Concept of Water Birth and Abzan Har (Hot Sitz Bath) for Delivery: A Correlation with Especial References to Unani System of Medicine

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[Received-10/01/2016, Accepted-21/01/2016, Published- 29/01/2016]

ABSTRACT
Delivering in water has recently become popular, and more hospitals now offer water birth. However, water birth is still considered an alternative birthing method. Water birth refers to childbirth, usually human, that occurs in water. It is the process of giving birth in a tub of warm water. Water temperature in the tub is maintained at or around body temperature (98° F - 100° F). Warm water is soothing, comforting and relaxing. Similarly Abzan Har (Hot Sitz bath) is a type of bath in which the patient is made to sit in warm water or joshanda of medicines (medicated sitz bath). The hip region is immersed in water in a tub. Abzan Har (Hot Sitz bath) activates the internal organs of the abdomen and pelvis by increasing blood circulation to the surface, and reduces congestion of abdominal organs and inflammation. It also helps to reduce cramps and lower back pain. Unani physicians were familiar about the use of warm water for delivery and it has been recommended by various eminent Unani physicians like Ibn-e-sina, Zakariya Razi, Abu Al- Hasan Ali Ibn-e-Abbas, Mohd Kabiruddin, Akbar Arzani and Hkm Mohd Azam khan etc. In both the techniques water birth and Abzan Har, warm water is being used to ease delivery. Though it has not been mentioned in Unani literature that delivery should also occur in water but it is clearly mentioned that when the time of delivery is near or the female is in labour pain make her sit in warmwater (Abzan Har – hot sitz bath). We cannot say that Abzan Har and water birth are same but we can definitely say that the use of warm water for delivery is in practice since ancient Unani times. Thus we can co relate the concept of water birth and Abzan Har as in both the techniques use of warm water is an important aspect of delivery.

Key words: Water birth, Abzan Har, warm water, Correlation, Delivery and Unani system of Medicine.

INTRODUCTION
Water birth, is a great tool for labor and delivery. The use of water has been around for many, many years. Its roots aren't exactly known, but the benefits are definitely plentiful and well-
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known. Water birth is childbirth that occurs in water. Proponents believe water birth results in a more relaxed, less painful experience that promotes a midwife-led model of care. It is the process of giving birth in a tub of warm water. Water temperatures in the tub is maintained at or around body temperature (98°F - 100°F). It also soothe tired and aching muscles and ligaments – helping further relaxation to the mother.

History of Water birth
In Egypt, ancient Petroglyphs (rock carvings) are rumored to depict the water births of pharaohs some 8000 years ago. Similarly from as early as 2700 BC the Minoan civilization on the island of Crete created temples in which women laboured and birthed in water.
In California, The Chumash Indians tell stories of women labouring in natural pools and shallow inlets with dolphins hovering nearby. Within the Hawaiian Islands it is believed, thousands of generations have had birth in water. In fact, historically speaking, from the Southern Islands of Japan, to the Panama Indians, to the Maoris of New Zealand, water birth appears as not an innovative practice but rather an ancient one.
There is one fact however that can be universally agreed upon. The advent of modern medicine brought about a low point in the history of waterbirth.

The Rebirth of Water birth
The first recorded account of a water birth in the modern Western world occurred in a village in France in 1803. After labouring for some 48 hours a woman was helped into a warm bath by her doctor in an effort to soothe her and provide temporary pain relief. Shortly after entering the bath the woman’s stalled labour quickly progressed, and her baby was born before any effort could be made to remove her from the bath. However despite the obvious success of the use of water in this case, and publication of the event in a French medical society journal, it would be the early-1970’s before the history of water birth would be revisited by the medical profession in earnest.
In the 1970’s, French and Russian midwives and doctors began to explore alternative ways of helping the baby make the transition from womb to outside life as easy as possible.

What is involved in a Water Birth
- Bathtub, Hot tub (with the temperature turned down), other pool of water.
- Water delivery can be conducted at home, in a birthing centre, or in a hospital
- A special underwater Doppler device will monitor baby’s heartbeat.
- Women can also receive medications through an IV while she is in the water.
- Using warm water seemed to not only help women cope better with the pain associated with childbirth, but also appeared to offer babies a more peaceful journey from the womb into their mother's arms.
Bath Tub for Water birth

Benefits for Mother:
- Warm water is soothing, comforting, relaxing.
- In the later stages of labour, the water has helped enhance the woman’s energy.
- Buoyancy promotes more efficient uterine contractions and improved blood circulation resulting in better oxygenation of the uterine muscles, less pain for the mother, and more oxygen for the baby.
- Immersion in water often helps lower high blood pressure caused by anxiety.
- Water causes the perineum to become more elastic and relaxed, reducing the incidence and severity of tearing and the need for an episiotomy and stitches.
- As the labouring women relax physically, she is able to relax mentally with greater ability to focus on the birth process.
- Since the water provides a greater sense of privacy, it can reduce inhibitions, anxiety, and fears.

Research reviewed in the article by Schorn, McAllister and Blanco show "the benefits of water immersion include faster cervical dilation resulting in shorter labors, increased relaxation and decreased pain". Cervical dilation was more rapid in one group (2.5 cm/hour) as compared to 1.25 cm per hour in a control group. Other studies have documented the great anxiety relief and fast pain relief mothers feel upon entering the water in labor. To be sure, warm water is soothing to the body and mind, and this relaxation allows the woman to feel less pain. Some studies cite up to an 80% reduction in the pain women felt when immersed in warm water.

Benefits for Baby:
- Provides an environment similar to the amniotic sac.
- Eases the stress of birth thus increasing reassurance and sense of security.

Conditions not ideal for water birth

The British Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of Midwives issued a joint statement supporting water birth for healthy women with uncomplicated pregnancies but does not recommend it in cases of complications. Following are the situations not ideal for water birth:
- Herpes infection. The infection can pass to the baby through the water.
- Excessive bleeding or maternal infection.
- Breech presentation
- Multiple pregnancy
- If preterm labour is expected
- If there is severe meconium
- Pregnancy-related complications such as preeclampsia, Diabetes and toxaemia.

Risk to baby:
- Unexplained deaths
- Drowning and near-drowning
- Asphyxiation
- Water intoxication (hyponatremia) causing seizures
- Water aspiration leading to respiratory distress syndrome and respiratory failure
- Pulmonary oedema
- Snapped umbilical cord
- Hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy
- Pneumonia and other infections including Pseudomonas bacteremia.

AbzanHar (Hot Sitz bath)
- A type of bath in which the patient is made to sit in warm water or joshanda of medicines(medicated Sitz bath).
- AbzanHar (Hot Sitz bath) is used to specially help treat problems in the pelvic and genital areas.
- The hip region is immersed in water in a tub. AbzanHar (Hot Sitz bath) activates the internal organs of the abdomen and pelvis by increasing blood circulation to the...
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surface, and reduces congestion of abdominal organs and inflammation. It also helps to reduce cramps and lower back pain.

Concept of Water-Birth can be co-related with Abzan Har (Hot Sitz Bath) for delivery.

Statements referring the women in labour being made to sit in warm water (Abzan Har) for delivery have been scattered in ancient Unani literature at various places. Thus making warm water the most important aspect here.

Illustrations have been mentioned below.

- Hkm. Abu Al- Hasan Ali Ibn-e-Abbas describes in his book Kamil-us- sana that when the time of delivery is near or the female is in labour pain make her sit in warm water (Abzan – hot sitz bath).
- Hkm Ibn-e-Sina has mentioned in his book Alqanoon-Fil-tib that if the female is having difficult labour (Usr-e-wiladat) make her sit in a tub of warm water.
- Hkm. Zakaria Razi has also mentioned in his book Al- Hawi that medicated hot sitz bath (Joshanda of babuna or marzanjosh or methi or pudina or mashkatumashee or zarawand) is helpful in difficult labour (Usr-e-wiladat).
- HkmMohdKabiruddin has described in his book Al Akseer that if pregnant women is suffering from difficult labour make her sit in warm water or joshanda of baboona, shabit, marzanjosh and aqleel.
- Hkm Akbar Arzani has also mentioned in his book Tibb-e-Akbar the use of Abzan(made from joshandaof baboona, shabit, marzanjosh and aqleel) for usr-e-wiladat.
- HkmMohd Azam khan says in his book Ramooz-e-Azam that when the women is in labour or having Usr-e- wiladat Nutool of warm water or medicated Abzan of joshanda of agar, hulba, tukhm-e-katanwakhubbazi can be used.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We can observe that in both the techniques warm water is being used for easy delivery. Though it has not been mentioned in Unani literature that delivery should also occur in water but it is clearly mentioned that when the time of delivery is near or the female is in labour pain make her sit in warmwater (AbzanHar – hot sitz bath). From all the above literature we can conclude that ancient Unani Hkms were also using warm water for delivery. There is hence every possibility that modern science might have adapted the old concept of warm water as an important aspect of delivery and by keeping this concept in mind they have invented the new method of delivery named as water birth.

We cannot say that Abzan Har and water birth are same but we can definitely say that the use of warm water for delivery is in practice since ancient Unani times. Thus we can co-relate the concept of water birth and Abzan Har for delivery.

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