

AN OVERVIEW OF SHARI'AH COMPLIANT HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Muslims are obliged to observe the Shari'ah in all aspects of their lives. *Shari'ah*-compliant healthcare services is designed to provide Muslim patients with medical treatment that abides by Islamic principles which also includes halal medicine. There are several issues that arise when discussing this type of healthcare services. For example, Muslim patients face significant challenges in receiving treatment in conventional hospitals, which includes privacy issues during treatment, cross-gender interactions between patients and medical practitioners as well as the status of the pharmaceuticals provided as treatment. Hence, many Muslims are concerned with the manner in which they treated when seeking medical attention in hospitals and this has resulted in the demands for Shari'ah compliant healthcare services. This article gives an overview of the concept of Shari'ah compliant healthcare services in Malaysia. Among others it provides background information on the development of Shari'ah compliant healthcare services in the country. From there the article continues to highlight the concept of Shari'ah compliant healthcare services and its requirements. A brief explanation as to its application is also made accordingly.

Keywords: Shari'ah compliant healthcare, Shari'ah compliant hospitals, Halal pharmaceuticals,

Introduction

Muslims are obliged to observe the Shari'ah in all aspects of their lives. *Shari'ah*-compliant healthcare services is designed to provide Muslim patients with medical treatment that abides by Islamic principles which also includes halal medicine. There are several issues that arise when discussing this type of healthcare services. For example, Muslim patients face significant challenges in receiving treatment in conventional hospitals, which includes privacy issues during treatment, cross-gender interactions between patients and medical practitioners as well as the status of the pharmaceuticals provided as treatment. Hence, many Muslims are concerned with the manner in which they treated when seeking medical attention in hospitals and this has resulted in the demands for Shari'ah compliant healthcare services. (Sharif SM, Rahman ARA, 2016)

The increased awareness of consuming only halal products (Norafni@Farlina Rahim et. al., 2015) and experiencing Halal services among Muslim consumers has influenced them to also seek for Shari'ah compliant healthcare services. This encourages several service providers to include hospitals that adopt and implement Shari'ah compliant healthcare services in Malaysia. This includes, the Islamic Hospital Consortium (IHC) which comprises of several Shariah compliant hospitals such as Al-iSLAM Specialist Hospital, Pusrawi Hospital, Ar-Ridzuan Medical Center and An Nur Specialist Hospital was established with the main objective of providing services that

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complies with Shari'ah requirements to Muslim patients (Al-Islam, 2017). In general, these hospitals fulfill the needs of Muslims wishing to be treated according to Islamic principles especially when they are sick. This creates an awareness among patients and their families of the need to care for each other (*hablu min an-nas*) whilst observing compliance to Shari'ah principles (*Hablu min Allah*).

This article gives an overview of the concept of Shari'ah compliant healthcare services in Malaysia. Among others it provides background information on the development of Shari'ah compliant healthcare services in the country. From there the article continues to highlight the concept of Shari'ah compliant healthcare services and its requirements. A brief explanation as to its application is also discussed accordingly.

The Development of Shari'ah Compliant Healthcare Services in Malaysia

In the beginning, only a few hospitals offered Shari'ah compliant services with the tag line "Ibadah Friendly Hospital". Amongst the earliest hospitals to introduce Shari'ah compliant healthcare services was the al-Islam Specialist Hospital in Kampung Baru which opened their services to the public in 2006 and was officially launched by the Ministry of Health in August 2010. Initially, the prime objective of the hospital was to provide the best services and facilities to help patients and at the same time also provide staff and patients as well as visitors with enough facilities to perform their *ibadah* especially prayers. (Hadi, 2014).

It must be mentioned that the Pusat Rawatan Islam or PUSRAWI had also been introduced earlier than Hospital al-Islam in 1984 (PUSRAWI, 2013). However, its establishment was not aimed to provide Shari'ah compliant healthcare services in its totality. Instead, it was a hospital that provided medical services for the public at large which is fully owned by the Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan. Nevertheless, one of its objectives is to inculcate Islamic principles as a work ethics (PUSRAWI, 2013).

Subsequently, many other healthcare establishments followed suit. The Islamic Hospital Consortium was established in 2005 with an objective to establish contact and cooperation among its members in the field of healthcare services, strengthen ethical medical practice and hospital administration based on the principles of Islam (IHC, 2016). The Consortium also caters to both to the human capital as well as and services offered by member hospitals and ensures that these hospitals are Shari'ah compliant in both aspects. For human capital which includes medical practitioner and other workers, the hospital organized workshop monthly such as Training of Trainers (T.O.T) workshop. From this workshop, all healthcare institution's staff can learn about various praying methods during sickness and they also were introduced to *tayammum* method. Other than that, they prepared a short reminder (*tazkirah*) every week in the different ward room to fulfill spiritual needs of patients.

Meanwhile, the services provided at those hospitals are in terms of facilities and accommodations. For facilities, they have prepared prayer facilities include ablution kit such pure dust for *tayammum* and also water spray. Almost all the member hospitals dedicate *amusolla* at all levels of the hospital buildings. This has also been adopted by some Government hospitals such as in Sultan Abdul Halim Hospital (Zaiton, 2014) and Selayang Hospital ((Zulaiha, 2014). Besides that, they also provide prayer outfit and mat, Qibla signage and also manual guidelines for prayer.

The Concept of Shari'ah Compliant Healthcare Services

The concept of Shari'ah compliant healthcare services can be defined as healthcare services offered by healthcare institutions which cater to the needs of Muslim patients while fulfilling specific requirements of the Shari'ah. Not only that, the establishment of the institution must be based on the protection of the Maqasid al-Shari'ah. Therefore, the whole "eco-system" of the hospital must be Shari'ah compliant. This means that the management, services, products and facilities offered must all comply to Shari'ah principles.

A brief elucidation on the concept of Maqasid al-Shari'ah is necessary so as to enable readers to appreciate the basis of Shari'ah compliant healthcare services as a whole. Literally, the word "maqasid" is the plural for "maqsud" which means purpose, intents, objectives, goals or aims. Meanwhile, the word "shari'ah" literally means road or path. The word has been described as "the way to the watering hole" by Muhammad Hashim Kamali. This reflects the nature of the Shari'ah which is a source of guidance and felicity for the whole mankind. By following the way to the watering hole, the Shari'ah leads the way for all who follow it to sustenance, peace, tranquility and felicity for the body, soul, mind and heart. As such, the term "Maqasid al-Shari'ah" theoretically means, the objectives or purposes behind the Shari'ah. It is the principle goal that the Shari'ah aims at achieving to allow humans to lead a life that would be good for them in this world and Hereafter.

According to al-Juwaini, there are five levels to the purpose of the Shari'ah. These include the following:

1. The necessities (al-dharuriyat),
2. Public needs (al-hajjah al-'ammah),
3. Moral behaviour (al-makrumat),
4. Recommendations (al-mandubat), and
5. What cannot be attributed to a specific reason.

He proposed that the main intent of Islamic law that are set by Allah s.w.t is to protect the things that are considered as the necessities (al-dharuriyat) in people's lives. If these essential necessities were not protected, then human lives could not continue. These essential necessities would include the protection and preservation of faith, souls, minds, dignity and property.

Meanwhile, Imam al-Ghazzali in his work al-Mustasfa had gone on to use the maqasid as a basis for explaining the purpose for some Shari'ah rulings. Aside from that he also opined that there was a hierarchy to the application of these Maqasid. Unlike al-Juwaini, he has divided the the levels of the Maqasid into the following three:

1. The necessities (al-Dharuriyat). To him there are five essential values that must be protected by the Shari'ah and are considered as necessities for the existence of human life (Ibn 'Asyur, 2001). It is thus necessary for the Shari'ah to protect:
 - i) Life (Nafs)
 - ii) Religion (Deen)
 - iii) Intellect ('Aqal)

- iv) Lineage (Nasl)
- v) Property

2. The needs (al-Hajjiyyat). Meanwhile, the next level of the Maqasid seeks to protect the are of human needs. At this level humans needs would mean that the Shari'ah also protects human needs to ensure that human life is bearable. This would include the protection of and
3. The embellishments (al-Tahsiniyyat).The protection of the *Tahsiniyyat* are protection of things that are neither necessary nor needed by humans. These are the extra embellishments in life. If there exists a conflict between these three levels, then priority will be given to the protection of human necessity, needs and then embellishments. Another Muslim jurist, al-'Izz succinctly summed that;

“When you study how the purpose of the law brings good and prevents mischief, you realise that it is unlawful to overlook any common good or support any act of mischief in any situation, even if you have no specific evidence from the script, concensus or analogy.”

When further explaining this concept, Ibn al-Qayyim states that the Shari'ah “is all about wisdom and achieving people's welfare in this life and the afterlife. It is all about justice, mercy, wisdom and good”.

Based on the above explanations, it could be surmised that in the case of providing healthcare services that complies with the Shari'ah, the main purpose of the hospital would be to provide medical services to promote and protect the main dharuriyyah for all human beings, i.e. life. In doing so, the hospital must give due consideration to the needs of the public which must come over and above any monetary interests or gains. Therefore, the purpose for the introduction of a Shari'ah compliant hospital is to ensure that the lives and livelihood of Muslims in Malaysia is the primary concern of the hospital.

The protection and preservation of human life in essence will lead to the promotion and also the protection of religion. This concept actually enables the hospital to protect and promote the religion through emphasising that working for the benefit of others is actually an ibadah that would be rewarded by Allah s.w.t manifolds. This is also evident from the Qur'anic ayah which mentions that if a person saves the life of a person it is as if he saved the life the people of the whole world. Hence, in providing health services to all who need the treatment, a Shari'ah compliant hospital must also ensure that the doctors, nurses, attendants and administrators are consious of the importance of offering the best services possible to all who need it, regardless of religion or race.

Aside from offering services, a Shari'ah compliant hospital must also ensure that the religious duties of their staff, patients and visitors are able to be fulfilled. As such, the hospital must ensure that the necessary services and facilities are able to cater to the needs of fardhu 'ain which involves the fulfillment of the ibadah khususiah such as the five time daily prayers, obtaining Halal medicine, food and beverages as well as protecting their aurah when being treated. These will be discussed further in the next

part of the article which concentrates on the application of the relevant Shari'ah principles to ensure full compliance with the Shari'ah.

Application of the Shari'ah Compliant Healthcare Services in Malaysia

This part of the article proceeds to explain the specific areas that needs to be emphasised so as to show how healthcare service providers who are interested in providing these services are able to ensure that the management, products, facilities and services that are offered has indeed complied with the Shari'ah.

1. Management Responsibilities

The heart of the Shari'ah compliant hospital lies in its management team. In relation to the management of Shari'ah compliant hospitals, Kamaruzzaman (2013) opines that the broad guidelines includes a quality hospital management process together with an Islamic financial management system. Other than that, the management responsibilities covers the care of hospital facilities, patient care, customer service, human resource and the management of F&B as well as drugs administration, all of which must be in line with the Shari'ah. In addition, the management of Shariah-compliant hospitals also needs to meet the standards stipulated under the Malaysian Standard MS 1900:2014 which provides guidelines for a Shariah-based quality management system (An Nur Specialist Hospital, 2016).

According to the 2013 annual report by the National Consumer Complaints Centre (NCCC), the highest complaint related to healthcare services in total is 37.9% which mainly about hospital billing (National Consumers Complaints Centre, 2013). The charges imposed are exorbitant and some consumers were wrongly charged for treatment undergone by them, but refund was denied or delayed by the center. From this issue, it can be seen that the right of consumer's property is not properly preserved and it is totally against Islamic teaching as it clearly violates the protection of property.

2. Services

Allah mentions in Surah Al-An'am:

"...And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden except for jus cause".
(Surah Al-An'am: 151)

Hence, the core services offered by the hospital would include the responsibility of physicians to provide sincere and genuine medical diagnosis, treatment and care to the patients with the aim of saving their lives. The physicians must make every effort to ensure that they perform their duties according to Islamic medical ethical principles so that they avoid any negligence which may harm a patient's life or cause injury. The duty of the doctor is to provide the best treatment possible to alleviate the pain and suffering of their patients. In Islam, there are certain categories of illnesses to be treated. According to Aziz (2013) who quoted the view of al-Imam al-Ghazali on medical treatment, illnesses can be divided into three categories: curable, expected to be cured and the cure is yet to be found. When the ailment is curable, then the refusal of treatment is forbidden in Islam. Meanwhile, when the disease may be cured but the

treatment may have a dangerous side effect or there is no guarantee that the treatment will be able to cure the disease, then, treating is not contrary to the teachings of Islam as to rely on Allah, the patients are encouraged to seek treatment. For the third category, the treatment may entail hazardous side effects like cauterization, in such cases, the disease may be left alone however treatment is permissible due to modernization of science and technology as prophet mentioned in one hadith:

“For every ailment there is a cure, so seek treatment as Allah has not created a cure, known to some and unknown to others.” [Ibnu Majah, 1953]

Ibn Qayyim commented about this which he said on the one hand patients will always be hopeful of a cure, and on the other hand those in the medical profession are encouraged to conduct further research to enhance this possibility. This is clearly in line with the main dharuriyyat of protecting a person's life as explained above.

Meanwhile, Shari'ah compliant hospitals in general must strive towards providing health care services at reasonable prices, realizing the responsibility and trust to each staff members that the hospital is not just a working place but also a place of worship to Allah swt (to do all the good things and to avoid all malpractices), contributing to the community through Islamic activities (*da'wah*) particularly in health education in order to help the community become a healthier and balanced, integrating the physical, psychological, mental treatment with religious elements (Al-ISLAM, 2017).

Aside from that, Shari'ah compliant hospital services would also include the responsibility of nurses to assist both the doctors and the patients whenever needed. In both aspects, the hospital must ensure that the patient's rights are protected. For example, Islam preserves the modesty of Muslims. Unfortunately due to their lack of understanding on such issue, this issue is neglected by hospital's authorities. The healthcare institutions should strive in preparing enough physicians and nurses to treat the patients according to patient's genders. Although Islam doesn't totally forbid treatment of the opposite sex, providing the patients with a nurse or physician of the same gender when possible is highly recommended. Aside from that, all procedures especially nursing procedures, (SOP) must incorporate Shari'ah needs, having guidelines to handle Muslim and other patients and having trained staff to advise Muslim patients regarding *ibadah* and *ruksah* (an exception to a general law, granted to preserve life or remove hardship)

Besides that, one of the issues raised by Muslim patients amongst pregnant women is not only male doctors present during delivering process of the baby, but male nurse also came to check themselves whether the cervix has begun to open or not (Faidhi, 2013). A Shari'ah compliant hospital needs to emphasise the importance of observing the *aurah* so that the patients can preserve their dignity, in line with the Maqasid al-Shari'ah. This leads to a distinctive aspect of a Shariah compliant hospital in that all its doctors in the obstetrics and gynaecology (O&G) department should be women. This means, babies will only be delivered by female doctors, except in cases of emergency or martial law where male doctors are allowed to treat pregnant women (An Nur Specialist Hospital, 2016).

3. Products

In terms of products, the Shari'ah compliant hospital needs to ensure two main types of products offered to their patients are in compliance to Shari'ah principles and are Halal and good (tayyiban) for their use and consumption. The first is in relation to their dietary needs while being treated in the hospital. Not only must the food and drinks offered are suitable according the dietary requirements of the patients according to the illness that they suffer, it must also be Halal. The use of personal and sanitary care of the patients must also be Halal. This requirement is also extended to the food and beverages offered to the staff and visitors at the hospital.

The second concern would of course be the medicine that is provided by the physicians in their attempt to cure the disease. The management of the Shari'ah compliant hospital would have to ensure that the pharmaceutical products supplied to the patients comply to the strict Halal requirements and are safe for Muslim consumption. There may be some concessions made in cases of dharurah or extreme necessity where non-Halal pharmaceuticals may be resorted to if there are no other options available and to refrain from taking these medicine would result in the death of the patient.

Halal aspect can't be separated with *Toyyib* aspect in all situations. *Toyyib* aspect includes safety and cleanliness. For example, when patients want to perform prayer, they have to ensure their place and clothes are clean from any filth, especially for those patients who are bedridden or who has been attached with urinating bag. Therefore, it is the responsibility of nurses in assisting patients to clean themselves before doing *ibadah* especially performing prayer. Another hygienic issue is related to preparing and handling food. As stated in MS1500:2009, the premises must be clean and safe in order to prepare food and beverages.

Other medical treatment related to protection of intellect is the necessity to ensure that the pharmaceutical products are Halal and free from harmful ingredients. However if alcohol is used as a solvent in medicine it is then permissible in Islam.

4. Facilities

Another aspect of a Shari'ah compliant healthcare institution is the need to provide for the facilities which includes accomodation as well as other facilities that assist the staff and patients to perform their daily *ibadah*., having a panel of expert to advice the hospital management on Shari'ah compliance, and having a regular assessment including clients' feedback to ensure Shari'ah compliance (Kamaruzzaman 2013).

The basic accommodation especially for patients in the hospital is the ward room. Some hospitals accommodate distinguish room based on the patients need and their social status. Although the room is significantly different amongst patients, the important criterion to be taken care of in the Muslim Friendly Healthcare is privacy. Almost all healthcare institutions in Malaysia separate the ward room between male and female patients. However there is less privacy occurring when a patient's guardian or relative from different gender having a visit to the patients. The duty to honour others' privacy is not to be borne by hospital alone, it is important for a visitor to also aware other's patient privacy. On the other hand, when the nurse and physician with different gender want to enter the room, it is better to give signal before their arrival by knocking at the door to ensure that the patient's privacy is preserved.

One of the main aspect for Shari'ah compliant hospital is ensuring adequate facilities for patients and also staff to perform their *ibadah* such as prayer and other obligations in comfort. The healthcare institutions must provide ablution facilities such as ablution space in the toilet or *musolla* and for those bedridden patients the hospital should prepare pure dust for the purpose of *tayammum* (Islamic act of dry ablution using a purified sand or dust, which may be performed in place of ritual washing (*wudu* or *ghusl*) or water spray for them as they cannot take ablution normally. To perform prayer, the hospital has to provide adequate prayer space or *musolla*, *Qibla* signage especially in the wardroom and prayer outfit such as *telekung* (female prayer garment) and *sajada* (praying mat). Furthermore, the manual guideline to pray also important whether in the form of booklet or posters to assist and encourage patients to perform prayer based on their capabilities. (Jawatankuasa Majlis Fatwa Kebangsaan, 2011).

5. Principle of necessity (*dharurah*)

Islam is a religion of Rahmah and Allah s.w.t in His infinite mercy has allowed for some concessions for Muslims when faced with situations which is known as *dharurah*. According to Wahbah Zuhayli as cited by (Luqman, 2012) *dharurah* is a situation of necessity where a Muslim is faced with a choice of either committing an unlawful act or face dire consequences to his religion, life, dignity, intellect and also property. In situations like these, where any of the five essential purposes in his life would be endangered, he is allowed to violate the rules laid down by the Shari'ah. An example can be seen in one of the challenges of a Shari'ah compliant hospital. As seen in the discussion above, one of the essential values that the Shari'ah aims to protect is the patient's dignity. This can be manifested in the protection of a person's *aurah* or modesty. As such, a Shari'ah compliant hospital should ensure that their patients' *aurah* is protected by ensuring that the doctors and nurses are of the same gender as the patients. However, this may not be possible. Therefore, the concept of *dharurah* can be applied with certain conditions by *Shariah*; the patients can be treated by opposite gender when there is no other specialist who can examine the patients. If this situation happens, the patients must be accompanied by his or her *mahram* during treatment (Al-Sharbini, 1997).

Another example can be seen in the administration of medicine. The doctors must prescribe medicine which does not contain prohibited food substances in Islam. However, the concept of necessity may be applicable so long as the following conditions as mentioned by (Qaradawi, 1993) are fulfilled:

- i. The patient's life is endangered if he does not take such medicine.
- ii. No alternative or substitute medication made from entirely *halal* source is available.
- iii. The medication is prescribed by a Muslim physician who is knowledgeable as well as Allah-fearing.

Therefore, the concept of necessity can be used if certain conditions are met which acts as an exception to the general rule and not taken as a norm.

Conclusion

In essence, healthcare establishments adopting Shari'ah compliant status must be imbued with Islamic value in all their action such as striving for excellence and *ihsan* (Arabic term meaning "perfection" or "excellence") (Hadi, 2014) aside from providing Muslim staff, patients and the public with the opportunity to fulfil their religious duties even when they are sick or caring for the sick.

As a conclusion, although Shari'ah compliant healthcare services is not yet fully implemented in many healthcare institutions in Malaysia, some of the elements are already practiced. However, among the main challenge faced by these healthcare institutions is there is no standardized manual or Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for their staff and medical practitioners to rely on to ensure that they are actually complying with various Shari'ah requirements. Therefore, the next step forward would be for the government to seriously look into filling this gap, especially in light of achieving Malaysia's target to become one of the medical tourism country by the year 2020.

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