



## **Role of Muslim Women in The Management of Health Challenges**

Maimuna Usman Gaya<sup>1</sup> and Fadimatu Adamu<sup>2</sup>

Islamic Studies Department, School for Secondary Education Programmes, Arts and Social Sciences  
Federal College of Education, Yola. Adamawa State, Nigeria  
maimunausmangaya67@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, fatimaadamu977@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

The focus of the paper is highlighting the role of Islam in the management of Health Challenges among the Muslim Ummah. The significance of the paper is its essence in examining the challenges and proffering possible remedies. In essence, health is wealth and it cannot be compromised. Health is the wellbeing of the individual. With health a person can function properly while a sick person cannot. Nevertheless, Islam takes into consideration the wellbeing of all Muslims so that they can worship Allah (S.W.T) and to work hard for earning lawful means, obtaining reward and securing admission to al-Jannah on the Day of Judgement. Yet, in the circumstance of illness, a patient that is patient, meditating and prayerful will equally earn reward and even sins can also be cleaned off. The paper adopts a survey of related literature and observation of some health-related cases within the family and the society. The findings of the paper reveal that Islam provides some guidelines in treating and handling patients for convenience and comfortability. Such as observation of the time for prayers, observation of Ramadan fasting even in sick conditions, being modest, minimizing direct physical contact between patient of the opposite sex and the healthcare personnel among others. The paper concludes and recommends that patients should be reminded about prayer time and period of Ramadan, assistance should be rendered to the patients. Government should try to incorporate female treating and handling female patients, while male should equally treat and handle male patients among others.

**Keywords:** Islam, Women, Health Management, Challenges.

### **1. Introduction**

Everyday people are face with many health challenges which are becoming problems, such problems of health faced by people include among others the followings; malaria, hypertension, diabetic, thyroid, maternal health and child mortalities, poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS, Lassa fever and presently corona virus pandemics which is in fact, a global pandemic that almost short down the activities of the globe at its inception. Many lives were lost globally. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the leaders of various countries including healthcare providers stood up to see that the pandemic is combated globally. In almost all aspects of healthcare issues Muslim women participated in the fight against it spread. For instance, during the life time of Prophet (S.A.W) Muslim women participated in providing health services example are: Humm bint Jahsh, Al-Rabi bint Mu'awiz, Laila Al Ghifariah and Ummal Dihak served in battle field. Supporting the armies, supplying food and water carrying and treating the injured Muslim soldiers to safety places. The Prophet (S.A.W) ordered that a tent be built to a Muslim lady for treating the Soldiers that sustains injuries (Imam, n.d).

### **1.2 Conceptual Framework**

Health can be said to be the condition of individual which makes possible the highest enjoyment of life, the greatest constructive work which show itself in the best service to the world (Balami, Mammawa



& Malgwi, 2012). Health is something to cherish, health is wellbeing of a person that cannot be purchased no matter how wealthy a person might be. A healthy nation is a wealthy nation.

Health according to Balami, Mammawa & Malgwi (2012) involve keeping the body and mind at the highest level of efficiency possible of living at one's best and not been satisfied with merely the absence of disease. Shatima & Juliana (2010) maintain that health knowledge can be passed across to people through mass medium where professional can talk on either source of infection, prevention and control of a disease or nature of the disease.

## **2. Islam and Health**

Health is a state of physical, psychological, spiritual and social wellbeing and is considered the greatest blessing Allah (SWT) has given humankind. In Islam, patients receive illness with patience, prayers and meditation. Islam attaches significant importance to health, so taking care of one's health is a religious duty. Spiritual values are components of health and as such spiritual needs takes precedence over physical needs. Therefore, Muslim patients are acquitted with the teachings that illness, suffering, pain and dying are all test from Allah (SWT) and consider illness as a trial by which one's sins are forgiven.

Islam permits the use of halal drugs even in a life-threatening situation. Muslim patients' privacy and modesty has to be respected. It is the best for the same gender to care for and provide clinician and nurse. For instance, to Hosseini, Asghari & Bandlegh (2019) that if a male healthcare provider is examining a patient, it is of the utmost importance for the health personnel to explain the steps of the physical examination to the female patient and if clothing must be removed it should be removed for as little time as possible and according the situation of the sickness. Ideally in Islam, female patient and healthcare personnel should reduce too much eye contact unless otherwise, because both men and women are enjoined to lower their gaze regarding the opposite sex. Qur'an Chapter 24:31-32 say, thus;

*Tell the believing men to reduce their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them indeed, Allah is acquainted with what they do.  
And tell the believing women to reduce their vision and guard their private parts and not to expose their adornments except which appears there of and draw their head covers over their selves and not to expose their adornments except to their husbands, their fathers...*

Furthermore, hand shaking should be avoided between the opposite sex even on health ground except otherwise. Moreover, in examination of the opposite sex permission should be sought before uncovering any part of the body of the opposite sex unless an emergency circumstances. When entering the room of an opposite sex sick patient obtain permission before entering the room unless on emergency situations.

### **2.2 The Concept of Healthy living**

Health is a quality of life as a result of person functionality within his biological, physical and social environment including his spiritual cycles. Balami, Mammawa & Malgwi (2012) posit that the quality of person's life is determined by the effectiveness of his level of living. Effective living is a product of a person's functioning in a variety of life's activities, which include his physical, mental and social experiences.

### **2.3 Who are healthy People?**

Healthy people are those individuals whose physical, mental, psychological, social and as well as spiritual life are sound and physically in good condition. To Raymond (2012) healthy people usually agree and complement each other. Therefore, they include people who are expected to:

- i. Develop a positive attitude towards good health.



- ii. Have increased self-control.
- iii. Develop a sense of responsibility.
- iv. Aspire to possess a personal value system.
- v. Care to ensure a healthy environment for maintaining safety.
- vi. Lead cooperative life and develop a good communication skill in combatting unhealthy environment.

#### **2.4 Strategies for Providing health Education for Self-Guiding Healthy Environment among the Society.**

There is no single way of dissemination of health information among the society. Although there are some that the health care providers used to do including the following:

- i. Through educating the populace.
- ii. Through awareness, in various places like schools, masjid, house to house.
- iii. Others include through encouraging health personnel to attend workshops, seminars, reading book, magazines, newspaper inducing media of various kinds e.g., radio, television, internet etc.

Shatima & Juliana (2010) maintain that health knowledge can be passed across to people through mass medium where professionals can talk on where sources of infection, prevention and control of a disease or nature of the disease be made known to people.

### **3. Healthcare Challenges**

Delivering high quality healthcare to patients of the Muslim require an understanding of the Islamic teachings. Therefore, to provide healthcare it is important that the following Islamic provisions concerning healthcare should be complied otherwise lack of observing these guidelines become challenges which include among others the followings:

1. Prayer time.
2. Food and Medication.
3. Minimizing physical and direct contact between patient of the opposite sex and the healthcare provider
4. Respect of Modesty of the patient.
5. Sexuality Issues.
6. Handling objects.
7. Visitors and Family member's issues of the Patient.
8. Occurrence of Ramadan Period.
9. Misconception about what causes certain illness.
10. Bed set up in the Hospitals.
11. Death of the Patient etc.

#### **3.2 Islamic guidelines of Health Management Challenges**

##### **3.2.1 Prayer Time**

Prayers occurs five times a day, a health care personnel should assist the Muslim patient in determining the direction of the *qibla* once the prayer time is due. Prayer one of the pillars of Islam even during sickness once a patient is conscious, he must observe the prayer Qur'ān Chapter 4:103 says, thus;

*... Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers at specified times.*

Similarly, Qur'ān Chapter 29:45 says thus:



*... Establish prayer, indeed prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing  
And the remembrance of Allah is greater...*

Similarly, the Glorious Qur'an Chapter 2:45 says thus;

*And seek help through patience and prayer, and it is difficult  
Except for the humbly submissive (to Allah)*

### 3.2.2 Food and Medication

Islam has rules regarding food and medication by instructing Muslims to eat and drink lawfully, Qur'an Chapter 2:172 says;

*O you who have believed, eat from good things which We have provided  
For you and be grateful to Allah if it is (indeed) Him that you worship.*

A Muslim should not to partake in prohibited food, drinks and medication such as death animals, swine, pork and alcohol, Allah (S.W.T) clearly prohibits certain categories of foods in Qur'an Chapter 5:3 thus;

*Prohibited to you are dead animals' blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has  
been dedicated to other than Allah, and those killed by strangling, or by a violent  
blow or by a head long fall or by the goring of horns...*

Concerning drinks Allah (SWT) says in Qur'an Chapter 5:90 -91 thus;

*O you who believe, indeed, intoxicants, gambling and stone alters and divining  
arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be  
successful.*

The Prophet (S.A.W) prohibits all intoxicants of all kinds no matter how small. Therefore, all types of intoxicants whether liquid or solid must be shunned.

### 3.2.3 Physical and direct contact between patient of the opposite gender and the healthcare personnel

Female personnel should attend to the female patient and male to males unless otherwise. In cases where it is not possible, to Furqan, Awaad & Kardiyak (2019) males are required to communicate through the spouse of the patient if the patient is female. Similarly, when physical examination, it is also desirable to have the healthcare personnel of the same sex for convenience and comfortability unless in emergency and otherwise.

### 3.2.4 Respect of Modesty of the Patient.

Observation of modesty is one of the requirements of Islam. Modesty is part of faith. That is why Islam enjoins its adherents to be modest. Therefore, in examining an opposite sex patient it is of the utmost importance for the healthcare provider to be of the same sex, i.e., Female for female and male for male, unless otherwise. If male personnel will examine a female patient, then permission should be sought from the female patient before uncovering any part of the body and it should be done sequentially i.e., exposing as small an area as possible with each step except in an emergency situation. Moreover, when entering the room of an opposite sex sick patient obtain permission before entering the room, unless in an emergency circumstance. Regarding getting permission before entering apartment the Glorious Qur'an Chapter 24:27 says:

*O you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own  
Houses until you seek permission...*



### 3.2.5 *Sexuality Issues*

Healthcare personnel should be aware of those issues regarding sensitive parts of the patient in all dealings with female patient in diagnosis and medication, otherwise most female will not expose some of their privacy. Because protection of private part is an injunction in so many verses of the Glorious Qur'ān which include Chapter 23:5 thus;

*And they who guard their private parts*

### 3.2.6 *Handling Objects*

Handling of medication by healthcare personnel should be appropriate. A healthcare provider should not use left hand in administering medication to a patient through feeding or giving drinks and all drugs etc. because Islam discourages the use of left hand in feeding.

### 3.2.7 *Visiting the patient and Family members issues of the Patients*

Islam urges and encourages its adherents to visit the sick and comfort by so doing one will earn reward. Qur'ān Chapter 30:38 says, thus;

*So, give the relative his right, as well as the needy and the traveler  
That is best for those who desire the countenance of Allah, and  
It is they who will be the successful.*

Yet, in case of too much number of visitors that may lead to lack of complying with healthcare rules, as being seen in most of our healthcare centers then staff on duty and security should be sensitive to the patient's need without compromising the healthcare of other patient.

### 3.2.8 *Occurrence of Ramadan Period*

Patient who wants to fast during Ramadan should be provided with fasting means. Hence, the rules of Islam during Ramadan regarding medication should be observed unless otherwise, i.e. If doing so will endangered the life of the patient. Fasting is one of duty (pillars of Islam) incumbent upon all Muslims. Allah (S.W.T) says in Qur'ān Chapter 2:183 thus;

*O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it has been  
Prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous...*

Yet, if someone is sick the Chapter 2:185 further says;

*...So, whoever among you is ill or on a Journey, then an equal number of days are to be made up  
Allah intends for you ease and does not intends for You hardship and wants for you to complete the  
period and to glorify Allah...*

### 3.2.9 *Misconception about what causes certain Illness*

Patient should be encouraged to resist illness through enlightenment. Furthermore, healthcare system that are conceive with some superstitions should be re-dressed.

### 3.2.10 *Beds set up in the Healthcare Centers/Hospitals*

Beds set up should be in line with Islamic guidelines. Beds facing *al-qibla* (the direction where the face while observing prayers) for easy observation of prayers should be made. The Glorious Qur'ān Chapter 2:144 says thus;

*... So, turn your face toward al- Masjid al- Haram. And whenever you are, turn  
Your faces toward it in prayer...*



### 3.2.11 *Death of the Patient*

In case of death, family of the deceased be allowed to wash and prepare it for burial in accordance with Islamic teachings.

## 4. Conclusion

Health is wealth, with health one can worship Allah (S.W.T). Health involves keeping the body, mind, soul including all physical and spiritual aspects of man free from diseases and disturbances. Hence, in taking care of yourselves yet, if illness occur a Muslim should seek for healthcare in patience and prayerful. Because being in the state of sickness and being patience will earn you reward and ward off sins that you might have committed as taught by the Prophet (S.A.W). Nevertheless, lack of complying with the guidelines of Islam in managing healthcare encourage health challenges. The paper sought female health personnel to attend for female patients and male for male patients. Therefore, in managing health challenges the rules of Islam are to be observed by the patients, healthcare providers, staff, security personnel, visitors and family members of patients. The government should provide the necessary needs of the centers, motivate the personnel through encouraging them to further their studies.

## 5. Recommendations

The paper recommends the followings for managing healthcare challenges among the Muslims.

- Patients must be allowed to perform the five daily prayers provided they are conscious. Healthcare provider should not interrupt. While those patients who can observe the Ramadan fasting should also be allowed to do so if their conditions warrant so.
- Islam strictly prohibits certain categories of foods like pork, death meat, blood etc. and anything that can intoxicates no matter how small is the quantity, hence, healthcare must comply in handling food, drinks and all kinds of medications e.g., drugs in line with Islamic guidelines.
- Visitors and family visitations should adhere to the rules of Islam and the healthcare guidelines, including all healthcare issues thus, superstitions should be avoided.
- Beddings should be in line with Islamic teachings.
- All physical contacts, sexuality issues, modesty and handling of sick people should be in line with Islamic teachings.
- Non-Muslim healthcare personnel should learn how to treat and handle the Muslim patients.
- Healthcare providers should attain professional courses for optimum performance.
- Healthcare providers should be friendly and always apologize for mistakes, be respectful and be of assistance to patients. (These create patient-centered services).
- Patients should be law abiding on their part.
- Government should provide all facilities needed in all healthcare centers, should motivate and provide prompt payment of salary and wages to the healthcare personnel.
- Government should try to be sensitive regarding sexuality issues by incorporating and ensuring in all healthcare centers, male attending males and female attending females for efficiency, convenience and comfortability among the patients, family and the healthcare providers.

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