

**APPLICATION OF AVICENNA'S THEORY OF TEMPERAMENT TO  
MEDICINAL SUBSTANCES**

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the role of the great physician Avicenna's theory of temperament in the field of pharmacy, particularly in evaluating the nature of medicinal substances and their effects on the human body. In ancient medicine, it was emphasized that a drug should be selected in accordance with a patient's temperament, a concept that aligns closely with today's personalized medicine. This article explores the theoretical foundations of Avicenna's ideas, their practical applications, and how they integrate with modern pharmaceutical science.

**Keywords:** Avicenna, temperament, pharmacy, medicinal substance, traditional medicine, heat, cold, pharmacology

The science of pharmacy has evolved through numerous stages throughout history. In particular, Eastern medicine was greatly influenced by the thinker and scientist Avicenna, who studied medicine and pharmacology in depth and established approaches that remain relevant to this day. His work *The Canon of Medicine* served for centuries as a primary textbook in medical institutions across Europe and Asia. Avicenna selected medicinal substances based on their properties of heat, cold, moisture, or dryness and developed treatment methods that matched the patient's natural temperament.

### **Avicenna's Theory of Temperament in Detail**

#### **1. The Concept and Categories of Temperament**

In Avicenna's medical philosophy, temperament refers to the natural physiological state of an individual, formed by the balance of four qualities: heat, cold, moisture, and dryness. According to him, the human body consists of four elements—earth, water, air, and fire—each possessing two qualities: Fire: hot and dry; Air: hot and moist; Water: cold and moist; Earth: cold and dry. The balance of these qualities in each individual defines their temperament. A healthy state, called "moderate temperament," occurs when these four elements are in equilibrium. Imbalanced temperaments are categorized into eight types: hot, cold, moist, dry, hot-moist, hot-dry, cold-moist, and cold-dry.

#### **2. Temperament and Personalized Treatment**

The theory of temperament aligns with the principles of modern personalized medicine. Taking into account the individual physiological characteristics of each patient and selecting appropriate treatments accordingly remains a fundamental medical approach. Avicenna emphasized this need for individualized treatment centuries ago.

## **Classification of Medicinal Substances Based on Temperament**

### **1. Types of Medicinal Substances According to Temperament**

Avicenna classified all drugs based on their effects on human temperaments and divided them into four degrees: First-degree drugs: mild effects, mainly used for preventive purposes; Second-degree drugs: moderate effects with minimal side effects; Third-degree drugs: strong effects that can harm the body if misused; Fourth-degree drugs: extremely potent and potentially toxic, used only under expert supervision. The nature of a drug is determined by its properties of heat, cold, moisture, and dryness.

### **2. Examples of Drugs According to Temperament:**

Ginger – third-degree, hot and dry; beneficial for patients with cold temperaments. Rosehip – first or second-degree, cold and moist; suitable for individuals with hot temperaments. Wormwood (Artemisia) – fourth-degree, very hot and dry; should be used with caution. Mint – cold and moist; calming for the heart, suitable for hot-tempered individuals.

## **Practical Application of Temperament Theory in Pharmacy**

### **1. Considering Temperament When Selecting Drugs**

Modern pharmacy studies the pharmacokinetics (absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion) and pharmacodynamics (mechanism of action) of each medicinal substance. Avicenna referred to these aspects as 'strength,' 'speed,' and 'power.' Proper drug selection starts with identifying the patient's temperament.

### **2. Combining Drugs Based on Temperament**

Avicenna developed methods for combining drugs with contrasting temperaments to reduce harmful effects. For example, a very hot drug can be mixed with a cold-natured substance to make its effect safer. This principle is the historical foundation of today's synergistic and antagonistic drug combinations. Avicenna advanced the idea that "The success of medical practice lies in treating not the disease, but the specific temperament of the individual patient." Practical experience shows that even medications designed for a particular illness may not be equally effective for all patients. Only medications tailored to the patient's temperament produce optimal therapeutic results.

## **The Role of Temperament Theory in Modern Medicine**

Today's field of pharmacogenetics studies how medications interact with a person's genetic makeup. This approach closely resembles Avicenna's theory of temperament. In essence, temperament reflects genetic, metabolic, and physiological balance.

Examples: Patients with hypertension: cold-tempered medications (moist, sedative). Patients with digestive disorders: hot and dry substances (ginger, black pepper). Patients suffering from cold-related ailments: warming agents (nettle, cinnamon).

## Conclusion

Avicenna's theory of temperament provides not only a historical foundation but also a scientific framework for selecting and applying medicinal substances today. Its relevance to modern personalized medicine shows the continuity between ancient medical knowledge and contemporary pharmaceutical science. Therefore, studying, analyzing, and applying Avicenna's scientific heritage remains a crucial task for current and future scholars.

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