



The HEALTH

PRIVATE HEALTHCARE

Adapt, Innovate, Collaborate.

The recently-released Association of Private Hospitals of Malaysia (APHM) Factbook 2024 sheds light on the significant role these institutions play, detailing both their contributions and the challenges they face. **p08-09**

Traditional medicine for modern times

Golden Medical Award 2024 highlights TCM's growing role in Malaysia's healthcare system.

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A crisis looming

The urgent need for global awareness and action. **P17**

Targetted subsidies

A significant announcement was the end of universal and nearly free healthcare for all citizens. **P06-07**



The Team

Kay Mathy | Publisher
kaymathy@revonmedia.com

Law Beng Chee | Chief Executive Officer
bclaw@revonmedia.com

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

- ▶ **Dato' Dr Mohmed Razip Hassan**
- ▶ **Dato' Fauzi Omar**
- ▶ **Prof Dr Yumi Zuhani Has-Yun Hashim**
- ▶ **Adi Satria**

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

Dato' (Dr) Johnson Fernandez | Managing Editor
johnson@revonmedia.com

Khirtini K Kumaran | Editor
khirtini@revonmedia.com

Sheila Rozario | Contributing Editor
sheila@revonmedia.com

Fatihah Manaf | Writer
fatihah@revonmedia.com

Adeline Anthony Alphonso | Writer
adeline@revonmedia.com

Zafirah Zafruddin | Writer
zafirah@revonmedia.com

a.azam | Creative Director
a.azam@revonmedia.com

SALES & MARKETING DEPARTMENT

Sahana | Media Director
sahana@revonmedia.com

Hash Plus Media | Media Associate
marketing@hashplusmedia.com

Published by:

Revon Media Sdn Bhd
A-5-1, Parklane Commercial Hub,
Jalan SS 7/26, SS 7,
47301 Petaling Jaya,
Selangor D.E., Malaysia.
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Percetakan Osacar Sdn. Bhd.
No. 16, Jalan IDA 1A,
Industri Desa Aman, Kepong,
52200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
Tel: +603 6279 9474
+6 03 6263 1856
Fax: +603 6280 6802

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SMART PARTNERSHIP



Critical illness: Does halalness matter?

Islam provides clear guidance on permissible and prohibited matters during illness, ensuring actions align with faith



BY MOHAMMAD
AIZAT JAMALUDIN



AND YUMI ZUHANIS
HAS-YUN HASHIM

International Institute for Halal Research and Training (INHART), International Islamic University Malaysia

IN general, critical illness refers to any serious health condition that poses an immediate threat to life, requires intensive medical attention, and often involves organ dysfunction or failure.

Such illnesses typically necessitate treatment in a specialised intensive care unit (ICU) where close monitoring, advanced life-supporting therapies, and interventions are available to stabilise the patient and address severe complications.

According to Nickson (2020), advances in intensive care have led to a growing cohort of chronic critical illness patients who would have otherwise succumbed to acute illness survive in a state dependent on prolonged intensive care therapies. This situation may cause a heavy burden of costs to the individual, family and society; it requires extreme use of resources and causes considerable distress to the patient and family.

In Islam, critical illness is seen as a test of faith and a way to draw closer to Allah the Almighty, offering opportunities for patience, forgiveness, and purification from sins. Islam provides clear guidance on permissible and prohibited matters during illness, ensuring actions align with faith, such as allowing necessary (al-dharurah) medical treatments while prohibiting any practices that contradict Islamic beliefs.

Muslims are encouraged to seek medical treatment, make prayers, and rely on Allah's will, believing that all things, including illness, are part of His divine plan. Supporting and comforting the sick is also highly valued, as it strengthens empathy and community bonds. Through these actions, illness becomes a path for spiritual growth and acceptance of Allah's wisdom.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CRITICAL ILLNESS

Common types of critical illnesses include cardiovascular emergencies such as heart attacks and life-threatening arrhythmias; respiratory conditions such as Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) or severe pneumonia leading to respiratory failure; neurological crises such as large stroke or severe seizure, severe infections and sepsis such as septic shock; and traumatic injuries such as significant injuries from accidents or fall often involving multiple body system.

Three possible outcomes could occur following an acute illness, namely recovery (complete or incomplete), death during the acute illness or progression

to persistent or chronic critical illness (Nickson, 2020). The key characteristics of critical illness may include:

- **Life-threatening nature:** Critical illnesses are conditions that, if untreated, have a high risk of death or significant health deterioration. Examples include heart attacks, severe strokes, respiratory failure, and sepsis.
- **Organ dysfunction or failure:** These illnesses often involve one or more vital organs, such as the heart, lungs, liver, or kidneys, being impaired or failing, which requires specialised care to support organ function temporarily or permanently.
- **Need for intensive treatment:** Management of critical illnesses frequently involves advanced medical interventions like mechanical ventilation, dialysis, blood transfusions, and high-dose medications to stabilise the patient.
- **Prolonged recovery and rehabilitation:** Survivors of critical illness may require extensive rehabilitation and follow-up care due to physical and psychological impacts from both the disease and the intensive treatments involved.

Critical illness management is often a collaborative, multidisciplinary effort involving physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, and other specialists working to stabilise the patient and initiate recovery as swiftly and safely as possible.

DELICATE BALANCE

The concept of "halalness" in critical illness concerns the permissibility and ethical considerations of medical interventions under Islamic law (shari'ah). It involves exploring how Muslims can receive healthcare aligned with their religious values, especially in critical, life-threatening situations. It is about maintaining the delicate balance between preserving life, respecting religious beliefs, and understanding medical limitations.

For Muslims, the concept of halal extends beyond dietary restrictions, encompassing all aspects of life, including medical treatment to preserve life (Hifz al-nafs). 'Halal' comes from the root word hala-yahillu-hillan wa halalan, which means "permissible" in Arabic, and signifies actions that align with the teachings of Islam as outlined in the Quran and the Hadith (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad SAW).

In medicine, this relates to ensuring that healthcare practices respect Islamic

law, especially in critical illnesses, where complex decisions around treatments, end-of-life care, and life-sustaining measures are often involved.

MANAGEMENT OF CRITICAL ILLNESSES

When addressing critical illness and halal issues in Islam, it is important to base decisions on relevant Quranic verses and Hadith. These sources offer guidance on life preservation, the importance of intention, and the permissibility of using non-Halal means in cases of necessity.

1. Necessity (al-dharurah): Islam allows exceptions in cases of extreme necessity, especially when it comes to preserving life (Hifz al-Nafs). The principle of dharurah is derived from the Quran, which states:

"He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced by necessity, neither desiring it nor transgressing its limit—there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."
(Quran, Al-Baqarah, 2:173).

This verse highlights the permissibility of consuming otherwise forbidden substances (such as non-halal food or medicine) if it is necessary to save one's life, as long as the person does not seek it out or enjoy it unnecessarily.

2. Preservation of life (Hifz al-nafs): The preservation of human life is one of the five essential objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shari'ah). The Quran emphasises the sanctity of life and the importance of saving it:

"...whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity..." (Quran, Al-Maidah, 5:32)

This verse underscores the immense value Islam places on saving lives, which forms the basis for allowing life-saving treatments, even if they involve non-halal substances or methods when no alternatives are available.

3. End-of-life decisions: End-of-life care is a sensitive area in the discussion of halalness in healthcare. Islamic teachings emphasise husn al-khatimah (a good ending) and the dignity of the dying process. However, critical illness often leads to difficult decisions about withdrawing life support, pain management, and managing end-of-life symptoms.

While Islam encourages seeking medical treatment, it does not support futile care, where interventions extend suffering without improving the quality of life (Chamsi-Pasha and Albar, 2017). Islamic ethics often endorse the provi-

sion of palliative care when the chances of recovery are negligible, allowing patients to die naturally rather than prolonging life artificially. Scholars agree on the permissibility of adequate pain relief, even if it may indirectly hasten death, as long as the intent is to relieve suffering, not to cause death directly.

"There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment."
(Sahih al-Bukhari, 582)

This Hadith encourages seeking medical treatment while acknowledging that ultimate healing comes from Allah the Almighty. In end-of-life situations, if medical experts conclude that treatment is futile, the family may decide to withhold further interventions.

"None of you should wish for death because of a calamity befalling him; but if he has to wish for death, he should say: 'O Allah! Keep me alive as long as life is better for me and let me die if death is better for me.'" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 5671)

This Hadith emphasises patience during suffering and discourages asking for death, while also recognising that death may sometimes be a form of relief in cases of irreversible suffering.

Use of non-halal medication: When critically ill patients need non-halal medications due to the lack of alternatives, the principle of necessity permits their use. Scholars cite the Hadith that allows for necessary exceptions:

"The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Allah has sent down the disease and the cure and has made for every disease a cure. So, seek treatment, but do not seek treatment with what is unlawful.'" (Sunan Abu Dawood, 3874)

This Hadith suggests that Muslims should seek treatment, but it is generally encouraged to use lawful (halal) treatments. However, based on the principle of necessity (al-dharurah), if no halal options are available and withholding treatment would harm the patient, using non-halal medicine is allowed.

Caring for the sick and the importance of intention: Islam places great value on caring for the sick, with numerous Hadiths emphasising the reward for visiting and supporting the ill. Intention (al-niyah) plays a crucial role in medical decisions, as actions taken with a sincere intention to seek treatment and preserve life are highly valued.

"He who relieves the hardship of a believer in this world, Allah will relieve his hardship on the Day of Judgment." (Sahih Muslim)

This Hadith speaks to the reward for alleviating suffering, which can be extended to the context of providing care and treatment for critically ill patients.

Pain management and palliative care: Islam encourages the relief of suffering, and the use of medication to manage pain, even if it may lead to sedation or reduced consciousness, is generally permitted when the intention is to ease suffering rather than hasten death.

"There comes forth from their bellies a drink

of varying colours wherein is healing for men. Verily, in this is a sign for people who reflect." (Quran, An-Nahl, 16:69)

This verse is often interpreted to encourage seeking treatment and healing, whether through natural means or medicine.

FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS COUNSEL

Family members play a significant role in decision-making processes for Muslim patients, especially in critical conditions where patients may be hindered. The concept of al-Shura (consultation) is vital in Islam, where family members, religious leaders, and healthcare providers collaborate to make decisions that respect and benefit (al-maslahah) the patient's values and beliefs.

For Muslims, having access to religious counsel during critical illness can bring comfort and reassurance, providing moral guidance in making difficult choices. Religious figures familiar with Islamic ethics can be instrumental in bridging the gap between medical realities and religious teachings, especially for families struggling to understand complex medical options.

AWARENESS AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Healthcare providers need to understand the significance of halalness in critical illness to ensure culturally sensitive and religiously compliant care. Misunderstandings can lead to mistrust, potentially affecting treatment adherence or family cooperation. Providers should aim to understand the basic principles of Islamic bioethics and the current fatwa, especially when working in diverse settings.

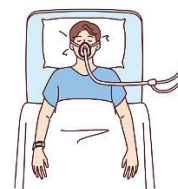
Integrating halal practices into healthcare may include efforts like offering halal-certified pharmaceuticals, accommodating religious practices, and consulting with Islamic scholars on complex bioethical questions. Many hospitals now employ cultural competence training for healthcare providers, which often includes education on Islamic practices, to ensure a holistic approach to Muslim patients' care.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Islam provides a framework for dealing with critical illness through a balance of preserving life, seeking permissible treatments, and using exceptions in cases of necessity. Quranic verses and Hadith support the idea of compassion, intention, and the ultimate sovereignty of Allah the Almighty in matters of life and death.

Halalness in critical illness is a multifaceted concept shaped by religious teachings, ethical considerations, and medical needs. It emphasises preserving life and dignity while respecting religious boundaries and personal beliefs. Understanding halalness in critical care

WHAT DOES ISLAM SAY ABOUT MANAGEMENT OF CRITICAL ILLNESS?



01

Principle of Necessity (Al-Dharurah)

In extreme necessity cases, Islam permits otherwise forbidden actions to save lives.

02

Sanctity of Life (Hifz al-Nafs)

Preserving life is one of the objectives of Islamic law



03

End-of-Life Care

Islam supports natural death over futile medical interventions.



04

Use of Non-Halal Medication

Non-halal treatments are allowed if no halal options exist and life is at risk.



05

Caring for the Sick

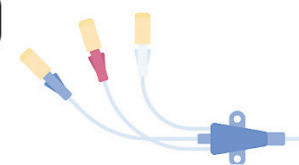
High value is placed on supporting the ill; intention matters.



06

Pain Management & Palliative Care

Islam encourages relieving suffering. Pain relief is permitted, even if it may reduce consciousness, as long as it is not intended to hasten death.



HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS' AWARENESS AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IS THE KEY

Healthcare providers should understand halal practices and Islamic bioethics to deliver culturally sensitive care, which fosters trust and improves treatment adherence among Muslim patients.

contexts requires a balance between the principles of Islamic bioethics and current fatwa, medical necessity, and compassionate care.

As healthcare becomes increasingly globalised, accommodating the halal needs of patients not only ensures compliance with religious beliefs but also enhances the quality of care by respecting the diverse cultural and religious landscape of modern healthcare. - **The HEALTH**