that angels would repent above every house in which there is some honey"(4).

Imam Ali (p.b.u.h.) mentioned referred to honey as the most enjoyable food material. Imam Reza (p.b.u.h.) viewed the honey produced from flower nectars as a cure for all diseases(5).

In traditional medicine, honey was used to cure wounds which had previously showed resistance to various microorganisms(1).

For thousands of years honey has been used to treat human injuries and diseases. Historical evidence shows that Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks and Persians are among ancient tribes who took advantage of honey mixed with medical herbs or alone in treating diseases(6-8).

From long time ago, miraculous effects of honey in treating burns, injuries and wounds have been the center of attention. Honey has a low water level, high osmosis pressure and acid-like traits. It can therefore, stop the growth of infectious factors; it does actually create a sterilizing coverage on wounds (1).

Honey is used in treating different wounds such as surgical wounds or those caused by volectomy(9-14) , trauma-related wounds(15-17) and diabetic wounds(18).

Investigations have revealed that there exists 20 types of sugar, 8 types of vitamin, 11 minerals, 16 types of amino acid, several enzymes and many other unidentified materials(19). Among the minerals are: potassium, iron, phosphorus, iodine, magnesium, lead, manganese, aluminum, copper, sulfur, chromium, lithium, nickel, zinc, osmium, titanium and sodium(20). Among its minerals are: mannites, resin, pollen,

lactic acid, formic acid, malic acid, tartaric acid, exilic acid, citric acid, colors, odorous oils, azotic materials. Its fermented materials are: invertase, amylase, catalase, peroxidase, and lipase. Other elements in honey include: glucose, sucrose, serine, dextrin, albuminoidal materials, sulfates, invertin, formic acid, water. The vitamins in honey are six: A-B-C-D-K-E(19, 20).

Honey is used as a commonplace treatment as well as a cure for infectious injuries. It is effective against highly resistant bacterial injuries. Honey is made of the nectar of different flowers. It has various anti-bacterial activities and is used to evaluate the antibacterial activity level and other microorganisms(21).

A myriad of reports do exist to confirm the antibacterial power of honey. These reports confirm the effect of honey in preventing different microorganisms' growth (22-26).

Lab tests have indicated that a wide range of pathogen microorganisms which affect the infection of injuries can be stopped by honey(27, 28), especially those which have the potential of extending antibiotic resistance such as staphylococcus aureus(29) and pseudomonas(30). As for its activity mechanism, honey acts similarly to other antiseptics, and has a destructive and pathologic effect on healthy tissues(22).

Moreover, according to investigations, honey develops the formation of new healthy tissues (30-35). Moreover, it leads to its epithelialization (31-33).

In Tajik et al.'s study, different types of honey which existed in different geographical regions could have diverse anti-microbial traits. Moreover, this study indicated that a different concentration of honey can affect its anti-microbial effects. Its highest anti-microbial effect is actually on staphylococcus aureus bacteria(22).

Mahmoud et al. investigated the protective and anti-infectious property of honey in rats. They found that a rat suffering from ulcer disease had less severe injury under the therapeutic effect of honey as compared to the control group(1, 34).

Zina et al.(35) investigated the activities of anti-leishmaniasis species under the effect of honey and sugar in a cultivation context. They indicated that they both had anti-leishmaniasis traits; however, the anti-leishmaniasis effect of honey was stronger(36).

Some researchers believe that the anti-microbial activity of honey is primarily due to the physical properties of this biological fluid. These physical properties include: water absorption,

high adhesion, high osmolarity and high acidity (22, 24, 37-40).

Yet some other researchers believe that the anti-microbial potential of honey is dependent on its hydrogen peroxide which is added to honey through the enzymic activity of a bee's saliva production(22, 28, 41, 42).

Some researchers attributed the antibacterial features of honey to its physical and chemical properties(37, 38). According to research, the physical and chemical properties of the existing honey types in each region depends on the type of flowers and plants which exist in that region(43).

METHODOLOGY

Perusals of the related literature as well as that of highly valid academic websites have been used in this research to collect the required data.

CONCLUSION

Findings of this research indicate that Islamic instructions which could be traced back to surah Nahl, the holy prophet Mohamed's (p.b.u.h.) quotations as well as those of the other Imams about 14 centuries ago were true about the healing effect of honey. This truth has only recently been unraveled by medical scientists and researchers. They proved that honey is effective in treating infectious injuries which resist against any other therapy. Honey was found to help to heal different wounds and infectious injuries which had shown resistance against therapies. It was found to heal wounds infected by microorganisms highly resistant against antibiotics for example a myriad of reports does exist to confirm the antibacterial power of honey. These reports confirm the effect of honey in preventing different microorganisms' growth. Lab tests have indicated that a wide range of pathogen microorganisms which affect the infection of injuries can be stopped by honey.

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