Can Muslims Use Medicines Containing Animal Products?

In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful,

If the medicine is made from, or contains animal by-products, it may be one of 2 types:

1. **Halal animal**: Halal (licit/permissible). If it comes from an animal whose meat may be eaten and it has been slaughtered according to the Islamic rite,
   - It is **permissible** to consume and use the product as medicine.

2. **Haram animal**
   a) Haram (illicit/unlawful) animal (pork etc.) or;
   b) It comes from a Halal animal (beef, sheep, chicken etc.) which has not been slaughtered according to the Islamic rite,
   - The consumption or use of such meat is Haram in general circumstances.

It is important to mention that many substances derived from animals undergo chemical transformation whereas the substance has been modified. In such case the status will also change. If there are no remaining of the animal product due to chemical transformation, the end product is Halal.

If there has been no chemical transformation, it will remain Haram.

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<th>Halal animal:</th>
<th>Slaughtered according to the Islamic rite</th>
<th>Chemical transformation whereas the substance has been modified: the status will change too.</th>
<th>Halal</th>
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<td>Halal animal:</td>
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Remains the question about using Haram substance (animal or other) for medication. The straight forward answer would be yes, it is permissible; if

1. It is saving a life and
2. There is no available Halal alternative.

However, the fact is that the scholars have differed in this issue due to the apparently conflicting evidence/Hadiths found in this regard. Some narrations indicate that it is Haram to use Haram medication, whilst others seem to indicate that it will be permitted to use Haram substances for medical purposes.
Evidences of permissibility:

1) Allah Most High says:

“He (Allah) has only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that on which any other name has been invoked besides that of Allah. But if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, then he is guiltless. For Allah is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful." (Surah al-Baqarah, V:173)

2) Sayyiduna Anas (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that some people came from (the tribe of) 'Ukl or 'Urayna and became ill in Madinah. The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) commanded them to go to the milk-camels and to drink their urine and milk (for their treatment) (Sahih al-Bukhari, no: 231)

3) Sayyiduna Anas ibn Malik (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) permitted Zubayr and Abd al-Rahman (Allah be pleased with them both) to wear silk because of the itching they suffered from.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, no: 5501)

Wearing of silk has been categorically forbidden for men by the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace), yet it was allowed for medical purposes.

4) Imam Abu Dawud, Imam Nasa'i and Imam Tirmidhi (Allah have mercy on them) relate in their respective Sunan collections, that a Companion (Sahabi) by the name of Arfaaja ibn Aswad (Allah be pleased with him) had his nose damaged in the battle of Kulab. He replaced it first with silver, and then with a nose made of gold, with the order and consent of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace), despite gold being Haram for men.

Narrations indicating impermissibility:

1) Sayyiduna Abu al-Darda (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said: “Indeed Allah has sent down both illness and its cure, and He has appointed a cure for every illness, so treat yourselves medically, but use nothing Haram.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, no: 3870)

2) Sayyiduna Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) forbade from (using) impure medicine.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, no: 3866)

3) Tariq ibn Suwayd or Suwayd ibn Tariq asked the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) regarding wine, but he forbade it. He again asked him, but he forbade him. He said to him: “O Messenger of Allah! It is a medicine”. The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said: “No it is a illness.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, no: 3869)

4) Sayyida Umm Salamah (Allah be pleased with her) narrates: …… So the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him & give him peace) said: “Indeed Allah Most High has not put cure for you in the Haram.” (Sahih Ibn Hibban)

As far as the narrations indicating the impermissibility of using Haram medication are concerned, they (according to the scholars who permit using Haram medication) refer to the situation where an alternative is available. Hence, in such a case, it would indeed be Haram to avail of Haram medicine.
Similarly, it will be Haram to use Haram medication when there is uncertainty in the medication being a cure for one’s illness; hence, the narrations refer to the situation where there is uncertainty.

Among other references, the Muhaddith, Allama Badr al-Din al-Ayni (Allah have mercy on him) states in his renowned commentary of Sahih al-Bukhari:

“Seeking treatment with Haram medication is permissible when one is certain of being cured, similar to consuming dead-meat when dying of hunger and drinking alcohol when dying of thirst.” (Umdat al-Qari, 2/649) The same has been mentioned by other scholars also.

And God knows best.

Imam Abdel Rahim
EICC
Eastbourne Islamic Cultural Centre
cckoas@yahoo.co.uk

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