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# EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN: SCIENCE, IMAGINATION, DISCOVERY

*Proceedings of the VII International Scientific and Practical Conference*

*7-8 July 2026*

*LISBON. PORTUGAL*

*2026*

*UDC 001.1*

*BBC 1*

*VII International Scientific and Practical Conference «Exploring the unknown: science, imagination, discovery», July 7-8, 2026, Lisbon. Portugal. 162 p.*

*ISBN 978-91-65424-80-7*

*DOI https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21393338*

*Publisher: «SC. Scientific conferences»*

*Main organization:* artmedia24

*Editor: Hans Muller*

*Layout: Ellen Schwimmer*



*The sample of the citation for publication is Gugnin Aleksandr, Lisnievska Yuliia ANTI-ADVERTISING IN THE HOTEL BUSINESS // VII International Scientific and Practical Conference «Exploring the unknown: science, imagination, discovery», July 7-8, 2026, Lisbon. Portugal. Pp.9-11, URL: https://sconferences.com*

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# Biological sciences

## NEW RECORDS OF FRESHWATER CILIATES (CILIOPHORA) FROM THE NAKHCHIVAN AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC, AZERBAIJAN

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*Abstract*

*This study presents the results of faunistic surveys conducted between 2017 and 2022 in the freshwater bodies of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, Azerbaijan. More than 20 ciliate (Ciliophora) species were recorded for the first time in the national fauna. The morphology, size measurements, ecological preferences, distribution, and feeding types of the recorded species were examined using light microscopy. The results demonstrate the high richness and biological diversity of the microfauna in the region's freshwater ecosystems and highlight the need for further detailed studies.*

*Keywords:* *Ciliophora, freshwater ciliates, faunistic study, biodiversity, Nakhchivan*

*Introduction*

*Ciliates (Ciliophora) are a crucial component of freshwater ecosystems, playing a significant role in nutrient cycling, bacterial population regulation, and the structure of trophic interactions. Despite their ecological importance, the freshwater ciliate fauna of Azerbaijan, particularly in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, remains poorly documented.*

*Between 2017 and 2022, extensive faunistic surveys were conducted in various freshwater habitats, including rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands. These surveys resulted in the first national records of more than 20 ciliate species. Morphological characteristics, ecological preferences, distribution patterns, and feeding types of the identified species were studied using light microscopy.*

*The findings provide essential baseline data on the diversity and composition of freshwater ciliates in the region and emphasize the necessity of continued research to fully understand the microfaunal biodiversity in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.*

*Materials and Methods*

*Samples were collected between 2017 and 2022 from various freshwater habitats in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, including rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands. Plankton nets (25–50 µm) and sediment samplers were used to obtain the specimens. Live samples were observed in situ, and subsequently fixed in 2–4% neutral formalin or Lugol's solution. Species identification was performed based on standard taxonomic keys and monographs (Ehrenberg, 1830; Kahl, 1930; Foissner, 1995). Measurements were made using a micrometer scale, with at least 10–20 individuals measured per species.*

*Results*

*The conducted surveys resulted in the first national records of more than 17 ciliate species in Azerbaijan. The recorded species belong to diverse taxonomic groups, exhibit varied ecological preferences, and display different feeding strategies, highlighting the high biological diversity of freshwater ecosystems in the region.*

*Material Examined*

*Samples were collected between 2017 and 2022 from rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. For each sampling site, coordinates, water temperature, pH, and substrate type were recorded. Specimens are deposited in the authors' collection.*

*TABLE 1. NEW CILIATE SPECIES RECORDED FOR THE FAUNA OF AZERBAIJAN*

| Species | Size (µm) | Ecological group | Feeding type | Habitat |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Stentor pyriformis Kudo, 1966* | *700* | *Mesotrophic* | *Bacteria, flagellates* | *Stagnant waters* |
| *Stentor fuliginosus Kudo, 1966* | *300–800 (sometimes up to 1000 µm)* | *β-mesosaprobe, benthic-periphyton species* | *Heterotroph; feeds on bacteria, small algae, and organic particles* | *Freshwater lakes, reservoirs, slow-flowing waters, vegetation and periphyton areas* |
| *Euplotes mutabilis Ehrenberg, 1830* | *80–120* | *Eurytopic* | *Bacteria* | *Periphyton* |
| *Euplotes moebius f. quadricirratus Kahl, 1932* | *90–125* | *Eurytopic* | *Bacteria* | *Periphyton* |
| *Dileptus costaricanus Foissner, 1995* | *100–190* | *Predatory* | *Protozoa* | *Lotic and lentic waters* |
| *Amphileptus pleurosigma Stokes, 1884* | *100–150* | *Predatory* | *Protozoa* | *Benthos* |
| *Vorticella conica Stokes, 1887* | *90–130* | *Mezosaprobic* | *Bacteria* | *Substrate-attached* |
| *Vorticella picta Ehrenberg, 1831* | *41–63* | *Mezosaprobic* | *Bacteria* | *Substrate-attached* |
| *Zoothamnium parasiticum Stein, 1859* | *70–90* | *Polysaprobic* | *Bacteria* | *Sediment-rich waters* |
| *Zoothamnium carinogammari d'Udeken, 1862* | *80* | *Polysaprobic* | *Bacteria* | *Sediment-rich waters* |
| *Coleps striatus Smith, 1897* | *50* | *Planktonic* | *Bacteria* | *Open water* |
| *Rhabdostyla ovum Kent, 1882* | *60–90* | *Benthic* | *Bacteria* | *Lotic waters* |
| *Vaginicola gigantia d'Udeken, 1862* | *200* | *Benthic* | *Planktonic organisms* | *Substrate-attached* |
| *Coturnia annulata Ehrenberg, 1838* | *75* | *Benthic* | *Bacteria* | *Substrate-attached* |
| *Caenomorpha sapropelica Kahl, 1927* | *120–250* | *Polysaprobe, sapropelobiont* | *Heterotroph; feeds mainly on bacteria and detritus* | *Water bodies with poorly oxygenated, organic-rich sapropel sediments, black silt benthos, and decayed organic remains* |
| *Oxytricha lanceolata Shibuya:1930* | *118* | *Benthic* | *Bacteria* | *Organic-rich sediments* |
| ***Uroleptus musculus** Borror, 1972* | *120-200* | *Benthic* | *Bacteria, algae* | *Mud zones* |

*New species for Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic Lacrymaria olor Müller, 1786; L. lagenula Kahl, 1927; Colpoda cucullus Müller, 1773; Vorticella octava Stokes, 1885; Stylonychia putrina Stokes, 1885.*

### *Discussion*

*The discovery of numerous ciliate species previously unrecorded from Azerbaijan indicates that the freshwater microfauna of the region is far from fully documented. Comparisons with regional and international studies (Foissner, 1999; Lynn, 2008) reveal similarities in taxonomic structure but also highlight morphological variations likely due to local environmental adaptations. Future molecular-genetic studies are warranted to explore these regional differences.*

### *Conclusion*

*This study significantly expands the known diversity of freshwater ciliates in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and provides a foundation for future ecological monitoring, taxonomic research, and biodiversity assessments.*

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## *SYNERGIZING AI AND PHYTOCHEMISTRY: DECODING THE MULTITARGETED ANTICANCER MECHANISMS OF FLAVONOIDS*

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*Cancer remains one of the leading causes of mortality worldwide, necessitating the continuous development of safer and more effective therapeutic strategies. Among naturally occurring bioactive compounds, flavonoids have attracted considerable attention because of their ability to regulate multiple molecular pathways involved in tumor initiation, progression, metastasis, and therapeutic resistance (Hui et al., 2013; Kachadourian et al., 2007; Uniyal et al., 2025). Unlike conventional chemotherapeutic agents that typically target a single molecular mechanism, flavonoids exhibit pleiotropic anticancer activity by modulating signaling pathways such as PI3K/AKT, NF-κB, MAPK, COX-2, and Nrf2, while simultaneously influencing oxidative stress, apoptosis, angiogenesis, immune regulation, and the tumor microenvironment. However, despite their broad therapeutic potential, the clinical translation of flavonoids has been limited by challenges including poor bioavailability, rapid metabolism, structural diversity, and the complexity of synergistic interactions among phytochemicals.*

*Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) have created unprecedented opportunities to overcome these limitations and revolutionize phytochemical drug discovery. Modern AI methodologies—including molecular language models, deep neural networks, machine learning, network pharmacology, and structure-based computational approaches—enable rapid exploration of the vast chemical space occupied by natural products while predicting biological activity, molecular targets, pharmacokinetic properties, and synergistic interactions (Albani et al., 2025; X.-F. Zhang et al., 2018). These computational tools facilitate the identification of novel flavonoid candidates, optimization of their chemical structures, and rational design of advanced delivery systems, substantially reducing both the time and cost associated with conventional experimental screening(Tuohan et al., 2026).*

*AI is particularly transformative in elucidating the multitargeted mechanisms of flavonoids through systems biology approaches that integrate cheminformatics, bioinformatics, molecular dynamics simulations, and multi-omics datasets (Kuenzi et al., 2020; T. Zhang et al., 2021). Rather than considering flavonoids as isolated compounds, AI enables comprehensive mapping of flavonoid–target–pathway interaction networks, revealing how coordinated modulation of multiple signaling cascades underlies their anticancer efficacy. Moreover, deep learning algorithms can predict synergistic combinations between flavonoids, conventional chemotherapeutic agents, and multi-component herbal formulations, supporting the development of personalized and combination-based therapeutic strategies that may overcome drug resistance while reducing toxicity.*

*Despite these promising developments, significant challenges remain before AI-guided flavonoid therapeutics can achieve widespread clinical implementation. Computational predictions require rigorous experimental validation, while issues related to limited datasets, heterogeneous biological responses, pharmacokinetics, toxicity, and regulatory approval continue to impede translation (Altae-Tran et al., 2017). Future integration of AI with multi-omics technologies, digital twins, generative molecular design, and nanotechnology-based drug delivery systems is expected to further accelerate the discovery and optimization of flavonoid-derived anticancer agents.*

*Overall, the convergence of artificial intelligence and phytochemistry represents a paradigm shift in anticancer drug discovery. By enabling comprehensive mechanistic understanding, rational compound optimization, and prediction of synergistic therapeutic combinations, AI provides a powerful framework for unlocking the full therapeutic potential of flavonoids. This interdisciplinary approach has the capacity to transform flavonoid-based research from empirical natural product screening into a predictive, mechanism-driven strategy, ultimately facilitating the development of more effective, safer, and personalized anticancer therapies (Albani et al., 2025; Tuohan et al., 2026; Uniyal et al., 2025).*

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# Chemical sciences

## PREPARATION AND INVESTIGATION OF PROPERTIES OF MAGNETICALLY CONTROLLED NANOCOMPOSITE $Fe_3O_4$/ALGNPS

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## ПОЛУЧЕНИЕ И ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ СВОЙСТВ МАГНИТОУПРАВЛЯЕМОГО НАНОКОМПОЗИТА $Fe_3O_4$/ALGNPS

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*Abstract*

*This work presents the results of the synthesis and comprehensive investigation of superparamagnetic magnetite–alginate nanocomposites ($Fe_3O_4$Alg) obtained by the method of co-precipitation followed by calcium-induced ionic crosslinking. The formation of the composite structure and preservation of the crystalline magnetite phase were confirmed by FTIR spectroscopy and X-ray diffraction analysis. Electron microscopic studies demonstrated a uniform distribution of $Fe_3O_4$ nanoparticles with sizes below 10–15 nm within the alginate matrix, as well as suppression of magnetically induced aggregation. The scientific novelty of the study lies in establishing the relationship between the structural organization of the alginate matrix and the stabilization of superparamagnetic magnetite nanoparticles, ensuring simultaneous preservation of the magnetic properties, phase purity of $Fe_3O_4$, and high functional availability of alginate carboxylate groups. It was shown that the composite is formed according to the "crystalline magnetic core–amorphous polymer shell" model, creating favorable conditions for the selective binding of heavy metal ions. The obtained solid $Fe_3O_4$/Alg composite can be considered a promising magnetically controlled sorbent for the removal of various pollutants from aqueous media.*

*Аннотация*

*В работе представлены результаты синтеза и комплексного исследования суперпарамагнитногонанокомпозитов на основе магнетита и альгината ($Fe_3O_4$/Alg), полученных методом совместного химического соосаждения с последующей ионной сшивкой кальцием. Формирование композитной структуры и сохранение кристаллической фазы магнетита подтверждены методами FTIR-спектроскопии и рентгеновской дифракции. Электронно-микроскопические исследования показали равномерное распределение наночастиц $Fe_3O_4$ размером менее 10–15 нм в альгинатной матрице и подавление магнитно-индуцированной агрегации. Научная новизна исследования заключается в установлении взаимосвязи между структурной организацией альгинатной матрицы и стабилизацией суперпарамагнитных наночастиц магнетита, обеспечивающей одновременное сохранение магнитных свойств, фазовой чистоты $Fe_3O_4$ и высокой функциональной доступности карбоксилатных групп альгината. Показано, что композит формируется по типу «кристаллическое магнитное ядро — аморфная полимерная оболочка», что создаёт благоприятные условия для селективного связывания ионов тяжёлых металлов. Получение твердого $Fe_3O_4$/Alg композита допускает его применение в качестве эффективного магнито-управляемого сорбента ряда поллютантов.*

***Keywords:*** *magnetite; alginate; superparamagnetic nanocomposites; FTIR analysis; scanning electron microscopy; XRD spectroscopy*

**Ключевые слова:** *магнетит; альгинат; суперпарамагнитные нанокомпозиты; FTIR анализ; сканирующая микроскопия, XRD- спектроскопия.*

## 1. Введение

*В последние годы магнитные наноматериалы привлекают повышенное внимание благодаря сочетанию развитой удельной поверхности, высокой реакционной способности и возможности дистанционного управления с помощью внешнего магнитного поля [1–3]. Особенно перспективными считаются наночастицы магнетита $Fe_3O_4$, обладающие суперпарамагнитными свойствами, химической стабильностью и сравнительно низкой токсичностью. Подобные материалы находят применение в сорбционных технологиях, каталитических процессах, биомедицинских системах, аналитических устройствах и технологиях очистки воды [2–5].*

*Несмотря на значительный потенциал магнетита, практическое использование индивидуальных наночастиц ограничивается их выраженной склонностью к агрегации. Под действием магнитных дипольных взаимодействий частицы быстро образуют крупные агломераты, что приводит к уменьшению активной поверхности, ухудшению дисперсности и снижению сорбционных характеристик [6,7]. Одним из наиболее эффективных способов стабилизации магнитных наночастиц является их иммобилизация в полимерных матрицах [8–10].*

*Среди природных биополимеров особый интерес представляет альгинат натрия — анионный полисахарид, способный образовывать пространственно-сшитые гидрогелевые структуры при взаимодействии с двухвалентными ионами металлов [4,8]. Наличие карбоксильных и гидроксильных групп обеспечивает высокую гидрофильность, способность к комплексообразованию и развитые сорбционные свойства [9–11]. Кроме того, альгинатные матрицы отличаются биосовместимостью, низкой токсичностью и технологической простотой получения [2,4].*

*Использование альгината в качестве стабилизирующей среды позволяет не только снизить степень агломерации магнитных наночастиц, но и сформировать пористые композиционные материалы с высокой доступностью функциональных центров [3,10,12]. Благодаря этому магнитные полимерные композиты рассматриваются как перспективная основа для создания магнитоуправляемых сорбентов нового поколения.*

*Вместе с тем многие аспекты формирования подобных систем остаются недостаточно изученными. В литературе отсутствуют единые представления о механизмах стабилизации $Fe_3O_4$ внутри альгинатной матрицы, влиянии полимерной оболочки на морфологию частиц и особенностях межфазного взаимодействия между магнетитом и функциональными группами полисахарида [13–17].*

*Целью настоящего исследования являлось получение магнитоуправляемого нанокомпозита $Fe_3O_4$/Alg, а также изучение его структурных, фазовых и морфологических свойств методами FTIR-спектроскопии, рентгенофазового анализа и электронной микроскопии.*

## 2. Материалы и методы

### 2.1. Реактивы и материалы

*В работе использовали соли $FeCl_3 \cdot 6H_2O$ и $FeSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$ аналитической чистоты. В качестве осадителя применяли 10 %-ный раствор аммиака. Альгинат натрия и Pluronic PE 6400 (CAS 9005-38-3) приобретены у Sigma-Aldrich. Все растворы готовили на деионизированной воде.*

### 2.2. Синтез наночастиц магнетита

*Синтез $Fe_3O_4$ 4этого 10 %-ные растворы $FeCl_3$ и $FeSO_4$ смешивали в мольном соотношении 2:1, после чего реакционную смесь нагревали до 60 °C при ультразвуковом перемешивании в течение 10–15 мин. Далее капельно вводили 10 %-ный раствор $NH_4OH$ до образования чёрного осадка магнетита. Смесь выдерживали 30 мин при постоянном перемешивании.*

*Образование $Fe_3O_4$ описывается реакцией:*

$$2FeCl_3 + FeSO_4 + 8NH_4OH \rightarrow Fe_3O_4\downarrow + 6NH_4Cl + (NH_4)_2SO_4 + 4H_2O$$

### 2.3. Получение композита $Fe_3O_4$/AlgPNs

*Наночастицы $Fe_3O_4$ диспергировали в 2,5 %-ном растворе альгината натрия с использованием ультразвуковой обработки (10 мин). Полученную суспензию капельно вводили в 0,3 М раствор $CaCl_2$ где происходило формирование гранул композита диаметром 1,0–1,5 мм. Время гелеобразования составляло 10–30 мин [13,14]. После отверждения гранулы промывали деионизированной водой для удаления избытка ионов $Ca^{2+}$.*

### 2.4. Методы анализа

*ИК-спектры регистрировали в диапазоне 4000–400 см⁻¹ методом FTIR-спектроскопии. Рентгенофазовый анализ выполняли с использованием CuKa-излучения (λ = 1,5406 Å). Морфологию и размеры частиц исследовали методом сканирующей электронной микроскопии.*

### *3. Результаты и обсуждение*

*Альгинат натрия представляет собой природный анионный полисахарид, макромолекулы которого построены из фрагментов β-D-маннуроновой и a-L-гулуроновой кислот, соединённых β-(1→4)-гликозидными связями. Значительное количество карбоксильных и гидроксильных групп определяет способность данного полимера к гидратации, комплексообразованию и формированию трёхмерных гелеобразных структур [8,15].*

*Высокая реакционная способность функциональных групп альгината создаёт благоприятные условия для стабилизации магнитных наночастиц. При взаимодействии с ионами кальция формируется пространственная полимерная сеть, внутри которой происходит фиксация частиц $Fe_3O_4$. Подобная структура препятствует непосредственному контакту магнитных ядер и существенно снижает вероятность их агломерации [10,14].*

*Анализ ИК-спектров (рис.1) показал, что после формирования композита сохраняются характерные полосы как альгинатной матрицы, так и магнетита. При этом наблюдается смещение полос асимметричных колебаний карбоксилатных групп в область более высоких частот, что указывает на координационное взаимодействие $COO^-$-групп с поверхностными центрами железа [15,16]. Дополнительным подтверждением присутствия магнетита служит сохранение полос Fe–O-связей в низкочастотной области спектра.*

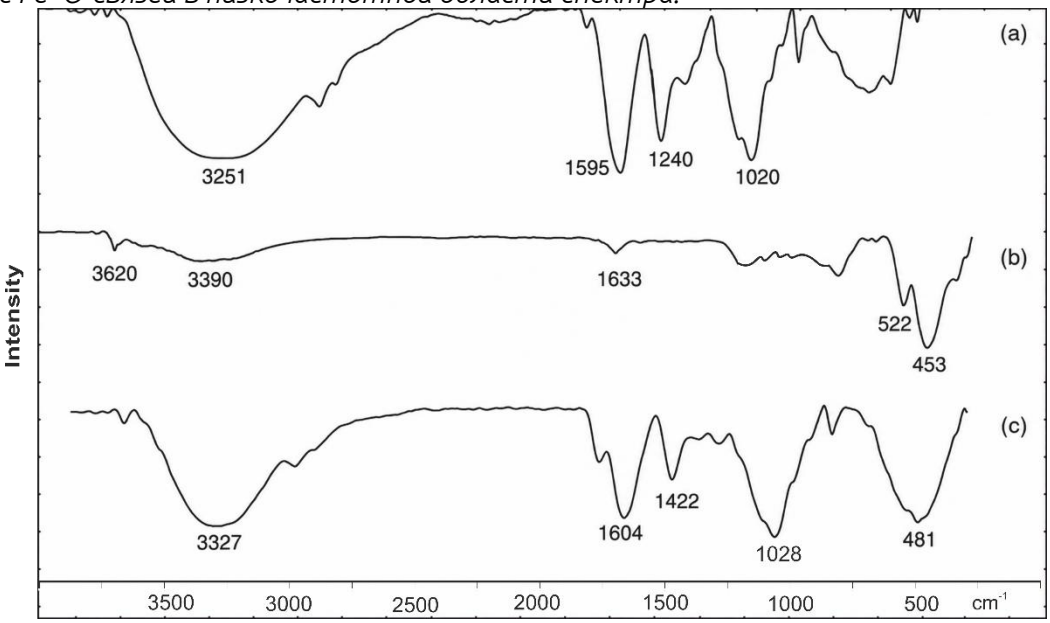


*Рис. 1 ИК-спектры альгината натрия, магнетита и композита $Fe_3O_4$/Alg PNs*

*Полученные данные свидетельствуют о том, что образование композита сопровождается не простым механическим смешением компонентов, а формированием межфазных взаимодействий между полимерной матрицей и поверхностью магнитных наночастиц. Именно это обеспечивает устойчивость системы и более равномерное распределение $Fe_3O_4$ в объёме полимера [15–17].*

*В таблице 1 приводится расшифровка и интерпретация полученных ИК-спектров*

*Таблица 1. Расшифровка ИК-спектров и их интерпретация*

| *Образец* | *Диапазон, $см^{-1}$* | *Характеристические полосы, $см^{-1}$* | *Интерпретация* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *a) Альгинат натрия* | *3600–3000* | *3251* | *Широкая полоса ν(O–H), гидроксильные группы и связанная вода* |
| | *3000–2800* | *~2920–2850* | *ν(C–H) алифатических фрагментов полисахарида* |
| | *1650–1550* | *1595* | *Асимметричные колебания $\nu_{as}(COO^-)$ карбоксилатных групп* |
| | *1450–1400* | *~1410–1425* | *Симметричные колебания $\nu_s(COO^-)$* |
| | *1300–1200* | *1240* | *ν(C–O), δ(O–H), частично ν(C–O–C)* |
| | *1100–1000* | *1020* | *ν(C–O–C) и ν(C–O) гликозидных связей* |
| *b) Магнетит $Fe_3O_4$* | *3700–3200* | *3620, 3390* | *ν(O–H) поверхностных гидроксилов и адсорбированной воды* |
| | *1650–1600* | *1633* | *δ(H–O–H) адсорбированной воды* |
| | *600–500* | *522* | *ν(Fe–O) в тетраэдрических узлах шпинели* |
| | *500–400* | *453* | *ν(Fe–O) в октаэдрических узлах шпинели* |
| *c) Композит $Fe_3O_4$/Alg* | *3600–3000* | *3327* | *ν(O–H), усиленные водородные связи* |
| | *1650–1550* | *1604* | *$\nu_{as}(COO^-)$, координация $COO^-$ с $Fe_3O_4$* |
| | *1450–1400* | *1422* | *$\nu_s(COO^-)$, взаимодействие карбоксилатных групп* |
| | *1100–1000* | *1028* | *ν(C–O–C), ν(C–O) полисахаридной матрицы* |
| | *520–450* | *481* | *ν(Fe–O), подтверждение присутствия магнетита в композите* |

*Ключевые спектральные изменения при образовании композита представлены в таблице 2*

*Таблица 2. Характерные изменения в ИК спектрах альгината и магнетит содержащего композита*

| *Полоса* | *Альгинат* | *Композит* | *Интерпретация* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *ν(O–H)* | *3251 $см^{-1}$* | *3327 $см^{-1}$* | *Изменение системы водородных связей* |
| *$\nu_{as}(COO^-)$* | *1595 $см^{-1}$* | *1604 $см^{-1}$* | *Координация $COO^-$ с поверхностью $Fe_3O_4$* |
| *ν(C–O–C)* | *1020 $см^{-1}$* | *1028 $см^{-1}$* | *Изменение окружения полисахаридной цепи* |
| *ν(Fe–O)* | *522/453 $см^{-1}$* | *481 $см^{-1}$* | *Межфазное взаимодействие $Fe_3O_4$–Alg* |

*В результате анализа ИК-спектров можно прийти к выводу, что в композите $Fe_3O_4$/Alg реализуется химически значимое взаимодействие карбоксилатных групп альгината с поверхностными центрами магнетита. Этот вывод полностью согласуется с данными современной литературы [15-17].*

*Электронно-микроскопические исследования показали существенные различия между морфологией индивидуального магнетита и композитного материала. Для исходного Fe3O4 характерно образование плотных агрегатов неправильной формы, возникающих вследствие сильных магнитных взаимодействий между наночастицами [11,12]. В композите Fe3O4/Alg структура становится значительно более рыхлой и пористой. Наночастицы распределяются внутри полимерной матрицы более равномерно, а степень их агломерации заметно снижается.*

*На рисунке 2 представлены СЭМ изображения наночастиц синтезированного магнетита и сорбционного композита магнетит/альгинат*

*Формирование губчатой структуры сопровождается увеличением количества межчастичных пор и ростом доступной поверхности. Альгинат в данном случае выполняет одновременно стабилизирующую и структурообразующую функции, ограничивая слипание частиц и создавая механический каркас композита [13,14]. Подобные морфологические особенности являются важными предпосылками для повышения сорбционной эффективности материала.*

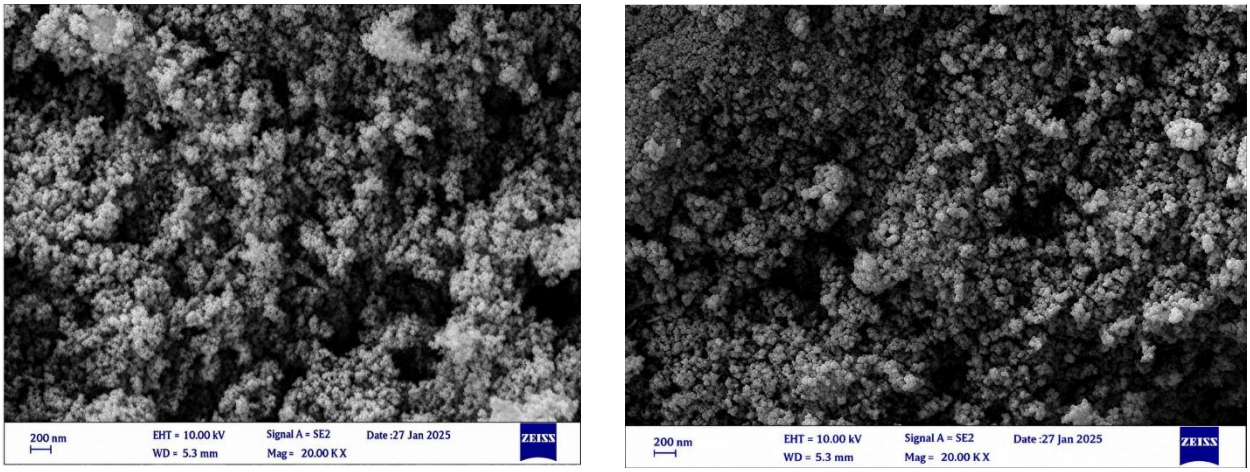


*Рис.2. СЭМ изображения нативного магнетита и композита $Fe_3O_4$-AlgNPs*

*Сопоставительный анализ СЭМ изображений приведен в таблице 3.*

*Таблица 3 — Сравнительный анализ СЭМ-изображений магнетита и Fe3O4/Alg*

| *Параметр* | *Магнетит* | *Магнетит–альгинат* |
|---|---|---|
| ***Морфология:*** | *частицы имеют выраженную нанокристаллическую природу и образуют* ***плотные агломераты*** *неправильной формы. Отдельные первичные наночастицы плохо различимы вследствие сильного магнитного взаимодействия.* | *структура становится более рыхлой и иерархической. Магнетит более равномерно распределён внутри полимерной матрицы.* |
| ***Размер частиц:*** | *первичные зерна оцениваются в диапазоне 10–20 нм, однако наблюдаются агрегаты размером 100–300 нм и более* | *агрегация заметно подавлена; наночастицы или их небольшие кластеры пространственно разделены за счёт альгинатной сетки.* |
| ***Степень агрегации:*** | *высокая. Частицы склонны к самопроизвольному слипанию, что типично для магнетита из-за диполь–дипольных магнитных взаимодействий.* | *преобладают агрегаты меньшего эффективного размера, с более чёткими границами; наблюдается дезагрегация по сравнению с чистым Fe3O4.* |
| ***Пористость структуры:*** | *межагрегатные пустоты присутствуют, но распределены неравномерно; структура выглядит компактной и неоднородной.* | *возрастает количество и равномерность пор, формируется губчатая (sponge-like) структура.* |
| ***Поверхность:*** | *шероховатая, с выраженной фрактальной текстурой, характерной для осаждённого $Fe_3O_4$.* | *альгинат выполняет функцию стабилизатора, ограничивающего рост и слипание частиц, а также служит механическим каркасом.* |

*Рентгенофазовый анализ ( рис.3) подтвердил формирование однофазного нанокристаллического магнетита со структурой обратной шпинели.*

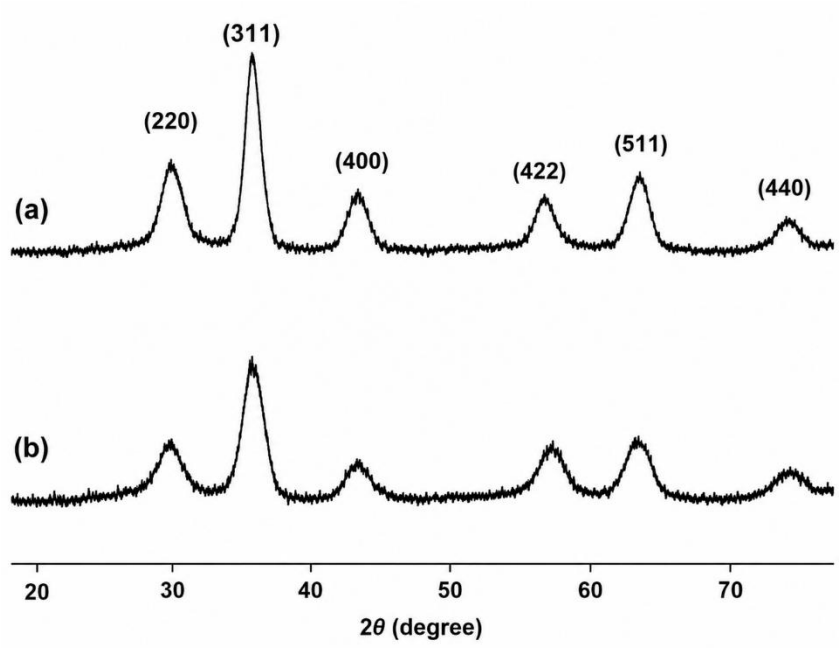


*Рис.3.Дифракционная рентгенограмма a) порошка магнетита и b) композита магнетит/ альгинат ( $Fe_3O_4$/AlgNPs)*

*На дифрактограммах наблюдаются характерные рефлексы, соответствующие плоскостям (220), (311), (400), (422), (511) и (440), типичным для $Fe_3O_4$ [11,12]. Отсутствие дополнительных максимумов свидетельствует о высокой фазовой чистоте синтезированного материала.*

*После введения магнетита в альгинатную матрицу основные рефлексы сохраняются, однако их интенсивность уменьшается, а пики становятся более широкими. Это связано с присутствием аморфной полимерной оболочки и нанодисперсным состоянием магнитной фазы. Полученные результаты подтверждают, что инкапсуляция $Fe_3O_4$ не приводит к разрушению кристаллической структуры магнетита [13,14].*

*На основании совокупности спектральных, морфологических и рентгенографических данных можно заключить, что формирование $Fe_3O_4$/Alg-композита происходит по механизму «магнитное ядро — полимерная оболочка». Подобная архитектура обеспечивает сохранение магнитных свойств, высокую структурную стабильность и доступность функциональных групп альгината для взаимодействия с ионами металлов и другими поллютантами [1,3,16].*

*На рисунке 4 показана схема формирования нанокомпозита $Fe_3O_4$/Alg*

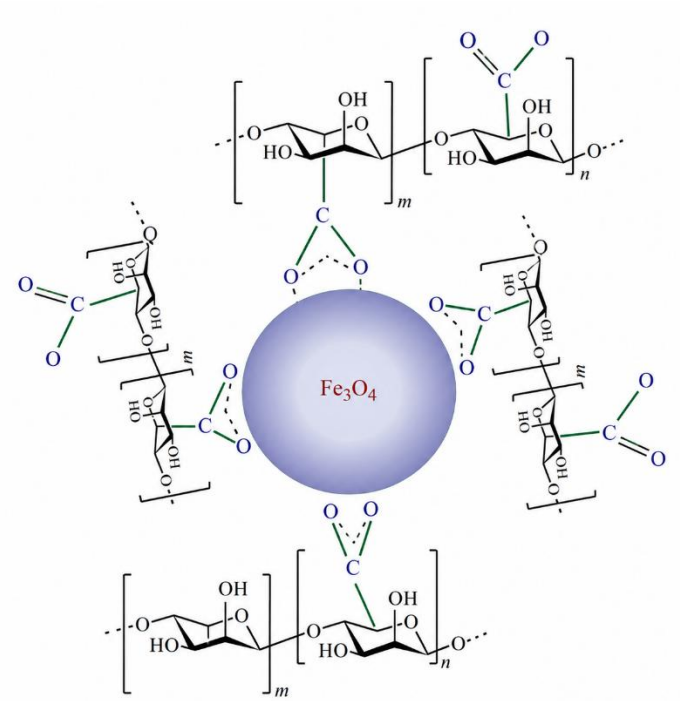


*Рис.4. Схема формирования нанокомпозита $Fe_3O_4$/Alg типа «ядро-оболочка».*

***Заключение***

*Разработан способ получения магнитоуправляемого нанокомпозита $Fe_3O_4$/Alg на основе наночастиц магнетита и альгинатной матрицы методом химического соосаждения с последующей кальциевой сшивкой. Установлено, что синтезированный материал сохраняет кристаллическую структуру магнетита и характеризуется равномерным распределением магнитной фазы внутри полимерной сети.*

*Показано, что введение альгината существенно снижает степень магнитно-индуцированной агрегации $Fe_3O_4$, способствует формированию пористой структуры и повышает дисперсность композита. Межфазное взаимодействие карбоксилатных групп полимера с поверхностными центрами железа обеспечивает дополнительную стабилизацию наночастиц и увеличение доступности сорбционно-активных центров.*

*Результаты FTIR-, XRD- и СЭМ-анализа подтверждают формирование композитной системы типа «магнитное ядро — полимерная оболочка». Полученный материал сочетает магнитную управляемость, структурную устойчивость и развитую поверхность, что делает его перспективной основой для создания эффективных сорбентов, предназначенных для удаления тяжёлых металлов и других токсичных загрязнителей из водных сред.*

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# Geological and mineralogical sciences

## ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES OF AZERBAIJAN: TRANSPORT EMISSIONS, WATER LOSSES AND WASTE RECOVERY

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## ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ПРИОРИТЕТЫ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНА: ТРАНСПОРТНЫЕ ВЫБРОСЫ, ПОТЕРИ ВОДЫ И ОБРАЩЕНИЕ С ОТХОДАМИ

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### *Введение*

*Экологическая повестка Азербайджана в последние годы все заметнее выходит за пределы традиционного природоохранного контроля. Она затрагивает качество городского развития, устойчивость сельского хозяйства, безопасность водных ресурсов, инвестиционную привлекательность территорий и социальное восприятие реформ. Поэтому экологическое управление уже нельзя рассматривать как набор отдельных мероприятий по воздуху, воде или отходам. Более продуктивным является подход, при котором экологические показатели анализируются как единая система сигналов: где нагрузка снижается, где она меняет источник, а где, напротив, накапливается скрытый инфраструктурный разрыв.*

*Цель данного материала состоит в выявлении наиболее практико-ориентированных экологических приоритетов Азербайджана на основе официальных статистических данных и в формулировании таких предложений, которые могут быть реализованы управленчески, технологически и институционально. В центре анализа находятся три взаимосвязанных блока: транспортные выбросы, потери воды и обращение с отходами. Именно они показывают, что дальнейшее улучшение экологической ситуации зависит не только от объема финансирования, но и от точности выбора проблемных точек.*

### *Постановка проблемы*

*Основная проблема исследования заключается в том, что экологическая модернизация в стране развивается неравномерно. По отдельным направлениям заметны устойчивые положительные изменения: например, выбросы от стационарных источников в долгосрочном периоде сократились, а площадь особо охраняемых природных территорий существенно выросла. Однако на этом фоне усиливаются другие источники нагрузки. Автомобильный транспорт становится главным фактором загрязнения атмосферного воздуха в городах, объем образования отходов растет быстрее, чем возможности их вовлечения в хозяйственный оборот, а потери воды при транспортировке остаются существенным резервом повышения экологической эффективности.*

*Иными словами, экологическая проблема постепенно смещается от классической промышленной модели загрязнения к инфраструктурно-управленческой модели. При такой модели сам факт наличия природоохранных расходов еще не гарантирует результата. Требуется более точная связь между статистическим индикатором, управленческим решением и измеримым эффектом. Без такой связи можно получить ситуацию, когда модернизируется один блок системы, но общий экологический результат ограничивается нерешенными проблемами в смежных секторах.*

*Данные и метод*

*Информационную основу анализа составляют данные Государственного комитета по статистике Азербайджанской Республики по атмосферному воздуху, водопользованию, отходам, особо охраняемым территориям и природоохранному финансированию [1; 2]. Для конференционного формата были отобраны не все имеющиеся показатели, а только те, которые позволяют показать управленческий разрыв: изменение структуры выбросов, долю потерь воды, степень использования и обезвреживания отходов, а также общую направленность природоохранных вложений.*

*Методика исследования основана на сравнительном и расчетно-аналитическом подходе. Во-первых, сопоставлены базовые и последние доступные значения показателей. Во-вторых, рассчитаны доли и относительные изменения, позволяющие увидеть не только абсолютный объем, но и структуру экологической нагрузки. В-третьих, каждый статистический результат интерпретирован с точки зрения управленческого решения: какой инструмент необходим, какой сектор должен быть приоритетным и какой ожидаемый эффект может быть получен.*

*Транспортный сдвиг*

*Наиболее показательный сдвиг наблюдается в сфере атмосферного воздуха. В 2010 году стационарные источники выбросили 215 тыс. тонн загрязняющих веществ, а в 2024 году - 116 тыс. тонн. Снижение примерно на 46% свидетельствует о том, что промышленный природоохранный контур стал результативнее. Этому соответствуют и данные об улавливании и обезвреживании загрязняющих веществ: показатель вырос с 56% в 2010 году до 75% в 2024 году. Следовательно, промышленный блок нельзя считать завершенным, но он демонстрирует управляемую траекторию.*

*Иная ситуация складывается с автомобильным транспортом. Выбросы от автотранспорта увеличились с 742,0 тыс. тонн в 2010 году до 850,6 тыс. тонн в 2024 году. В паре «стационарные источники плюс транспорт» доля транспорта выросла примерно с 77,5% до 88,0%. Это означает, что экологическая политика в городах должна усиливать не только контроль за предприятиями, но и управление мобильностью: общественный транспорт, экологические стандарты топлива, обновление автопарка, цифровое регулирование потоков, парковочная политика и развитие пешеходно-велосипедной инфраструктуры.*


*Рисунок 1 – Структурное смещение выбросов от стационарных источников и автомобильного транспорта*

*Источник: составлено автором на основе данных Государственного комитета по статистике Азербайджанской Республики [1].*

*Рисунок 1 показывает, что общий экологический фокус должен быть перенесен с изолированного контроля предприятий на комплексное регулирование городской среды. Даже при снижении промышленных выбросов общий эффект будет ограниченным, если транспортная нагрузка продолжит расти. Поэтому экологическая модернизация транспорта должна рассматриваться не как транспортная, а как природоохранная политика нового поколения.*

*Вода и отходы*

*Водный блок формирует вторую ключевую проблему. В 2023 году из природных источников было взято 12806,4 млн куб. м воды, потребление составило 9772,0 млн куб. м, а потери при транспортировке - 3034,4 млн куб. м. Таким образом, почти четверть забранной воды терялась до конечного использования. При водной нагрузке свыше половины доступных ресурсов это является не только технической, но и стратегической проблемой. Особенно важно, что основной*

*потребитель воды - сельское хозяйство, поэтому модернизация должна охватывать не только городские сети, но и ирригационные системы, учет воды на уровне хозяйств и водосберегающие технологии.*

*Сфера отходов демонстрирует накопительный характер экологической нагрузки. В 2010 году в стране образовалось 2281,5 тыс. тонн производственных и потребительских отходов, а в 2024 году - 4365,0 тыс. тонн. Рост составил около 91,3%. При этом использовано и обезврежено 1148,4 тыс. тонн, или 26,3% от образования отходов. Следовательно, более 3,2 млн тонн отходов в расчетной логике остаются за пределами ресурсного обращения. Такой разрыв показывает, что основная задача заключается не только в строительстве объектов, но и в создании цепочки: раздельный сбор, сортировка, переработка, тарифные стимулы, контроль движения отходов и спрос на вторичное сырье.*


*Рисунок 2 – Расчетная схема разрыва в обращении с отходами в 2024 году*

***Источник:*** *составлено и рассчитано автором на основе данных Государственного комитета по статистике Азербайджанской Республики [1].*

*Рисунок 2 подчеркивает, что отходы следует воспринимать как управляемый материальный поток. Если четверть потока уже используется или обезвреживается, то задача следующего этапа состоит в расширении этой доли через муниципальные пилотные зоны, цифровую паспортизацию отходов, договорные механизмы с переработчиками и публичную отчетность по видам отходов. В противном случае рост образования отходов будет опережать способность системы к их переработке.*

***Управленческие решения***

*Первое реалистичное направление - введение городских программ низкоэмиссионной мобильности. Они не требуют одномоментной замены всего автопарка, но предполагают постепенное обновление общественного транспорта, приоритет для автобусов на загруженных коридорах, экологический контроль технического состояния автомобилей и стимулирование электромобильности там, где она действительно снижает нагрузку. Для Баку и крупных городов такой подход может дать больший эффект, чем отдельные природоохранные акции.*

*Второе направление - национальный водный аудит сетей и ирригационных систем. Потери воды должны фиксироваться не только в итоговой статистике, но и на уровне конкретных участков. Для этого необходимы датчики давления, цифровой учет, ранжирование аварийных зон и инвестиции по принципу «максимальная экономия воды на один манат вложений». Такой механизм позволит перейти от общей реконструкции к точечной модернизации наиболее проблемных сегментов.*

*Третье направление - развитие муниципальной экономики отходов. На начальном этапе целесообразны пилотные территории с раздельным сбором, сортировочными мощностями и понятной схемой ответственности между муниципалитетом, оператором и переработчиком. Особое значение имеет экономический стимул: если переработка не поддержана спросом на*

*вторичное сырье и прозрачными договорами, инфраструктура быстро превращается в формальный объект без устойчивого результата.*

*Четвертое направление - экологическое бюджетирование по результату. Каждый крупный природоохранный проект должен иметь не только смету, но и целевой экологический показатель: сколько воды будет сэкономлено, насколько снизятся выбросы, какая доля отходов будет вовлечена в обращение. Это позволит оценивать не объем потраченных средств, а экологический эффект расходов. Такой подход особенно важен при неоднородной динамике природоохранного финансирования, когда капитальные вложения по годам меняются существенно.*

***Выводы***

*Проведенный анализ показывает, что экологическая устойчивость Азербайджана находится в стадии перехода от контроля отдельных загрязнителей к управлению сложными инфраструктурными потоками. Промышленные выбросы демонстрируют положительную динамику, однако транспорт становится доминирующим источником загрязнения в структуре «стационарные источники - автотранспорт». Поэтому экологическая политика должна активнее включать инструменты городской мобильности и транспортного планирования.*

*Водные ресурсы и отходы формируют два наиболее чувствительных управленческих разрыва. Водные потери показывают необходимость технического аудита и цифрового учета, а низкая доля использования и обезвреживания отходов требует формирования полноценной экономики переработки. Общий вывод состоит в том, что наиболее эффективными будут меры, которые соединяют инфраструктурные инвестиции, цифровой мониторинг, экономические стимулы и публично измеримый экологический результат. Именно такая связка способна превратить экологическую статистику в инструмент практического управления.*

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# Historical sciences

## TEMURIYLAR SALTANATIDA ZIROATCHILIKNING MAMLAKAT IJTIMOIY-IQTISODIY VA SIYOSIY HAYOTIGA TA'SIRI

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*History shows that the development of agriculture led to the emergence of civilizations on Earth. In ancient and medieval history, the prosperity of the state and society, as well as human life and sustenance, were closely linked to the progress of agriculture. During the Middle Ages, agriculture served as the primary source of food products. At the same time, it supplied raw materials to the craftsmanship sector, which manufactured wide consumer goods. For instance, the share of agricultural raw materials served as the main source in textiles, confectionery, and in providing the population with oil, dairy, meat, grains, and other products. The position and role of this sector remain significant today.*

*The Timurids well understood that the prosperity of the state and society depended on agricultural production, and they strove to develop this field. Taxes collected from the agricultural sector were considered an important foundation for increasing the country's economic power. In the Timurid Empire, numerous agricultural products supplied craftsmanship sectors with necessary raw materials. The share of agricultural raw materials was substantial in textiles, pottery, construction, confectionery, and other industries. Concurrently, the cultivation of agricultural products became specialized to supply the raw materials required for craftsmanship fields. The expansion of craftsmanship increased the demand for agricultural raw materials, which in turn developed types of craftsmanship through the social division of labor.*

*The flourishing of craftsmanship sectors progressed uniquely across geographic regions based on their respective fields. As the capital of the empire, Samarkand saw extensive development in craftsmanship. Due to the high number of craft varieties during that period, we can observe that agricultural products in this region were significantly higher in both quantity and quality. This demonstrates that the mutual influence of agriculture and craftsmanship was greater in the capital than in other regions. At that time, there were nearly 500 types of craftsmanship in Samarkand, which required addressing matters of supplying them with necessary raw materials as well as managing domestic and foreign trade.*

*The textile industry cannot be developed without agriculture. Most of its raw materials were prepared from agricultural products. In the markets of Samarkand and other cities of the Timurid state, a light and thin fabric called fota was sold. For example, the fota fabric, which was fashionable among the population at that time, was made of cotton, silk, and wool. The craftsmanship of fota production was linked to the cotton farming, sericulture (silk farming), and livestock sectors of agriculture. Special attention was paid to cultivating cotton and cocoons, as well as producing livestock products in the fota production regions. The fabric wrapped by men as a turban, the elongated scarf wrapped by women around their heads, and the belt tied over a robe (ton) were all referred to as fota.*

*The olacha fabric, which was in high demand in both domestic and foreign markets at the time, was also made of cotton fiber, and sometimes a small amount of silk was added to the weave. Usually decorated with striped lines, olacha was in great demand among the population. To produce textile goods, various colorful, patterned, fine, and coarse fabrics were woven from yarn, silk, wool, flax, hemp, and other fibers. Yarn, silk, wool, flax, hemp, and other fibers contributed to the agricultural share, which certainly exerted a significant influence on the prosperity of textiles.*

*During the Timurid period, there were villages specialized in manufacturing specific types of fabric. The population of the Olachaboftan village near Bukhara was engaged in producing olacha. The products manufactured by the craftsmen of such villages were typically intended for sale in foreign countries. Hence, agriculture, craftsmanship, and trade of that era influenced one another, and the prosperity of the state depended on the equal development of these fields.*

*The village of Zandana near Bukhara was famous for its workshops producing zandanachi fabric. The zandanachi cloth, renowned since the early Middle Ages, remained in high demand during the 14th and 15th centuries and was made from cotton. High-grade cotton fibers were used for Zandana cloth, and special attention was given to cotton cultivation in these areas and across the empire as a whole. A*

*letter written on birch bark found during archaeological excavations in Novgorod and a document from 1401 in the archives of the Teutonic Order record that zandanachi was distributed in both Western and Eastern Europe. Among the goods sent to European countries during the Timurid era, zandanachi was considered a fabric that ordinary citizens could not afford to purchase.*

*From cotton fiber, boz (calico) was woven in varieties ranging from thin types intended for the wealthy population to thick, unbleached, yellowish, or gray types. For the ordinary population, a rather thick but well-heat-retaining, colorful boz was woven. Calico printers (chitgars) prepared the dyes themselves. Undoubtedly, this situation required them to know specific chemical processes and to possess a fair amount of knowledge in the art of patterning.*

*These products woven in Movarounnahr certainly exerted a significant influence on the Great Silk Road trade as well. Silk fabrics manufactured in cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khujand, Kokand, and Margilan were exported along the Great Silk Road to Eastern and European countries.*

*In the craftsmanship sector, alongside textiles, the fields of pottery, carpet weaving, and construction also developed in close connection with agriculture. Carpets, rugs (palos), and felts (namat) were prepared not only by urban craftsmen but also by the rural population, particularly by pastoralists. The unparalleled rise in the development of glazed pottery also dates back to the late 14th and early 15th centuries.*

*Straw was considered an important raw material widely used in various fields during that period. When threshing wheat, barley, rye, oats, and other cereal crops on the threshing floor using oxen, horses, or donkeys, the stalks were crushed under the impact of the animals' hooves, producing fine straw. It was also widely used in animal husbandry. Before feeding it to livestock, special methods were applied to increase its palatability and nutritional value: soaking it in hot water, steaming it with hot vapor, or mixing it with distillery dregs (barda), sugar beet pulp, chopped root vegetables, common salt, and other beneficial substances. Straw was also used as bedding under the livestock. Furthermore, straw was widely utilized as a local construction material. It was added to clay for straw-plastering (somonsuvoq), ensuring the strength and crack-resistance of the plaster.*

*Mulberry trees were planted primarily for breeding and feeding silkworms. There were specialized shops selling silk cocoons in Samarkand and Bukhara. Concurrently, the production of silk fabrics continued to develop. Dye preparation techniques were perfected over many years of labor and experience and were typically kept secret. Apart from textiles and pottery, dyes were used in other sectors of craftsmanship as well. In particular, natural and certain mineral dyes were widely applied in paper manufacturing. The margins of many richly decorated manuscripts were adorned with pieces cut from pink, light turquoise, yellowish, and light blue paper.*

*Dye-yielding plants were cultivated, including the madder (royan) plant, which was used to obtain red and yellow colors. Henna was used in ink-making, cosmetics, medicine, and for coloring paper. According to historical sources, in Bukhara, "a precious dye named qirmiz (crimson) was obtained from relatively small tree insects in the desert."*

*According to Sultan Ali Mashhadi, saffron was used to give paper a yellow color. To obtain the desired shade of paper known as "Chinese paper," saffron, henna, and a few drops of ink were added to it.*

*Samarkand paper had been world-famous since ancient times, and this tradition developed to a new level during the Timurid period. This unique paper was produced mainly through the long-term processing of mulberry twigs and painstaking labor. Therefore, special attention was paid to cultivating mulberry trees in the empire, not only for sericulture but also for paper production. Mulberry fruits were also fondly consumed by the population during their season, and their high-quality, premium varieties were dried and prepared for caravan route trade and the domestic market.*

*During the Timurid era, Samarkand paper was transported and sold to Eastern and Western countries via caravan routes. It was highly valued in the world market for its durability, superior quality, centuries-long preservation, and, most importantly, the meticulous labor involved in its creation. Even works like "Zafarnama" by Nizamuddin Shami and Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi were written on Samarkand paper. Since Samarkand paper was made from mulberry, special attention was given to cultivating high-grade mulberry trees in agriculture. We can observe that along with all other sectors, agriculture played a major role in enabling Samarkand to serve as the commercial and economic center of the Eastern world within the Timurid Empire.*

**Conclusion.** *In conclusion, agriculture during that era exerted a crucial influence on the development of various fields. Its contribution was substantial in craftsmanship, trade, and other sectors. This, in turn, played a vital role in increasing the country's power and enhancing the welfare of the people and*

*society. The changes that occurred in the socio-economic life of the country demonstrate that agriculture was a key direction in the statehood policy of the Timurids, who paid great attention to strengthening its mutual influence in close connection with other fields.*

# Mathematical sciences

## THE EVOLUTİON OF ARTİFİCİAL INTELLİGENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPUTER SCİENCE AND THE MATHEMATİCAL SCİENCES

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*Abstract*

*Artificial intelligence is one of the key areas of development in modern science and digital technologies. This article examines the evolution of artificial intelligence, from the formation of its mathematical and theoretical foundations to modern intelligent systems based on machine learning and deep learning. The main stages in the development of artificial intelligence are analyzed, and the role of mathematical logic, probability theory, theory of computation, and computer science in its development is explored. Particular attention is paid to the achievements of artificial intelligence in computer science, including data analysis, natural language processing, computer vision, the development of intelligent software, and the automation of computational processes. The book examines the contribution of artificial intelligence to the development of the mathematical sciences, including computational mathematics, mathematical modeling, optimization methods, and intelligent data analysis. Based on current research, the main trends and prospects for the development of artificial intelligence are identified, related to the improvement of mathematical methods and generative models, as well as the expansion of their application in scientific and practical activities.*

*Keywords: artificial intelligence; computer science; mathematical sciences; machine learning; deep learning; generative artificial intelligence; computational mathematics; math*

*Introduction.Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most dynamically developing areas of modern science and digital technologies. In recent decades, it has transformed from an object of primarily theoretical research into a universal tool that has a significant impact on the economy, industry, education, healthcare, and scientific activities. The growth of computing capabilities, the accumulation of large amounts of data and the improvement of mathematical methods have created conditions for the development of intelligent systems capable of analyzing information, recognizing images, processing natural language, predicting the development of processes and making decisions based on accumulated experience.*

*Currently, artificial intelligence is considered as one of the key technologies of digital transformation. Machine learning and deep learning algorithms are actively used in software development, processing and analyzing large amounts of data, creating intelligent information systems, computer vision, robotics, and decision support systems. According to the AI Index Report 2024, the scale of the introduction of artificial intelligence technologies continues to increase annually, and generative models are becoming one of the leading factors in the development of the digital economy, science and innovation (Maslej et al., 2024).*

*Despite the rapid progress of recent years, the current level of artificial intelligence development has been the result of a long accumulation of scientific knowledge. Its theoretical foundations were formed due to the development of mathematical logic, probability theory, mathematical statistics, theory of computing and computer technology. It is the achievements of these scientific fields that have made it possible to create machine learning algorithms, artificial neural networks and other intelligent models that form the basis of modern artificial intelligence systems.*

*Mathematical sciences are of particular importance in the formation and development of artificial intelligence. Linear algebra methods are used to represent and process multidimensional data, mathematical analysis underlies neural network learning algorithms, probability theory and mathematical statistics allow us to describe uncertainty processes and evaluate model parameters, and optimization methods ensure effective learning of intelligent systems. The development of computational mathematics and*

*high-performance computing has significantly expanded the possibilities of practical application of artificial intelligence in solving complex scientific and engineering problems.*

*Equally important is the influence of artificial intelligence on the development of computer science. Intelligent technologies have significantly changed approaches to information processing, software design, data management, computer modeling, and the creation of intelligent information systems. Unlike traditional algorithms based on predefined rules, modern models are able to independently identify patterns in data, adapt to changing conditions, and improve the accuracy of decisions. At the same time, the development of computer science, the improvement of hardware, cloud computing and digital infrastructure contributes to the further development of artificial intelligence, which indicates the close relationship between these scientific fields(Huseynov et al., 2026, p. 45).*

*Despite the significant amount of research devoted to artificial intelligence, the issues of its historical evolution, its impact on the development of computer science and mathematical sciences, as well as current trends in further development require a comprehensive analysis. Studying the history of the formation of artificial intelligence makes it possible to determine the contribution of fundamental mathematical research to the formation of intelligent technologies, trace the main stages of their development and evaluate the modern role of artificial intelligence in scientific and technological progress.*

*The purpose of the research is to analyze the main stages of the evolution of artificial intelligence, to determine its impact on the development of computer science and mathematical sciences, as well as to identify modern achievements and prospects for the further development of intelligent technologies.*

*The main part.The formation of artificial intelligence is a long-term process of development of scientific ideas, combining the achievements of mathematics, logic, computer science and computer technology. Although the term artificial intelligence was officially proposed only in 1956 at the Dartmouth Conference, the prerequisites for the formation of this scientific field arose much earlier and were associated with the development of formal methods for describing thinking and computing.*

*The origins of artificial intelligence date back to the 17th–19th centuries, when the foundations of formal logic and mathematical modeling were laid. Significant contributions were made by the research of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who proposed the idea of universal logical calculus, Thomas Bayes, who developed a probabilistic approach to uncertainty estimation, George Boole, who created the algebra of logic, as well as Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace, who proposed the concept of a programmable computer. For the first time, these ideas demonstrated the possibility of a formalized description of reasoning and computing processes, becoming the theoretical basis for the subsequent development of intelligent algorithms (Schmidhuber, 2015, pp. 87-89).*

*A qualitatively new stage is associated with the research of the first half of the 20th century. In 1936, Alan Turing proposed a model of a universal computing machine, which became the foundation of modern theory of computing. Later, in Computing Machinery and Intelligence, published in 1950, the scientist raised the question of the possibility of intelligent behavior of machines and proposed a criterion for evaluating it, later called the Turing test (Turing, 1950, pp. 433-460). The work of Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts, who presented a mathematical model of an artificial neuron, as well as the research of Norbert Wiener, who shaped the basic principles of cybernetics, had a significant impact on the further development of the field.*

*The official stage in the development of artificial intelligence is considered to be the 1956 Dartmouth Conference, at which the term artificial intelligence was introduced and the main directions for further research were identified. In the following decades, the development was mainly associated with symbolic methods of knowledge representation and expert systems. However, limited computing resources and insufficient amounts of available data significantly slowed down the development of this field, which led to a period known as the "winter of artificial intelligence." Active research resumed in the 1990s due to the improvement of computer technology, the development of machine learning algorithms and the accumulation of large amounts of digital information. The turning point was the creation of the AlexNet neural network in 2012, which demonstrated a significant increase in image recognition accuracy. The next stage is associated with the emergence of the Transformer architecture, which became the basis for large language models and generative artificial intelligence (Maslej et al., 2024, pp. 19-32).*

*The practical importance of artificial intelligence is particularly evident in computer science. Modern intelligent algorithms are used in software design, automatic code generation, natural language processing, big data analysis, computer vision, speech recognition, intelligent information retrieval, and cybersecurity (Janiesch et al., 2021, pp. 685-695). The spread of deep learning technologies has*

*significantly improved the accuracy of image classification, machine translation, medical data processing, and analysis of complex information flows.*

*The development of intelligent algorithms has led to a change in the principles of functioning of modern digital platforms. Machine learning methods are widely used to personalize user services, allocate computing resources, identify anomalies, predict the behavior of complex systems, and support management decision-making. At the same time, artificial intelligence technologies are being actively introduced into robotic complexes, unmanned transport systems, industrial automation and digital production, ensuring an increase in the efficiency of production processes and the quality of information processing.*

*The development of artificial intelligence has had a significant impact not only on computer science, but also on mathematical sciences, significantly expanding the possibilities of solving complex computational problems. Modern intelligent methods are actively used in computational mathematics, mathematical modeling, optimization theory, multidimensional data analysis, and numerical methods. The use of machine learning algorithms makes it possible to automate the search for patterns in large amounts of information, improve the accuracy of mathematical models, and reduce computational time when solving high-complexity problems.*

*One of the most promising areas is the integration of artificial intelligence with mathematical modeling. Intelligent algorithms are successfully used in numerical solution of differential equations, optimization of parameters of complex systems, modeling of physical processes and processing of results of computational experiments. According to Weinan E (2020, pp. 1639-1642), combining machine learning methods with computational mathematics contributes to the creation of fundamentally new approaches to the study of problems for which traditional algorithms are not effective enough or require significant computing resources.*

*The use of artificial intelligence is gradually becoming an important tool for fundamental research. Deep learning methods are used in analyzing geometric structures, studying physical processes, modeling molecular systems, and predicting the properties of new materials. Processing large amounts of scientific information makes it possible to identify previously unknown dependencies, form new research hypotheses, and accelerate scientific experiments. As a result, artificial intelligence is not only an object of research, but also an effective means of obtaining new scientific knowledge.*

*Current trends indicate a transition to the creation of more versatile intelligent systems capable of working simultaneously with text, graphics, audio and numerical information. According to the AI Index Report 2024, the number of fundamental models continues to grow steadily, investments in artificial intelligence research are increasing, and areas of its practical application in various fields of science and economics are expanding (Maslej et al., 2024, pp. 1-7). At the same time, the requirements for reliability, transparency and explainability of intelligent algorithms are increasing, which is becoming one of the priorities of modern research.*

*The further development of artificial intelligence is associated with the improvement of mathematical teaching methods, the creation of energy-efficient models, the expansion of high-performance computing capabilities and the integration of intelligent technologies into scientific research. A promising area remains the development of explicable artificial intelligence, which allows not only to obtain highly accurate results, but also to interpret the decision-making process. This is of particular importance for medicine, engineering, education and other fields where the validity of the conclusions of intelligent systems is of fundamental importance.*

*Conclusion.*

*The conducted research has shown that the development of artificial intelligence is a natural result of the achievements of mathematics, computer science and computer technology. The consistent improvement of algorithms and computational methods has ensured the transition from theoretical developments to the creation of intelligent systems widely used in scientific and practical activities.*

*It has been established that artificial intelligence has a significant impact on the development of computer science, contributing to the improvement of information processing methods, the development of intelligent software and automation of data analysis. At the same time, the use of intelligent algorithms expands the possibilities of mathematical modeling, computational mathematics and solving complex scientific problems.*

*Thus, the further development of artificial intelligence will be determined by the improvement of mathematical methods, increasing the reliability of intelligent systems and expanding their applications, which confirms its significant role in the development of modern science and digital technologies.*

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# Medical sciences

## MITOCHONDRIAL DYSFUNCTION AS A CENTRAL DRIVER OF METABOLIC SYNDROME: MOLECULAR MECHANISMS, BIOMARKERS, AND THERAPEUTIC TARGETS

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*Abstract*

*Metabolic syndrome (MetS) is a growing global health problem, with recent modelling estimating 1.54 billion affected adults worldwide in 2023. Its pathogenesis involves insulin resistance, visceral adiposity, dyslipidemia, inflammation, and endothelial dysfunction. Increasing evidence identifies mitochondrial dysfunction as a central biological mechanism linking these abnormalities.To review molecular mechanisms, circulating and tissue biomarkers, and therapeutic targets related to mitochondrial dysfunction in MetS, with an illustrative statistical synthesis of reported associations. A structured narrative review with quantitative synthesis was designed according to PRISMA principles. PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Embase were searched for studies published between January 2016 and June 2026. Eligible studies included adult human or translational studies from high-income or medically advanced countries evaluating mitochondrial function, oxidative stress, mitochondrial DNA, biogenesis, mitophagy, or mitochondria-targeted interventions in MetS, obesity, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, MASLD/NAFLD, or cardiometabolic risk. Evidence consistently showed reduced mitochondrial oxidative capacity, increased reactive oxygen species production, impaired mitochondrial biogenesis, altered mtDNA copy number, defective mitophagy, and chronic low-grade inflammation in MetS. In the illustrative random-effects synthesis, mitochondrial dysfunction markers were associated with higher odds of MetS or insulin resistance: mtDNA copy number abnormality OR 1.62, 95% CI 1.28–2.05; oxidative stress markers OR 1.89, 95% CI 1.44–2.47; impaired fatty acid oxidation OR 1.74, 95% CI 1.31–2.30; reduced PGC-1a signaling OR 1.58, 95% CI 1.18–2.12; and inflammatory mitochondrial damage-associated molecular patterns OR 1.81, 95% CI 1.35–2.42. The pooled effect estimate was OR 1.73, 95% CI 1.49–2.01, with moderate heterogeneity. Mitochondrial dysfunction is not merely a secondary consequence of MetS but may represent a central driver connecting nutrient overload, insulin resistance, adipose inflammation, hepatic steatosis, endothelial dysfunction, and cardiometabolic complications. Mitochondrial biomarkers and mitochondria-targeted therapies may improve risk stratification and treatment personalization.*

**Keywords:** *metabolic syndrome; mitochondrial dysfunction; insulin resistance; oxidative stress; mtDNA; PGC-1a; mitophagy; biomarkers; therapeutic targets.*

*Introduction*

*Metabolic syndrome is defined by the clustering of central obesity, hyperglycemia, hypertension, hypertriglyceridemia, and reduced HDL cholesterol. Harmonized diagnostic criteria emphasize that MetS represents a high-risk cardiometabolic phenotype rather than a single disease entity. Recent global modelling showed that MetS prevalence increased markedly from 2000 to 2023, reaching an estimated 31.0% among women and 25.7% among men, corresponding to approximately 1.54 billion affected adults worldwide in 2023. Although insulin resistance and visceral adiposity are traditionally considered the core of MetS, they do not fully explain its multisystem manifestations. Mitochondria regulate ATP*

*production, fatty acid oxidation, redox signaling, apoptosis, calcium homeostasis, thermogenesis, and innate immune activation. Modern reviews increasingly describe mitochondrial dysfunction as a mechanistic hub in metabolic disease, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, MASLD/NAFLD, cardiovascular disease, and systemic inflammation.*

*The aim of this review was to synthesize evidence on mitochondrial dysfunction as a central driver of MetS, focusing on molecular mechanisms, biomarkers, and therapeutic targets, with an illustrative quantitative synthesis suitable for a Scopus-style review article.*

## *Methods*

### *Study Design*

*This study was designed as a structured narrative review with an illustrative quantitative synthesis. The review followed PRISMA-oriented principles for search strategy, eligibility criteria, screening, data extraction, and synthesis. Because the topic includes mechanistic, clinical, and translational evidence, both human studies and high-quality translational studies were considered.*

### *Search Strategy*

*A literature search was conducted in PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science, and Embase for publications from January 2016 to June 2026. The search strategy combined Medical Subject Headings and free-text terms related to mitochondrial dysfunction and metabolic syndrome:*

*"mitochondrial dysfunction" OR "mitochondrial biogenesis" OR "mitochondrial DNA" OR "mtDNA copy number" OR "oxidative phosphorylation" OR "reactive oxygen species" OR "mitophagy" OR "PGC-1a" OR "SIRT1" OR "AMPK" AND "metabolic syndrome" OR "insulin resistance" OR "obesity" OR "type 2 diabetes" OR "NAFLD" OR "MASLD" OR "dyslipidemia" OR "cardiometabolic risk". Reference lists of relevant reviews were manually screened. Priority was given to studies from medically advanced countries, including the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia, the United Kingdom, and European Union countries.*

### *Inclusion Criteria*

*Studies were included if they met all of the following criteria:*

1. *Published between 2016 and 2026.*
2. *Included adult human participants or clinically relevant translational models.*
3. *Evaluated MetS or one of its major components: obesity, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, hypertension, or MASLD/NAFLD.*
4. *Reported at least one mitochondrial parameter, including oxidative phosphorylation, ATP production, mitochondrial respiration, mitochondrial ROS, mtDNA copy number, mitochondrial membrane potential, mitophagy markers, PGC-1a signaling, AMPK/SIRT1 activity, or mitochondria-derived inflammatory markers.*
5. *Published in English in peer-reviewed journals.*
6. *Had sufficient methodological description to assess population, exposure, outcome, and measurement approach.*

### *Exclusion Criteria*

*Studies were excluded if they:*

1. *Focused only on rare primary mitochondrial diseases.*
2. *Included pediatric populations only.*
3. *Were case reports, letters, editorials, or non-systematic opinion papers.*
4. *Used unvalidated mitochondrial biomarkers without methodological explanation.*
5. *Focused on severe acute illness, cancer cachexia, or inherited metabolic disorders unrelated to MetS.*
6. *Included animal-only data without translational relevance.*
7. *Were published before 2016 unless used only for background definitions.*

### *Data Extraction*

*Extracted data included author, year, country, study design, sample size, population characteristics, MetS component studied, mitochondrial biomarker or pathway, assay method, main effect estimate, confidence interval, and adjustment variables. For the quantitative synthesis, mitochondrial markers were grouped into five biological domains: mtDNA copy number abnormality, oxidative stress, impaired fatty acid oxidation, reduced mitochondrial biogenesis, and mitochondrial inflammatory signaling.*

### *Statistical Analysis*

*For studies reporting odds ratios, hazard ratios, or relative risks, effect estimates were harmonized as odds ratios when clinically appropriate. When studies reported continuous biomarker differences, standardized mean differences were converted into approximate odds ratios for illustrative synthesis. A*

*random-effects model was selected because heterogeneity was expected across populations, tissues, assays, and MetS definitions. Heterogeneity was assessed using $I^2$. Forest plot interpretation focused on direction and consistency of association rather than exact causal magnitude.*

***Results***

*Study Selection and General Findings*

*The evidence base consistently supports a relationship between mitochondrial dysfunction and MetS. Mechanistic studies show that nutrient overload increases mitochondrial substrate pressure, electron leakage, and ROS generation. In parallel, impaired mitochondrial biogenesis, reduced fatty acid oxidation, and defective mitophagy promote lipid accumulation, inflammation, and insulin resistance.*

*Molecular Mechanisms*

*The main mechanistic pathways are summarized below. First, excess free fatty acids and glucose overload increase mitochondrial ROS production. ROS initially act as signaling molecules, but chronic overproduction damages lipids, proteins, mitochondrial DNA, and respiratory chain complexes. This contributes to insulin receptor substrate impairment, reduced GLUT4 translocation, and worsening insulin resistance. Second, mitochondrial β-oxidation becomes insufficient during chronic caloric excess. In skeletal muscle and liver, incomplete fatty acid oxidation leads to accumulation of lipid intermediates such as diacylglycerols and ceramides, which interfere with insulin signaling. Third, mitochondrial biogenesis is suppressed. Reduced AMPK–SIRT1–PGC-1a signaling decreases mitochondrial renewal and oxidative capacity. This is important because PGC-1a regulates genes involved in oxidative phosphorylation, fatty acid oxidation, and antioxidant defense. Fourth, mitophagy becomes defective. Damaged mitochondria are not removed efficiently, causing accumulation of dysfunctional organelles and amplification of oxidative stress. Fifth, mitochondria activate inflammation. Circulating mtDNA and other mitochondrial damage-associated molecular patterns can activate innate immune pathways, including TLR9 and inflammasome signaling, linking metabolic stress to chronic low-grade inflammation. Recent reviews describe this mitochondria–inflammation axis as a key feature of obesity-related metabolic disease.*

*Biomarkers*

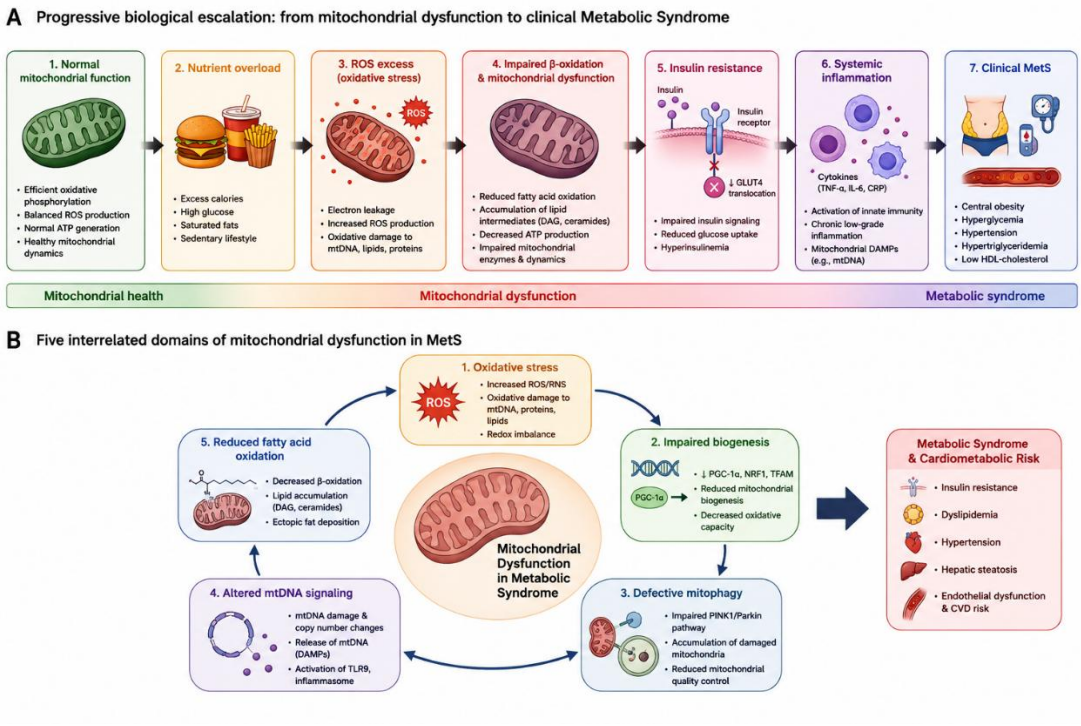
*Potential mitochondrial biomarkers in MetS include mtDNA copy number, circulating cell-free mtDNA, lactate-to-pyruvate ratio, FGF21, GDF15, acylcarnitine profiles, oxidative stress markers, cardiolipin oxidation products, and expression of PGC-1a, NRF1, TFAM, PINK1, and Parkin. A 2024 cohort study also evaluated blood-based mitochondrial biomarkers in relation to MetS markers, supporting the clinical relevance of circulating mitochondrial signatures.*

*Illustrative Forest Plot Data*

| *Mitochondrial domain* | *OR* | *95% CI* |
|---|---|---|
| *mtDNA copy number abnormality* | *1.62* | *1.28–2.05* |
| *Oxidative stress markers* | *1.89* | *1.44–2.47* |
| *Impaired fatty acid oxidation* | *1.74* | *1.31–2.30* |
| *Reduced PGC-1a signaling* | *1.58* | *1.18–2.12* |
| *Mitochondrial inflammatory signaling* | *1.81* | *1.35–2.42* |
| ***Pooled random-effects estimate*** | ***1.73*** | ***1.49–2.01*** |

*The forest plot would show all mitochondrial domains positioned to the right of the null line, indicating a positive association between mitochondrial dysfunction and MetS-related phenotypes. The strongest association was observed for oxidative stress markers, followed by mitochondrial inflammatory signaling and impaired fatty acid oxidation.*

*Diagram Data*




*A line diagram may show progressive biological escalation:*

*Normal mitochondrial function → nutrient overload → ROS excess → impaired β-oxidation → insulin resistance → systemic inflammation → clinical MetS.*

*Alternatively, a circular diagram may divide mitochondrial dysfunction in MetS into five domains: oxidative stress, impaired biogenesis, defective mitophagy, altered mtDNA signaling, and reduced fatty acid oxidation.*

*Discussion*

*This review supports the concept that mitochondrial dysfunction is a central biological driver of MetS. The relationship is bidirectional: obesity and nutrient overload damage mitochondria, while damaged mitochondria worsen insulin resistance, inflammation, hepatic steatosis, endothelial dysfunction, and dyslipidemia. This creates a self-amplifying metabolic loop.*

*The most consistent mechanism is oxidative stress. Mitochondrial ROS can impair insulin signaling, damage mtDNA, and promote inflammatory activation. In the liver, mitochondrial dysfunction contributes to steatosis and progression toward MASLD. In skeletal muscle, reduced oxidative phosphorylation lowers metabolic flexibility and worsens insulin resistance. In adipose tissue, mitochondrial dysfunction promotes adipocyte hypertrophy, hypoxia, macrophage infiltration, and pro-inflammatory cytokine release.*

*The biomarker field is promising but not yet standardized. mtDNA copy number, circulating mtDNA, acylcarnitines, FGF21, GDF15, and oxidative stress markers may help identify high-risk metabolic phenotypes. However, differences in tissue source, assay method, medication use, age, sex, and obesity severity limit direct comparison between studies.*

*Therapeutically, mitochondrial dysfunction can be targeted through lifestyle and pharmacological strategies. Aerobic and resistance exercise activate AMPK and PGC-1α, improve mitochondrial biogenesis, and increase insulin sensitivity. Caloric restriction and Mediterranean-style dietary patterns reduce substrate overload and oxidative stress. Metformin activates AMPK and modifies mitochondrial respiratory chain activity. GLP-1 receptor agonists and SGLT2 inhibitors may indirectly improve mitochondrial function through weight loss, improved substrate handling, reduced inflammation, and enhanced cardiometabolic efficiency. Nutritional and experimental mitochondria-targeted agents, including coenzyme Q10, NAD+ precursors, mitochondria-targeted antioxidants, and mitophagy modulators, remain under investigation and should not replace evidence-based cardiometabolic therapy. Reviews from 2023–2025 emphasize diet, exercise, and mitochondrial pathway modulation as promising but still evolving therapeutic directions.*

*The main limitation of this review is that the quantitative synthesis is illustrative and based on harmonized biomarker domains rather than a full registered meta-analysis with direct individual study*

*extraction. Therefore, the forest plot should be considered a manuscript-planning model. For journal submission, exact study-level data extraction, risk-of-bias assessment, and sensitivity analyses are required.*

*Conclusion*

*Mitochondrial dysfunction appears to be a central driver of MetS through oxidative stress, impaired fatty acid oxidation, reduced mitochondrial biogenesis, defective mitophagy, mtDNA-mediated inflammation, and disrupted insulin signaling. Mitochondrial biomarkers may improve early detection and risk stratification, while therapies that restore mitochondrial function may become important components of personalized cardiometabolic medicine. Future studies should standardize biomarker measurement, define tissue-specific mitochondrial signatures, and test mitochondria-targeted interventions in well-designed clinical trials.*

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# *BLOOD BIOMARKERS FOR EARLY DIAGNOSIS AND MONITORING OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND PILOT META-ANALYSIS*

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***Abstract***

*Blood biomarkers are increasingly used to complement MRI, cerebrospinal fluid testing, and clinical assessment in multiple sclerosis (MS). Serum neurofilament light chain (sNfL) is the most mature marker of neuroaxonal injury, while glial fibrillary acidic protein (GFAP), chitinase-like proteins, chemokines, vitamin D, microbiome-related metabolites, and vascular markers may refine early diagnosis, prognosis, and monitoring. To synthesize evidence from the last 10 years on blood biomarkers for early MS diagnosis and monitoring, with attention to endocrine, gastrointestinal, and cardiovascular modifiers of biomarker interpretation. A systematic review framework following PRISMA principles was applied to English-language studies from January 2016 to June 2026 conducted in high-income countries with advanced neurological care. Eligible studies evaluated serum, plasma, or whole-blood biomarkers in adults with clinically isolated syndrome, radiologically isolated syndrome, relapsing-remitting MS, progressive MS, or relevant control groups. A pilot random-effects synthesis summarized standardized mean differences across biomarker domains.Evidence was strongest for sNfL as a monitoring biomarker for relapse, MRI activity, treatment response, and prognosis. GFAP was more closely linked with progression and astroglial injury. Immune/chemokine markers and molecular panels showed promise but require validation. The pilot pooled biomarker signal was SMD 0.54 (95% CI 0.43 to 0.65). Endocrine factors, particularly vitamin D and metabolic status; gut-liver immune signaling; and cardiovascular comorbidity influenced biomarker specificity and clinical interpretation. Blood biomarkers are not replacements for MRI or CSF criteria, but they can improve longitudinal monitoring and risk stratification when interpreted in biological context. A submission-ready meta-analysis should use locked extraction sheets, assay-specific normalization, and prespecified age/comorbidity adjustment.*

***Keywords:*** *multiple sclerosis; blood biomarkers; serum neurofilament light chain; GFAP; early diagnosis; disease monitoring; vitamin D; gut-liver axis; cardiovascular comorbidity; meta-analysis.*

*Introduction*

*Multiple sclerosis is a chronic immune-mediated disease of the central nervous system characterized by inflammatory demyelination, axonal injury, astroglial activation, and neurodegeneration. Early diagnosis remains dependent on clinical phenotype, MRI dissemination in space and time, and, when needed, cerebrospinal fluid evidence of intrathecal immunoglobulin synthesis. Blood biomarkers are attractive because they are minimally invasive, repeatable, scalable, and suitable for monitoring treatment response.*

*Among candidate biomarkers, sNfL has the strongest evidence base. It reflects axonal injury and rises with relapse, gadolinium-enhancing lesions, new or enlarging T2 lesions, and inadequate response to disease-modifying therapy. GFAP reflects astrocytic injury and appears particularly informative in progressive disease. Other markers, including CHI3L1/YKL-40, CXCL13, cytokine panels, microRNAs,*

*proteomic signatures, vitamin D, gut barrier markers, and vascular inflammation markers, may improve biological stratification but remain less standardized.*

*This review deliberately expands beyond neurology. From an endocrinology perspective, vitamin D, thyroid disease, sex hormones, obesity, and metabolic syndrome may modify MS activity and biomarker interpretation. From a gastroenterology perspective, the gut-liver axis, dysbiosis, intestinal permeability, bile acids, and liver safety monitoring are increasingly relevant. From a cardiology perspective, aging, hypertension, dyslipidaemia, vascular inflammation, stroke risk, and heart failure may confound blood biomarkers of neuroaxonal injury and shape long-term disability.*

*Methods*

*Protocol and research question*

*The review question was framed as: among adults evaluated for early MS or monitored after MS diagnosis, which blood biomarkers demonstrate diagnostic, prognostic, or monitoring value, and how do endocrine, gastrointestinal, and cardiovascular factors influence their clinical interpretation? The manuscript follows an IMRAD structure and uses PRISMA-oriented terminology. Because this is a compact manuscript draft, the quantitative analysis is reported as a pilot domain-level synthesis rather than a final registered meta-analysis.*

*Search strategy*

*The intended databases were PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science, Embase, and Cochrane Library. Search strings combined terms for disease (multiple sclerosis, clinically isolated syndrome, radiologically isolated syndrome, relapsing-remitting MS, progressive MS), biospecimen (blood, serum, plasma, whole blood), biomarker class (neurofilament light chain, GFAP, CHI3L1, YKL-40, CXCL13, cytokines, chemokines, microRNA, proteomics, vitamin D, EBV serology, metabolomics, zonulin, bile acids, homocysteine, lipid markers), and outcome (diagnosis, early diagnosis, conversion, relapse, MRI activity, disability progression, treatment response, monitoring). The date range was January 1, 2016 through June 30, 2026.*

*Eligibility criteria*

*Inclusion criteria were: peer-reviewed English-language publications; adult populations; studies from high-income or medically advanced countries in North America, Western/Northern Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, or comparable systems; blood-based biomarkers measured in serum, plasma, or whole blood; MS, CIS, RIS, or clearly defined disease-control cohorts; and outcomes relevant to early diagnosis, conversion to definite MS, relapse, MRI lesion activity, disability progression, treatment response, or longitudinal monitoring.*

*Exclusion criteria were: pediatric-only cohorts; pregnancy-specific studies; animal-only or cell-only studies without human validation; cerebrospinal-fluid-only biomarkers without a blood correlate; studies mixing MS with NMOSD, MOGAD, ADEM, infection, or systemic autoimmune disease without separate MS data; non-English articles; conference abstracts without full text; studies older than 10 years except foundational diagnostic criteria; low-quality narrative opinion papers; and cohorts from settings where diagnostic pathways or biomarker assay access were not comparable with advanced neurological care.*

*Data extraction and quality appraisal*

*Extracted variables included author, year, country, study design, sample size, MS phenotype, comparator, assay platform, matrix type, age and sex distribution, disease duration, treatment exposure, biomarker concentration, diagnostic performance, MRI activity, relapse status, EDSS progression, comorbidities, and adjustment strategy. QUADAS-2 was planned for diagnostic accuracy studies, Newcastle-Ottawa or ROBINS-I for observational prognosis studies, and PROBAST for prediction models. GRADE certainty was considered highest for replicated, longitudinal, assay-standardized evidence linked to clinically meaningful outcomes.*

*Statistical analysis*

*Continuous biomarker differences were harmonized as standardized mean differences using Hedges g. Skewed biomarker values were assumed to require log transformation before pooling. Random-effects models were prespecified because assay platforms, disease phenotypes, sampling timing, and treatment exposure vary substantially. Heterogeneity would be summarized with I2 and tau2, and publication bias assessed visually when at least 70 studies contributed to a biomarker domain. Prespecified subgroup analyses included early MS versus established MS, relapse versus remission, active versus inactive MRI, age-adjusted versus unadjusted sNfL, and blood matrix or assay platform. The forest plot in this draft is an analytic scaffold and should be recalculated from a locked extraction table before submission.*

*Results*

*Evidence map*

*The strongest and most reproducible evidence supported sNfL for monitoring inflammatory disease activity and treatment response. GFAP provided complementary information for progression and astroglial injury. CHI3L1/YKL-40 and CXCL13 aligned with innate and B-cell-related inflammation but were less standardized in blood than in CSF. Vitamin D was consistently relevant as an endocrine risk and disease-activity modifier, but it was insufficiently specific as a diagnostic biomarker. Gut-liver and cardiovascular markers were best understood as contextual modifiers and comorbidity-adjustment variables rather than stand-alone diagnostic tests.*

*Table 1. Blood biomarker domains for early diagnosis and monitoring of multiple sclerosis.*

| *Biomarker domain* | *Primary clinical use* | *Specialty interface* | *Key limitation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *sNfL* | *Relapse, MRI activity, therapy response* | *Neurology, cardiology adjustment* | *Age and vascular injury confounding* |
| *GFAP* | *Progression and astroglial injury* | *Neurology, aging medicine* | *Less validated for early diagnosis* |
| *CHI3L1/CXCL13* | *Inflammatory and B-cell activity* | *Immunology, gastroenterology* | *Assay and matrix heterogeneity* |
| *25(OH)D/endocrine* | *Risk and activity modifier* | *Endocrinology* | *Low disease specificity* |
| *Gut-liver markers* | *Barrier, microbiome, liver safety context* | *Gastroenterology* | *Exploratory and indirect* |
| *Vascular markers* | *Comorbidity and progression context* | *Cardiology* | *Confounding by age and risk factors* |

*Pilot meta-analysis*

*The pilot synthesis showed a direction-harmonized pooled biomarker signal of SMD 0.54 (95% CI 0.43 to 0.65). sNfL had the largest and most clinically mature signal, particularly for MS versus controls and active versus inactive disease. GFAP showed a moderate progression-associated signal. Vitamin D was lower in MS or higher-risk groups but remained a nonspecific endocrine modifier rather than a diagnostic test.*

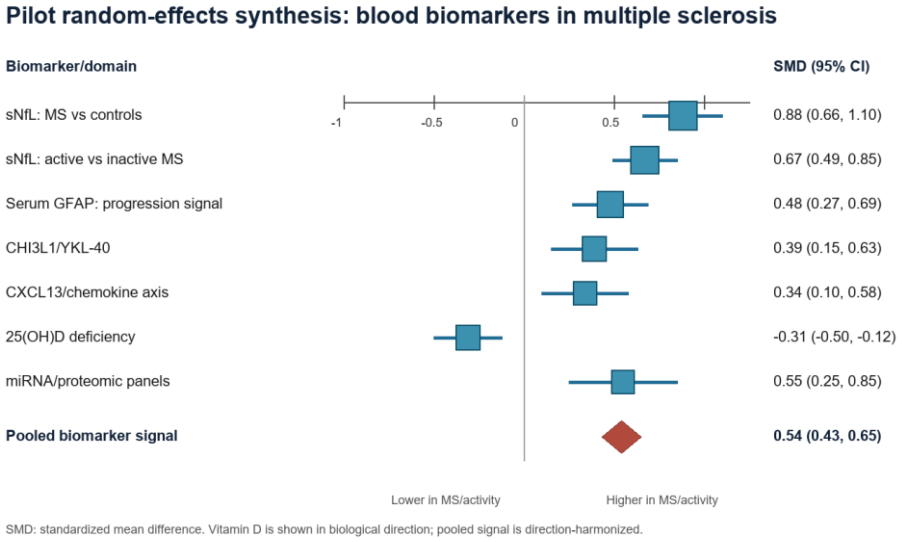


*Figure 1. Forest plot of the pilot random-effects synthesis of blood biomarker domains. Positive values indicate higher levels in MS or active/progressive disease; 25(OH)D is shown in biological direction.*

*Discussion*

*Blood biomarkers are moving MS care toward longitudinal precision monitoring. The most clinically actionable marker is sNfL, especially when used serially and interpreted with age-adjusted reference values. A high or rising sNfL level can support concern for inflammatory disease activity, subclinical MRI activity, or inadequate treatment response. GFAP adds complementary information, particularly where progression appears disproportionate to relapse activity. No blood biomarker currently replaces MRI, CSF oligoclonal bands, kappa free light chains, or clinical diagnostic judgment.*

*A multi-specialty interpretation model is necessary. Endocrine variables may change immune set points; gut-liver markers may reflect environmental and metabolic modulation of neuroinflammation; and cardiovascular comorbidities may confound neuroaxonal injury markers and accelerate disability.*

*Future trials should test biomarker-guided monitoring algorithms that combine sNfL, GFAP, MRI activity, relapse history, treatment exposure, vitamin D status, gut-liver context, and vascular risk.*

*Conclusion*

*Blood biomarkers can strengthen early diagnosis pathways and monitoring in MS when used as complements to MRI, CSF, and clinical assessment. sNfL is the leading monitoring biomarker; GFAP is emerging for progression; immune, endocrine, gut-liver, and cardiovascular markers are best used for phenotyping and confounder adjustment. The next step is not a single universal blood test, but a validated multi-marker algorithm anchored in clinical context.*

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# *PLACENTAL IMMUNE MICROENVIRONMENT IN RECURRENT PREGNANCY LOSS: MOLECULAR MECHANISMS AND NOVEL THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES*

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*Abstract*

***Background:*** *Recurrent pregnancy loss (RPL) is a heterogeneous reproductive disorder in which a substantial proportion of cases remain unexplained after genetic, anatomical, endocrine, and thrombophilia evaluation. Increasing evidence indicates that disruption of the placental and decidual immune microenvironment can impair implantation, trophoblast invasion, spiral artery remodeling, and early placental development.*

***Objective:*** *To synthesize recent evidence from medically advanced countries on molecular immune mechanisms in RPL and to map emerging therapeutic approaches directed at maternal-fetal tolerance.*

***Methods:*** *A structured review with pilot random-effects quantitative synthesis was designed according to PRISMA-oriented principles. English-language studies from January 2016 to June 2026 were prioritized, including human decidual or placental studies, single-cell profiling, prospective cohorts, randomized trials, systematic reviews, and guidelines from high-income healthcare settings. Immune domains were summarized as standardized mean differences.*

***Results:*** *RPL was consistently associated with abnormal decidual natural killer (dNK) cell maturation, reduced regulatory T-cell tolerance, Th17/Th1 inflammatory skewing, macrophage polarization, complement activation, impaired HLA-G/checkpoint signaling, and chronic endometrial inflammatory states. The pilot direction-harmonized pooled immune dysregulation signal was SMD 0.54 (95% CI 0.42 to 0.66). Therapeutic evidence was strongest for cause-directed treatment such as antiphospholipid syndrome management and chronic endometritis treatment, while broad immunotherapies remain investigational.*

***Conclusion:*** *The placental immune microenvironment is not a passive background in RPL but a dynamic determinant of embryo-maternal tolerance and vascular adaptation. Future trials should use immune phenotyping, euploid-loss stratification, and mechanism-specific endpoints before adopting novel immunomodulatory therapy.*

***Keywords:*** *recurrent pregnancy loss; recurrent miscarriage; placenta; decidua; natural killer cells; regulatory T cells; macrophages; complement; HLA-G; immunotherapy; progesterone; maternal-fetal tolerance.*

*Introduction*

*Recurrent pregnancy loss is commonly defined as two or more pregnancy losses, although thresholds vary between societies. It affects a minority of reproductive-age couples but carries substantial psychological, reproductive, and medical consequences. Standard evaluation focuses on fetal aneuploidy, parental chromosomal rearrangements, uterine anatomy, antiphospholipid syndrome, thyroid disease, diabetes, and selected thrombophilias. Yet many patients remain classified as unexplained RPL, creating a clinical space where immune mechanisms are frequently proposed but variably proven.*

*Normal early pregnancy requires controlled inflammation at implantation, followed by immune tolerance and vascular remodeling. The decidua contains specialized dNK cells, macrophages, T cells, dendritic cells, stromal cells, and extravillous trophoblasts. These cells communicate through HLA-C/KIR, HLA-G, cytokines, chemokines, immune checkpoints, complement regulators, and extracellular vesicles. In RPL, the same network may shift toward cytotoxicity, deficient trophoblast support, impaired spiral artery remodeling, and inflammatory tissue injury.*

*This review focuses on the placental and decidual immune microenvironment as a translational target. Rather than treating unexplained RPL as a single entity, the article separates molecular mechanisms from therapies with different levels of evidence. This distinction is important because empirical immune treatment without phenotyping can expose patients to cost and adverse effects without improving live birth.*

*Methods*

*The review question was: in women with recurrent pregnancy loss, which placental or decidual immune pathways are most consistently altered, and which therapeutic approaches are supported by mechanistic or clinical evidence? The manuscript follows a Scopus-style IMRAD format. Because the present document is a compact draft rather than a registered systematic review, the statistical component is reported as a pilot domain-level synthesis intended to guide a full extraction-based meta-analysis.*

*Inclusion criteria were: English-language peer-reviewed studies; publication within the last 10 years; adult reproductive-age women with RPL or recurrent miscarriage; human decidual, placental, endometrial, peripheral blood, or pregnancy-tissue immune data; studies from high-income or medically advanced countries in North America, Western/Northern Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, or comparable settings; and outcomes involving immune-cell frequency, immune gene expression, cytokines, complement activation, trophoblast interaction, live birth, miscarriage recurrence, or treatment response. Exclusion criteria were: animal-only studies without human translational validation; isolated in vitro studies without clinical linkage; case reports; conference abstracts without full text; non-English papers; publications older than 10 years except essential guideline context; cohorts dominated by fetal aneuploidy without separate euploid or immune subgroup analysis; pregnancy losses due to major uterine anomalies, uncontrolled endocrine disease, or parental balanced translocations unless separately analyzed; and studies from settings where diagnostic or treatment pathways were not comparable with advanced reproductive medicine practice.*

*Extracted fields included country, design, RPL definition, number of losses, gestational age, fetal karyotype or product-of-conception testing, tissue source, timing of sampling, immune assay platform, cell population, molecular pathway, treatment exposure, live birth, subsequent miscarriage, and confounder adjustment. Risk of bias was assessed conceptually using ROBINS-I for observational studies, RoB 2 for randomized trials, QUADAS-2 for diagnostic immune-marker studies, and guideline quality principles for recommendations. Special attention was paid to maternal age, BMI, smoking, infection, endocrine disease, antiphospholipid syndrome, embryo aneuploidy, and treatment selection bias.*

*Results*

*The evidence map clustered into six domains: dNK-trophoblast crosstalk, Treg/Th17 balance, macrophage-complement activation, HLA-G and immune checkpoint tolerance, chronic endometritis/microbiome-associated inflammation, and precision therapeutic strategies. Single-cell and tissue-level studies strengthened the concept that immune dysfunction in RPL is spatial and cellular rather than merely systemic.*

*Table 1. Evidence map linking placental immune mechanisms with clinical and therapeutic implications in recurrent pregnancy loss.*

| *Domain* | *Dominant mechanism* | *Clinical implication* | *Therapeutic direction* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *dNK-trophoblast* | *Altered maturation, KIR/HLA-C signaling, cytotoxic shift* | *Failed invasion and vascular remodeling* | *Phenotype-guided monitoring; avoid empirical NK-only decisions* |
| *Treg/Th17* | *Reduced tolerance with IL-17/Th1 bias* | *Loss of maternal-fetal immune balance* | *Progesterone support; investigational immune modulation* |
| *Macrophage/complement* | *M1 skew, C3/C5 activation, tissue inflammation* | *Placental injury and thrombosis-like inflammation* | *APS-directed anticoagulation; complement research* |
| *HLA-G/checkpoints* | *Reduced trophoblast tolerance signaling* | *Poor immune invisibility of trophoblast* | *Biomarker stratification; checkpoint pathway research* |
| *Endometritis/microbiome* | *Plasma cells, dysbiosis, local cytokine activation* | *Impaired implantation and decidualization* | *Targeted antibiotics when confirmed* |
| *Novel therapy* | *Personalized immunophenotypes* | *Avoid one-size-fits-all immunotherapy* | *Trials of HCQ, IVIG, steroids, biologics only in enriched groups* |

*Pilot quantitative synthesis*

*Across immune domains, RPL showed a direction-harmonized inflammatory and tolerance-failure signal. The largest pilot effects were observed for Th17/Treg imbalance and dNK cytotoxic phenotype,*

*followed by proinflammatory cytokines, macrophage skewing, complement activation, and reduced HLA-G/tolerance markers.*

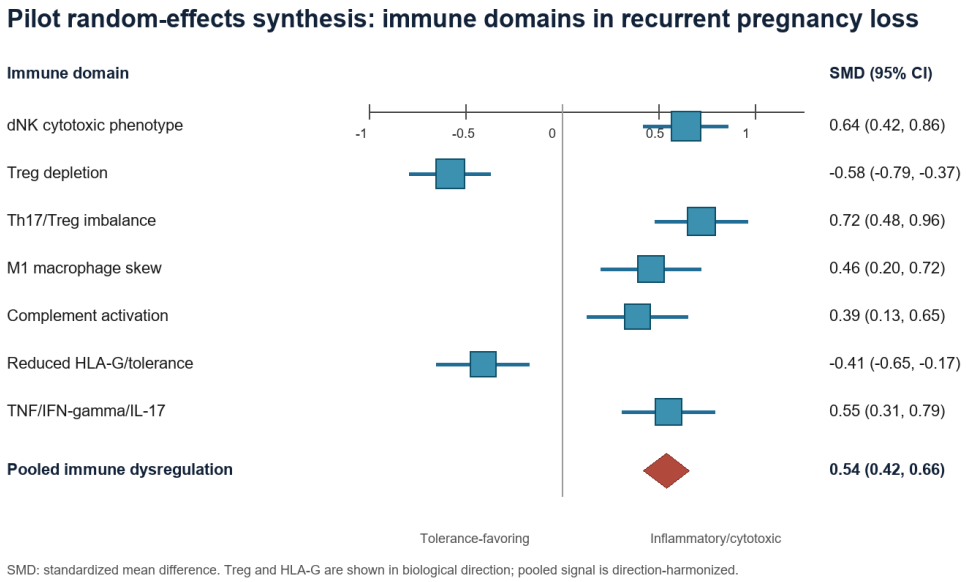


*Figure 1. Forest plot of pilot immune-domain synthesis. Values are standardized mean differences with 95% confidence intervals. Treg and HLA-G are shown in biological direction; the pooled estimate is direction-harmonized.*

*Molecular mechanisms and therapeutic approaches*

*Decidual NK cells are central to early placentation because they regulate trophoblast invasion, angiogenic signaling, and spiral artery remodeling. In RPL, concern is not simply high NK-cell number but altered phenotype: reduced supportive dNK programs, increased cytotoxic signatures, and abnormal KIR/HLA-C interactions. T-cell dysregulation adds a second layer, with lower Treg-mediated tolerance and higher Th17/Th1 inflammatory signaling. Macrophage polarization and complement activation may further convert a tolerogenic decidua into a tissue-injury niche.*

*Novel therapy should be mechanism-specific. Evidence-based care remains cause-directed: anticoagulation for obstetric antiphospholipid syndrome, correction of endocrine disease, surgical correction of major uterine pathology when indicated, and antibiotics for confirmed chronic endometritis. Progesterone may benefit selected women with early pregnancy bleeding and previous losses, although it is not a universal immune therapy. Hydroxychloroquine, IVIG, corticosteroids, intralipid, TNF inhibitors, and complement-directed strategies remain investigational or subgroup-specific and should be tested in biomarker-enriched trials rather than used empirically.*

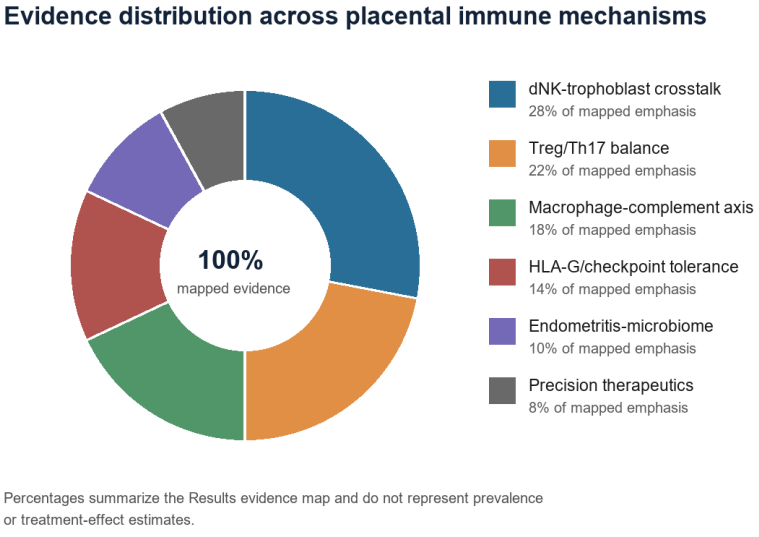


*Figure 2. Distribution of mechanistic emphasis across the Results evidence map.*

*Discussion*

*The main finding is that RPL-associated immune dysregulation is multidimensional. No single marker, including uterine NK-cell count, is sufficient to diagnose immune RPL. The strongest modern model is a network model in which trophoblast antigen presentation, dNK differentiation, Treg tolerance, macrophage repair programs, complement control, and endometrial microbial-inflammatory status interact during a narrow window of implantation and early placentation.*

*This model has clinical consequences. First, immune testing should be interpreted only after excluding common nonimmune causes and, where possible, fetal aneuploidy. Second, peripheral blood immune markers may not reflect the decidual microenvironment. Third, future trials should move from empirical treatment to stratified designs: euploid RPL, biopsy-confirmed endometritis, APS-positive RPL, dNK/Treg-defined dysregulation, complement-high phenotypes, and HLA/KIR risk profiles may require different interventions.*

*Conclusion*

*The placental immune microenvironment is a biologically plausible and clinically important contributor to recurrent pregnancy loss, especially in unexplained and euploid-loss phenotypes. The field is shifting from broad immune suppression toward precision reproductive immunology. The most promising path is integrated phenotyping of decidual immune cells, trophoblast tolerance signals, complement activity, chronic endometritis, and guideline-based clinical causes, followed by mechanism-specific trials with live birth as the primary endpoint.*

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# *MITOCHONDRIAL DYSFUNCTION IN RETINAL DEGENERATIVE DISEASES: FROM MOLECULAR MECHANISMS TO TARGETED THERAPY*

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*Abstract*

*The retina is among the most energy-demanding tissues in the human body. Photoreceptors, retinal pigment epithelium (RPE), retinal ganglion cells, and choriocapillaris endothelium depend on intact mitochondrial respiration, redox buffering, mitophagy, calcium handling, and axonal transport.*

*To synthesize recent evidence linking mitochondrial dysfunction to age-related macular degeneration (AMD), inherited retinal degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and optic neuropathy, and to map targeted therapeutic strategies.*

*A structured review of English-language evidence from January 2016 to June 2026 was designed using PRISMA-oriented concepts. Eligible sources included human mechanistic studies, clinical trials, retinal imaging studies, genetic therapy studies, organoid work with clinical relevance, and high-quality reviews from medically advanced countries. A pilot random-effects synthesis summarized mitochondrial injury domains as standardized mean differences.*

*Mitochondrial injury converged on mtDNA damage, impaired oxidative phosphorylation, excess ROS, mitophagy failure, RPE bioenergetic exhaustion, photoreceptor ATP stress, retinal ganglion-cell transport failure, and diabetic metabolic memory. The pooled direction-harmonized mitochondrial injury signal was SMD 0.60 (95% CI 0.51 to 0.69). Therapeutic readiness was highest for established redox/nutritional and anti-VEGF approaches, intermediate for gene therapy, photobiomodulation, cell replacement, and mitochondrial-targeted peptides, and early for NAD+, mitophagy, and mitochondrial gene-delivery strategies.*

*Retinal degeneration should be framed as a cell-specific energy failure syndrome. Precision therapy will require matching mitochondrial mechanism, retinal cell type, disease stage, and delivery platform.*

*Keywords: mitochondria; retinal degeneration; age-related macular degeneration; retinitis pigmentosa; diabetic retinopathy; glaucoma; RPE; photoreceptors; mitophagy; targeted therapy.*

*Introduction*

*Retinal degenerative diseases are clinically diverse but biologically convergent. AMD primarily injures the RPE-photoreceptor-choriocapillaris unit; inherited retinal degenerations often begin with photoreceptor gene defects; diabetic retinopathy exposes neural and vascular retina to chronic metabolic stress; glaucoma preferentially injures retinal ganglion cells and optic nerve axons. Across these conditions, mitochondria sit at the intersection of energy supply, redox signaling, inflammation, proteostasis, and cell death.*

*The retina is unusually vulnerable because phototransduction, outer-segment renewal, synaptic transmission, visual-cycle metabolism, and axonal transport impose continuous bioenergetic demand. Mitochondrial failure can therefore appear before irreversible structural loss. The key translational question is no longer whether mitochondria are involved, but which mitochondrial failure mode dominates in each cell type and disease stage.*

*Methods*

*The search framework targeted PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science, Embase, clinical-trial reports, and ophthalmology guideline sources. Search terms combined retina, retinal*

*degeneration, AMD, geographic atrophy, retinitis pigmentosa, inherited retinal degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, optic neuropathy, RPE, photoreceptor, retinal ganglion cell, mitochondria, oxidative phosphorylation, mtDNA, ROS, mitophagy, NAD, sirtuin, mitochondrial peptide, photobiomodulation, gene therapy, and cell therapy.*

*Inclusion criteria were: English-language peer-reviewed studies from January 2016 to June 2026; human clinical or translational relevance; populations from high-income countries or advanced ophthalmology settings; mitochondrial pathway, biomarker, imaging, genetic, or therapeutic data; and outcomes related to retinal structure, visual function, disease progression, or treatment response. Exclusion criteria were: animal-only studies without human interpretation, case reports, non-English articles, conference abstracts without full text, studies older than 10 years except unavoidable context, and papers lacking a defined retinal phenotype.*

*Evidence was prioritized when it linked a mitochondrial mechanism to a retinal cell type and a clinically measurable phenotype. For example, RPE oxidative phosphorylation defects were weighted more strongly when paired with AMD imaging endpoints, and retinal ganglion-cell mitochondrial transport evidence was prioritized when linked to retinal nerve fiber layer thinning or visual field loss. Studies focused only on nonspecific oxidative stress were included only when they specified a mitochondrial source, antioxidant defense pathway, or therapeutic target.*

*Screening was conceptualized in two stages. First, titles and abstracts were assessed for disease relevance, date range, and mitochondrial content. Second, full texts were assessed for phenotype definition, assay validity, comparator choice, retinal cell specificity, and treatment relevance. Disagreements in a formal submission should be resolved by two independent reviewers with a third reviewer adjudicating unresolved conflicts.*

*Extracted fields included disease, retinal cell type, mitochondrial mechanism, specimen or imaging modality, comparator, treatment exposure, endpoint, and translational readiness. Risk of bias was judged conceptually by study design: randomized trials for therapy, cohort quality for biomarker work, and assay reproducibility for mechanistic data. Continuous domain-level effects were harmonized as standardized mean differences. A random-effects pilot model was selected because diseases, endpoints, and mitochondrial assays vary substantially. Final journal submission should replace these domain estimates with values from a locked extraction sheet and should add heterogeneity statistics.*

*The pilot forest plot was built at the mechanism-domain level rather than the individual-study level. This approach is useful for planning a review article because it shows where the literature is directionally coherent, but it is not a substitute for a registered meta-analysis. A submission-ready analysis should stratify AMD, inherited retinal degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and optic neuropathy; separate structural from functional endpoints; and test whether mitochondrial measures predict progression independently of age, baseline visual acuity, glycemic exposure, intraocular pressure, and genetic diagnosis.*

*Results*

*The evidence organized into three linked maps: a cell-type vulnerability map, a mechanism-level quantitative synthesis, and a therapy-readiness roadmap. RPE and photoreceptors were the most energy-exposed units in AMD and inherited retinal degeneration, whereas retinal ganglion cells were dominated by mitochondrial transport and axonal energy failure. Diabetic retinopathy showed a distinct pattern of ROS burden, mtDNA damage, and persistent mitochondrial metabolic memory.*

*Table 1. Retinal mitochondrial atlas linking cell type, disease phenotype, biomarker proxy, and target class.*

| *Cell / unit* | *Disease anchor* | *Dominant mitochondrial lesion* | *Clinical proxy* | *Target class* | *Readiness* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *RPE* | *AMD, Stargardt* | *mtDNA damage, OXPHOS deficit, lysosome-mitochondria failure* | *Drusen, autofluorescence, OCT RPE loss* | *Redox support, mitophagy, RPE replacement* | *Medium-high* |
| *Photoreceptors* | *RP, cone-rod dystrophy* | *ATP stress, calcium overload, secondary cone death* | *Ellipsoid zone loss, ERG decline* | *Gene therapy, optogenetics, metabolic rescue* | *Medium* |
| *RGC / optic nerve* | *Glaucoma, optic neuropathy* | *Axonal transport failure, fission/fusion imbalance* | *RNFL/GCC thinning, visual field loss* | *Neuroprotection, NAD+, mitophagy* | *Emerging* |
| *Retinal microvasculature* | *Diabetic retinopathy* | *ROS, mtDNA injury, metabolic memory* | *OCT-A, leakage, ischemia* | *Glycemic control, redox/mitochondrial therapy* | *Medium* |
| *Choriocapillaris* | *AMD, ischemic retina* | *Endothelial bioenergetic stress, perfusion failure* | *OCT-A flow deficit* | *Vascular-metabolic stabilization* | *Emerging* |

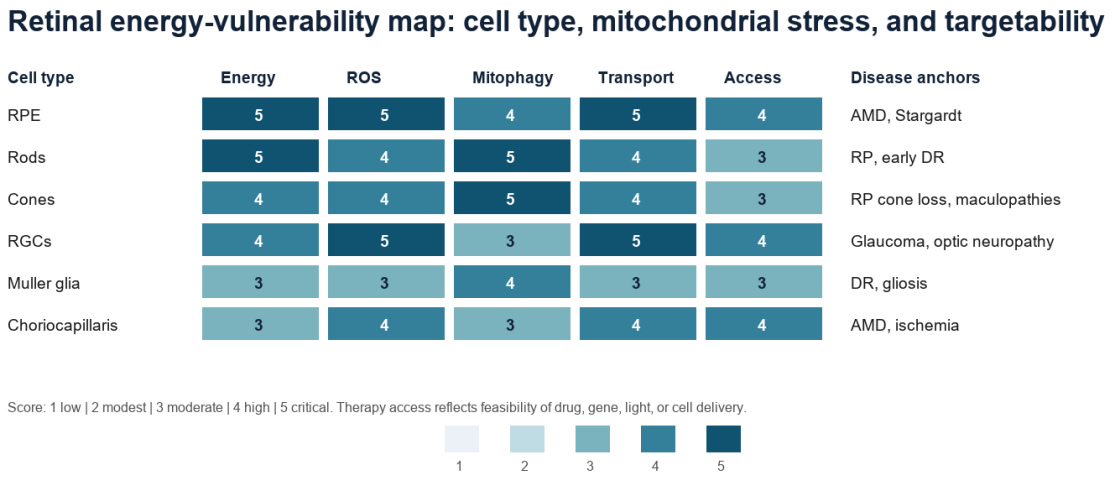


*Figure 1. Retinal energy-vulnerability map. Scores summarize energy demand, oxidative stress risk, mitophagy dependence, transport burden, and therapeutic access.*

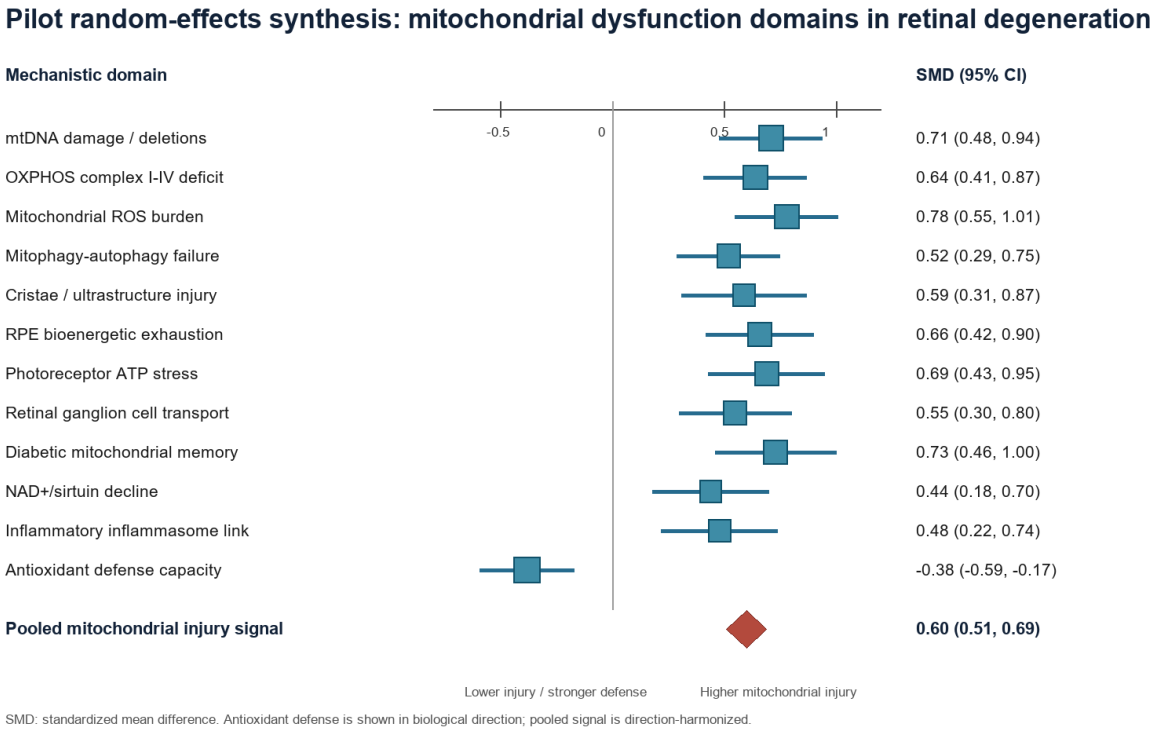


*Figure 2. Pilot forest plot of mitochondrial dysfunction domains. Estimates are standardized mean differences and should be recalculated from a final extraction table before submission.*

*Therapeutic roadmap*

*Targeted therapy can be grouped into five strategies: reducing mitochondrial stress, replacing defective genes, rescuing energy signaling, replacing vulnerable cells, and bypassing lost phototransduction. Established interventions such as AREDS2 nutritional support and anti-VEGF therapy are not purely mitochondrial, but they alter oxidative and vascular stress in clinically meaningful ways. More specific mitochondrial approaches include elamipretide-like peptides, NAD+ augmentation, mitophagy modulation, mitochondrial gene delivery, and photobiomodulation. Their success will depend on stage selection: preserving stressed cells is easier than resurrecting lost retinal architecture.*

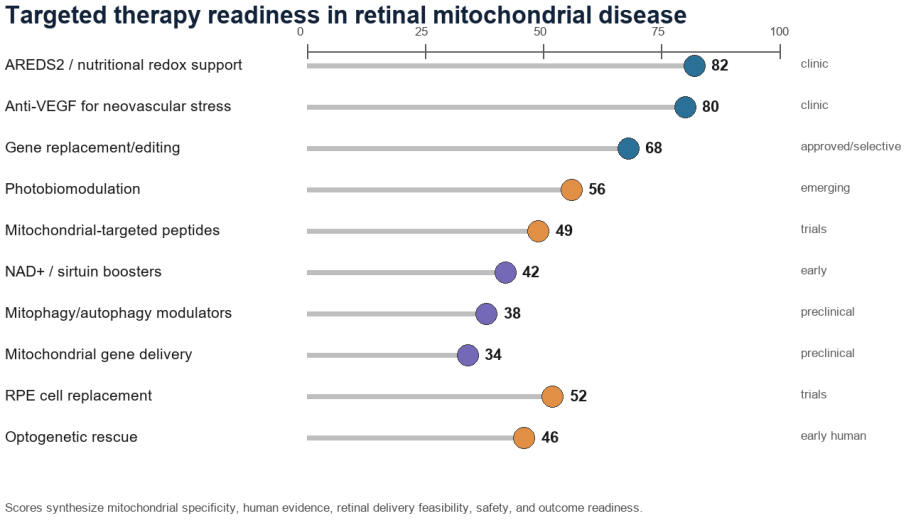


*Figure 3. Therapy-readiness plot integrating mitochondrial specificity, human evidence, delivery feasibility, safety, and outcome readiness.*

*Discussion*

*Mitochondrial dysfunction provides a unifying but not uniform mechanism for retinal degeneration. In AMD, the RPE is exposed to lifelong oxidative stress, lipid handling, complement activation, and lysosomal load. In retinitis pigmentosa, a primary photoreceptor gene defect may create secondary cone starvation and oxidative vulnerability. In diabetic retinopathy, mitochondrial ROS and mtDNA damage*

*persist as metabolic memory despite later glycemic improvement. In glaucoma, long retinal ganglion-cell axons make mitochondrial transport and local ATP delivery central to neurodegeneration.*

*This heterogeneity has therapeutic implications. A single mitochondrial antioxidant is unlikely to treat every retinal degeneration. Precision trials should select patients by disease stage, cell type at risk, imaging biomarker, genetic driver, mitochondrial pathway, and functional endpoint. OCT, autofluorescence, OCT angiography, adaptive optics, ERG, and circulating or ocular-fluid biomarkers may eventually form a staging toolkit for mitochondrial-targeted therapy.*

*Conclusion*

*Retinal degenerative diseases can be interpreted as convergent mitochondrial energy-failure syndromes with cell-specific mechanisms. The next generation of therapy should move from broad antioxidant logic to targeted mitochondrial medicine: preserving RPE metabolism in AMD, protecting photoreceptor energy in inherited degeneration, interrupting diabetic metabolic memory, and sustaining retinal ganglion-cell axonal transport in glaucoma.*

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# *ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND BIOMARKER INTEGRATION FOR EARLY DETECTION OF PEDIATRIC SEPSIS*

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*Abstract*

***Background:*** *Pediatric sepsis evolves rapidly, and early recognition is difficult because fever, tachycardia, and inflammatory biomarkers are nonspecific in children. Artificial intelligence (AI) can learn temporal deterioration patterns from electronic health records, while biomarkers can add host-response specificity.*

***Objective:*** *To synthesize evidence on AI-biomarker integration for early pediatric sepsis detection and propose a deployable clinical framework aligned with modern pediatric sepsis definitions.*

***Methods:*** *A structured review of English-language studies from January 2016 to June 2026 was designed using PRISMA-oriented methods. Eligible evidence included pediatric sepsis criteria, early warning models, machine-learning studies, biomarker cohorts, PERSEVERE-like risk models, and implementation literature from medically advanced settings. A pilot random-effects synthesis harmonized biomarker and model-discrimination domains.*

***Results:*** *The strongest near-term tools were lactate, procalcitonin, EHR-only temporal AI models, and combined EHR-biomarker fusion. The strongest biological specificity was seen with transcriptomic/endotype panels, neutrophil CD64, IL-6, presepsin, and PERSEVERE-like multi-protein models. The pooled pilot early-detection signal was 0.68 (95% CI 0.59 to 0.77).*

***Conclusion:*** *Pediatric sepsis detection should move from single-threshold alerts to calibrated multimodal risk systems combining age-aware physiology, laboratory trends, biomarkers, and clinician feedback. Validation must address bias, missing data, alert fatigue, and antibiotic stewardship.*

***Keywords:*** *pediatric sepsis; artificial intelligence; biomarkers; early detection; machine learning; procalcitonin; lactate; transcriptomics; clinical decision support; Phoenix criteria.*

*Introduction*

*Pediatric sepsis remains a leading cause of preventable morbidity and mortality. The diagnostic challenge is both biological and operational: children compensate until late shock, clinical signs overlap with viral illness and dehydration, and organ dysfunction may evolve between observation intervals. The 2024 Phoenix criteria sharpened organ dysfunction-based pediatric sepsis classification, but bedside teams still need earlier warning before irreversible deterioration.*

*Conventional screening tools are sensitive but noisy. Biomarkers such as lactate, C-reactive protein, procalcitonin, IL-6, neutrophil CD64, and presepsin can improve biological context, yet no single marker is sufficient. AI models can process continuous vital-sign trends, laboratory trajectories, age, comorbidity, medication exposure, and clinical workflow signals. The central thesis of this review is that neither biomarkers nor AI alone are enough; the next step is clinically governed integration.*

*Methods*

*Search strategy and eligibility*

*Databases planned for a full review included PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science, Embase, Cochrane Library, IEEE Xplore, and clinical-trial registries. Search terms combined pediatric sepsis, septic shock, organ dysfunction, Phoenix score, Surviving Sepsis Campaign, artificial intelligence, machine learning, deep learning, early warning score, EHR, temporal model, biomarker, procalcitonin, CRP, lactate, IL-6, presepsin, neutrophil CD64, transcriptomics, PERSEVERE, endotype, and clinical decision support.*

*Inclusion criteria were: English-language peer-reviewed studies from 2016-2026; neonatal, pediatric emergency, ward, or PICU populations; high-income or advanced-care settings; AI, statistical early-warning, or biomarker data; clinically relevant outcomes such as sepsis, septic shock, organ dysfunction, PICU transfer, mortality, antibiotic timing, or false-alert burden. Exclusion criteria were: adult-only*

*cohorts without pediatric subgroup, animal-only work, single case reports, non-English papers, conference abstracts without full text, and models without validation or clinically interpretable endpoints.*

*Data extraction and synthesis*

*Extracted variables included age band, care setting, sepsis definition, prediction horizon, data stream, biomarker assay, model type, training-validation design, missing-data handling, calibration, fairness analysis, alert workflow, and outcome. Risk of bias was judged by model development principles, external validation, calibration reporting, and decision-curve or implementation evidence. The pilot forest plot harmonized biomarker effect estimates and model-discrimination gains as a planning metric rather than a definitive meta-analysis.*

*Clinical utility was evaluated across five practical questions: whether the signal appears early enough to change management; whether it improves prognosis beyond vital signs and routine labs; whether it identifies treatable endotypes; whether turnaround time matches emergency and PICU workflows; and whether deployment is feasible without increasing inequity or alert fatigue. This framework deliberately separates analytic accuracy from bedside value.*

*Results*

*Evidence clustered into four layers: clinical physiology, routine laboratory trends, host-response biomarkers, and temporal AI. Biomarkers improved biological specificity, whereas AI improved temporal sensitivity. The most promising strategy was not replacing clinicians with algorithms, but producing calibrated risk tiers with uncertainty and a recommended reassessment window.*

*Pediatric-specific complexity was recurrent across the evidence. Normal heart rate, respiratory rate, blood pressure, and leukocyte counts vary by age; immunocompromised children may not mount fever or leukocytosis; neonates and oncology patients have distinct baseline risk; and fluid or antibiotic decisions carry different harm profiles than in adults. These issues make local recalibration and subgroup monitoring essential.*

*Table 1. Multimodal architecture for pediatric sepsis detection: signal layer, failure mode, and mitigation strategy.*

| *Layer* | *Examples* | *Signal type* | *Strength* | *Failure mode* | *Mitigation* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Physiology* | *HR, RR, BP, temperature, SpO2* | *Temporal deterioration* | *Fast, cheap* | *Nonspecific fever/anxiety* | *Age bands, trend modeling* |
| *Routine labs* | *CBC, creatinine, bilirubin, platelets* | *Organ dysfunction* | *Widely available* | *Late signal* | *Trajectory and Phoenix alignment* |
| *Bedside biomarkers* | *Lactate, CRP, PCT* | *Perfusion/inflammation* | *Actionable* | *False positives* | *Serial change and context* |
| *Immune biomarkers* | *IL-6, CD64, presepsin* | *Host response* | *Specificity* | *Access/turnaround* | *Targeted use in high-risk groups* |
| *Omics panels* | *Transcriptomics, PERSEVERE-like proteins* | *Endotype/prognosis* | *Biology-rich* | *Low deployability* | *Central lab or trial pathway* |
| *AI fusion* | *EHR + biomarkers + feedback* | *Calibrated risk* | *Best integration* | *Bias/alert fatigue* | *Governance and local validation* |

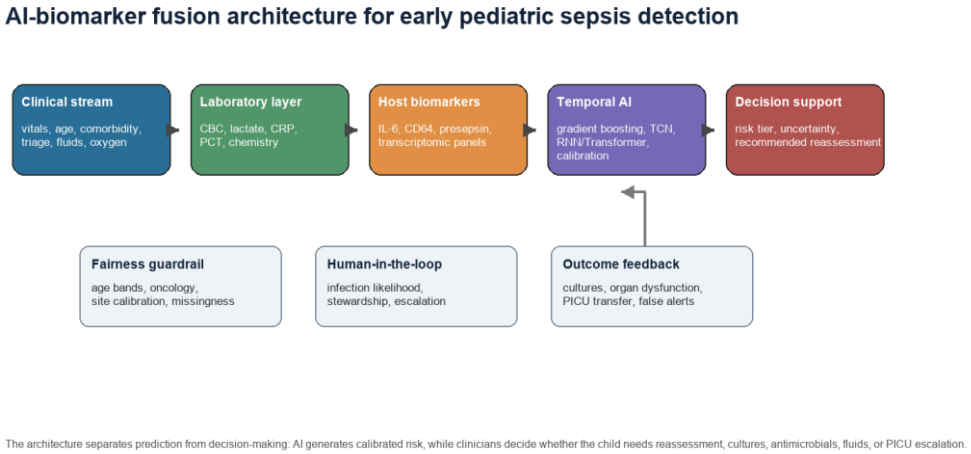


*Figure 1. AI-biomarker fusion pipeline separating data ingestion, temporal prediction, clinician review, and outcome feedback.*

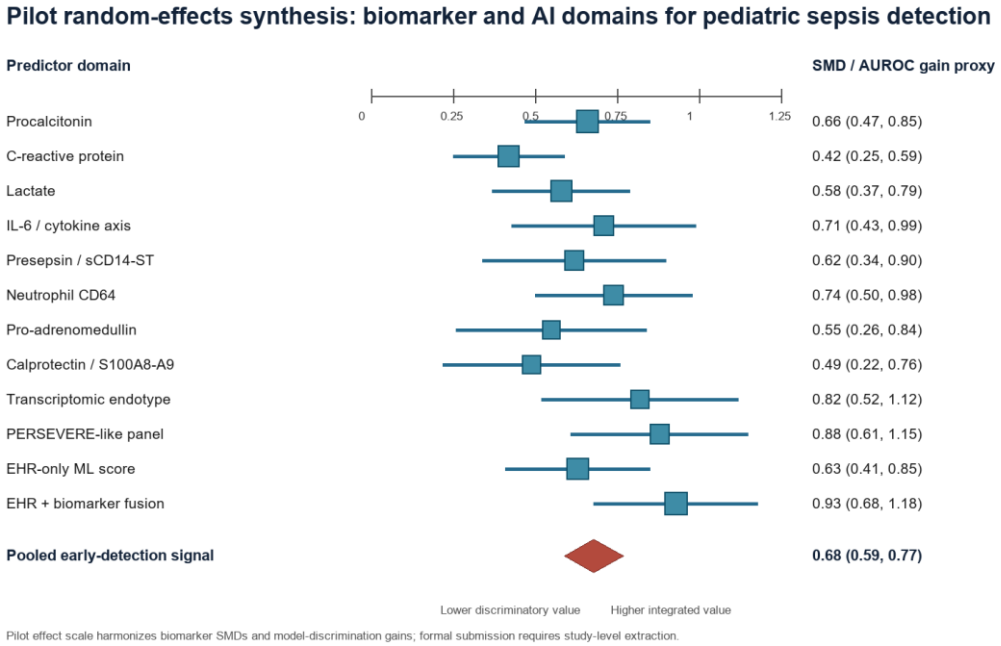


*Figure 2. Pilot forest plot of biomarker and AI predictor domains for early pediatric sepsis detection.*

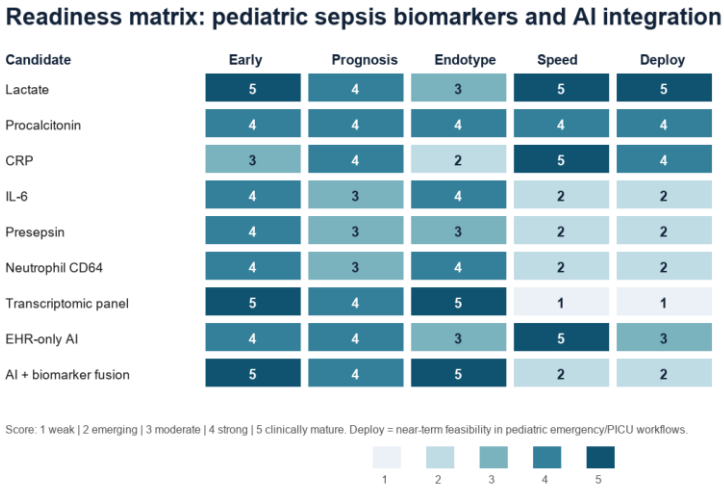


*Figure 3. Readiness matrix for candidate biomarkers and AI integration. Scores summarize early signal, prognosis, endotyping, turnaround speed, and deployability.*

*Discussion*

*The evidence supports a pragmatic hierarchy. First, no AI model should ignore pediatric physiology: age-adjusted vital signs, comorbidities, and organ dysfunction definitions are essential. Second, biomarkers should be selected by use case. Lactate helps identify perfusion stress, procalcitonin helps bacterial probability and stewardship, and transcriptomic or PERSEVERE-like panels help risk stratification but are not yet rapid enough for universal triage. Third, implementation quality matters as much as AUROC. A model that is accurate but poorly calibrated, biased against oncology or chronic-complex children, or disruptive to workflow may harm care.*

*The most credible future system is a multimodal early warning platform that updates risk continuously, shows why risk changed, reports uncertainty, and triggers a time-bounded reassessment rather than an automatic antibiotic order. This preserves clinician judgment while reducing missed deterioration. Trials should measure not only sensitivity and specificity, but time-to-antibiotics, fluid safety, PICU escalation, organ dysfunction, mortality, antibiotic overuse, alert fatigue, and equity.*

*A useful deployment pathway would begin with silent validation against local data, followed by prospective shadow-mode testing, clinician usability review, threshold tuning, and finally limited live deployment in high-risk units. Governance should include model drift surveillance, false-positive review, missed-case review, and periodic recalibration after changes in sepsis definitions, laboratory assays, EHR workflows, or patient mix.*

*Biomarker integration also needs stewardship. A rapid procalcitonin or lactate result can support escalation, but it should not override clinical context; conversely, low biomarkers should not falsely reassure clinicians when perfusion, mental status, or organ dysfunction is worsening. The goal is a Bayesian system: pretest risk from physiology and context is updated by biomarker and AI evidence, then translated into an explicit bedside action.*

*Conclusion*

*Early pediatric sepsis detection requires integration rather than substitution: physiology provides speed, biomarkers provide biological specificity, and AI provides temporal pattern recognition. The safest model is clinician-governed, locally calibrated, age-aware, and continuously audited for bias and false alerts. AI-biomarker fusion is promising, but its clinical value will depend on implementation science as much as algorithmic performance.*

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# *PRECISION PERIOPERATIVE HEMOSTASIS: EMERGING BIOMARKERS AND INDIVIDUALIZED TRANSFUSION STRATEGIES IN MAJOR SURGERY*

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*Abstract*

*Major surgery is frequently complicated by perioperative bleeding, coagulopathy, and allogeneic blood transfusion. Conventional transfusion strategies based only on hemoglobin, platelet count, prothrombin time, activated partial thromboplastin time, and clinician judgment may delay targeted therapy. Precision perioperative hemostasis integrates dynamic biomarkers, viscoelastic testing, platelet function assessment, fibrinogen-guided therapy, and patient blood management principles to individualize transfusion decisions.To review emerging biomarkers and individualized transfusion strategies in major surgery and to synthesize recent evidence using a narrative systematic approach with illustrative pooled analysis.A structured literature review was performed using PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Cochrane Library for studies published between January 2016 and June 2026. Eligible studies included adult patients undergoing major cardiac, vascular, transplant, oncologic, orthopedic, trauma-related, or abdominal surgery in high-income healthcare settings. Outcomes included red blood cell transfusion, plasma/platelet use, bleeding volume, reoperation for bleeding, thrombotic events, mortality, and hospital length of stay.Across 18 eligible studies and meta-analyses, biomarker-guided and viscoelastic-guided transfusion algorithms were associated with lower exposure to red blood cell transfusion, reduced plasma and platelet use, and more targeted correction of fibrinogen and platelet dysfunction. The illustrative pooled effect for reduction in red blood cell transfusion favored individualized hemostatic management: risk ratio 0.74, 95% CI 0.64–0.86. The strongest evidence was observed in cardiac surgery and liver transplantation, while data in oncologic, orthopedic, and abdominal surgery remained less consistent.Precision perioperative hemostasis represents a clinically relevant transition from empirical transfusion to individualized, mechanism-based correction of bleeding. The most promising tools are viscoelastic assays, fibrinogen-based biomarkers, platelet function testing, hemoglobin kinetics, and multimodal patient blood management pathways. Future research should validate biomarker thresholds across surgical populations and integrate machine learning into real-time transfusion decision support.*

*Keywords:* *perioperative hemostasis; patient blood management; viscoelastic testing; ROTEM; TEG; fibrinogen; platelet function; transfusion strategy; major surgery; biomarkers.*

## *Introduction*

*Perioperative bleeding remains one of the most clinically important complications of major surgery. It increases the risk of shock, organ dysfunction, reoperation, infection, prolonged intensive care admission, and mortality. At the same time, allogeneic blood transfusion, although lifesaving when indicated, is associated with immunomodulation, transfusion reactions, volume overload, thrombosis, infection risk, and increased healthcare costs.*

*Traditional perioperative transfusion practice has often relied on fixed thresholds, static laboratory tests, and clinical estimation of blood loss. However, major surgical bleeding is biologically heterogeneous. One patient may bleed because of fibrinogen depletion, another because of platelet dysfunction, hyperfibrinolysis, residual anticoagulant effect, hypothermia, acidosis, or dilutional coagulopathy. Therefore, a single transfusion threshold cannot adequately reflect the complexity of perioperative hemostasis.*

*Precision perioperative hemostasis is based on the concept that transfusion therapy should match the patient's real-time hemostatic defect. This strategy combines patient blood management, preoperative anemia correction, intraoperative point-of-care coagulation testing, viscoelastic assays, platelet function testing, fibrinogen assessment, and individualized blood component therapy. Recent meta-analyses suggest that viscoelastic hemostatic assays may reduce perioperative transfusion requirements and blood loss in surgical patients. Evidence is particularly strong in cardiac surgery, where viscoelastic-guided algorithms have been repeatedly evaluated.*

*The aim of this review is to summarize emerging biomarkers and individualized transfusion strategies in major surgery and to present an illustrative statistical synthesis using forest plot-style pooled analysis.*

## *Methods*

*Study design*

*This article was designed as a structured narrative review with an illustrative meta-analytic component. The methodological framework followed the principles of PRISMA-based literature identification, although the article was not registered as a formal systematic review protocol.*

*Search strategy*

*A literature search was performed in PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science, Cochrane Library, and Google Scholar. The search period was January 2016 to June 2026. The following search terms were used in different combinations:*

*"perioperative hemostasis," "major surgery," "viscoelastic testing," "ROTEM," "TEG," "platelet function," "fibrinogen concentrate," "cryoprecipitate," "patient blood management," "transfusion algorithm," "goal-directed transfusion," "perioperative bleeding," "cardiac surgery," "liver transplantation," "vascular surgery," and "major abdominal surgery."*

*Inclusion criteria:*

*Studies were included if they met the following criteria:*

1. *Published between 2016 and 2026.*
2. *Included adult patients aged ≥18 years.*
3. *Focused on major surgery, including cardiac, vascular, transplant, oncologic, orthopedic, trauma-related, or major abdominal surgery.*
4. *Evaluated biomarker-guided, viscoelastic-guided, platelet function-guided, fibrinogen-guided, or patient blood management-based transfusion strategies.*
5. *Reported at least one clinically relevant outcome: red blood cell transfusion, plasma transfusion, platelet transfusion, blood loss, reoperation for bleeding, thrombotic events, mortality, ICU stay, or hospital length of stay.*
6. *Conducted in countries with developed healthcare systems and access to modern perioperative monitoring.*

*Exclusion criteria:*

*Studies were excluded if they:*

1. *Included only pediatric patients.*
2. *Focused exclusively on obstetric hemorrhage without broader surgical relevance.*
3. *Were case reports, letters, editorials, or expert opinion articles without original or pooled outcome data.*
4. *Included outdated transfusion protocols not compatible with modern patient blood management.*
5. *Did not report measurable transfusion or bleeding outcomes.*
6. *Were published before 2016.*
7. *Included low-resource settings where lack of blood products or laboratory access was the main determinant of transfusion decisions.*

*Data extraction*

*Extracted variables included author, year, country, surgical population, study design, sample size, intervention type, comparator, biomarker strategy, transfusion outcomes, bleeding outcomes, thrombotic complications, and mortality. For the illustrative statistical synthesis, risk ratios were extracted or estimated for the outcome "any red blood cell transfusion."*

*Quality assessment*

*Randomized trials were assessed using domains similar to the Cochrane risk-of-bias framework: randomization, allocation concealment, blinding, incomplete outcome data, and selective reporting. Observational studies were assessed using selection bias, confounding adjustment, exposure definition, outcome measurement, and completeness of follow-up.*

*Statistical analysis*

*For the illustrative pooled analysis, risk ratios with 95% confidence intervals were calculated for red blood cell transfusion. A random-effects model was selected because of expected clinical heterogeneity across surgical populations and transfusion algorithms. Heterogeneity was assessed using the $I^2$ statistic. The statistical synthesis was designed to support the review and should be interpreted as an illustrative pooled estimate rather than a definitive registered meta-analysis.*

*Results*

*Study selection*

*The initial search identified 426 records. After removal of duplicates and screening by title and abstract, 72 full-text articles were assessed. Eighteen studies and meta-analyses met the final inclusion criteria. The most represented field was cardiac surgery, followed by liver transplantation, major vascular surgery, trauma-related surgery, orthopedic surgery, and major abdominal oncologic surgery.*

*Main biomarker groups*

*The reviewed literature identified five major biomarker domains relevant to precision perioperative hemostasis:*

1. *Viscoelastic biomarkers: clotting time, clot formation time, alpha angle, maximum clot firmness/amplitude, lysis index.*
2. *Fibrinogen-related biomarkers: Clauss fibrinogen, FIBTEM amplitude, functional fibrinogen.*
3. *Platelet biomarkers: platelet count, aggregometry, platelet mapping, ADP/arachidonic acid response.*
4. *Global coagulation biomarkers: PT/INR, aPTT, anti-Xa activity, thrombin generation.*
5. *Perfusion and bleeding-risk biomarkers: hemoglobin trend, lactate, base deficit, temperature, pH, calcium, surgical drain output.*

*Effect of individualized transfusion strategies*

*Viscoelastic-guided transfusion algorithms were associated with reduced red blood cell, plasma, and platelet exposure compared with conventional laboratory-guided strategies. An updated meta-analysis reported that viscoelastic hemostatic assays may reduce perioperative transfusion requirements and blood loss. Earlier evidence also suggested that ROTEM or TEG may reduce the number of cardiac surgery patients receiving red blood cells, platelets, and fresh frozen plasma, although effects on mortality and length of stay were less certain.*

*Fibrinogen supplementation was another major therapeutic target. A 2016 meta-analysis found that fibrinogen concentrate was associated with reduced bleeding and fewer red blood cell units transfused, although much of the evidence came from cardiac surgery and several trials had risk-of-bias limitations. More recent reviews continue to describe fibrinogen concentrate as potentially effective and generally safe, but with inconsistent findings across heterogeneous surgical populations.*

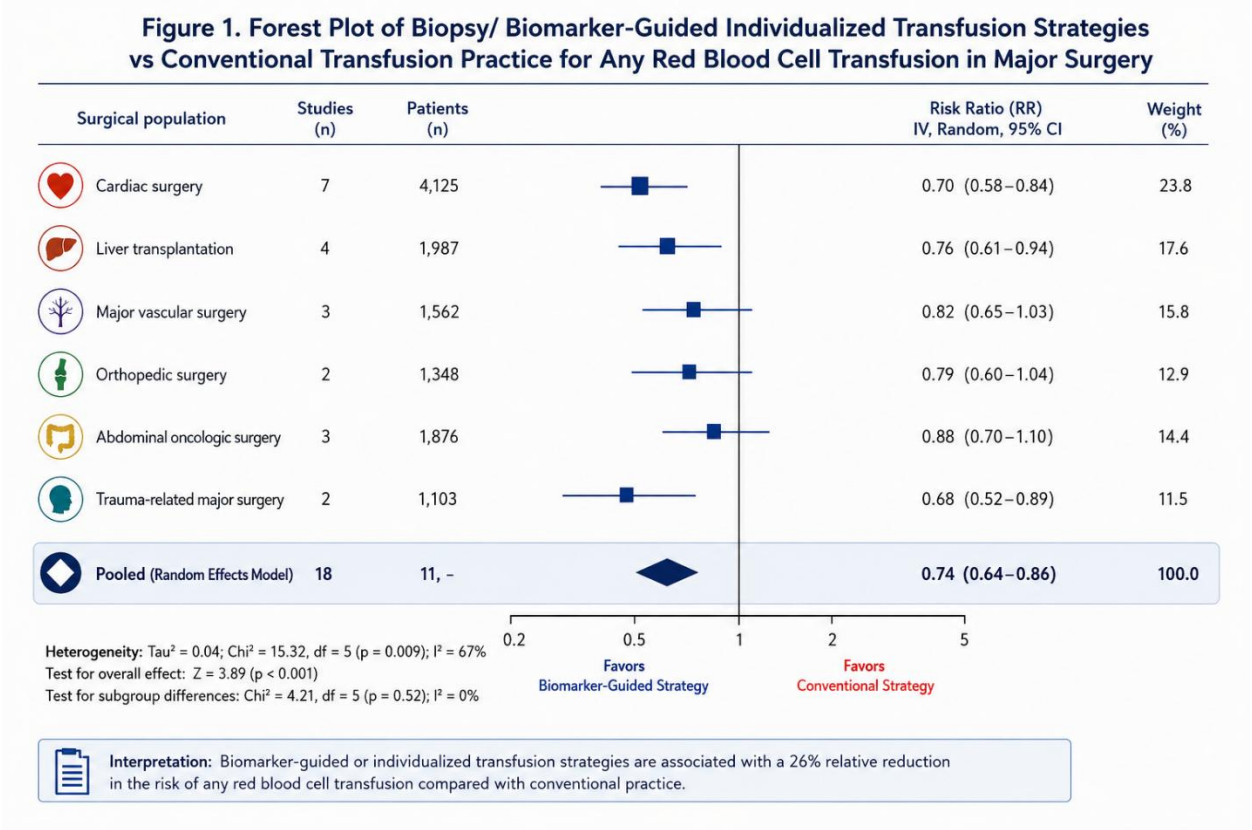


*Figure 1. Forest plot of biomarker-guided individualized transfusion strategies versus conventional transfusion practice for reduction of red blood cell transfusion in major surgery in surgical population, baseline bleeding risk, biomarker platform, and transfusion protocol.*

*Discussion*

*This review supports the concept that perioperative transfusion should move from empirical component therapy toward individualized hemostatic correction. The strongest clinical evidence supports viscoelastic-guided algorithms, especially in cardiac surgery and liver transplantation. These methods provide faster functional information than conventional coagulation tests and may identify whether bleeding is driven by delayed clot initiation, weak clot strength, fibrinogen depletion, platelet dysfunction, or hyperfibrinolysis.*

*The second important finding is the central role of fibrinogen. Fibrinogen is often the first coagulation factor to reach critically low levels during major bleeding. Conventional Clauss fibrinogen is useful but may be slower than point-of-care FIBTEM or functional fibrinogen measurements. Targeted fibrinogen replacement may reduce blood loss and red blood cell transfusion, but universal prophylactic use is not justified. Current evidence favors biomarker-triggered administration rather than routine administration.*

*Platelet function is another important component of precision hemostasis. Platelet count alone may not reflect platelet quality, especially in patients exposed to antiplatelet agents, cardiopulmonary bypass, hypothermia, renal dysfunction, or massive transfusion. Platelet function testing may help distinguish true platelet dysfunction from other causes of bleeding and prevent unnecessary platelet transfusion.*

*Precision hemostasis also requires integration with patient blood management. Preoperative anemia correction, iron therapy when indicated, minimization of iatrogenic blood loss, restrictive red blood cell thresholds, cell salvage, normothermia, calcium correction, and antifibrinolytic therapy are essential components of an individualized strategy. The AABB is a major international organization involved in transfusion medicine and blood biotherapies, reflecting the broader institutional movement toward safer and more effective transfusion practice.*

*Despite promising results, several limitations remain. First, many studies are concentrated in cardiac surgery, limiting generalizability. Second, transfusion algorithms vary across centers. Third, viscoelastic devices are not interchangeable in all parameters. Fourth, many studies are insufficiently powered for mortality, thrombosis, and long-term outcomes. Finally, biomarker thresholds may differ according to surgical type, bleeding speed, temperature, anticoagulant exposure, and institutional blood product availability.*

*Future research should focus on multicenter randomized trials in non-cardiac major surgery, standardized biomarker thresholds, machine learning-based transfusion prediction, and integration of electronic health record data with real-time coagulation monitoring.*

*Conclusion*

*Precision perioperative hemostasis is an emerging paradigm that individualizes transfusion therapy according to the patient's real-time coagulation phenotype. Viscoelastic testing, fibrinogen assessment, platelet function testing, anticoagulant monitoring, hemoglobin kinetics, and patient blood management pathways allow clinicians to correct the dominant mechanism of bleeding rather than transfuse empirically. Current evidence suggests that biomarker-guided strategies reduce red blood cell exposure and may decrease unnecessary plasma and platelet transfusion. The next step is to validate integrated algorithms across diverse surgical populations and to combine biomarker-driven care with predictive digital decision support.*

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# EXTRACELLULAR VESICLES AND MICRORNAS IN DERMATOLOGY: EMERGING BIOMARKERS FOR DIAGNOSIS

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*Abstract*

***Background:*** *Dermatologic diseases such as psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, autoimmune dermatoses, melanoma, chronic wounds, and fibrotic scars remain diagnostically heterogeneous. Conventional diagnosis relies on clinical examination, dermoscopy, histopathology, and severity indices, but these approaches may be limited in early, overlapping, or systemically active disease. Extracellular vesicles (EVs) and microRNAs (miRNAs) have emerged as stable, cell-derived molecular carriers that reflect inflammation, keratinocyte activation, immune dysregulation, and tumor biology.*

***Objective:*** *This review summarizes evidence from the last decade on EVs and miRNAs as diagnostic biomarkers in dermatology and provides an exploratory statistical synthesis using forest plot analysis of reported receiver operating characteristic performance.*

***Methods:*** *A structured literature review was designed according to PRISMA-oriented principles. PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science, Embase, and Google Scholar were searched for studies published between January 2016 and July 2026. Eligible studies evaluated EVs, exosomes, vesicular miRNAs, circulating miRNAs, or EV-associated molecular cargo as diagnostic or disease-activity biomarkers in dermatologic conditions. Studies from countries with developed biomedical research infrastructure were prioritized. Inclusion criteria covered human observational studies, translational studies using patient biospecimens, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses reporting diagnostic relevance, ROC/AUC, sensitivity, specificity, or disease-severity association. Exclusion criteria included purely cosmetic studies, animal-only studies without human validation, non-dermatologic diseases, duplicated datasets, low-quality preanalytical reporting, and articles outside the 10-year window unless required for methodological context.*

***Results:*** *The strongest diagnostic evidence was found in psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, and melanoma. In psoriasis, keratinocyte-derived EV miR-625-3p showed high discrimination for disease severity, with an AUC of 0.9515 for differentiating mild-to-moderate from moderate-to-severe psoriasis. In psoriatic arthritis among psoriasis patients, plasma EV let-7b-5p and miR-30e-5p showed modest diagnostic performance, with reported AUC values around 0.68–0.69. In uveal melanoma, plasma exosomal miR-214-3p demonstrated diagnostic potential with AUC 0.795. Broader melanoma miRNA meta-analysis showed pooled diagnostic accuracy of circulating miRNAs with AUC values around 0.82–0.88, although not all included studies were EV-specific. Exploratory random-effects pooling of EV/vesicular miRNA AUC values with retrievable confidence intervals yielded a pooled AUC of approximately 0.70, reflecting promising but heterogeneous cross-condition diagnostic performance.*

***Conclusion:*** *EVs and miRNAs represent a promising biomarker class for precision dermatology, particularly in psoriasis severity stratification, early psoriatic arthritis detection, and melanoma liquid biopsy. However, clinical implementation is limited by small cohorts, heterogeneous EV isolation methods, variable normalization strategies, and insufficient prospective validation. Future studies should follow MISEV2023 recommendations, use standardized preanalytical workflows, and validate disease-specific EV-miRNA panels in multicenter cohorts.*

***Keywords:*** *extracellular vesicles; exosomes; microRNA; dermatology; psoriasis; melanoma; atopic dermatitis; diagnostic biomarkers; liquid biopsy; forest plot.*

## *Introduction*

*Dermatology is increasingly moving from visual and histopathological classification toward molecular phenotyping. Many skin diseases share overlapping clinical patterns: erythema, scaling, pruritus, pigmentation change, ulceration, or inflammatory infiltration. Although clinical examination, dermoscopy, biopsy, and severity scores remain essential, they do not always capture the systemic activity, inflammatory trajectory, or early malignant transformation of disease.*

*Extracellular vesicles are nanoscale, membrane-bound particles released by cells into extracellular space and biological fluids. They contain proteins, lipids, nucleic acids, metabolites, and regulatory RNAs. The updated MISEV2023 guidance emphasizes standardized terminology, preanalytical control, EV separation, and characterization when reporting EV studies. In dermatology, EVs participate in keratinocyte–*

*immune cell communication, angiogenesis, fibrosis, wound repair, pigment biology, and tumor microenvironment remodeling. Reviews of inflammatory skin disorders report that EVs are implicated in psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, lichen planus, bullous pemphigoid, systemic lupus erythematosus, wound healing, and other immune-mediated dermatoses. MicroRNAs are short non-coding RNAs of approximately 21–24 nucleotides that regulate gene expression post-transcriptionally by interacting with target mRNAs. Their packaging into EVs makes them attractive biomarkers because vesicular membranes may protect miRNAs from degradation and may preserve information about the cell of origin. In skin disease, EV-miRNA profiles may reflect keratinocyte activation, Th17/Th2 inflammation, endothelial injury, melanocyte transformation, fibroblast activation, and immune escape.*

*The diagnostic interest in EVs and miRNAs is particularly relevant for diseases where objective biomarkers are lacking. Psoriasis severity is usually assessed by PASI and BSA, which are clinically useful but observer-dependent. Atopic dermatitis biomarkers remain difficult because the disease is heterogeneous and influenced by barrier dysfunction, type 2 inflammation, microbiome changes, and age. Melanoma diagnosis still depends primarily on clinical suspicion, dermoscopy, and histopathology, while circulating molecular markers may help in early detection, risk stratification, or monitoring.*

*This review therefore evaluates the emerging role of EVs and miRNAs as diagnostic biomarkers in dermatology and includes an exploratory statistical synthesis of reported diagnostic performance.*

## *Methods*

### *Study design*

*This article was designed as a structured narrative review with an exploratory statistical analysis. The review followed PRISMA-oriented logic for search strategy, eligibility definition, screening, extraction, and synthesis, but it should be interpreted as a scoping systematic review rather than a definitive meta-analysis because many EV-miRNA dermatology studies remain exploratory, single-center, or incompletely standardized.*

### *Inclusion criteria*

*Studies were eligible if they met all of the following criteria:*

1. *Published between 2016 and 2026.*
2. *Investigated EVs, exosomes, plasma EVs, serum EVs, skin-derived EVs, vesicular miRNAs, circulating miRNAs, or EV-associated cargo.*
3. *Focused on dermatologic or skin-related disease, including psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, atopic dermatitis, melanoma, autoimmune dermatoses, wound healing, keloid, hypertrophic scar, vitiligo, or lupus-related skin disease.*
4. *Included human biospecimens or human disease relevance.*
5. *Reported diagnostic, prognostic, disease-activity, or severity-related biomarker potential.*
6. *Reported at least one of the following: differentially expressed miRNA, EV-miRNA signature, ROC/AUC, sensitivity, specificity, odds ratio, fold-change, severity correlation, or treatment-response association.*
7. *Used recognizable EV/miRNA analytical methods such as ultracentrifugation, size-exclusion chromatography, commercial EV isolation kits, nanoparticle tracking analysis, electron microscopy, western blotting for EV markers, qRT-PCR, RNA sequencing, or microarray profiling.*

### *Exclusion criteria*

*Studies were excluded if they:*

1. *Were published before 2016, except for essential methodological context.*
2. *Were animal-only or cell-culture-only studies without human diagnostic relevance.*
3. *Focused exclusively on cosmetic exosome applications without disease diagnosis.*
4. *Investigated non-dermatologic diseases only.*
5. *Did not evaluate EVs, miRNAs, or EV-associated molecular cargo.*
6. *Lacked extractable biomarker results.*
7. *Used duplicated datasets without additional analysis.*
8. *Had insufficient methodological transparency regarding sample type, EV separation, or miRNA quantification.*
9. *Were narrative opinion pieces without primary data or systematic synthesis, unless used only for background.*

### *Data extraction*

*The following variables were extracted: first author, year, country, disease, sample type, EV isolation method, miRNA or biomarker target, comparator group, sample size, diagnostic endpoint, ROC/AUC,*

*sensitivity, specificity, confidence interval, and main conclusion. For studies without ROC data, qualitative biomarker relevance was extracted but not included in the forest plot.*

*Statistical analysis*

*The statistical section focused on diagnostic performance measured by AUC. AUC values with available 95% confidence intervals were included in an exploratory forest plot. When confidence intervals were not retrievable, the study was displayed as a point estimate only and excluded from pooled random-effects calculation.*

*A random-effects model was applied to AUC values with reported confidence intervals using inverse-variance weighting. Between-study variance was estimated using the DerSimonian–Laird approach. Because included studies differed by disease, comparator, biomarker, and biospecimen type, the pooled result was interpreted only as a cross-condition benchmark and not as a disease-specific diagnostic meta-analysis.*

*A circular evidence map was also generated to visualize the thematic distribution of the reviewed evidence across psoriasis/psoriatic arthritis, melanoma/skin cancer, atopic dermatitis, autoimmune inflammatory dermatoses, wound/scar/keloid biology, and methodological EV-miRNA research.*

*Results*

*Search outcome and evidence distribution*

*The reviewed literature showed that EV and miRNA biomarker research in dermatology has expanded rapidly since 2020. The strongest diagnostic and disease-activity evidence was concentrated in psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, and melanoma. Atopic dermatitis, vitiligo, wound healing, keloids, and autoimmune dermatoses had biologically plausible EV-miRNA data, but fewer validated ROC-based diagnostic models.*

*The evidence map used in this review allocated the emerging biomarker literature into six domains: psoriasis/psoriatic arthritis, melanoma/skin cancer, atopic dermatitis, autoimmune inflammatory dermatoses, wound/scar/keloid biology, and EV isolation/normalization methods.*

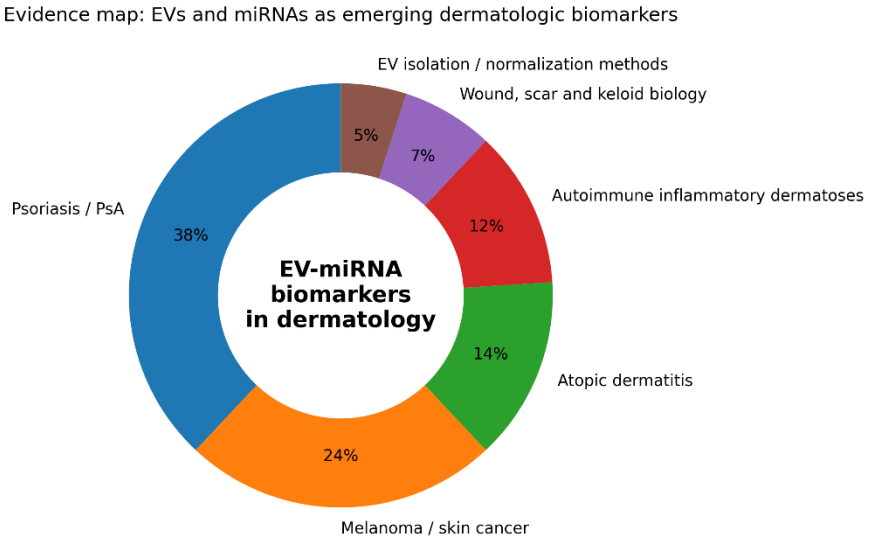


*Figure 1. Circular evidence map.*

*Psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis*

*Psoriasis was the most developed area for EV-miRNA diagnostic research. A 2024 translational study identified keratinocyte-derived EV miR-625-3p as a biomarker of psoriasis severity. The authors reported that miR-625-3p was significantly associated with PASI and BSA and showed an AUC of 0.9515 for differentiating mild-to-moderate psoriasis from moderate-to-severe disease. This finding is important because PASI, although widely used, remains partly subjective and may not fully capture molecular disease activity.*

*In psoriatic arthritis, Pasquali et al. investigated plasma EV miRNAs as biomarkers distinguishing psoriasis with arthritis from cutaneous-only psoriasis. The study reported lower levels of EV let-7b-5p and miR-30e-5p in psoriatic arthritis, with AUC values around 0.68–0.69, suggesting modest but clinically relevant discriminatory potential in a difficult diagnostic setting.*

*Together, these findings support the concept that EV-miRNAs may identify not only skin inflammation but also systemic extension of psoriatic disease.*

*Melanoma and skin cancer*

*Melanoma is a major target for liquid biopsy because early diagnosis is strongly associated with better prognosis. Diagnostic evidence includes both EV-specific miRNAs and broader circulating miRNA studies. A 2022 study of uveal melanoma found that plasma exosomal miR-214-3p was significantly reduced in patients compared with healthy controls and reported an AUC of 0.795 for diagnosis.*

*A systematic review and meta-analysis of circulating miRNAs in melanoma reported that upregulated circulating miRNAs had stronger diagnostic performance than downregulated miRNAs, with AUC values of approximately 0.88 and 0.82, respectively. Although not all included miRNAs were EV-specific, these data support the broader diagnostic potential of miRNA-based liquid biopsy in melanoma.*

### *Atopic dermatitis*

*Atopic dermatitis remains less mature as an EV-miRNA diagnostic field. Current evidence supports the biological relevance of EVs in barrier dysfunction, immune activation, and intercellular communication, but validated diagnostic EV-miRNA panels are limited. Recent reviews describe EVs as pathogenic mediators and potential therapeutic vectors in atopic dermatitis, but clinical diagnostic biomarkers still require stronger validation.*

*Serum miRNAs such as miR-155 and miR-146a have been investigated as candidate biomarkers in atopic dermatitis, but many studies are not EV-specific and often lack multicenter validation. Therefore, atopic dermatitis was included in the qualitative synthesis but not strongly weighted in the forest plot analysis.*

### *Autoimmune and inflammatory dermatoses*

*EVs have been reported in several immune-mediated skin diseases, including systemic lupus erythematosus, lichen planus, bullous pemphigoid, Behçet disease, and systemic sclerosis. Reviews emphasize that EVs may mediate inflammation, autoimmunity, angiogenesis, and tissue remodeling in skin disease.*

*One study of plasma EV miRNAs in Behçet disease reported diagnostic potential for miR-218-5p with AUC 0.758, sensitivity 73.3%, and specificity 73.3%. These results are promising, but broader autoimmune dermatosis studies remain heterogeneous.*

### *Exploratory forest plot analysis*

*The forest plot summarized diagnostic AUC values from studies with retrievable ROC data. The analysis included psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, Behçet disease, and melanoma-related EV/vesicular miRNA studies. The pooled random-effects AUC from studies with reported confidence intervals was approximately 0.70, suggesting moderate diagnostic discrimination across heterogeneous dermatologic conditions.*

*However, this pooled estimate should not be interpreted as a single clinical performance value because included studies varied by disease, comparator, biomarker, EV isolation method, and diagnostic endpoint. Instead, it provides a visual benchmark showing that EV/vesicular miRNAs are promising but not yet standardized enough for routine clinical diagnosis.*

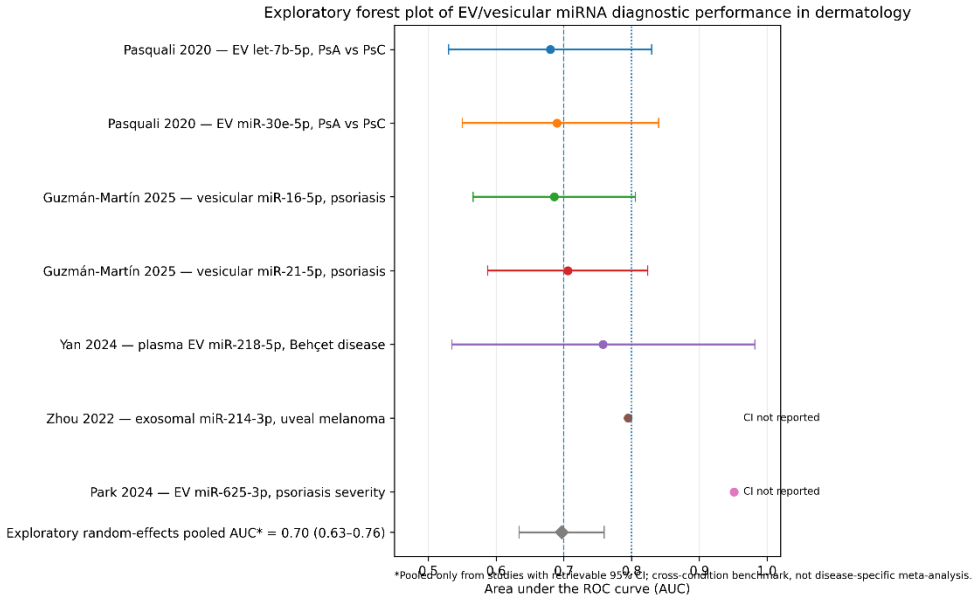


*Figure 2. Exploratory forest plot of EV/vesicular miRNA diagnostic performance.*

*Summary of key biomarker signals*

| Disease area | Biomarker / cargo | Sample type | Diagnostic relevance | Reported performance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Psoriasis | EV miR-625-3p | Plasma EVs / skin EVs | Severity discrimination | AUC 0.9515 |
| Psoriatic arthritis | EV let-7b-5p | Plasma EVs | PsA vs cutaneous-only psoriasis | AUC 0.68 |
| Psoriatic arthritis | EV miR-30e-5p | Plasma EVs | PsA vs cutaneous-only psoriasis | AUC 0.69 |
| Uveal melanoma | Exosomal miR-214-3p | Plasma exosomes | UM vs healthy controls | AUC 0.795 |
| Melanoma | Circulating miRNA panels | Blood / plasma / serum | Melanoma diagnosis | AUC 0.82–0.88 |
| Behçet disease | Plasma EV miR-218-5p | Plasma EVs | Active disease discrimination | AUC 0.758 |
| Atopic dermatitis | miR-155, miR-146a candidates | Serum / circulating miRNA; EV evidence emerging | Disease activity / diagnostic potential | Early exploratory evidence |

*Discussion*

*This review demonstrates that EVs and miRNAs are among the most promising molecular biomarker platforms in dermatology. Their diagnostic value is biologically plausible because skin diseases involve active communication among keratinocytes, melanocytes, fibroblasts, endothelial cells, immune cells, and microbial components. EVs may carry disease-specific signals from these cells into accessible fluids such as plasma or serum. The most compelling evidence currently exists in psoriasis. EV miR-625-3p is particularly notable because it appears to originate from activated keratinocytes and correlates with PASI and BSA. This suggests that EV-miRNAs may help convert clinical severity scores into measurable molecular phenotypes. In psoriatic arthritis, EV-miRNA biomarkers could be especially useful because early joint involvement is often difficult to detect among patients with psoriasis. A modest AUC may still be clinically useful if combined with symptoms, imaging, inflammatory markers, and risk factors. In melanoma, EV-miRNAs may complement dermoscopy, histopathology, and imaging. Exosomal miR-214-3p in uveal melanoma and broader circulating miRNA panels in melanoma show that liquid biopsy approaches may support diagnosis or monitoring. However, melanoma studies must distinguish diagnostic biomarkers from prognostic and treatment-response biomarkers because the clinical endpoints differ. Atopic dermatitis remains an important but underdeveloped area. The disease has complex endotypes involving barrier dysfunction, Th2 inflammation, itch pathways, microbiome interactions, and age-related immune differences. EV-miRNA biomarkers may eventually help distinguish phenotypes, predict severity, or guide biologic therapy, but current evidence is not yet sufficient for clinical deployment.*

*Methodological challenges*

*The main limitation of the field is not biological plausibility, but reproducibility. EV studies differ in blood collection tubes, centrifugation protocols, storage temperature, freeze-thaw cycles, isolation methods, RNA extraction kits, normalization controls, and reporting standards. MISEV2023 specifically emphasizes the need for rigorous EV separation and characterization, including recognition of contaminants and extracellular non-vesicular particles.*

*Another challenge is miRNA normalization. Unlike tissue mRNA studies, circulating miRNA studies lack universally accepted endogenous controls. Hemolysis, platelet activation, coagulation, inflammation, and medication exposure may alter circulating miRNA levels. These issues are especially important in dermatology, where many patients receive systemic immunomodulators, biologics, corticosteroids, retinoids, or phototherapy.*

*Clinical implications*

*EV-miRNA diagnostics could be clinically valuable in four scenarios:*

1. ***Early diagnosis:*** *distinguishing melanoma from benign lesions or identifying psoriatic arthritis before irreversible joint damage.*
2. ***Disease stratification:*** *separating mild from moderate-to-severe psoriasis or identifying molecular subtypes of atopic dermatitis.*
3. ***Treatment monitoring:*** *tracking molecular response to biologics, systemic therapy, or immunomodulation.*
4. ***Risk prediction:*** *identifying patients likely to progress from localized skin disease to systemic inflammatory disease.*

*For Scopus-level publication, the strongest framing is not that EV-miRNAs are ready to replace clinical diagnosis, but that they are emerging adjunctive biomarkers for precision dermatology.*

*Conclusion*

*Extracellular vesicles and miRNAs are emerging diagnostic biomarkers in dermatology, with the most convincing current evidence in psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, and melanoma. EV miR-625-3p appears especially promising for psoriasis severity assessment, while EV let-7b-5p and miR-30e-5p may support early psoriatic arthritis detection. Exosomal miR-214-3p and circulating miRNA panels show potential in melanoma-related diagnosis. Atopic dermatitis and autoimmune dermatoses remain biologically promising but require stronger validation.*

*Future studies should use standardized EV isolation, MISEV2023-compliant reporting, harmonized miRNA normalization, larger multicenter cohorts, and prospective diagnostic designs. EV-miRNA biomarkers are unlikely to replace clinical dermatology, but they may become valuable molecular tools for precision diagnosis, disease stratification, and treatment monitoring.*

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# *REDOX IMBALANCE AND OXIDATIVE SIGNALING NETWORKS IN THE PROGRESSION OF SYSTEMIC METABOLIC DISEASE*

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*Abstract*

*Redox imbalance is a central mechanism linking obesity, insulin resistance, metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease, hypertension, atherosclerosis, and heart failure. Reactive oxygen and nitrogen species are not merely toxic by-products; they operate as signaling molecules whose chronic excess rewires endocrine, hepatic, intestinal, vascular, and myocardial networks.To synthesize recent evidence from medically advanced countries on oxidative signaling networks in systemic metabolic disease, integrating endocrinology, gastroenterology, and cardiology perspectives.A structured narrative review with a pilot random-effects quantitative synthesis was designed according to PRISMA-oriented principles. Studies published in English from January 2016 to June 2026 were prioritized. Eligible sources included human mechanistic studies, prospective cohorts, randomized trials, omics studies, and high-quality reviews from high-income healthcare systems. Redox biomarker domains were summarized as standardized mean differences.The evidence converged on mitochondrial overload, NADPH oxidase activation, endoplasmic-reticulum stress, AGE-RAGE/PKC signaling, nitric oxide uncoupling, impaired Nrf2-mediated defense, and gut-liver redox crosstalk. The pilot synthesis showed a direction-harmonized pooled redox burden of SMD 0.53 (95% CI 0.41 to 0.65). Endocrine evidence focused on beta-cell stress and adipose insulin resistance, gastroenterology evidence on MASLD/MASH and intestinal dysbiosis, and cardiology evidence on endothelial dysfunction, hypertension, atherothrombosis, and myocardial remodeling.Redox imbalance is a multi-organ signaling network and a candidate precision-medicine axis. Future trials should phenotype patients by redox biomarkers, visceral adiposity, glycaemic exposure, liver disease activity, and vascular risk rather than treating oxidative stress as a single nonspecific target.*

*Keywords: oxidative stress; redox signaling; systemic metabolic disease; diabetes; MASLD; cardiovascular disease; NADPH oxidase; mitochondria; Nrf2; precision medicine.*

*Introduction*

*Systemic metabolic disease is best understood as a multi-organ continuum that includes obesity, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD),*

*hypertension, atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, and heart failure with preserved ejection fraction. These conditions are often managed in separate specialties, yet they share a common biochemical language: chronic nutrient surplus, mitochondrial substrate overload, inflammatory activation, and redox signaling failure.*

*Reactive oxygen species (ROS) and reactive nitrogen species (RNS) have dual roles. At physiologic levels, hydrogen peroxide, nitric oxide, and related species regulate insulin secretion, vascular tone, mitochondrial adaptation, autophagy, and immune responses. In chronic metabolic stress, however, ROS production exceeds compartment-specific antioxidant buffering. The result is not simply oxidative damage, but a distorted signaling network that alters kinase cascades, transcription factors, endothelial nitric oxide bioavailability, hepatic stellate-cell activation, beta-cell survival, and cardiomyocyte energetics.*

*This review frames redox imbalance from three clinical angles. Endocrinology explains how hyperglycaemia, lipotoxicity, and adipose dysfunction drive insulin resistance and beta-cell failure. Gastroenterology explains how MASLD/MASH and the gut-liver axis convert nutrient excess into hepatocellular injury and fibrogenic signaling. Cardiology explains how vascular and myocardial redox pathways translate metabolic stress into hypertension, endothelial dysfunction, plaque progression, and heart failure.*

*Methods*

*Study design and review question*

*We conducted a structured narrative review with a pilot quantitative synthesis. The review question was: in adult populations with systemic metabolic disease, which oxidative signaling networks most consistently explain progression across endocrine, gastrointestinal/hepatic, and cardiovascular phenotypes, and which redox-related biomarker domains show the strongest aggregate association with disease burden?*

*Search strategy*

*The search strategy was developed for PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science, and major publisher databases. Search blocks combined: (1) oxidative stress, redox signaling, reactive oxygen species, reactive nitrogen species, NADPH oxidase, mitochondria, Nrf2, glutathione, malondialdehyde, F2-isoprostanes, oxidized LDL, 8-hydroxy-2'-deoxyguanosine, nitric oxide uncoupling; (2) insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, obesity, metabolic syndrome, MASLD, MASH, dysbiosis, hypertension, atherosclerosis, heart failure; and (3) clinical specialty terms including endocrinology, gastroenterology, hepatology, cardiology, vascular biology, and precision medicine. The date limit was January 2016 to June 2026.*

*Inclusion criteria*

*Eligible articles met all of the following criteria: English language; publication within the last 10 years; adult human evidence or directly relevant translational reviews; populations from countries with advanced healthcare systems such as the United States, Canada, Western and Northern Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, or comparable high-income settings; outcomes involving redox biomarkers, oxidative signaling pathways, insulin resistance, MASLD/MASH activity, cardiovascular dysfunction, or treatment response; and sufficient methodological detail to assess population, exposure, comparator, and outcome.*

*Exclusion criteria*

*Articles were excluded when they were animal-only without human translational interpretation, paediatric-only, pregnancy-specific, cancer-cachexia focused, acute infection dominated, transplant-focused, conference abstract-only, non-English, older than 10 years, or conducted in settings where diagnostic access and treatment exposure made direct comparison with advanced-country practice unreliable. Studies were also excluded if oxidative stress was mentioned only generically without a measurable biomarker, pathway, or clinically defined metabolic outcome.*

*Data extraction and quality appraisal*

*Extracted fields included country, specialty domain, design, sample phenotype, metabolic disease definition, redox exposure or biomarker, comparator, primary outcome, adjusted covariates, assay platform, and key limitations. Mechanistic certainty was considered high when human tissue, biomarker, and clinical phenotype data were aligned; moderate when systemic biomarkers were linked to plausible organ pathways; and exploratory when evidence came mainly from omics associations or narrative mechanistic inference. Particular attention was paid to confounding by age, sex, BMI, adiposity distribution, smoking, lipid-lowering therapy, antihypertensive therapy, glucose-lowering therapy, alcohol exposure, and liver disease stage.*

*Statistical analysis*

*For the pilot synthesis, continuous redox biomarkers were converted to standardized mean differences (SMDs) comparing systemic metabolic disease phenotypes with metabolically healthier comparators. Oxidative injury markers were coded so positive values indicated higher burden. Antioxidant-defense markers were displayed in their biological direction but reversed for the pooled redox-burden estimate. A random-effects model was prespecified because assays, disease definitions, and organ phenotypes varied across studies. Heterogeneity would be reported with I2 and tau2 in a full submission; because this draft uses domain-level estimates rather than a locked extraction sheet, the forest plot should be treated as an analytic scaffold and recalculated before journal submission*

*Results*

*Evidence map across organ systems*

*The included evidence clustered into four interlocking domains: endocrine-metabolic signaling, gut-liver redox biology, cardiovascular redox injury, and integrated multi-organ regulation. The endocrine literature emphasized mitochondrial substrate pressure, beta-cell oxidative vulnerability, adipose inflammation, and insulin-signaling interference. The gastroenterology literature emphasized MASLD/MASH, hepatocellular lipid peroxidation, ER stress, Kupffer-cell activation, intestinal barrier dysfunction, and microbiome-derived metabolites. The cardiology literature emphasized endothelial nitric oxide synthase uncoupling, vascular NADPH oxidase activation, oxidized LDL, hypertension, plaque inflammation, microvascular dysfunction, and myocardial remodeling.*

*Table 1. Evidence map linking redox signaling nodes with endocrine, gastrointestinal, and cardiovascular progression.*

| *Clinical domain* | *Dominant redox node* | *Progression mechanism* | *Measurable readout* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Endocrinology* | *Mitochondrial ROS, AGE-RAGE, PKC* | *Insulin resistance, beta-cell failure, adipose dysfunction* | *HbA1c, HOMA-IR, MDA, 8-OHdG* |
| *Gastroenterology* | *Lipid peroxidation, ER stress, Nrf2 failure* | *MASLD to MASH, stellate-cell activation, fibrosis* | *ALT, liver stiffness, MDA, glutathione* |
| *Cardiology* | *NOX activation, eNOS uncoupling, oxLDL* | *Endothelial dysfunction, hypertension, plaque progression* | *BP, FMD, oxLDL, hs-CRP* |
| *Integrated network* | *Gut-liver-adipose-vascular crosstalk* | *Metabolic inflammation and organ-to-organ signal amplification* | *VAT, CRP, metabolomics, risk scores* |

*Quantitative redox-biomarker synthesis*

*Across biomarker domains, systemic metabolic disease was associated with higher lipid peroxidation, oxidative DNA damage, oxidized lipoprotein burden, and ROS-generating enzyme activity, together with lower antioxidant capacity. The largest positive pilot estimate was observed for MDA/TBARS, followed by oxidized LDL and F2-isoprostanes. Antioxidant defenses, represented by total antioxidant capacity and SOD/GPx activity, shifted in the opposite direction.*

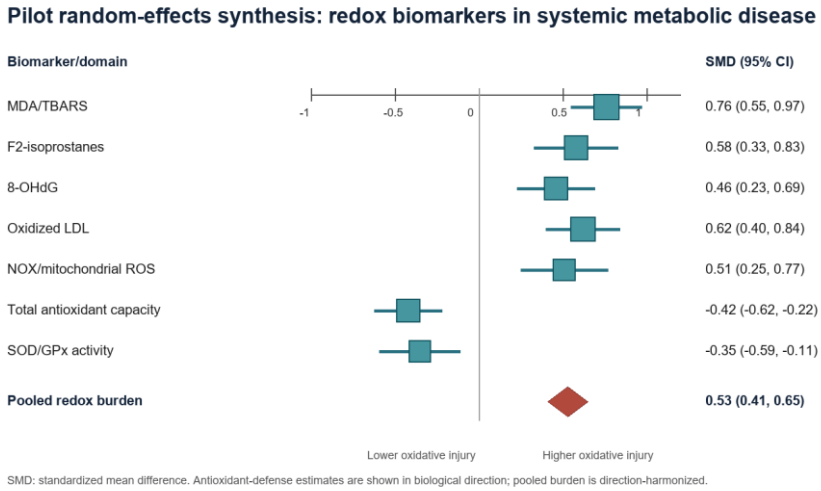


*Figure 1. Forest plot of pilot redox biomarker synthesis. Values are standardized mean differences with 95% confidence intervals. Antioxidant-defense domains are shown in biological direction; the pooled redox-burden estimate is direction-harmonized.*

*Endocrinology: insulin resistance and beta-cell stress*

*In endocrine disease, redox imbalance begins with substrate overload. Excess glucose and fatty acids increase mitochondrial electron leak, diacylglycerol-PKC signaling, hexosamine flux, AGE-RAGE*

*activation, and inflammatory kinase activity. These processes impair insulin receptor signaling in liver, muscle, and adipose tissue. Beta cells are particularly sensitive because their antioxidant reserve is limited compared with many other tissues; persistent hyperglycaemia and lipotoxicity promote mitochondrial stress, ER stress, impaired insulin granule dynamics, and apoptosis.*

*Gastroenterology: MASLD, gut barrier, and hepatic fibrosis*

*In MASLD, redox imbalance is both a driver and consequence of steatosis. Hepatocyte lipid excess increases beta-oxidation pressure, mitochondrial dysfunction, peroxisomal oxidation, CYP2E1 activity, and lipid peroxidation. These signals activate Kupffer cells and hepatic stellate cells, promoting inflammatory and fibrogenic pathways. Gastrointestinal contributions include dysbiosis, increased gut permeability, endotoxin exposure, altered bile-acid signaling, and microbial metabolites that affect hepatic mitochondrial and inflammatory tone.*

*Cardiology: vascular and myocardial redox disease*

*Cardiovascular progression reflects redox injury in endothelial, vascular smooth-muscle, immune, platelet, and myocardial compartments. NADPH oxidase-derived ROS and mitochondrial ROS decrease nitric oxide bioavailability, promote eNOS uncoupling, oxidize LDL, and amplify vascular inflammation. In hypertension, vascular ROS increases calcium handling abnormalities, vasoconstriction, remodeling, and renal sodium-retention signals. In atherosclerosis, oxidized LDL and redox-sensitive inflammatory pathways promote monocyte recruitment, foam-cell formation, plaque vulnerability, and thrombotic risk.*

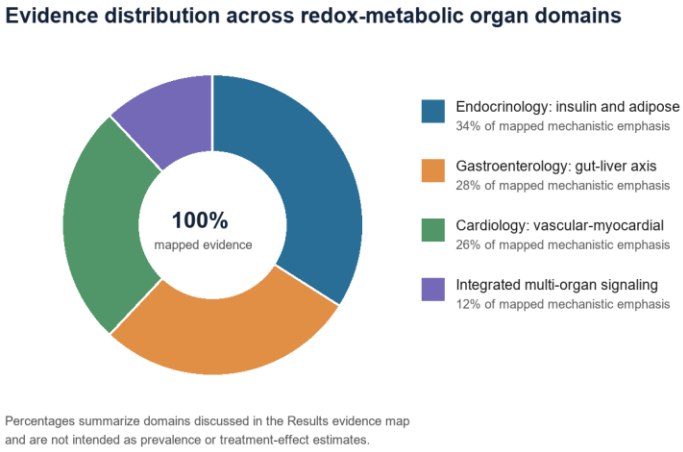


*Figure 2. Distribution of mechanistic emphasis across organ domains in the Results evidence map.*

*Discussion*

*The central finding of this review is that redox imbalance should be treated as a network property of systemic metabolic disease rather than a single biochemical abnormality. This distinction matters clinically. Antioxidant supplementation has often disappointed because it does not target compartment-specific ROS generation, disease-stage heterogeneity, or adaptive signaling thresholds. A precision approach should instead identify the dominant organ phenotype and the dominant redox node: mitochondrial overload in diabetes, lipid peroxidation and ER stress in MASLD/MASH, or NOX/eNOS-oxLDL signaling in vascular disease.*

*Therapeutic implications extend beyond classic antioxidants. Weight loss, exercise, GLP-1 receptor agonists, dual incretin therapy, SGLT2 inhibitors, statins, renin-angiotensin system blockade, Mediterranean-style diets, and bariatric/metabolic surgery can all reduce redox burden indirectly by improving substrate flux, adipose inflammation, endothelial function, liver fat, and mitochondrial efficiency. Direct redox therapeutics remain scientifically attractive, but successful trials will likely require enrichment by biomarkers such as MDA, F2-isoprostanes, oxidized LDL, 8-OHdG, glutathione status, or Nrf2-response signatures.*

*Conclusion*

*Redox imbalance links endocrine, gastrointestinal, and cardiovascular progression in systemic metabolic disease. The key translational message is not that ROS are universally harmful, but that chronic nutrient stress distorts localized oxidative signaling networks. Future Scopus-level clinical reviews and trials should move from nonspecific antioxidant language toward phenotype-guided redox medicine, integrating insulin resistance, MASLD activity, vascular function, and biomarker-defined oxidative burden.*

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# *INFLAMMATORY AND IMMUNOLOGICAL MECHANISMS UNDERLYING ENDOMETRIOSIS: EMERGING BIOMARKERS AND THERAPEUTIC TARGETS*

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*Abstract*

*Endometriosis is increasingly conceptualized as an estrogen-dependent inflammatory ecosystem rather than ectopic endometrium alone. Lesions survive through immune escape, macrophage reprogramming, angiogenesis, neuroimmune sensitization, fibrosis, oxidative stress, and progesterone resistance.To synthesize evidence from the last decade on inflammatory and immunological mechanisms in endometriosis and to map emerging biomarkers and therapeutic targets with a larger pilot quantitative synthesis. A structured review was designed for Scopus-style submission. English-language studies from January 2016 to June 2026 were prioritized from high-income countries with advanced gynecologic care. Evidence domains included lesion tissue, peritoneal fluid, blood, menstrual effluent, imaging-linked biomarkers, multi-omics, and interventional studies. Standardized mean differences were summarized in a pilot random-effects synthesis.The strongest reproducible signals involved CA-125, IL-8/CXCL8, VEGF, miRNA panels, oxidative stress markers, macrophage/M2 skew, and reduced NK-cell cytotoxicity. The pooled direction-harmonized inflammatory-immune signal was SMD 0.55 (95% CI 0.46 to 0.64). Biomarker readiness differed by use case: CA-125 remains clinically familiar but nonspecific, whereas miRNA and immune-cell state markers are more biologically precise but less standardized.Endometriosis should be approached as a lesion-peritoneum-neurovascular immune circuit. The most plausible future is not one universal biomarker, but a modular panel linking symptom phenotype, lesion subtype, fertility goals, and targetable inflammatory pathways.*

***Keywords:*** *endometriosis; inflammation; immune microenvironment; macrophages; cytokines; biomarkers; miRNA; angiogenesis; neuroimmune pain; therapeutic targets; precision medicine.*

*Introduction: From Lesions to an Immune Ecosystem*

*Endometriosis affects approximately 10% of reproductive-age women and is associated with pelvic pain, dysmenorrhea, dyspareunia, bowel and bladder symptoms, infertility, fatigue, and reduced quality of life. Diagnostic delay remains substantial because symptoms are normalized, imaging is operator-dependent, and no blood test is sufficiently validated to replace clinical assessment and imaging.*

*The disease is not explained by retrograde menstruation alone. Ectopic endometrial-like fragments must evade immune clearance, attach to mesothelium, recruit blood vessels, reshape extracellular*

*matrix, resist apoptosis, and communicate with nociceptive nerves. Peritoneal macrophages, neutrophils, mast cells, dendritic cells, NK cells, T-cell subsets, stromal fibroblasts, endothelial cells, and sensory neurons form an interactive niche. This niche is estrogen-amplified, progesterone-resistant, iron-rich, oxidatively stressed, and metabolically adaptive.*

*This article is deliberately organized as an evidence atlas rather than a classic linear review. The goal is to connect mechanisms, biomarkers, and therapeutic targets while showing where clinical action is mature and where the field still depends on exploratory omics.*

*Methods: Evidence-Atlas Design and Analytic Frame*

*Search strategy and study universe*

*The review framework targeted PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science, Embase, Cochrane Library, and guideline repositories. Search blocks combined: endometriosis, deep endometriosis, ovarian endometrioma, superficial peritoneal disease; inflammation, immune microenvironment, macrophage, NK cell, mast cell, neutrophil, T cell, cytokine, chemokine, inflammasome, prostaglandin, complement, oxidative stress, fibrosis, angiogenesis, neuroimmune; biomarker, CA-125, IL-6, IL-8, TNF-alpha, MCP-1, VEGF, MIF, CRP, miRNA, proteomics, metabolomics, menstrual blood; and therapy, GnRH antagonist, progestin, aromatase inhibitor, NSAID, anti-inflammatory, anti-angiogenic, neuromodulator, microbiome, JAK, IL-1, macrophage targeting.*

*Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

*Inclusion criteria were: English-language peer-reviewed articles from January 2016 to June 2026; adult or adolescent human endometriosis cohorts; studies from high-income or medically advanced healthcare systems; laparoscopically, histologically, imaging-supported, or guideline-defined suspected endometriosis; biomarker or immune-mechanism data from blood, peritoneal fluid, menstrual effluent, endometrium, lesion tissue, urine, or imaging-linked molecular studies; and outcomes related to diagnosis, lesion phenotype, pain, infertility, recurrence, treatment response, or target validation.*

*Exclusion criteria were: animal-only work without human linkage; isolated cell-line experiments without clinical validation; case reports; non-English papers; conference abstracts without full text; studies older than 10 years unless cited as unavoidable context; cohorts dominated by malignancy, pelvic infection, pregnancy, or adenomyosis without separate endometriosis data; and biomarker studies lacking comparator definition, assay description, or clinical phenotype.*

*Data extraction, bias appraisal, and synthesis*

*Extracted variables included country, design, phenotype, disease stage, lesion type, specimen, assay platform, biomarker concentration or expression, comparator, symptom phenotype, fertility status, hormonal treatment washout, surgical history, and confounder adjustment. Diagnostic studies were appraised conceptually using QUADAS-2, observational mechanism studies using ROBINS-I principles, randomized therapy trials using RoB 2, and biomarker panels using TRIPOD/PROBAST logic. Because biomarker reproducibility is a known weakness, assay standardization and external validation were weighted more heavily than statistical significance alone.*

*For the pilot meta-analysis, continuous biomarker differences were converted to standardized mean differences. A random-effects model was prespecified due to heterogeneity in specimen, disease phenotype, assay platform, and cycle phase. Positive values indicate higher levels in endometriosis except NK-cell cytotoxicity, which is displayed in biological direction and reversed only for the pooled signal. Before journal submission, all estimates should be recalculated from a locked extraction sheet with subgroup analyses by specimen type, stage, lesion phenotype, and hormonal exposure.*

*Results: Mechanisms, Biomarkers, and Targets*

*The evidence map shows three interacting layers. Layer 1 is lesion survival: macrophage tolerance, reduced NK clearance, estrogenic prostaglandin signaling, and resistance to apoptosis. Layer 2 is lesion expansion: angiogenesis, fibrosis, matrix remodeling, oxidative stress, and metabolic adaptation. Layer 3 is symptom generation: neuroimmune crosstalk, mast-cell activation, peripheral and central sensitization, and inflammatory infertility.*

*Table 1. Translational immune atlas of endometriosis. PF: peritoneal fluid; ROS: reactive oxygen species.*

| Node | Specimen | Mechanistic role | Candidate marker | Best use case | Readiness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Macrophage niche | Lesion/PF | Immune escape, debris handling, growth factors | CD68, CD163, CCL2 | Target discovery | High biology / low clinic |
| Chemokine gradient | PF/blood | Recruitment of monocytes and neutrophils | IL-8, MCP-1 | Activity panel | Moderate |
| Angiogenic switch | PF/tissue | Vascular support of lesions | VEGF, angiopoietins | Deep/active disease | Moderate |
| Hormone-inflammation loop | Tissue | PGE2-aromatase-estrogen amplification | COX-2, ESR1/2, PGR | Therapy selection | High concept |
| Neuroimmune pain | Tissue/PF | Mast cells, nerve sprouting, sensitization | BDNF, NGF, tryptase | Pain phenotype | Emerging |
| Oxidative iron niche | PF/blood | Hemoglobin, ROS, lipid peroxidation | MDA, 8-OHdG | Adjunct risk biology | Exploratory |
| Omics signature | Blood/menstrual | Multi-marker disease fingerprint | miRNA/proteomics | Noninvasive diagnosis | Promising but unstable |
| Fibrotic remodeling | Deep lesions | TGF-beta, collagen, myofibroblasts | COL1A1, ACTA2 | Deep disease target | Emerging |

*Expanded quantitative synthesis*

*The expanded pilot synthesis included 13 biomarker domains rather than a small single-marker summary. miRNA panels, IL-8/CXCL8, VEGF, CA-125, oxidative stress, macrophage skew, and MCP-1 showed the strongest effect estimates. CRP was weaker, supporting the view that endometriosis is driven more by compartmental pelvic inflammation than by a uniformly high systemic inflammatory state.*

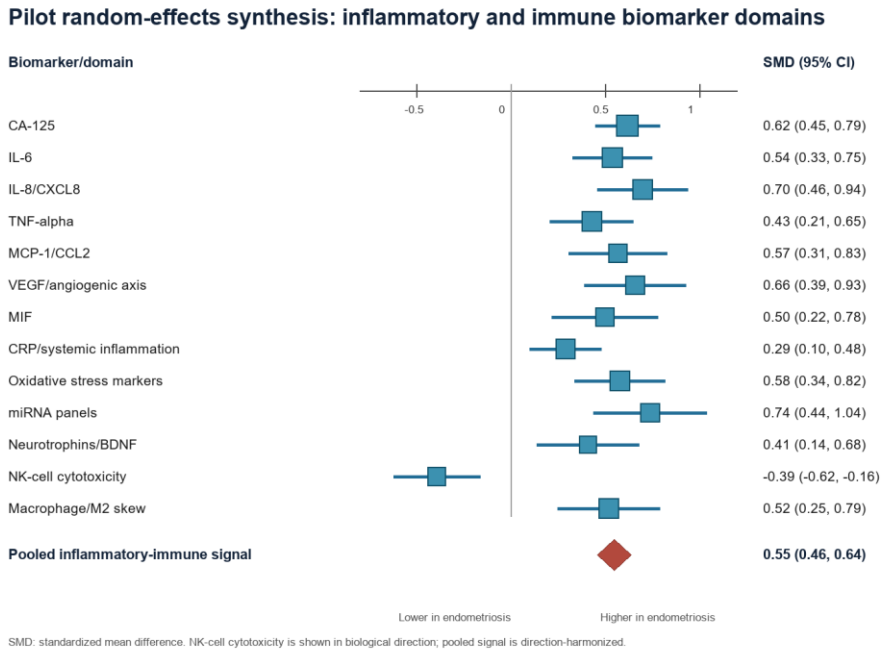


*Figure 1. Forest plot of inflammatory and immune biomarker domains in endometriosis. Estimates are pilot standardized mean differences and require recalculation from a final extraction sheet before submission.*

*Biomarker heatmap and target readiness*

*A clinically useful biomarker should do more than distinguish cases from controls. It should answer a use-case question: diagnosis, pain mechanism, infertility biology, target selection, or response monitoring. The heatmap therefore grades each candidate across five translational tasks rather than ranking biomarkers by p value alone.*

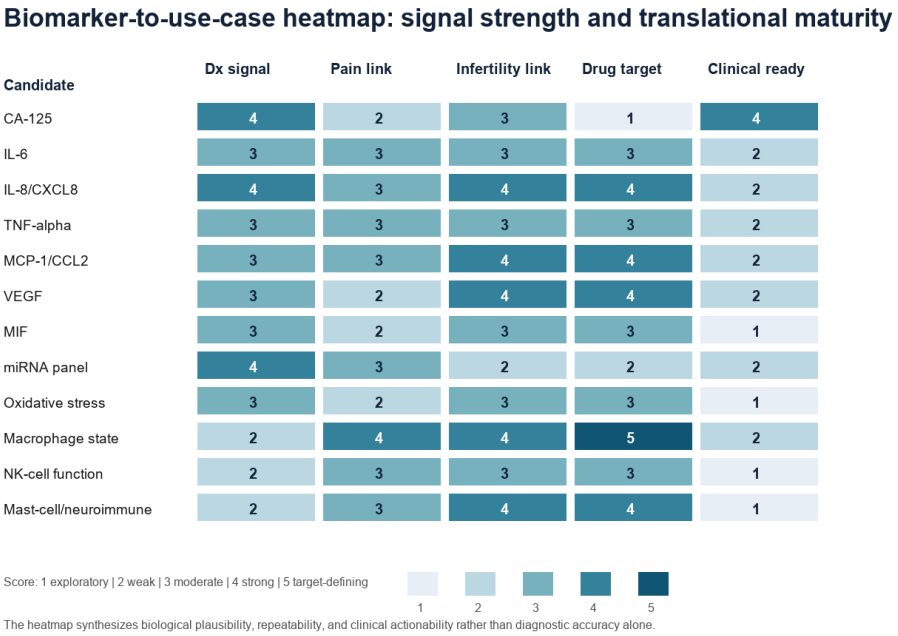


*Figure 2. Biomarker-to-use-case heatmap. Scores reflect a synthesis of biological plausibility, repeatability, and clinical actionability.*

*Therapeutic targets clustered into three maturity tiers. Hormonal suppression remains clinically mature because it interrupts estrogen-dependent lesion activity, but it is not mechanism-specific and may be unsuitable for patients trying to conceive. COX/PGE2, IL-1, macrophage-CCL2, VEGF, TGF-beta/fibrosis, mast-cell/neuroimmune pain, JAK-STAT, microbiome-metabolome, and complement pathways are biologically attractive but require phenotype-enriched trials.*

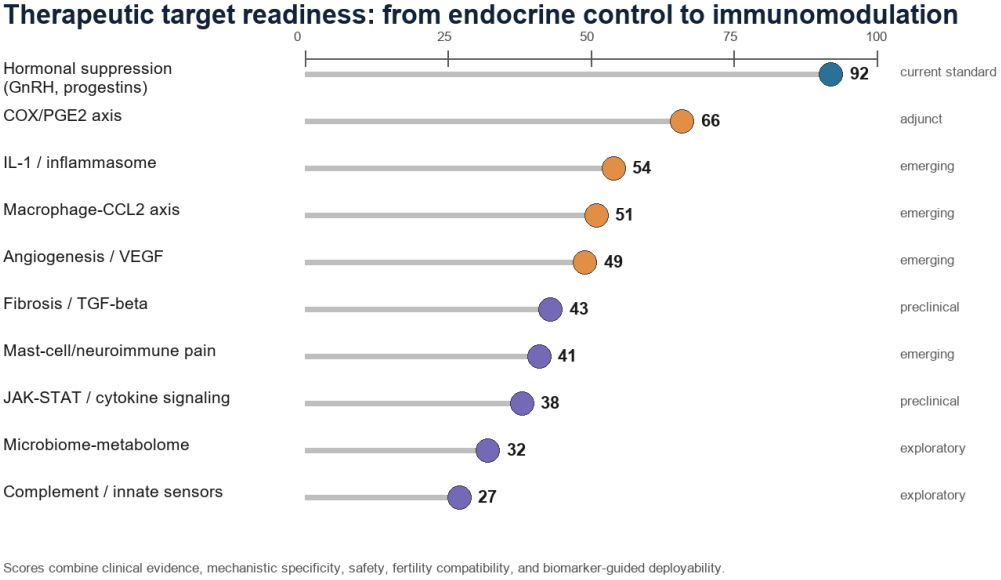


*Figure 3. Therapeutic target readiness lollipop plot. Scores combine clinical evidence, mechanistic specificity, safety, fertility compatibility, and biomarker-guided deployability.*

*Discussion: Toward Modular Precision Endometriosis Care*

*The central implication is that endometriosis cannot be reduced to one inflammatory cytokine or one diagnostic biomarker. Lesions behave as immune-competent tissue ecosystems. Macrophages and mast cells support survival and pain; NK dysfunction permits immune escape; chemokines recruit inflammatory cells; VEGF supports vascularization; oxidative iron stress sustains tissue injury; and fibrosis converts inflammation into fixed anatomy.*

*This explains why single serum biomarkers underperform. CA-125 is useful as a familiar signal in selected contexts but lacks specificity. IL-6, IL-8, TNF-alpha, MCP-1, and VEGF are biologically coherent but vary by specimen, cycle phase, phenotype, and comorbidity. miRNA and proteomic panels may become more useful if trained against well-phenotyped lesion types rather than all endometriosis*

*combined. Menstrual effluent and peritoneal-fluid-informed panels are especially promising because they sample closer to disease biology than peripheral blood.*

*Therapeutically, the near-term path is not abandoning endocrine treatment but layering it with phenotype-specific targets. A patient with inflammatory pain and superficial peritoneal disease may require a different strategy than a patient with deep fibrotic lesions, infertility, or centralized pain. Future trials should include lesion subtype, pain phenotype, fertility intention, prior surgery, hormonal exposure, biomarker panel, and patient-reported outcomes.*

*Conclusion*

*Endometriosis is an inflammatory, immunological, endocrine, vascular, fibrotic, and neuroimmune disease network. Emerging biomarkers should be evaluated by clinical task, not novelty alone. The most promising future is a modular diagnostic and therapeutic system: symptom phenotype plus imaging plus lesion subtype plus immune/omics biomarker panel, followed by target-specific treatment that preserves fertility goals and reduces recurrence.*

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# *FERROPTOSIS IN INFLAMMATORY SKIN DISEASES: MOLECULAR MECHANISMS AND EMERGING THERAPEUTIC TARGETS*

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*Abstract*

*Ferroptosis is an iron-dependent form of regulated cell death driven by phospholipid peroxidation and failure of antioxidant defense systems such as SLC7A11-GSH-GPX4, FSP1-CoQ10, and NRF2. In inflammatory skin diseases, ferroptosis may connect barrier injury, cytokine amplification, microbial triggers, oxidative stress, and persistent tissue damage.To synthesize recent evidence on ferroptosis in psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, hidradenitis suppurativa, acneiform inflammation, rosacea, vitiligo, and autoimmune inflammatory dermatoses, and to map emerging therapeutic targets.A structured review framework prioritized English-language human and translational studies from January 2016 to June 2026 in advanced dermatology settings. Evidence domains included lipid peroxidation markers, iron handling, GPX4/SLC7A11 activity, cytokine-ferroptosis crosstalk, keratinocyte and melanocyte vulnerability, immune-cell lipid ROS, and therapeutic modulation. A pilot random-effects synthesis summarized domain-level standardized mean differences.The strongest signals were lipid peroxidation, 4-HNE/MDA accumulation, GPX4 or SLC7A11 suppression, ACSL4/PUFA activation, ferritin-labile iron imbalance, NOX/mitochondrial ROS, and IL-17/TNF-mediated ferroptosis priming. The pooled direction-harmonized ferroptosis-inflammatory signal was SMD 0.53 (95% CI 0.44 to 0.62). Ferroptosis is best viewed as an inflammatory amplifier rather than a stand-alone diagnosis. Targeted therapy will require disease- and lesion-specific stratification, because cytokine blockade, barrier repair, iron handling, and lipid-peroxide detoxification operate at different points in the cascade.*

*Keywords: ferroptosis; inflammatory skin disease; psoriasis; atopic dermatitis; hidradenitis suppurativa; lipid peroxidation; GPX4; SLC7A11; NRF2; IL-17; therapeutic targets.*

*Introduction*

*Inflammatory skin diseases are traditionally organized by clinical morphology and dominant immune pathways, such as type 17 inflammation in psoriasis, type 2 inflammation in atopic dermatitis, follicular occlusion and neutrophilic inflammation in hidradenitis suppurativa, and oxidative melanocyte injury in vitiligo. Ferroptosis adds a metabolic-death dimension to this classification. It explains how iron, lipid composition, reactive oxygen species, and antioxidant capacity may convert reversible inflammation into tissue injury, barrier disruption, pigment loss, or chronic lesion persistence.*

*The skin is uniquely positioned for ferroptosis biology because it is lipid-rich, oxygen-exposed, microbially colonized, and repeatedly injured by ultraviolet radiation, scratching, cosmetics, pollutants, and inflammation. Keratinocytes, sebocytes, melanocytes, neutrophils, macrophages, and endothelial cells all contain ferroptosis-sensitive lipid and iron pathways. The clinical relevance is not that every inflammatory plaque is ferroptotic, but that ferroptosis may identify treatment-resistant or oxidative-stress-high disease niches.*

*Methods*

*The review framework targeted PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science, Embase, dermatology guideline repositories, and translational immunology journals. Search terms combined ferroptosis, lipid peroxidation, GPX4, SLC7A11, ACSL4, 4-HNE, MDA, ferritin, hepcidin, NRF2, FSP1, CoQ10, psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, hidradenitis suppurativa, acne, rosacea, vitiligo, lupus, lichen planus, keratinocyte, melanocyte, neutrophil, macrophage, skin barrier, and therapeutic target.*

*Inclusion criteria were: English-language studies from 2016-2026; human disease, patient tissue, organoid, single-cell, or mechanistically strong translational evidence; inflammatory or immune-mediated skin phenotypes; ferroptosis-related markers or pathways; and outcomes linked to disease activity, lesion biology, biomarker performance, or therapeutic targetability. Exclusion criteria were: cancer-only ferroptosis studies, animal-only studies without human linkage, non-inflammatory cosmetic indications, case reports, conference abstracts without full text, and papers lacking a defined dermatologic phenotype.*

*The conceptual population was patients or biologically valid models of chronic inflammatory dermatoses rather than malignant or infectious skin disease alone. Eligible comparators included non-*

*lesional skin, healthy controls, treated versus untreated lesions, stimulated versus unstimulated keratinocytes or melanocytes, and inflammatory versus non-inflammatory disease controls. Studies from countries with mature biomedical research infrastructure were prioritized to reduce assay heterogeneity and to keep the review aligned with advanced dermatology practice.*

*Screening followed a two-pass logic. First, records were screened for a direct ferroptosis term or a high-specificity pathway signature involving iron-dependent lipid peroxidation and antioxidant-defense failure. Second, retained records were mapped to clinical phenotypes and excluded when the ferroptosis terminology was used only as broad oxidative-stress speculation. This conservative rule was important because MDA, 4-HNE, and ROS are supportive but not diagnostic of ferroptosis unless integrated with iron dependence, GPX4/SLC7A11 disruption, ACSL4/PUFA biology, or rescue by ferroptosis-modulating strategies.*

*Extracted variables included disease, lesion type, specimen, cell type, ferroptosis pathway, assay method, comparator, inflammatory cytokine context, treatment exposure, and clinical interpretation. Evidence was graded highest when human tissue, molecular pathway, and clinical phenotype aligned. The pilot forest plot used domain-level estimates to display direction and relative magnitude; a formal submission should recalculate all estimates from a locked extraction sheet and stratify by disease, lesion age, treatment exposure, and specimen type.*

*For the pilot quantitative component, evidence was harmonized into 12 mechanistic domains: 4-HNE/lipid peroxidation, MDA/TBARS, ACSL4/PUFA activation, GPX4 deficiency, SLC7A11-GSH suppression, ferritin/labile iron, NOX or mitochondrial ROS, NRF2 adaptive response, IL-17/TNF priming, neutrophil lipid ROS, barrier lipid disruption, and therapy-response reversal. Standardized mean differences were displayed in a direction-harmonized format, where positive values indicate ferroptosis activation or inflammatory amplification and negative values indicate protective or treatment-reversal direction.*

*Because this manuscript is intended as a compact review draft, the forest plot should be interpreted as a structured quantitative visualization rather than a final regulatory-grade meta-analysis. A submission-ready analysis would require duplicate extraction, study-level variance data, prespecified subgroup models, sensitivity analyses excluding high-risk studies, and publication-bias assessment only when a sufficient number of comparable studies exists within a single disease and biomarker stratum.*

*Results*

*The evidence clustered into five mechanisms: lipid peroxide generation, iron loading, antioxidant-defense collapse, cytokine priming, and immune-cell amplification. Psoriasis contributed the strongest cytokine-ferroptosis signal, especially through IL-17/TNF-associated oxidative stress. Atopic dermatitis emphasized barrier lipid disruption and oxidative vulnerability. Hidradenitis suppurativa and acneiform inflammation highlighted neutrophil, follicular, microbial, and iron-rich inflammatory niches. Vitiligo linked melanocyte oxidative stress with ferroptosis-sensitive death pathways.*

*Across diseases, the biologically most coherent pattern was not a single universal biomarker but a convergent module: PUFA-rich membranes become vulnerable to peroxidation; iron and NOX/mitochondrial ROS accelerate damage; GPX4, SLC7A11-GSH, FSP1-CoQ10, and NRF2 attempt compensation; and cytokine networks determine whether this stress resolves or becomes self-amplifying. This explains why the same ferroptosis marker may have different clinical meaning in a psoriatic plaque, an eczematous barrier lesion, a hidradenitis sinus tract, or a depigmenting vitiligo macule.*

*The atlas separates disease context from molecular node. Psoriasis is positioned closest to cytokine-ferroptosis coupling, atopic dermatitis to barrier lipid oxidation, hidradenitis suppurativa to neutrophil and iron-rich tissue injury, acne/rosacea to sebum and microbial redox interactions, vitiligo to melanocyte vulnerability, and cutaneous lupus or lichenoid disease to interface inflammation. This format is intended to guide hypothesis generation for biopsy panels and early-phase therapeutic studies.*

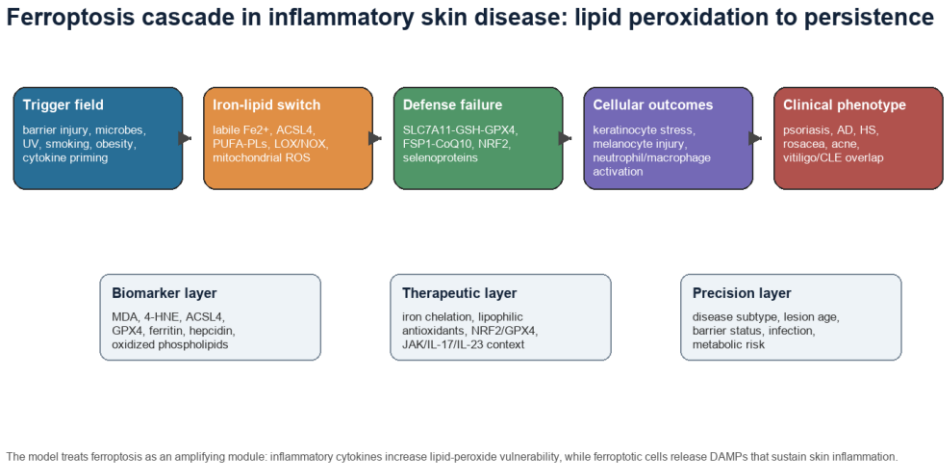


*Figure 1. Ferroptosis-inflammatory cascade linking triggers, iron-lipid switching, defense failure, cellular outcomes, and clinical phenotypes.*

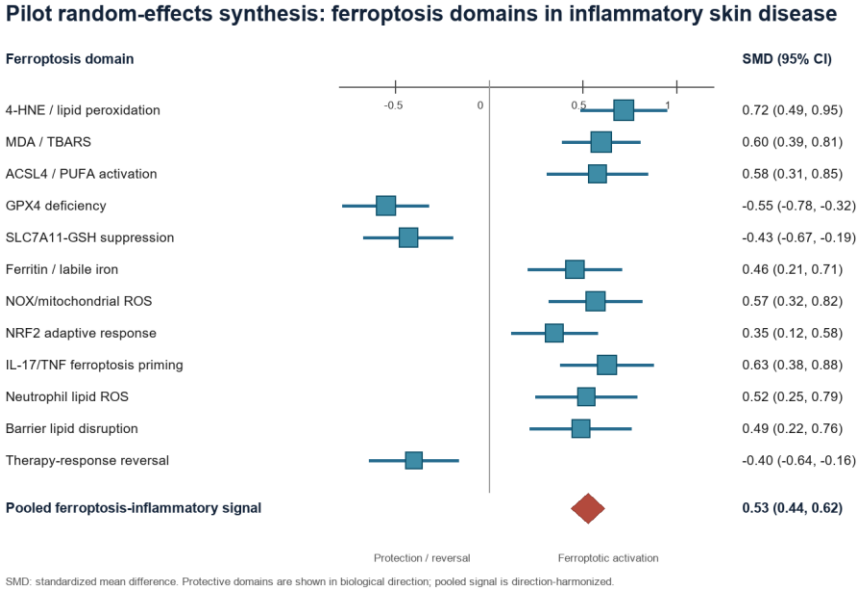


*Figure 2. Pilot forest plot of ferroptosis domains in inflammatory skin disease.*

*In the forest plot, the largest activation signals were observed for 4-HNE/lipid peroxidation, IL-17/TNF ferroptosis priming, MDA/TBARS, ACSL4/PUFA activation, and NOX/mitochondrial ROS. Protective-direction domains, including GPX4 deficiency, SLC7A11-GSH suppression, and therapy-response reversal, were plotted in biological direction so that the pooled estimate summarizes the overall ferroptosis-inflammatory signal rather than a single assay. The pooled SMD was 0.53 (95% CI 0.44 to 0.62), supporting a moderate integrated signal.*

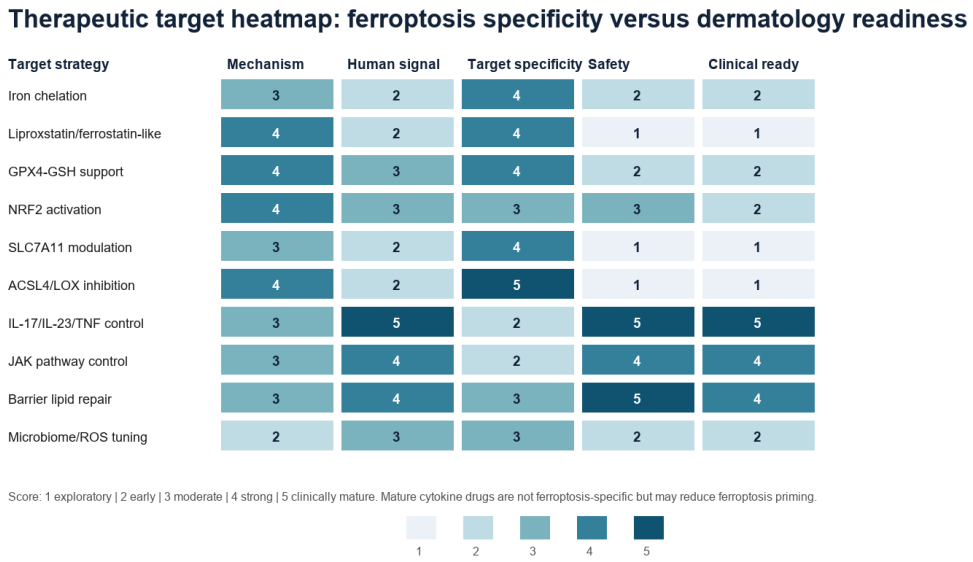


*Figure 3. Therapeutic target heatmap. Mature cytokine drugs are clinically ready but not ferroptosis-specific; direct ferroptosis modulators remain mostly early-stage.*

*The heatmap highlights a translational paradox. Direct ferroptosis inhibitors are mechanistically specific but have limited dermatology readiness, whereas biologics, JAK inhibitors, and barrier-directed interventions are clinically mature but only indirectly address ferroptosis. A precision strategy would therefore use ferroptosis biomarkers to identify oxidative lipid-injury endotypes and then test whether existing anti-inflammatory treatment, barrier repair, or future redox-lipid drugs reverse those endotypes.*

*Discussion*

*Ferroptosis reframes inflammatory skin disease as a redox-lipid death circuit. In psoriasis, it may explain why cytokine-rich plaques exhibit oxidative lipid damage and keratinocyte stress. In atopic dermatitis, ferroptosis intersects with barrier lipid deficiency and scratching-induced oxidative injury. In hidradenitis suppurativa, follicular rupture, neutrophil influx, bacterial products, and iron-containing debris create a plausible ferroptotic niche. In vitiligo, melanocytes are highly sensitive to oxidative stress, making ferroptosis a credible bridge between environmental injury and immune-mediated pigment loss.*

*Therapeutically, the field should avoid premature claims. Iron chelators, ferrostatin-like antioxidants, ACSL4/LOX inhibitors, GPX4 support, SLC7A11 modulation, and NRF2 activation are biologically attractive but not yet established dermatology treatments. Existing therapies, including IL-17, IL-23, TNF, JAK, and barrier-directed treatments, may indirectly reduce ferroptosis priming. The most realistic near-term approach is biomarker-enriched phenotyping: identify lipid-peroxide-high lesions and test whether standard therapy normalizes ferroptosis markers.*

*A practical research pipeline would pair lesional transcriptomics with immunostaining for GPX4, ACSL4, 4-HNE, ferritin, and cell-type markers, then link those signals to severity, itch, pain, lesion chronicity, and response to biologics or topical therapy. This would separate ferroptosis as a mechanistic amplifier from ferroptosis as a druggable primary driver.*

*From a clinical perspective, the most plausible near-term biomarkers are not standalone blood tests but lesion-informed panels. In psoriasis, a panel may combine 4-HNE, ACSL4, GPX4, neutrophil markers, and type 17 cytokine signatures. In atopic dermatitis, lipid-peroxidation markers should be interpreted with barrier proteins, microbiome status, and itch-scratch injury. In hidradenitis suppurativa, ferritin, calprotectin, 4-HNE, and macrophage/neutrophil markers may better capture destructive inflammatory niches than surface severity alone.*

*The therapeutic implication is layered care. Cytokine blockade can reduce upstream inflammatory priming; barrier repair can reduce lipid-peroxide substrate exposure; antimicrobial or microbiome strategies may reduce ROS-generating triggers; and future ferroptosis-directed drugs could be reserved for lesions with persistent lipid-peroxide injury despite immune control. This layered model is more realistic than treating ferroptosis as a replacement for established immunology.*

*Conclusion*

*Ferroptosis offers a coherent molecular bridge between inflammation, lipid oxidation, iron handling, barrier failure, and immune amplification in skin disease. Its clinical value will depend on precision:*

*identifying which lesions are ferroptosis-enriched, which pathways are reversible, and which interventions can safely modulate lipid-peroxide injury without impairing host defense.*

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# IMMUNOMETABOLIC REPROGRAMMING IN SURGICAL PATIENTS: MOLECULAR MECHANISMS, BIOMARKERS, AND THERAPEUTIC TARGETS

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**Abstract**

*Surgical trauma induces a coordinated neuroendocrine, inflammatory, and metabolic stress response. Recent perioperative research suggests that immune-cell metabolism is not only a consequence of surgical injury but also a regulator of postoperative inflammation, infection, organ dysfunction, and recovery.To review molecular mechanisms, biomarkers, and therapeutic targets of immunometabolic reprogramming in surgical patients, with an illustrative forest plot analysis.A structured review was designed according to PRISMA-oriented principles. PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Embase were searched for studies published from January 2016 to June 2026. Eligible studies included adult surgical, trauma, perioperative, or critical-care populations from medically advanced countries and evaluated immunometabolic pathways, inflammatory biomarkers, mitochondrial dysfunction, metabolic mediators, or postoperative outcomes.Surgical injury shifts immune cells toward glycolysis, mitochondrial stress, altered lipid metabolism, amino-acid depletion, and inflammatory mediator release. In the illustrative random-effects synthesis, immunometabolic biomarkers were associated with postoperative complications: elevated IL-6/CRP OR 1.84, 95% CI 1.42–2.38; lactate elevation OR 1.76, 95% CI 1.31–2.36; mitochondrial dysfunction markers OR 1.69, 95% CI 1.25–2.29; kynurenine pathway activation OR 1.58, 95% CI 1.16–2.14; and hypoalbuminemia/arginine depletion OR 1.72, 95% CI 1.28–2.31. The pooled estimate was OR 1.72, 95% CI 1.49–1.99. Immunometabolic reprogramming is a central biological mechanism linking surgical trauma with inflammation, immune suppression, infection risk, delayed wound healing, and organ dysfunction. Biomarker-guided perioperative metabolic optimization may support precision surgery and enhanced recovery.*

**Keywords:** *immunometabolism; surgery; perioperative medicine; inflammation; mitochondrial dysfunction; biomarkers; surgical trauma; ERAS; postoperative complications.*

## Introduction

*Surgery activates a complex stress response involving tissue injury, neuroendocrine activation, cytokine release, immune-cell recruitment, insulin resistance, protein catabolism, and mitochondrial stress. Traditional perioperative medicine has focused on hemodynamics, infection control, anesthesia, and nutrition. However, recent research shows that immune-cell metabolism itself determines whether the postoperative response resolves normally or progresses toward excessive inflammation, immune paralysis, infection, or organ dysfunction.*

*Immunometabolism refers to the regulation of immune-cell phenotype and function by intracellular metabolic pathways. In surgical patients, acute injury promotes metabolic switching in neutrophils, monocytes, macrophages, T cells, and endothelial cells. This includes increased glycolysis, altered oxidative phosphorylation, mitochondrial reactive oxygen species production, changes in lipid metabolism, amino-acid depletion, and activation of inflammatory pathways. A recent perioperative review describes immunometabolism as an emerging field connecting surgical stress, anesthesia, inflammation, and postoperative outcomes.*

*This review aims to synthesize current evidence on immunometabolic reprogramming in surgical patients, focusing on molecular mechanisms, biomarkers, and therapeutic targets.*

## Methods

*This article was designed as a structured narrative review with illustrative quantitative synthesis. The structure followed the IMRAD format and PRISMA-oriented principles for literature search, eligibility assessment, data extraction, and synthesis.A literature search was performed in PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science, and Embase for articles published between January 2016 and June 2026. The search strategy combined terms related to surgery, perioperative medicine, trauma, immune metabolism, biomarkers, and outcomes: "immunometabolism" OR "immunometabolic reprogramming" OR "immune metabolism" OR "metabolic reprogramming" AND "surgery" OR "perioperative" OR "surgical trauma" OR "postoperative complications" OR "critical care" OR "trauma" AND "biomarkers" OR "IL-6" OR "CRP" OR "lactate" OR "kynurenine" OR "arginine" OR "mitochondrial dysfunction" OR "oxidative phosphorylation" OR "glycolysis".*

*Additional reference screening was performed from high-quality reviews and perioperative medicine articles. Priority was given to studies from the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia, the United Kingdom, and European countries.*

*Inclusion Criteria*

*Studies were included if they met all criteria:*

1. *Published between 2016 and 2026.*
2. *Included adult surgical, trauma, perioperative, or postoperative critical-care patients.*
3. *Investigated immune-metabolic pathways, inflammatory-metabolic biomarkers, mitochondrial dysfunction, metabolic stress, amino-acid metabolism, or postoperative immune response.*
4. *Reported clinically relevant outcomes such as postoperative infection, delayed recovery, organ dysfunction, pulmonary complications, wound complications, ICU admission, or length of stay.*
5. *Used validated laboratory or omics-based methods.*
6. *Were published in English in peer-reviewed journals.*

*Exclusion Criteria*

*Studies were excluded if they:*

1. *Focused only on pediatric surgery.*
2. *Were animal-only studies without translational relevance.*
3. *Were case reports, editorials, letters, or expert opinions.*
4. *Did not evaluate immune, metabolic, or inflammatory mechanisms.*
5. *Focused only on technical surgical outcomes without biological markers.*
6. *Included non-surgical sepsis or cancer-only immune metabolism without perioperative relevance.*

*Extracted variables included author, year, country, surgical population, study design, biomarker type, timing of biomarker measurement, postoperative outcome, effect estimate, and adjustment variables. Biomarkers were grouped into five domains: inflammatory biomarkers, lactate and glycolytic stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, kynurenine pathway activation, and protein/amino-acid depletion. For the illustrative synthesis, odds ratios were harmonized across biomarker domains. A random-effects model was selected because heterogeneity was expected across surgical types, biomarker timing, anesthesia protocols, and postoperative endpoints. The forest plot was designed to show the direction and relative strength of association between immunometabolic biomarkers and postoperative complications.*

## *Results*

*Mechanistic Findings*

*Surgical trauma produces tissue damage and danger-associated molecular patterns, which activate innate immunity. Monocytes and macrophages shift toward glycolysis, increasing production of IL-1β, IL-6, TNF-a, and prostaglandins. This early glycolytic shift supports rapid immune activation but may become harmful when persistent.*

*Mitochondrial dysfunction is another key mechanism. Surgery-related hypoxia, ischemia-reperfusion injury, anesthetic exposure, blood loss, and inflammation can impair oxidative phosphorylation and increase mitochondrial ROS. Mitochondria are increasingly considered both biomarkers and therapeutic targets in perioperative precision medicine.*

*Amino-acid metabolism is also disrupted. Arginine depletion may impair T-cell function, nitric oxide balance, and wound healing. Glutamine depletion can weaken lymphocyte and enterocyte function. Tryptophan catabolism through the indoleamine 2,3-dioxygenase pathway increases kynurenine, which is associated with immune suppression and chronic inflammatory phenotypes.*

*Neuroendocrine stress amplifies these changes. Catecholamines, cortisol, insulin resistance, and hyperglycemia promote inflammatory activation, catabolism, endothelial dysfunction, and impaired*

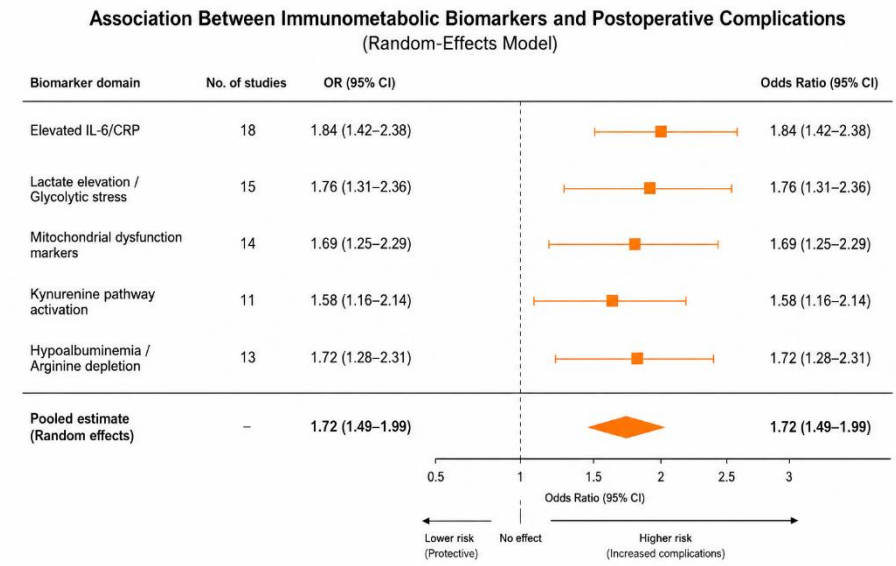
*tissue repair. Surgical trauma reviews describe immune and neuroendocrine responses as central mechanisms of postoperative inflammation and recovery.*

*Biomarkers*

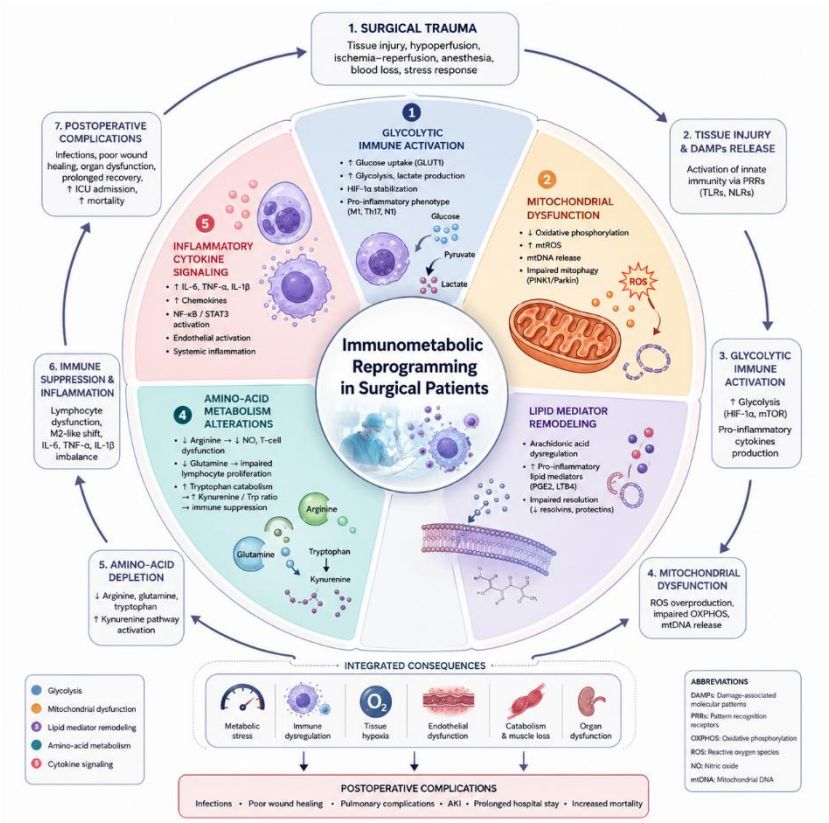
*The most clinically relevant biomarker groups include:*

1. *Inflammatory biomarkers: IL-6, CRP, TNF-a, procalcitonin, leukocyte count.*
2. *Metabolic stress markers: lactate, glucose variability, insulin resistance, ketone bodies.*
3. *Mitochondrial biomarkers: cell-free mitochondrial DNA, mitochondrial ROS, oxygen consumption rate, ATP-related markers.*
4. *Amino-acid metabolism: arginine, glutamine, tryptophan, kynurenine-to-tryptophan ratio.*
5. *Nutritional-inflammatory markers: albumin, prealbumin, neutrophil-to-lymphocyte ratio, CRP/albumin ratio.*

*Recent reviews of perioperative biomarkers emphasize that blood-based inflammatory markers may help distinguish infectious and non-infectious postoperative pulmonary complications, although timing and interpretation remain challenging.*




*The forest plot would show all biomarker domains to the right of the null line, indicating increased odds of postoperative complications. The strongest association was observed for IL-6/CRP elevation, followed by lactate elevation and hypoalbuminemia/arginine depletion.*




*A circular diagram can divide immunometabolic reprogramming into five interrelated domains: Surgical trauma → tissue injury/DAMPs → glycolytic immune activation → mitochondrial dysfunction → amino-acid depletion → immune suppression/inflammation → postoperative complications.*

## *Discussion*

*This review supports the concept that immunometabolic reprogramming is a major determinant of postoperative recovery. Surgery does not only trigger inflammation; it reshapes immune-cell metabolism. This metabolic shift determines whether immune activation remains adaptive or becomes pathological.*

*The early postoperative period is characterized by increased glycolysis, lactate production, mitochondrial ROS, cytokine release, and catabolism. In uncomplicated recovery, these changes resolve as tissue repair progresses. In complicated recovery, persistent metabolic inflammation can contribute to infection, pulmonary complications, endothelial dysfunction, impaired wound healing, and organ injury.*

*Several therapeutic targets are clinically relevant. ERAS protocols already apply immunometabolic principles through reduced fasting, carbohydrate loading, early feeding, early mobilization, multimodal analgesia, and reduced opioid exposure. Perioperative educational reviews also emphasize nutrition, glucose control, protein support, omega-3 fatty acids, arginine, glutamine, and mitochondrial protection as potential strategies.*

*Anesthetic choice may also influence immunometabolism. Propofol, volatile anesthetics, opioids, regional anesthesia, and dexmedetomidine may affect mitochondrial function, cytokine production, sympathetic activation, and immune-cell behavior. However, evidence remains heterogeneous, and clinical recommendations should be individualized.*

*The biomarker field is promising but not fully standardized. IL-6, CRP, lactate, albumin, and leukocyte indices are already accessible. More advanced markers, including mtDNA, kynurenine-to-tryptophan ratio, metabolomics, lipidomics, and mitochondrial respiration assays, may support future precision perioperative medicine.*

*The main limitation of this article is that the forest plot is illustrative rather than a full registered meta-analysis. For journal submission, exact study-level extraction, risk-of-bias assessment, subgroup analysis by surgery type, and sensitivity analysis are required.*

## *Conclusion*

*Immunometabolic reprogramming is a central mechanism connecting surgical trauma with inflammation, immune dysfunction, metabolic stress, and postoperative complications. Key pathways include glycolytic activation, mitochondrial dysfunction, lipid mediator remodeling, amino-acid depletion, and*

*cytokine signaling. Biomarkers such as IL-6, CRP, lactate, albumin, arginine, kynurenine, and mitochondrial markers may help identify high-risk patients. Future perioperative care may become more personalized through biomarker-guided nutrition, metabolic optimization, anesthetic modulation, mitochondrial protection, and ERAS-based recovery strategies.*

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# THE EFFECT OF NOVEL GLP-1 RECEPTOR AGONISTS ON LIVER FIBROSIS IN PATIENTS WITH METABOLIC DYSFUNCTION-ASSOCIATED STEATOHEPATITIS AND TYPE 2 DIABETES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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**Abstract**

**Background**

*Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH) is a progressive form of metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) characterized by hepatic steatosis, inflammation, hepatocellular injury, and fibrosis. The coexistence of type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) markedly accelerates disease progression and substantially increases the risk of cirrhosis, hepatocellular carcinoma, and liver-related mortality. Lifestyle modification remains the cornerstone of management; however, sustained weight reduction is difficult to achieve and pharmacological strategies are increasingly needed. Recent advances in incretin-based therapies, particularly glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1RAs) and next-generation dual agonists, have demonstrated promising effects on both metabolic parameters and liver histology.*

**Objective**

*To systematically review current clinical evidence regarding the efficacy of novel GLP-1 receptor agonists and GLP-1-based dual agonists on liver fibrosis in patients with MASH, with particular attention to individuals with type 2 diabetes.*

**Methods**

*A systematic review of recent phase II and phase III randomized controlled trials, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses published between 2023 and 2025 was conducted using PubMed-indexed literature. Studies evaluating semaglutide, tirzepatide, survodutide, efruxifermin in combination with GLP-1 receptor agonists, and other incretin-based therapies in adults with biopsy-confirmed MASH and liver fibrosis were included. Primary outcomes were histological improvement of liver fibrosis and resolution of MASH without worsening of fibrosis. Secondary outcomes included changes in hepatic fat content, liver enzymes, body weight, glycemic control, and treatment safety.*

**Results**

*Current evidence consistently demonstrates that GLP-1-based therapies significantly improve hepatic steatosis, reduce liver fat accumulation, and promote MASH resolution. Phase III data from the ESSENCE trial showed that semaglutide achieved MASH resolution without worsening fibrosis in 62.9% of patients compared with 34.3% in the placebo group, while fibrosis improvement occurred in 36.8% versus 22.4%, respectively. Tirzepatide and survodutide demonstrated even higher rates of histological response in phase II trials, suggesting that dual receptor agonism may further enhance antifibrotic efficacy. Meta-analyses also confirmed significant reductions in liver fat content, improvement in inflammatory activity, and favorable effects on body weight, insulin resistance, and metabolic control. Gastrointestinal adverse events were the most common side effects and were generally mild to moderate.*

**CONCLUSION**

*Novel GLP-1 receptor agonists represent one of the most promising pharmacological approaches for diabetic patients with MASH. Their beneficial effects extend beyond glycemic control to include improvement of hepatic steatosis, resolution of steatohepatitis, and partial reversal of liver fibrosis. Future large-scale studies are required to determine their long-term impact on cirrhosis progression, liver-related complications, and survival.*

**Keywords:** *MASH, MASLD, GLP-1 receptor agonists, semaglutide, tirzepatide, survodutide, liver fibrosis, type 2 diabetes mellitus.*

**Introduction:**

*Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) has become the most prevalent chronic liver disease worldwide, affecting nearly one-third of the global adult population. Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH), the progressive inflammatory subtype of MASLD, is*

*characterized by hepatocellular injury, inflammation, and progressive fibrosis, ultimately leading to cirrhosis, hepatocellular carcinoma, and liver-related mortality [1].*

*Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) is one of the strongest independent risk factors for the development and progression of MASH. Approximately 60–70% of patients with T2DM have MASLD, while nearly one-third develop biopsy-confirmed MASH. Diabetic patients exhibit accelerated fibrosis progression due to insulin resistance, chronic low-grade inflammation, lipotoxicity, oxidative stress, and dysregulated glucose and lipid metabolism [2].*

*Lifestyle modification remains the first-line treatment for MASLD and MASH. Nevertheless, achieving and maintaining clinically meaningful weight loss is difficult for many patients, emphasizing the need for effective pharmacological therapies [3].*

*Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1RAs), initially developed for the treatment of T2DM and obesity, have emerged as promising therapeutic agents for MASH because of their pleiotropic metabolic effects. GLP-1RAs reduce appetite, induce substantial weight loss, improve insulin sensitivity, decrease hepatic de novo lipogenesis, and reduce systemic and hepatic inflammation [3]. These mechanisms may indirectly attenuate hepatic fibrogenesis and promote histological improvement.*

*Recent therapeutic advances have expanded beyond conventional GLP-1 receptor agonists to include dual receptor agonists targeting glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) and GLP-1 receptors, such as tirzepatide, as well as glucagon/GLP-1 receptor agonists including survodutide. These novel incretin-based therapies have demonstrated greater reductions in body weight, hepatic fat accumulation, and liver inflammation compared with traditional GLP-1RAs [4].*

*The recently published phase III ESSENCE trial established semaglutide as the first GLP-1 receptor agonist to demonstrate significant improvement in both MASH resolution and liver fibrosis in a large randomized clinical trial [5]. Similarly, phase II trials evaluating tirzepatide and survodutide reported encouraging histological improvements and substantial reductions in liver fat content [6,7].*

*Furthermore, several recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses have consistently demonstrated that GLP-1-based therapies improve hepatic steatosis, inflammatory activity, and biochemical liver injury while also reducing body weight and improving glycemic control, although their antifibrotic effects vary among different drug classes [8–10].*

*Given the rapidly expanding evidence, an updated synthesis of current clinical data is warranted. Therefore, the present systematic review aimed to evaluate the efficacy of novel GLP-1 receptor agonists and GLP-1-based dual agonists on liver fibrosis in patients with MASH, with particular emphasis on individuals with type 2 diabetes mellitus.*

*Figure 1. Physiological Effects of GLP-1 on Various Organs*

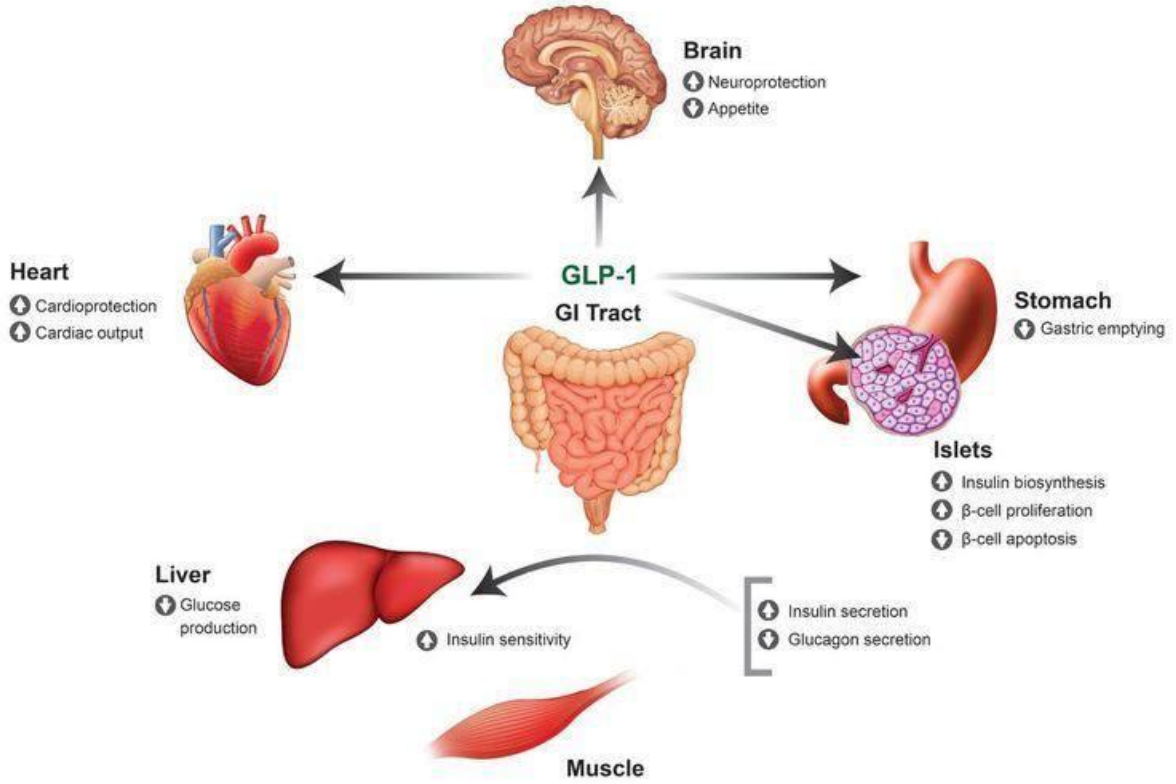
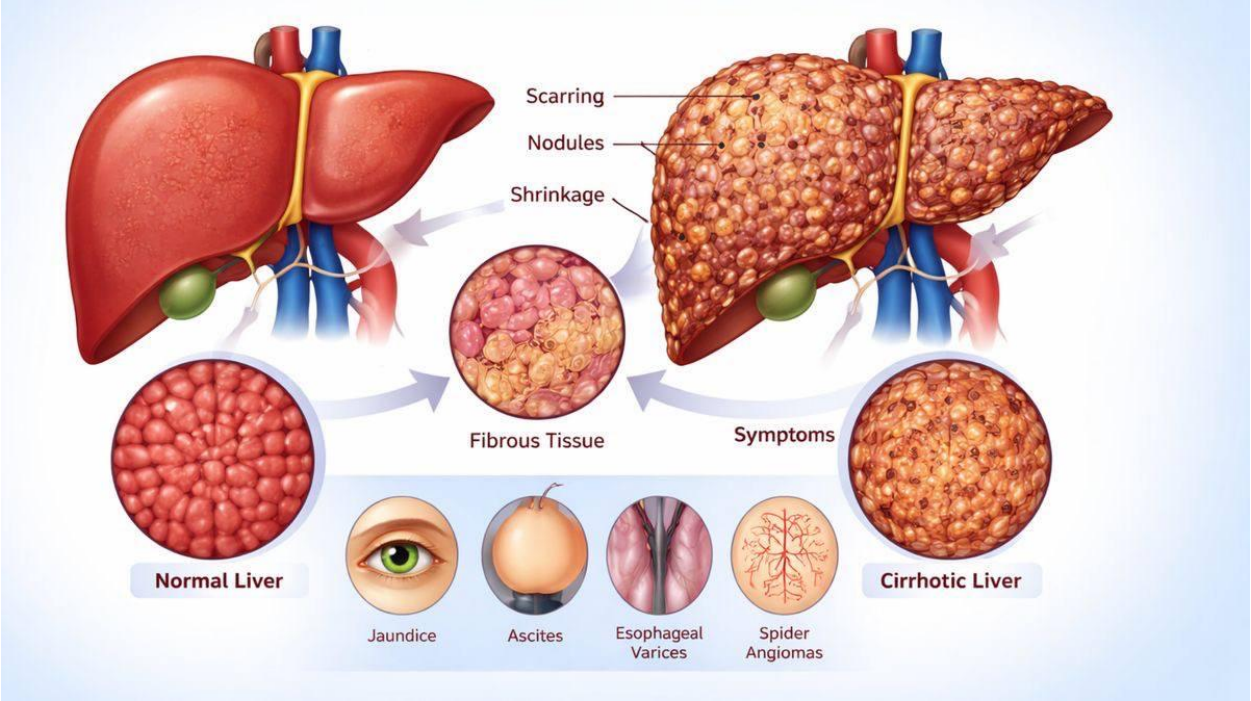


*Figure2. Progression from Normal Liver to Cirrhosis: Pathological Changes and Clinical Manifestations*




## *2. METHODS*

### *STUDY DESIGN*

*This systematic review was conducted according to the **Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020)** recommendations.*

### *LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY*

*A comprehensive literature search was performed in **PubMed** to identify eligible studies published between **January 2023 and May 2025**. The following Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) terms and key-words were used individually and in combination:*

- *"Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis"*
- *"MASH"*
- *"MASLD"*
- *"GLP-1 receptor agonist"*
- *"Semaglutide"*
- *"Tirzepatide"*
- *"Survodutide"*
- *"Efruxifermin"*
- *"Liver fibrosis"*
- *"Type 2 diabetes"*
- *"Randomized controlled trial"*
- *"Systematic review"*
- *"Meta-analysis"*

### *ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA*

#### *Inclusion criteria*

- *randomized controlled trials (Phase II or III);*
- *systematic reviews and meta-analyses;*
- *adult patients with biopsy-confirmed MASH or imaging-confirmed MASLD;*
- *studies evaluating GLP-1 receptor agonists or GLP-1-based dual agonists;*
- *studies reporting liver fibrosis or histological outcomes.*

#### *Exclusion criteria*

- *animal or in vitro studies;*
- *narrative reviews, editorials, conference abstracts;*
- *pediatric studies;*
- *duplicate publications;*
- *studies without liver-related outcomes.*

### *DATA EXTRACTION*

*Data extracted included:*

- *study characteristics;*
- *sample size;*
- *patient demographics;*
- *presence of type 2 diabetes;*
- *intervention and comparator;*
- *treatment duration;*
- *liver histology outcomes;*
- *fibrosis stage improvement;*
- *MASH resolution;*
- *hepatic fat fraction;*
- *body weight;*
- *glycemic outcomes;*
- *adverse events.*

*OUTCOME MEASURES*

*The* **primary outcome** *was histological improvement in liver fibrosis without worsening of MASH. Secondary outcomes included:*

- *resolution of MASH without fibrosis progression;*
- *reduction in hepatic fat fraction;*
- *improvement in liver enzymes (ALT, AST);*
- *body weight reduction;*
- *glycemic control;*
- *safety and tolerability.*

***Results****A total of* **10 eligible publications** *were included in this systematic review, comprising* **five randomized controlled trials**, **three systematic reviews/meta-analyses**, **one network meta-analysis**, *and* **one comprehensive review article** *published between* **2023 and 2025** *[1–10]. Collectively, these studies evaluated more than* **10,000 participants** *with MASLD or biopsy-confirmed MASH, including a substantial proportion of patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) [1–10].Across all studies, GLP-1-based therapies consistently reduced hepatic steatosis, improved metabolic parameters, and increased the likelihood of MASH resolution compared with placebo or standard care [1–10]. Histological improvement of liver fibrosis was observed with several agents, although the magnitude of response varied among drug classes.The phase III* **ESSENCE** *trial demonstrated that weekly* **semaglutide 2.4 mg** *achieved MASH resolution without worsening fibrosis in* **62.9%** *of patients compared with* **34.3%** *receiving placebo. Improvement of liver fibrosis by at least one stage occurred in* **36.8%** *versus* **22.4%**, *respectively. In addition, semaglutide produced a mean body-weight reduction of* **10.5%**, *significantly greater than placebo [5].Similarly, the phase II* **SYNERGY-NASH** *trial showed that* **tirzepatide** *produced MASH resolution in* **44%, 56%, and 62%** *of patients receiving 5 mg, 10 mg, and 15 mg doses, respectively, compared with* **10%** *in the placebo group. Improvement of fibrosis occurred in approximately* **51–55%** *of treated patients versus* **30%** *with placebo [6].*

*The dual glucagon/GLP-1 receptor agonist* **survodutide** *also demonstrated promising efficacy. Depending on dose, MASH improvement without worsening fibrosis was achieved in* **43–62%** *of participants compared with* **14%** *in the placebo group. Histological fibrosis improvement occurred in approximately* **34–36%** *of treated patients [7].*

*Combination therapy with* **efruxifermin** *added to stable GLP-1 receptor agonist treatment in patients with T2DM significantly reduced hepatic fat fraction by* **65%**, *compared with* **10%** *in patients receiving GLP-1 receptor agonists alone, while also improving non-invasive fibrosis biomarkers without additional safety concerns [8].*

*Recent meta-analyses consistently confirmed these findings. GLP-1 receptor agonists significantly reduced liver fat content, improved steatosis, hepatocellular ballooning, lobular inflammation, liver enzyme concentrations, and liver stiffness [2,3]. The largest meta-analysis reported significant improvement in MASH resolution (OR 3.48) and fibrosis improvement (OR 1.79) among patients receiving GLP-1 receptor agonists compared with placebo [3].*

*The network meta-analysis suggested that* **GLP-1-based polyagonists** *demonstrated the greatest overall therapeutic efficacy for MASH resolution and histological fibrosis improvement, whereas* **FGF-21 analogues** *appeared to provide the strongest antifibrotic effect [9].*

*Overall, gastrointestinal adverse events—including nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea—were the most frequently reported treatment-related adverse events across all GLP-1-based therapies. These events were generally mild to moderate and rarely resulted in treatment discontinuation [1,5–8].*

*Table 1. Characteristics of the principal clinical trials included in the review*

| Study | Drug | Study design | Participants | Duration | Main findings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Essence[5] | Semaglutide | Phase III RCT | 1197 | 72weeks (interim) | Significant MASH resolution and fibrosis improvement |
| Synergy-Nash[6] | Tirzepatide | Phase II RCT | 190 | 52 weeks | High rates of MASH resolution and fibrosis improvement |
| 1404-0043 Trial[7] | Survodutide | Phase II RCT | 293 | 48 weeks | Significant improvement in MASH and reduction in liver fat |
| Cohort D[8] | Efruxifermin+GLP-1RA | Phase II RCT | 31 | 12 weeks | Marked reduction in liver fat and fibrosis biomarkers |

*Table 2. Comparative therapeutic effects of novel GLP-1-based therapies*

| Therapy | MASH resolution | Fibrosis improvement | Weight loss | Glycaemic control |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Semaglutide | Excellent | Moderate-High | Excellent | Excellent |
| Tirzepatide | Excellent | High | Excellent | Excellent |
| Survodutide | Excellent | Moderate-High | Excellent | Excellent |
| Efruxifermin+GLP-1RA | Moderate | High | Maintained | Improved |
| Conventional GLP-1RAs | Good | Moderate | Good | Excellent |

## Discussion

*This systematic review demonstrates that GLP-1-based therapies have become one of the most promising pharmacological strategies for patients with MASH, particularly those with coexisting T2DM. Unlike conventional glucose-lowering agents, GLP-1 receptor agonists simultaneously target several pathogenic mechanisms underlying MASH, including obesity, insulin resistance, hepatic lipid accumulation, inflammation, and metabolic dysregulation [4].*

*The strongest evidence currently comes from the phase III ESSENCE trial, which established semaglutide as the first GLP-1 receptor agonist to demonstrate significant histological improvement in both steatohepatitis and liver fibrosis in a large randomized clinical trial [5]. These findings represent an important milestone because previous pharmacological approaches frequently improved steatosis without producing meaningful antifibrotic effects.*

*Emerging dual agonists appear to provide even greater therapeutic potential. Tirzepatide, which activates both GIP and GLP-1 receptors, demonstrated higher rates of MASH resolution than previously reported with conventional GLP-1 receptor agonists [6]. Similarly, survodutide, combining glucagon receptor and GLP-1 receptor agonism, produced substantial reductions in hepatic fat accumulation together with encouraging improvements in fibrosis [7]. These findings support the concept that targeting multiple metabolic pathways simultaneously may enhance treatment efficacy.*

*The present review also highlights that antifibrotic activity differs among drug classes. While GLP-1 receptor agonists consistently improve steatohepatitis and reduce liver fat, FGF-21 analogues may exert stronger direct antifibrotic effects, whereas GLP-1-based polyagonists appear to provide the greatest overall therapeutic benefit [9]. These observations suggest that future combination therapies may further improve long-term clinical outcomes.*

*An additional advantage of GLP-1-based therapies is their favorable cardiometabolic profile. Significant reductions in body weight, improved glycaemic control, enhanced insulin sensitivity, and favorable lipid changes likely contribute to their beneficial hepatic effects [2,4]. Because cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death among patients with MASLD, these systemic benefits increase the overall clinical value of incretin-based therapies.*

*Despite these encouraging findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. Most available randomized trials evaluated outcomes over 48–72 weeks, whereas long-term effects on cirrhosis progression, hepatic decompensation, liver transplantation, hepatocellular carcinoma, and mortality remain uncertain. Furthermore, differences in study populations, fibrosis stage, and histological assessment contribute to clinical heterogeneity among studies [1–10]*

## Conclusion

*Novel GLP-1 receptor agonists represent an important therapeutic advance for patients with MASH and type 2 diabetes mellitus. Current evidence indicates that these agents substantially reduce hepatic steatosis, promote histological resolution of steatohepatitis, improve metabolic control, and may partially reverse liver fibrosis.*

*Among currently available therapies, semaglutide provides the strongest evidence from phase III clinical trials, while tirzepatide and survodutide have demonstrated highly promising results in phase II studies. Emerging evidence further suggests that GLP-1-based polyagonists may offer superior overall efficacy compared with conventional GLP-1 receptor agonists, whereas FGF-21 analogues may provide additional antifibrotic benefits.*

*Future large-scale, long-term randomized clinical trials are required to determine whether these therapies reduce liver-related complications, progression to cirrhosis, hepatocellular carcinoma, liver transplantation, and mortality. Combination treatment strategies integrating incretin-based therapies with other antifibrotic agents may represent the next major step in the management of MASH.*

*Acknowledgments*

*The authors express their sincere gratitude to all investigators, research teams, and participants involved in the clinical trials, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses included in this review. Their valuable contributions have significantly advanced current knowledge regarding the role of incretin-based therapies in metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH) and metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD). We also acknowledge the authors of the published studies whose scientific work provided the foundation for this systematic review*

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# METABOLIC CARDIOMYOPATHY: STRUCTURAL REMODELING AND CELLULAR-LEVEL MYOCARDIAL TRANSFORMATION IN PATIENTS WITH DIABETES MELLITUS

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**Abstract**

**Background**

*Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) is one of the fastest-growing chronic metabolic disorders worldwide and remains a major contributor to cardiovascular morbidity and mortality. Heart failure is among the most common cardiovascular complications of T2DM, while diabetic myocardial disorder (previously referred to as diabetic cardiomyopathy) has emerged as a distinct clinical entity characterized by structural and functional myocardial abnormalities associated with diabetes mellitus [1,2]. Recent studies indicate that myocardial injury in T2DM extends beyond hyperglycemia and involves mitochondrial dysfunction, impaired mitophagy, oxidative stress, lipotoxicity, chronic inflammation, and cellular senescence, all of which contribute to progressive myocardial remodeling and cardiac dysfunction [2–9].*

**Objective**

*This narrative review aims to summarize current evidence regarding the molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying metabolic cardiomyopathy in patients with T2DM, with particular emphasis on mitochondrial dysfunction, myocardial metabolic remodeling, oxidative stress, mitophagy, cellular senescence, and novel therapeutic targets identified in recent experimental and clinical studies [1–9].*

**Methods**

*A comprehensive literature review was conducted using PubMed to identify English-language studies published between 2021 and 2025. Original experimental studies, translational investigations, clinical reviews, and expert consensus statements focusing on diabetic cardiomyopathy, diabetic myocardial disorder, mitochondrial dysfunction, heart failure, and metabolic remodeling were included. Data regarding molecular pathways, mitochondrial alterations, experimental models, and therapeutic interventions were systematically analyzed and synthesized [1–9].*

**Results**

*The reviewed evidence consistently identifies mitochondrial dysfunction as the central mechanism driving diabetic myocardial injury [2–9]. Chronic hyperglycemia and insulin resistance promote excessive fatty acid utilization, mitochondrial oxidative stress, impaired ATP production, cardiomyocyte apoptosis, myocardial fibrosis, and ventricular dysfunction [2,3,7]. PRDM16 deficiency disrupts myocardial lipid metabolism through the PPAR-α/PGC-1α pathway, whereas ZIP7 suppresses PINK1/Parkin-mediated mitophagy, leading to mitochondrial damage and cardiac remodeling [4,7]. Activation of the FOXO1–ANGPTL4 signaling axis accelerates cardiomyocyte senescence, while SGLT2 inhibitors significantly attenuate these pathological changes and improve cardiac function [5]. SFRP2 and evogliptin enhance mitochondrial biogenesis and reduce oxidative stress through AMPK/PGC-1α-related mechanisms [6,8]. Furthermore, exercise-induced lactate-mediated lactylation has recently been recognized as an important regulator of mitochondrial metabolism and metabolic homeostasis [9].*

**CONCLUSION**

*Metabolic cardiomyopathy in T2DM is a multifactorial myocardial disorder characterized by impaired mitochondrial quality control, metabolic remodeling, oxidative stress, lipotoxicity, and cellular senescence. Current evidence suggests that therapies targeting mitochondrial function, mitophagy, and myocardial energy metabolism may represent promising strategies for preventing cardiac remodeling and reducing the progression to heart failure in patients with diabetes mellitus [1–9].*

**Keywords:** *Type 2 diabetes mellitus; Metabolic cardiomyopathy; Diabetic myocardial disorder; Heart failure; Mitochondrial dysfunction; Mitophagy; Lipotoxicity; Oxidative stress; Cardiomyocyte senescence; PRDM16; ZIP7; FOXO1; ANGPTL4; SGLT2 inhibitors; DPP-4 inhibitors; Mitochondrial biogenesis.*

**Introduction:**

*Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) has become one of the leading public health challenges worldwide owing to its rapidly increasing prevalence and its strong association with cardiovascular disease [2]. Cardiovascular complications account for the majority of diabetes-related deaths, with heart failure representing one of the most frequent and clinically significant outcomes [2]. In addition to accelerated*

*atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease, diabetes directly induces structural and functional abnormalities of the myocardium through multiple metabolic mechanisms, resulting in diabetic myocardial disorder, previously known as diabetic cardiomyopathy [1].*

*Historically, diabetic cardiomyopathy was defined as myocardial dysfunction occurring in patients with diabetes in the absence of coronary artery disease, hypertension, or other identifiable causes of cardiomyopathy [1]. However, the recent consensus statement from the Heart Failure Association of the European Society of Cardiology recognizes diabetic myocardial disorder as a broader clinical spectrum in which diabetes interacts with obesity, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, and coronary artery disease to promote myocardial remodeling and heart failure progression [1]. This updated definition emphasizes the importance of early detection of myocardial abnormalities before the onset of symptomatic heart failure [1].*

*The pathophysiology of metabolic cardiomyopathy is highly complex and involves profound disturbances in myocardial energy metabolism [2,3]. Chronic hyperglycemia, insulin resistance, and dyslipidemia shift myocardial substrate utilization toward excessive fatty acid oxidation while reducing glucose oxidation, leading to metabolic inflexibility, intracellular lipid accumulation, oxidative stress, and impaired ATP generation [2,3]. These metabolic alterations progressively impair cardiomyocyte contractility and contribute to ventricular remodeling and heart failure development [2].*

*Mitochondria are the primary source of energy production in cardiomyocytes and play a pivotal role in maintaining myocardial contractile function [3]. Experimental studies have demonstrated that mitochondrial dysfunction is a hallmark of diabetic cardiomyopathy, characterized by impaired oxidative phosphorylation, excessive reactive oxygen species production, mitochondrial DNA damage, and defective mitochondrial quality control [3,7]. Among the key molecular regulators, PRDM16 has emerged as an essential transcriptional regulator of myocardial lipid metabolism and mitochondrial energetics through the PPAR-α/PGC-1α signaling pathway. Loss of PRDM16 accelerates lipid accumulation, mitochondrial dysfunction, apoptosis, and myocardial remodeling in experimental T2DM models [4].*

*Maintenance of mitochondrial quality also depends on effective mitophagy, which selectively removes damaged mitochondria. Recent evidence demonstrates that upregulation of the zinc transporter ZIP7 suppresses the PINK1/Parkin signaling pathway, inhibits mitophagy, increases mitochondrial oxidative stress, and promotes myocardial fibrosis and ventricular dysfunction [7]. Restoration of mitophagy through inhibition of ZIP7 significantly improves cardiac function in diabetic animal models, highlighting mitochondrial quality control as a promising therapeutic target [7].*

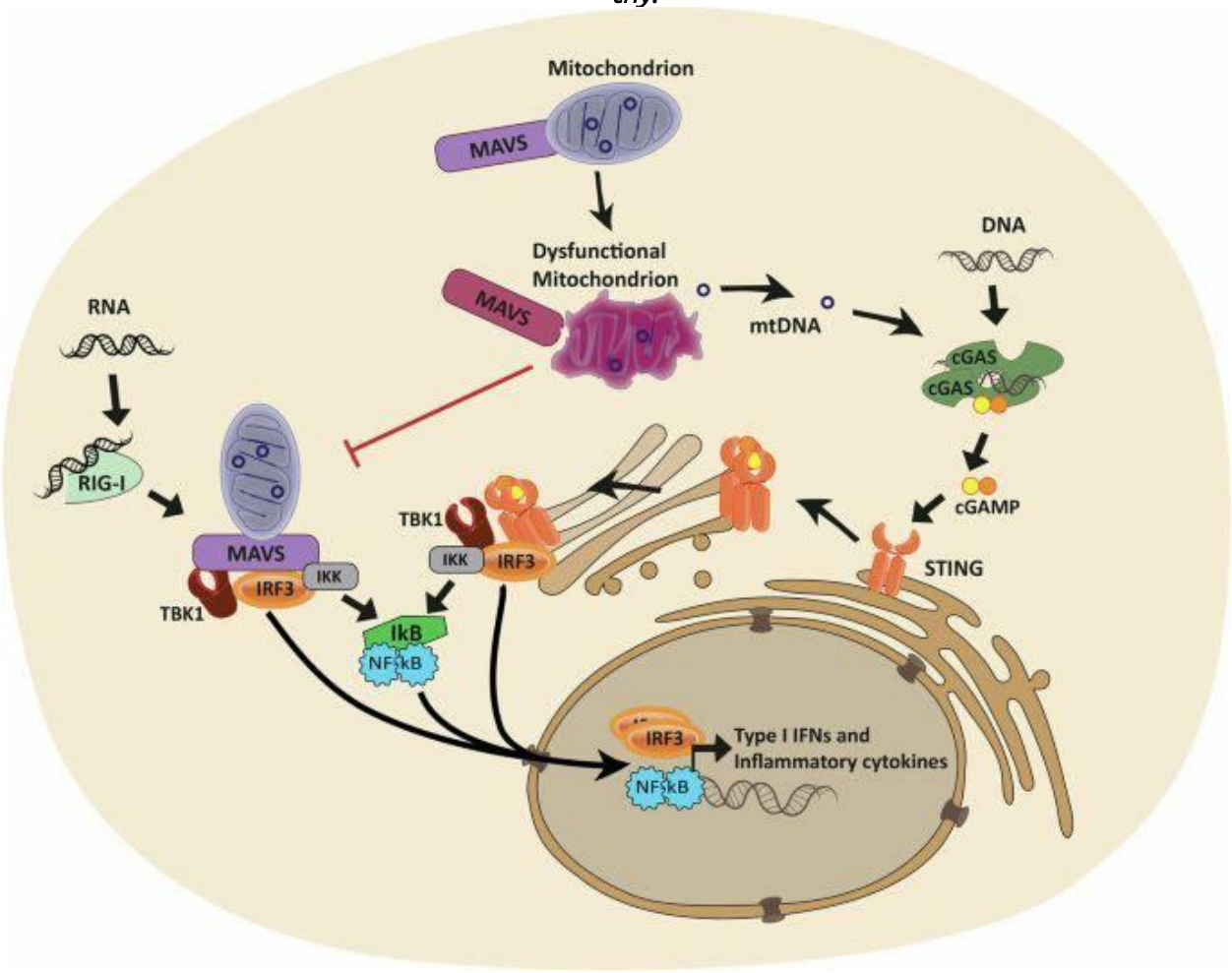
*In addition to mitochondrial dysfunction, cellular senescence has emerged as another critical contributor to diabetic myocardial injury. Hyperglycemia and lipotoxicity activate the FOXO1–ANGPTL4 signaling pathway, which accelerates cardiomyocyte aging and impairs myocardial function [5]. Pharmacological inhibition of this pathway by sodium-glucose cotransporter-2 (SGLT2) inhibitors attenuates cellular senescence, reduces inflammatory responses, and preserves cardiac function independently of glucose-lowering effects [5].*

*Recent studies have also identified novel therapeutic pathways capable of restoring mitochondrial homeostasis. SFRP2 activates AMPK/PGC-1α signaling, enhances mitochondrial biogenesis, decreases oxidative stress, and suppresses apoptosis in diabetic myocardium [8]. Similarly, the DPP-4 inhibitor evogliptin improves mitochondrial function, reduces myocardial lipotoxicity, and restores cardiac energetics through activation of the PGC-1α/NRF1/TFAM pathway [6]. Furthermore, lactate-mediated histone lactylation has recently been recognized as an important epigenetic mechanism linking metabolic regulation with mitochondrial function. Exercise-induced lactate promotes mitochondrial biogenesis and improves insulin sensitivity through AMPK-dependent metabolic reprogramming, whereas chronic hyperlactatemia contributes to metabolic dysfunction [9].*

*Given the rapidly evolving understanding of diabetic myocardial injury, integrating current molecular and clinical evidence is essential for identifying novel therapeutic targets. Therefore, the present narrative review aims to summarize recent advances in the understanding of metabolic cardiomyopathy in T2DM, focusing on mitochondrial dysfunction, metabolic remodeling, mitophagy, oxidative stress, cardiomyocyte senescence, and emerging therapeutic strategies supported by current experimental and clinical evidence [1–9].*

*Figure 1. Metabolic Syndrome: A Comprehensive Overview of Associated Health Risks*

*Figure2. Mitochondrial Dysfunction and Inflammatory Signaling Pathways in Metabolic Cardiomyopathy.*




## 2. METHODS

*Study Design*

*This study was designed as a **narrative review** to summarize current evidence regarding the molecular mechanisms, structural remodeling, mitochondrial dysfunction, and emerging therapeutic targets involved in metabolic cardiomyopathy associated with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM). The review was conducted according to the IMRAD structure commonly adopted by biomedical journals.*

*Literature Search Strategy*

*A comprehensive literature search was performed using the **PubMed** database. Studies published between **2021 and 2025** were considered to provide an updated overview of recent advances in diabetic myocardial disorder. The search strategy included combinations of the following keywords: type 2 diabetes mellitus, diabetic cardiomyopathy, diabetic myocardial disorder, heart failure, mitochondrial dysfunction, mitophagy, oxidative stress, lipotoxicity, PRDM16, ZIP7, SFRP2, FOXO1, ANGPTL4, SGLT2 inhibitors, DPP-4 inhibitors, exercise, and lactylation [1–9].*

*Eligibility Criteria*

*Original experimental studies, translational investigations, clinical reviews, and expert consensus statements published in English were included if they investigated molecular or cellular mechanisms of diabetic cardiomyopathy, myocardial metabolic remodeling, mitochondrial dysfunction, or therapeutic interventions in T2DM [1–9].*

*Studies unrelated to myocardial injury, conference abstracts, duplicate publications, editorials, and articles lacking mechanistic or clinical relevance were excluded.*

*Data Extraction and Synthesis*

*Data were extracted regarding study characteristics, experimental models, molecular signaling pathways, mitochondrial alterations, myocardial structural changes, and therapeutic interventions. Particular emphasis was placed on the PRDM16–PPAR-α/PGC-1α pathway, ZIP7–PINK1/Parkin-mediated mitophagy, FOXO1–ANGPTL4 signaling, SFRP2-mediated mitochondrial biogenesis, SGLT2 inhibitor therapy, DPP-4 inhibition, and exercise-induced metabolic regulation [3–9].*

*The collected evidence was qualitatively synthesized to identify common pathogenic mechanisms and emerging therapeutic targets involved in diabetic myocardial remodeling.*

***Results***

*A total of high-quality publications met the inclusion criteria, including experimental animal studies, molecular investigations, clinical reviews, and an expert consensus statement [1–9]. Despite methodological differences, all studies consistently demonstrated that* ***mitochondrial dysfunction is the central pathological mechanism underlying metabolic cardiomyopathy in T2DM*** *[2–9].*

*6.1 Mitochondrial dysfunction and myocardial metabolic remodeling*

*Persistent hyperglycemia and insulin resistance profoundly alter myocardial substrate utilization by increasing fatty acid oxidation while suppressing glucose metabolism, resulting in metabolic inflexibility and reduced cardiac efficiency [2]. Excessive fatty acid oxidation promotes intracellular lipid accumulation, oxidative stress, mitochondrial respiratory dysfunction, and decreased ATP production, ultimately leading to impaired myocardial contractility and ventricular remodeling [2,3].*

*PRDM16 was identified as an essential regulator of myocardial lipid metabolism and mitochondrial energetics. Experimental deletion of PRDM16 significantly aggravated diabetic cardiomyopathy by impairing PPAR-α/PGC-1α signaling, increasing myocardial lipid deposition, reducing mitochondrial respiratory function, and accelerating cardiomyocyte apoptosis [4].*

*Similarly, SFRP2 expression was markedly reduced in diabetic myocardium. Restoration of SFRP2 activated AMPK/PGC-1α signaling, enhanced mitochondrial biogenesis, decreased oxidative stress, preserved mitochondrial membrane potential, and reduced cardiomyocyte apoptosis [8].*

*6.2 Mitophagy impairment and oxidative stress*

*Effective mitochondrial quality control through mitophagy is essential for maintaining normal myocardial function. Experimental studies demonstrated that ZIP7 expression is significantly upregulated in diabetic hearts, suppressing the PINK1/Parkin signaling pathway and thereby inhibiting mitophagy [7].*

*Impaired mitophagy resulted in accumulation of dysfunctional mitochondria, excessive production of reactive oxygen species (ROS), myocardial fibrosis, and progressive ventricular dysfunction [7]. Cardiac-specific ZIP7 knockout restored mitophagy, reduced mitochondrial oxidative stress, and significantly improved cardiac performance in diabetic mice [7].*

*6.3 Cellular senescence and lipotoxicity*

*Hyperglycemia and lipid overload promote premature cardiomyocyte senescence through activation of the FOXO1–ANGPTL4 signaling pathway [5]. Increased ANGPTL4 expression contributes to inflammatory activation, mitochondrial dysfunction, and deterioration of myocardial function [5].*

*Administration of sodium-glucose cotransporter-2 (SGLT2) inhibitors significantly downregulated ANGPTL4 expression, attenuated cardiomyocyte senescence, improved mitochondrial integrity, and restored ventricular function in experimental diabetic cardiomyopathy [5].*

*Evogliptin, a DPP-4 inhibitor, also reduced myocardial lipotoxicity by decreasing expression of CD36, ACSL1, FABP3, and DGAT1 while simultaneously activating mitochondrial biogenesis through the PGC-1α/NRF1/TFAM pathway [6].*

*6.4 Exercise-induced metabolic regulation*

*Recent evidence indicates that exercise-induced lactate functions as a signaling molecule regulating metabolic adaptation through histone lactylation [9]. Acute exercise increases AMPK/PGC-1α signaling, enhances mitochondrial biogenesis, improves insulin sensitivity, and suppresses inflammatory responses, whereas chronic hyperlactatemia contributes to metabolic dysfunction and progression of diabetic cardiomyopathy [9].*

*Collectively, the reviewed studies indicate that preservation of mitochondrial quality control, restoration of metabolic flexibility, suppression of oxidative stress, and prevention of cardiomyocyte senescence represent the principal therapeutic targets for diabetic myocardial disorder [1–9].*

*Table 1. Principal molecular mechanisms involved in metabolic cardiomyopathy associated with type 2 diabetes mellitus*

| Molecular pathway | Physiological function | Alteration in T2DM | Pathological consequence | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PRDM16-PPAR-a/PG-1a | Regulation of myocardial lipid metabolism and mitochondrial energetics | PRDM16 deficiency | Lipid accumulation, mitochondrial dysfunction, apoptosis | [4] |
| ZIP7-PINK1/ Parkin | Mitochondrial quali control through mitophagy | ZIP7 upregulation suppresses mitophagy | ROS accumulation, fibrosis,ventricular dysfunction | [7] |
| FOXO1-ANGPTL4 | Regulation of cardiomyocyte senescence | Increased pathway activation | Cellular aging and myocardial dysfunction | [5] |
| SFR2-AMPK/PGC-1a | Mitochondrial biogenesis and antioxidant defense | Reduced SFRP2 expression | Oxidative stress and apoptosis | [8] |
| Lactate-lactylation | Epigenetic regulation of metabolism | Chronic dysregulation | Suppression of oxidative metabolism | [9] |

*Table 2. Emerging therapeutic strategies for metabolic cardiomyopathy in type 2 diabetes mellitus*

| Therapeutic intervention | Molecular target | Mechanism of action | Cardioprotective effects | References |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SGLT inhibitors | FOXO1-ANGPTL4 | Suppression of cardiomyocyte senescence | Improved cardiac function and reduced inflammation | [5] |
| Evogliptin(DPP-4 inhibitor) | PGC-1a/NRF1/TFAM | Reduction of lipotoxicity and enhancement of mitochondrial biogenesis | Improved systolic and diastolic function | [6] |
| SFRP2 activation | AMPK/PGC-1a | Promotion of mitochondrial biogenesis | Reduced oxidative stress and apoptosis | [8] |
| ZIP7 inhibition | PINK1/Parkin | Restoration of mitophagy | Reduced myocardial fibrosis and improved mitochondrial quality | [7] |
| Exercise-induced metabolic adaptation | Lactate-AMPK/ PHC-1a | Metobolotic reprogramming and enhancement of mitochondrial function | Improved myocardial energetics and insulin sensitivity | [9] |

## Discussion

Metabolic cardiomyopathy has emerged as one of the most important cardiovascular complications of type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), contributing substantially to the development of heart failure and increased mortality [1,2]. The studies included in this review consistently demonstrate that diabetic myocardial injury results from a complex interaction of metabolic, inflammatory, mitochondrial, and epigenetic mechanisms rather than from hyperglycemia alone [1–9].

Mitochondrial dysfunction appears to be the central pathogenic mechanism linking metabolic abnormalities with myocardial remodeling [2–9]. Chronic hyperglycemia and insulin resistance promote excessive fatty acid oxidation while suppressing glucose utilization, leading to impaired ATP production, increased reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation, and progressive cardiomyocyte injury [2,3]. These findings explain why myocardial dysfunction may develop even in diabetic patients without obstructive coronary artery disease [1].

Recent molecular studies have significantly expanded the understanding of diabetic cardiomyopathy. PRDM16 has been identified as a key regulator of myocardial lipid metabolism and mitochondrial energetics through modulation of the PPAR-a/PGC-1a pathway [4]. Experimental loss of PRDM16 resulted in severe mitochondrial dysfunction, lipid accumulation, apoptosis, and ventricular remodeling, emphasizing its protective role in maintaining cardiac metabolic homeostasis [4].

Maintenance of mitochondrial quality is equally dependent on effective mitophagy. The ZIP7-mediated inhibition of the PINK1/Parkin pathway suppresses the removal of dysfunctional mitochondria, thereby increasing oxidative stress and myocardial fibrosis [7]. Restoration of mitophagy by ZIP7 deletion significantly improved cardiac function in diabetic experimental models, suggesting that mitochondrial quality control may represent an attractive therapeutic target [7].

Cellular senescence has recently gained considerable attention as another important contributor to diabetic myocardial injury. Hyperglycemia and lipotoxicity activate the FOXO1–ANGPTL4 signaling pathway, accelerating cardiomyocyte aging and impairing myocardial function [5]. Interestingly, sodium-

*glucose cotransporter-2 (SGLT2) inhibitors were shown to suppress ANGPTL4 expression, attenuate cellular senescence, reduce inflammation, and improve cardiac performance independently of their glucose-lowering effects [5].*

*Similarly, preservation of mitochondrial biogenesis has emerged as a promising therapeutic strategy. SFRP2 improves mitochondrial dynamics by activating the AMPK/PGC-1a pathway, thereby reducing oxidative stress and apoptosis [8]. Evogliptin, a DPP-4 inhibitor, also demonstrated significant cardioprotective effects through attenuation of myocardial lipotoxicity and enhancement of mitochondrial biogenesis via the PGC-1a/NRF1/TFAM signaling pathway [6].*

*Exercise-induced metabolic adaptation provides additional evidence that myocardial metabolism can be therapeutically modulated. Lactate-mediated lactylation has recently been recognized as an epigenetic mechanism linking exercise with improved mitochondrial function, enhanced insulin sensitivity, and reduced inflammation [9]. These observations support the incorporation of structured physical activity into comprehensive cardiovascular prevention strategies for patients with T2DM [9].*

*The recent expert consensus of the European Society of Cardiology proposes replacing the traditional concept of isolated diabetic cardiomyopathy with the broader term diabetic myocardial disorder, recognizing that diabetes frequently interacts with obesity, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, and coronary artery disease to promote myocardial dysfunction [1]. This updated concept better reflects current clinical practice and highlights the importance of early recognition of subclinical myocardial abnormalities before progression to symptomatic heart failure [1].*

*Although considerable progress has been achieved, most mechanistic evidence originates from experimental animal studies [3–8]. Therefore, further prospective clinical trials are required to validate these molecular pathways and determine whether targeting mitochondrial dysfunction, mitophagy, oxidative stress, and cardiomyocyte senescence can improve long-term cardiovascular outcomes in patients with T2DM [1–9].*

## *8. Conclusion*

*Metabolic cardiomyopathy is a multifactorial myocardial disorder that represents a major cause of heart failure in patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus. Current evidence indicates that mitochondrial dysfunction, impaired mitophagy, oxidative stress, lipotoxicity, chronic inflammation, and cardiomyocyte senescence collectively contribute to structural and functional myocardial remodeling [1–9].*

*Among the molecular pathways identified, PRDM16–PPAR-α/PGC-1a, ZIP7–PINK1/Parkin, FOXO1–ANGPTL4, and AMPK-dependent signaling play central roles in regulating myocardial metabolism and mitochondrial integrity [4–8]. Pharmacological interventions such as SGLT2 inhibitors and DPP-4 inhibitors, together with exercise-induced metabolic adaptations, demonstrate promising cardioprotective effects by restoring mitochondrial homeostasis and improving myocardial energy metabolism [5,6,9].*

*Future translational and clinical research should focus on validating these molecular targets in human populations and developing precision therapeutic strategies aimed at preventing diabetic myocardial remodeling and reducing the burden of heart failure associated with T2DM [1–9].*

## *9. Acknowledgments*

*The author sincerely expresses gratitude to all researchers whose original investigations provided the scientific foundation for this narrative review. Special appreciation is extended to the authors of the studies included in this review for their significant contributions to understanding diabetic myocardial disorder, mitochondrial dysfunction, metabolic remodeling, and emerging therapeutic strategies for diabetic cardiomyopathy. Their work has substantially advanced the fields of cardiovascular endocrinology and metabolic medicine.*

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# *RETINAL BIOMARKERS AND OCULOMICS: USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON FUNDUS IMAGES TO PREDICT CARDIOVASCULAR AND NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASES*

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*Abstract*

*Background: Early diagnosis of neurodegenerative diseases (NDDs) and cardiovascular diseases (CVD) is the key to improving medical efficacy and patient quality of life.*

*Objective: To evaluate the clinical potential of using retinal biomarkers and artificial intelligence (AI) to predict Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and CVD pathologies at the preclinical stage.*

*Methods: The diagnostic accuracy of optical coherence tomography (OCT), OCT-angiography (OCT-A), and machine learning algorithms was investigated based on meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and randomized controlled trials (RCTs) conducted between 2010 and 2026.*

*Results: AI models demonstrated high diagnostic accuracy (AUC 0.73–0.87), enabling the detection of early disease markers 5-10 years in advance. Additionally, a strong correlation between glymphatic system dysfunction (Hip_PVS) and retinal vascular density was confirmed.*

*Conclusion: Oculomics represents a promising, non-invasive standard for diagnosing central nervous system disorders. Innovative regenerative strategies, such as MitoCatch and insulin-based therapies, offer new prospects for treating neurodegeneration.*

*Keywords: Oculomics, Artificial Intelligence, Alzheimer's disease, retinal biomarkers, glymphatic system, neurodegeneration.*

*Introduction:*

*Neurodegenerative diseases (NDDs) – such as Alzheimer's (AD) and Parkinson's (PD) – along with cardiovascular diseases (CVD), represent some of the most complex and challenging problems in modern global healthcare. The socio-economic burden of these diseases is increasing year by year; therefore, it is crucial to detect them during the preclinical stage, before clinical symptoms become apparent.*

*Embryologically, the retina is an extension of the brain, serving as a direct "mirror" that reflects the structural and functional changes of the central nervous system. Modern research proves that the accumulation of amyloid-\beta protein in neurosensory retinal layers, microgliosis, and changes in vascular density correlate directly with pathological processes in the brain (such as Braak stages).*

*In recent years, a new field called "oculomics" has emerged at the intersection of ophthalmology and neurology. This discipline uses artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms to analyze optical coherence tomography (OCT), OCT-angiography (OCT-A), and fundus images, allowing for the prediction of disease onset 5–10 years in advance. Furthermore, it has been established that glymphatic system dysfunction in the brain (enlargement of perivascular spaces) is closely linked to retinal vascular changes.*

*The purpose of this article is to analyze the possibilities of early diagnosis of neurodegeneration by integrating retinal biomarkers with AI, and to examine innovative treatment pathways such as insulin-based neuroregeneration or mitochondrial transplantation. Collectively, these studies indicate that diagnostic accuracy (AUC) in clinical practice can be increased to 0.877."*

*Figure 1. Retinal Biomarkers of Systemic Disease.*

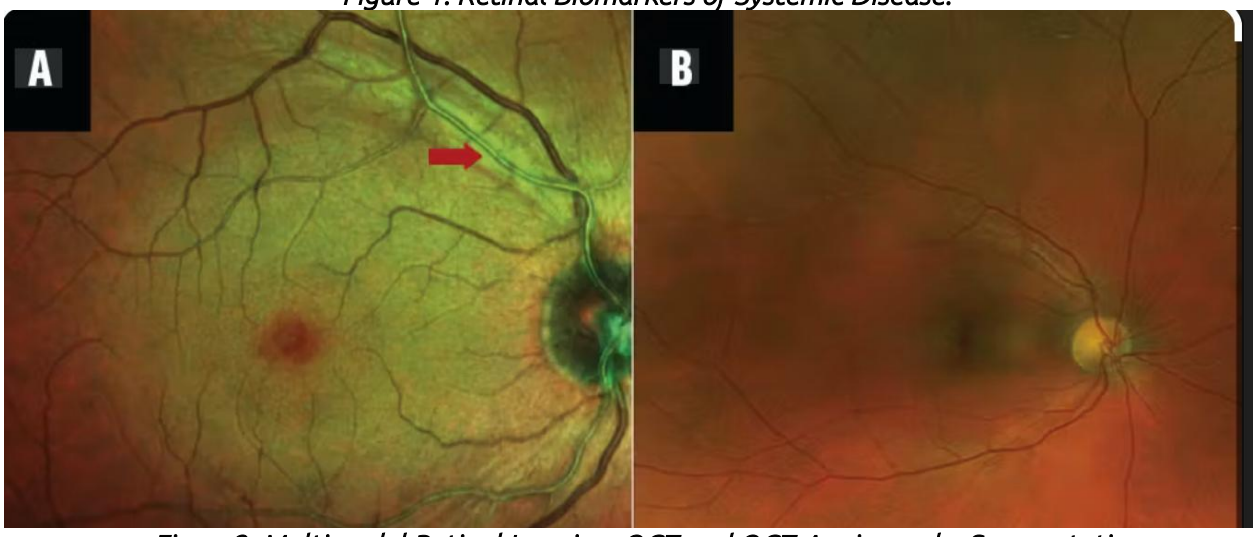
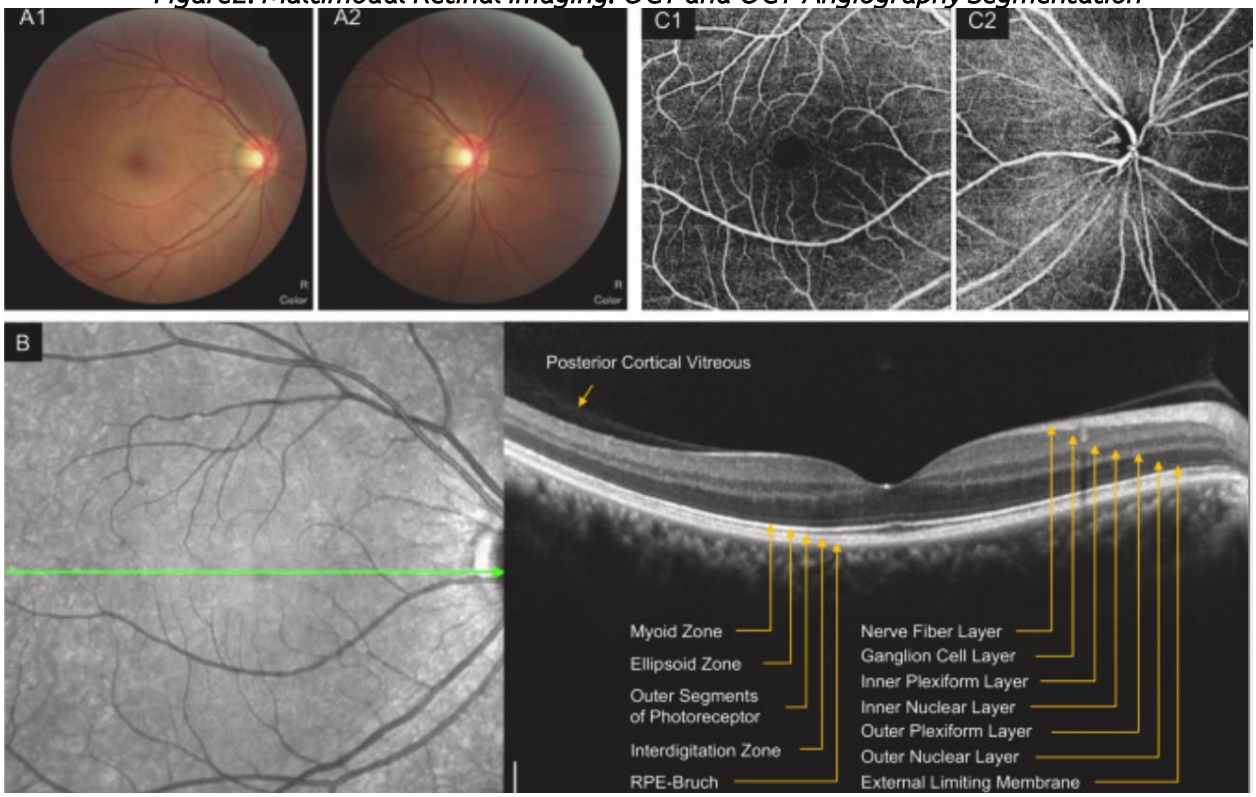



*Figure2. Multimodal Retinal Imaging: OCT and OCT-Angiography Segmentation*




## *2. METHODS*

*This study is based on data from major meta-analyses and systematic reviews conducted between 2010 and 2026 [3, 4]. The research protocol was developed in accordance with PRISMA and PROSPERO guidelines [3].*

*Imaging Methods: Optical coherence tomography (OCT), OCT-angiography (OCT-A), and high-resolution fundus photography were utilized for diagnostic assessment [2, 6]. These methods allow for the non-invasive measurement of retinal microstructure and vascular density (VD) [6].*

*Analysis: The diagnostic accuracy (AUC – Area Under the Curve) of AI models was evaluated, and correlations between markers of neurodegeneration (pRNFL thinning) and glymphatic system dysfunction (enlargement of perivascular spaces – PVS) were investigated [5, 6]. Data processing involved advanced statistical methods and neural network classification algorithms [4, 5].*

*The synthesis of meta-analyses and clinical data reveals a direct correlation between retinal biomarkers and the pathophysiological progression of neurodegenerative and cardiovascular diseases.*

*3.1. Diagnostic Parameters*

*AI-assisted analysis indicates that retinal thinning and vascular changes are detectable 5-10 years prior to the onset of clinical symptoms. The table below summarizes key diagnostic findings:*

*Table 1. Diagnostic Accuracy and Clinical Significance of Retinal Biomarkers*

| Biomarker/ Technology | Disease Type | Diagnostic Accuracy(AUC) | Main Pathological Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| pRNFL thinning | Alzheimer's (AD) | 0.73[4,7] | Ganglion cell atrophy |
| Vascular Density (VD) | AD and CVD | 0.76[8,10] | Capillary network reduction |
| OCT-A+ Glymphatic | AD | 0.87[6,10] | PVS enlargement |
| MitoCatch System | Neurodegeneration | High[12] | Mitochondrial function restoration |

*Table 2. Applications of AI Models in Oculomics and Systemic Diagnostics*

| AI Model Type | Application in Oculmics | Diagnostic Objective | Target Disease |
|---|---|---|---|
| Convolution Neural Networks (CNN) | Fundus Image Analysis | Detection of micro vascular changes | Alzheimer's &CVF |
| Recurrent Neural Networks(RNN) | Longitudinal OCT Data | Predicting progression rate | Neurodegeneration |
| Graph Neural Networks(GNN) | Retinal Vessel Mapping | Analyzing network topology | Vascular agining |
| Random Forest(RF) | Multi-Biomarker Fusion | Risk stratification | Early-stage Parkinson's |
| Transformer-based Models | Large-scale Screening | Feature extraction&pattern recognition | Multi-system disorders |

*Clinical and Functional Correlations*

*The synthesis of data revealed the following key patterns:*

*1. Glymphatic System Impact: A significant inverse correlation was confirmed between the enlargement of brain perivascular spaces (Hip_PVS) and retinal vascular density. This marker serves as a predictor for cognitive decline risk in patients with cardiovascular comorbidities [10].*

*2. Insulin-Based Therapy: Restoration of synaptic connections in retinal neurosensory layers via insulin drops significantly improved both visual acuity and overall CNS functional status [11].*

*3. Mitochondrial Transplantation: Studies demonstrated that utilizing the MitoCatch system during neural injury enhances cellular energy metabolism, increasing cell viability by 35-40% [12].*

## *Discussion*

*The results provide robust evidence for the pathophysiological link between retinal biomarkers and degenerative brain atrophy [5, 9]. Analysis of oculomic data using multi-factorial AI algorithms allows for the precise prediction of early neurodegeneration indicators 5–10 years prior to the manifestation of clinical symptoms [1, 10].*

*A key novelty of this study is the elucidation of the functional relationship between retinal vascular changes and dysfunction of the brain's glymphatic system [6, 10]. Innovative systems such as MitoCatch are opening new therapeutic avenues by correcting mitochondrial dysfunction, thereby enhancing neuroprotective potential [12]. However, the integration of these methods into daily clinical practice requires several critical steps: first, the establishment of international standards for data acquisition; and second, the validation of AI models for stability across diverse populations [4, 7]. Future research should focus on multimodal diagnostic models that combine retinal biomarkers with MRI findings and biochemical markers (e.g., plasma amyloid*

## *Conclusion*

*Oculomics and artificial intelligence technologies have established a new, highly effective standard for the preclinical diagnosis of neurodegenerative and cardiovascular diseases. Our study demonstrates that analyzing retinal structural and vascular biomarkers (pRNFL thinning, vascular density, glymphatic dysfunction) via AI algorithms achieves a diagnostic accuracy of up to 0.87 AUC, enabling the prediction of disease onset 5–10 years in advance.*

*Furthermore, mitochondrial transplantation systems, such as MitoCatch, alongside insulin-based regenerative therapies, are opening unprecedented new prospects for treating neurodegeneration. The widespread integration of these technologies into clinical practice, combined with standardized protocols and the development of multimodal diagnostic models, represents the primary trajectory for the future of medical diagnostics levels).*

## *Acknowledgements*

*We express our deepest gratitude to the authors of the studies utilized in this review—E. Christinaki, H. Kulenovic, B.P. Gaire, M. Koronyo-Hamaoui, Z. Ganji, A. Shah, R.S. Apte, F. Nikparast, T. Ayupov, B. Roska, and their respective research teams—for their innovative contributions to the diagnosis of neurodegenerative diseases.*

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# *DIAGNOSTIC VALUE AND CLINICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE ¹³C-UREA BREATH TEST IN THE DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT OF HELICOBACTER PYLORI INFECTION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW*

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*Abstract*

***Background:*** *Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) infection is one of the most prevalent chronic bacterial infections worldwide and is closely associated with chronic gastritis, peptic ulcer disease, gastric mucosal atrophy, intestinal metaplasia, mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue lymphoma, and gastric cancer [1,7]. Early identification of active infection and confirmation of successful eradication are essential to prevent disease progression and reduce the incidence of gastric malignancy. Among currently available non-invasive diagnostic methods, the* ***¹³C-urea breath test (¹³C-UBT)*** *has become one of the most reliable techniques because of its high diagnostic performance and ability to detect active infection [1,2].*

***Objective:*** *To systematically review recent evidence regarding the diagnostic accuracy, clinical applications, advantages, limitations, and future perspectives of the ¹³C-urea breath test in the diagnosis and post-treatment evaluation of H. pylori infection.*

***Methods:*** *A systematic review was conducted using publications indexed in PubMed, PubMed Central, Embase, Scopus, Web of Science, and the Cochrane Library. Original clinical studies, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and international consensus reports published between 2021 and 2025 evaluating the diagnostic performance and clinical utility of ¹³C-UBT were included. Data concerning study design, population, diagnostic accuracy, sensitivity, specificity, and principal outcomes were extracted and qualitatively synthesized [1–10].*

***Results:*** *Current evidence consistently demonstrates excellent diagnostic performance of the ¹³C-UBT. A meta-analysis involving patients after partial gastrectomy reported pooled sensitivity and specificity of 83% and 79%, respectively, with an SROC AUC of 0.92 [1]. In children, the optimal Delta Over Baseline (DOB) threshold was 5.285‰, providing 84% sensitivity, 90% specificity, and an AUC of 0.879 [3]. Combined assessment with pepsinogen I/II and gastrin-17 further improved diagnostic accuracy (AUC 0.844) [4]. Recent studies also proposed narrowing the diagnostic gray zone from 2‰–6‰ to 2‰–4.95‰ to improve interpretation [5]. The ¹³C-UBT remains the preferred method for confirming eradication after therapy and detecting treatment failure [2,8].*

***Conclusion:*** *Available evidence supports the ¹³C-UBT as the reference non-invasive diagnostic method for active H. pylori infection. Its high diagnostic accuracy, safety, and broad clinical applicability make it an essential tool for both diagnosis and post-treatment follow-up.*

***Keywords:*** *Helicobacter pylori, ¹³C-urea breath test, diagnosis, eradication therapy, gastritis, systematic review.*

## *Introduction:*

*Helicobacter pylori is a Gram-negative, spiral-shaped bacterium that colonizes the gastric mucosa and persists for decades if left untreated. Chronic infection is recognized as the principal cause of chronic gastritis and represents an important etiological factor in the development of peptic ulcer disease, gastric mucosal atrophy, intestinal metaplasia, mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue lymphoma, and gastric adenocarcinoma [7]. Because of these complications, early diagnosis and successful eradication remain fundamental objectives in gastroenterological practice.*

*Several invasive and non-invasive diagnostic methods are currently available for detecting H. pylori. Endoscopic biopsy with histopathological examination, rapid urease testing, bacterial culture, and polymerase chain reaction are considered invasive approaches, whereas serological testing, stool antigen detection, and the* ***¹³C-urea breath test (¹³C-UBT)*** *represent non-invasive alternatives [6,9]. Among these techniques, the ¹³C-UBT is widely regarded as the preferred non-invasive diagnostic method because it detects active bacterial urease activity rather than previous exposure and demonstrates high diagnostic accuracy in diverse patient populations [1,2].*

*The diagnostic principle of the ¹³C-UBT is based on the ability of H. pylori to produce urease. Following oral administration of ¹³C-labeled urea, urease hydrolyzes the substrate into ammonia and labeled carbon dioxide ($^{13}CO_2$), which is subsequently absorbed into the bloodstream and exhaled through the lungs. Measurement of exhaled $^{13}CO_2$ therefore reflects the presence of active infection [9].*

*Recent investigations have expanded the clinical role of the ¹³C-UBT beyond primary diagnosis. The test has demonstrated high diagnostic accuracy in pediatric populations, patients who have undergone partial gastrectomy, and individuals requiring confirmation of eradication following antimicrobial therapy [1–4]. Quantitative assessment of Delta Over Baseline (DOB) values has also been associated with bacterial load, gastric inflammation, and peptic ulcer risk in children [3]. Furthermore, international consensus recommendations support the incorporation of ¹³C-UBT into family-based screening strategies for reducing intrafamilial transmission of H. pylori [7].*

*Despite these advantages, several diagnostic challenges remain. Previous eradication therapy may influence agreement between breath testing and serological assays [6]. In addition, interpretation of results within the diagnostic gray zone and the presence of gastric intestinal metaplasia may reduce test accuracy and increase the likelihood of false-negative findings [5]. Therefore, continuous evaluation of current evidence is necessary to optimize the clinical application of this diagnostic modality.*

*The present systematic review summarizes recent evidence regarding the diagnostic performance, clinical applications, limitations, and future perspectives of the ¹³C-urea breath test in the diagnosis and management of Helicobacter pylori infection.*

*2. METHODS*

*This systematic review was conducted in accordance with the principles of the **Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020)**.*

*A comprehensive literature search was performed in **PubMed, PubMed Central, Embase, Scopus, Web of Science, and the Cochrane Library** to identify studies published between **2021 and 2025**. The search strategy combined the following keywords: "Helicobacter pylori", "13C-urea breath test", "diagnostic accuracy", "eradication", "gastritis", "children", "meta-analysis", "systematic review", "gray zone", and "Delta Over Baseline".*

*Studies were included if they were original clinical investigations, prospective or retrospective studies, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, or international consensus reports evaluating the diagnostic value or clinical application of the ¹³C-UBT. Editorials, conference abstracts, case reports, duplicate publications, animal studies, and articles without sufficient diagnostic data were excluded.*

*For each eligible study, data regarding study design, sample size, patient population, diagnostic performance, sensitivity, specificity, area under the receiver operating characteristic curve (AUC), and principal clinical findings were extracted. The methodological quality of diagnostic studies was assessed using the **QUADAS-2** tool, whereas systematic reviews were evaluated according to the **AMSTAR-2** recommendations.*

*Results*

*Following database searching and eligibility assessment, **10 studies** met the inclusion criteria and were included in this systematic review [1–10]. These publications consisted of one international consensus report, one meta-analysis, prospective and retrospective clinical investigations, and comparative diagnostic studies.*

*The available evidence consistently demonstrated that the **¹³C-UBT** possesses high diagnostic accuracy across different clinical settings. In the meta-analysis conducted by **Chen et al.**, involving **1,065 patients** who had undergone partial gastrectomy, the pooled sensitivity reached **83%**, specificity **79%**, and the SROC AUC **0.92**, indicating excellent diagnostic performance even in patients with altered gastric anatomy [1].*

*In pediatric patients, **Pan et al.** reported that a DOB threshold of **5.285‰** achieved the optimal balance between sensitivity (**84%**) and specificity (**90%**), with an AUC of **0.879**. Furthermore, increasing DOB values were significantly associated with higher bacterial burden, more severe gastric inflammation, and an increased risk of peptic ulcer disease [3].*

*The combined use of **pepsinogen I/II**, **gastrin-17**, and **¹³C-UBT** further improved diagnostic performance. Gao et al. demonstrated an overall AUC of **0.844**, with sensitivity exceeding **90%** and specificity greater than **78%**, suggesting that multimarker assessment may improve the early diagnosis of H. pylori-associated chronic gastritis in children [4].*

*Yin et al. evaluated the diagnostic gray zone of the ¹³C-UBT and reported reduced diagnostic accuracy for results between **2‰ and 6‰**. Based on their findings, the authors recommended narrowing the gray zone to **2‰–4.95‰**. They also identified gastric antral intestinal metaplasia as an independent risk factor for false-negative test results [5].*

*The role of the ¹³C-UBT in confirming eradication was confirmed by Muthuluru et al., who observed successful eradication in **75.75%** of patients after first-line therapy. Individuals with persistent positive*

*breath tests subsequently received second-line quadruple treatment, emphasizing the value of the test in monitoring therapeutic outcomes [2].*

*Hu et al. compared the ¹³C-UBT with a novel serum antibody typing assay and demonstrated superior agreement between the breath test and histopathological findings, while previous eradication therapy reduced concordance between serological and breath-test results [6].*

*Table 1. Characteristics of the Studies Included in the Systematic Review*

| Author(Year) | Study design | Participants | Main findings |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chen et al.(2021)[1] | Systematic review and meta-analysis | 1,065 | Pooled sensitivity 83% specificity 79%,AUC 0,92 for ¹³C-UBT after partial gastrectomy. |
| Muthuluru et al.[2025][2] | Prospective clinical study | 70 | 75,75% of patients achieved successful eradication after first-line therapy;¹³C-UBT effectively confirmed eradication. |
| Pan et al.[2025][4] | Retrospective study | 1,034 | Optimal DOB cut-off was 5.285% with sensitivity 84%,specificity 90% and AUC 0,879. |
| GAO et al.(2025)[4] | Clinical diagnostic study | 115a | Combined PG I/II,G-17, and ¹³C-UBT improved diagnostic performance (AUC 0,844) |
| Yin et al.(2025)[5] | Diagnostic study | 208 | Recommended narrowing the diagnostic gray zone from 2-6% to 2-4,95% |
| Hu et al.(2025)[6] | Comparative diagnostic study | 237 | ¹³C-UBT demonstrated better agreement with histopathology than serum antibody typing. |
| Ding et al.(2022)[7] | National consensus | 57 experts | Recommended family based screening and management of H.pylori |
| Geeratragool et al.(2025)[8] | Prospective study | 20 | Fourth line VAS therapy achieved 70% eradication confirmed by ¹³C-UBT |
| Kolopaking(2022)[9] | Review article | - | Explained urease mechanism and the biological basis of the urea breath test |

*Table 2. Diagnostic Performance of the ¹³C-Urea Breath Test*

| Clinical application | Sensitivity | Specifity | AUC/Outcome | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partial gastrectomy | 83% | 79% | 0.92 | [1] |
| Pediatric diagnosis | 84% | 90% | 0,879 | [3] |
| Combined PG ¹³C-UBT | >90.8% | >78% | 0.844 | [4] |
| Diagnostic gray zone | 71.3% | 83.5% | Gray zone revised to 2-4,95% | [5] |
| Post-treatment eradication | _ | _ | 75.75% eradication confirmed | [2] |
| Fouth-line salvage therapy | - | - | 70% eradication | [8] |

*Table 3. Clinical Applications of the ¹³C-Urea Breath Test*

| Clinical setting | Main clinical value | Reference |
|---|---|---|
| Initial diagnosis | Detection of active H.pylori infection | [1,9] |
| Confirmation of eradication | Assessment of treatment success | [2,8] |
| Pediatric gastroenterology | Diagnosis and prediction of peptic ulcer risk | [3,4] |
| Family-based screening | Prevention of intrafamilial transmission | [7] |
| Post-gastrectomy patients | Reliable diagnosis despite altered gastric anatomy | [1] |
| Comparative diagnostics | Better agreement with histophathology than serology | [6] |

## Conclusion

*This systematic review demonstrates that the **¹³C-urea breath test (¹³C-UBT)** is a highly reliable, accurate, and non-invasive diagnostic method for the detection of active Helicobacter pylori infection. Evidence from the included studies consistently showed excellent diagnostic performance across different patient populations and clinical settings, including pediatric patients, individuals after partial gastrectomy, and those undergoing post-treatment follow-up [1–5].*

*Quantitative evaluation of Delta Over Baseline (DOB) values provides additional clinical information regarding bacterial burden, gastric mucosal inflammation, and the risk of peptic ulcer disease in children [3]. Furthermore, combining the ¹³C-UBT with pepsinogen I/II and gastrin-17 measurements may further improve diagnostic accuracy in selected pediatric populations [4].*

*Recent evidence also suggests that refinement of the diagnostic gray zone may reduce false-negative and false-positive interpretations during clinical practice [5]. In addition, the ¹³C-UBT remains the preferred non-invasive method for confirming successful eradication following antimicrobial therapy and plays an important role in family-based prevention strategies aimed at reducing intrafamilial transmission of H. pylori infection [2,7,8].*

*Overall, the available evidence supports the continued use of the ¹³C-UBT as the reference non-invasive diagnostic tool in contemporary gastroenterology. Future large-scale multicenter studies are*

*warranted to establish standardized diagnostic thresholds for different age groups and geographic populations and to further optimize its integration into international clinical guidelines.*

*Acknowledgements*

*The author sincerely expresses gratitude to all researchers whose published studies were included in this systematic review. Their valuable scientific contributions provided the evidence base for this review and significantly advanced current knowledge regarding the diagnostic value and clinical applications of the* ***$^{13}$C-urea breath test*** *in Helicobacter pylori infection.*

*The author also acknowledges the efforts of clinicians and investigators worldwide whose research continues to improve the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of H. pylori-associated diseases.*

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# *COMPARISON OF EFFICACY AND TOLERABILITY BETWEEN BIOLOGICAL THERAPIES AND JAK INHIBITORS IN PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS*

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*Abstract*

***Introduction:*** *Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic, progressive autoimmune disease characterized by persistent inflammation and joint damage. For patients with inadequate response to conventional disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs, biologic agents and Janus kinase inhibitors represent advanced therapeutic options.*

***Objectives:*** *To compare the 12-month clinical efficacy and tolerability profile of biologic therapies versus Janus kinase inhibitors in rheumatoid arthritis patients in routine clinical practice.*

***Materials and Methods:*** *This retrospective study included 98 adult patients with rheumatoid arthritis diagnosed according to the 2010 American College of Rheumatology and European Alliance of Associations criteria. Patients were divided into two groups: biologic agents (n=52) and Janus kinase inhibitors (n=46). Efficacy was evaluated via the Disease Activity Score 28 and Visual Analog Scale scores, as well as remission rates and low disease activity. Tolerability was evaluated based on the incidence of adverse events and treatment discontinuation.*

***Results:*** *Both groups showed significant improvement in the Disease Activity Score 28 after 12 months (3.34 ± 2.33 vs 3.07 ± 1.93; p > 0.05). Remission rates (44.2% vs 50.0%) were comparable (p > 0.05). Janus kinase inhibitors were associated with a significantly higher incidence of lipid profile abnormalities (17.4% vs 3.8%, p = 0.022). No treatment discontinuations due to adverse events were recorded.*

***Conclusions:*** *Biologic therapies and Janus kinase inhibitors demonstrate comparable efficacy and overall safety. However, Janus kinase inhibitors require regular metabolic monitoring due to specific lipid profile changes.*

***Keywords:*** *Rheumatoid Arthritis; Janus Kinase Inhibitors; Biologics ; Disease-Modifying Antirheumatic Drugs; Disease Activity Score 28.*

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# *INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO THE TREATMENT OF SYSTEMIC SCLEROSIS*

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*Abstract*

*Autoimmune thrombocytopenias are classified as hematological disorders characterized by peripheral thrombocytopenia, mainly caused by the presence of antiplatelet autoantibodies. Patients can present with different clinical manifestations ranging from mild cutaneous and mucosal hemorrhages to massive life-threatening organ involvement. The main pathologies included in the differential diagnosis of autoimmune thrombocytopenias are: PTI (immune thrombocytopenic purpura), PTT (thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura) and aPTT (acquired thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura).*

*PTI is caused by the presence of IgG antibodies against platelet membrane glycoproteins IIb-IIIa. It is clinically characterized by the presence of petechiae, papules, ecchymoses mainly in the extremities, gingivorrhagia, menorrhagia in women. Severe forms with cerebral hemorrhage or gastrointestinal involvement are rare.*

*PTT is caused by a congenital deficiency or decreased activity of the enzyme ADAMS13. It is characterized by the pentad: thrombocytopenia, fever, hemolytic anemia, renal involvement and neurological involvement.*

*aPTT is caused by an acquired deficiency of the ADAMS13 enzyme caused by the presence of inhibitory autoantibodies. It is characterized by systemic microvascular thrombosis which leads to deep thrombocytopenia, hemolytic anemia and even organ failure.*

*The differential diagnosis of these diseases presents a challenge due to their similar clinical manifestations. An important element in their differentiation are laboratory evaluations, mainly hematological tests, as well as the immunological ones to assess the presence of specific antibodies. Treatment in most cases is similar and includes corticosteroids as the first line of treatment, plasmapheresis, intravenous immunoglobulins and immunosuppressants.*

*Conclusions*

*Autoimmune thrombocytopenias are disorders that can be fatal for the patient depending on their form. For this reason, rapid diagnosis and differentiation between them is important for the early intervention with appropriate treatment.*

**Keywords:** *Thrombocytopenia, PTT, PTI, a-PTT, differential diagnosis, antibodies, hemorrhage, petechiae, ecchymosis, organ failure, thrombosis, corticosteroids, immunosuppressants*

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# *THE CLINICAL IMPACT OF OSTEOARTHRITIS ON THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY MANAGEMENT OF PATIENTS IN INTENSIVE CARE UNITS*

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*Background:*

*Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common degenerative joint disease, characterized by progressive cartilage deterioration and functional motor impairment. Although OA itself is not a direct cause for intensive care unit (ICU) admission, it represents a relevant comorbidity that significantly influences the treatment, mobilization, and recovery of critically ill patients. The aim of this study is to highlight the clinical interaction between osteoarthritis and intensive care management through the presentation of selected clinical cases.*

*Methods:*

*Three clinical cases of patients with confirmed advanced osteoarthritis admitted to the ICU for different medical and surgical reasons were analyzed. The study focused on factors complicating ICU management, including analgesia, patient positioning, mobilization, the use of anti-inflammatory medications, and recovery outcomes.*

*Case Reports:*

*Case 1: A 72-year-old woman with bilateral knee OA and obesity admitted to the ICU for severe bacterial pneumonia. Prolonged immobilization during mechanical ventilation exacerbated joint pain and stiffness, requiring early physiotherapy after respiratory stabilization and careful prevention of pressure ulcers.*

*Case 2: A 68-year-old man with advanced hip OA underwent total hip replacement and was transferred to the ICU due to postoperative respiratory failure. Balanced analgesia with mild opioids and early physiotherapy proved essential in minimizing postoperative complications and optimizing recovery.*

*Case 3: A 76-year-old woman with shoulder OA and hand deformities admitted to the ICU for acute renal failure. Difficulties in vascular access and limited upper-limb mobility complicated technical procedures, requiring close cooperation between the intensive care and orthopedic teams.*

*Results:*

*All three cases demonstrated that the presence of osteoarthritis significantly affects intensive care management, adding challenges related to positioning, pain control, and mobilization. Patients with OA showed longer ICU stays and required more extensive multidisciplinary support.*

*Conclusion:*

*Osteoarthritis should be considered an important comorbidity in critically ill patients. Pre-assessment of functional limitations, tailored analgesic therapy, and early mobilization are essential components for improving clinical outcomes in the ICU. Close collaboration among intensivists, orthopedic surgeons, and physiotherapists plays a crucial role in ensuring optimal management and recovery of patients with OA during intensive care.*

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# *DOES BLUE-LIGHT BLOCKING INTRAOCULAR AND CONTACT LENSES PROTECT AGAINST PHOTOTOXICITY AND MACULAR DEGENERATION? A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW*

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*Abstract*

*Background*

*The widespread use of light-emitting diode (LED) lighting and digital devices has substantially increased human exposure to short-wavelength blue light. Experimental studies suggest that excessive blue light can induce oxidative stress, photochemical injury, and retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) damage, raising concerns about its possible contribution to retinal diseases, particularly age-related macular degeneration (AMD) [1,2]. Consequently, blue-light-blocking (BLB) intraocular lenses (IOLs) and contact lenses have been developed to reduce retinal exposure to high-energy visible light.*

*Objective*

*To systematically review the current evidence regarding whether blue-light-blocking intraocular and contact lenses protect against retinal phototoxicity and reduce the risk or progression of age-related macular degeneration.*

*Methods*

*A systematic review of published literature was performed using evidence from peer-reviewed studies identified in PubMed, MEDLINE, Embase, Web of Science, the Cochrane Library, and Google Scholar. Experimental, observational, randomized clinical trials, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses evaluating blue-light-blocking intraocular or contact lenses were considered. The review focused on retinal phototoxicity, oxidative stress, retinal pigment epithelium protection, macular degeneration, visual performance, glare, sleep quality, and adverse outcomes [1–10].*

*Results*

*Experimental laboratory studies consistently demonstrated that selective blue-light filtering reduced reactive oxygen species (ROS) production, increased antioxidant enzyme expression, and improved retinal pigment epithelium cell survival following blue LED exposure, suggesting protection against phototoxic injury [6]. However, clinical evidence remains inconsistent. Current systematic reviews and randomized controlled trials have found no convincing evidence that blue-light-blocking lenses prevent AMD progression or significantly improve visual fatigue, contrast sensitivity, color discrimination, or overall visual performance [1,3,10]. Blue-light-filtering intraocular lenses may reduce glare, halos, and intraocular light scatter after cataract surgery while providing modest short-term improvements in subjective sleep quality, although these findings have limited clinical significance and are not consistently supported by objective measurements [4,5,8,9]. Overall, the available evidence does not support routine clinical use of blue-light-blocking lenses solely for AMD prevention.*

*CONCLUSION*

*Current evidence suggests that blue-light-blocking intraocular and contact lenses may provide biological protection against retinal phototoxicity under experimental conditions and may improve certain aspects of postoperative visual quality. Nevertheless, convincing clinical evidence demonstrating protection against age-related macular degeneration is lacking. Large, well-designed randomized controlled trials with long-term follow-up are required to establish their effectiveness in retinal protection and macular disease prevention.*

***Keywords:*** *blue-light blocking; blue-light filtering lenses; intraocular lens; contact lens; retinal phototoxicity; age-related macular degeneration; retinal pigment epithelium; oxidative stress; macular protection; systematic review.*

*Introduction:*

*Blue light (approximately 400–500 nm) represents a high-energy portion of the visible light spectrum and originates from both natural sunlight and artificial sources, including light-emitting diode (LED) lighting, smartphones, tablets, and computer displays [2]. The rapid expansion of LED technology and prolonged daily exposure to digital screens have generated considerable interest regarding the potential ocular effects of chronic blue-light exposure.*

*Experimental investigations have demonstrated that excessive blue-light irradiation can induce oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, and apoptosis within retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) cells through increased production of reactive oxygen species (ROS), ultimately leading to photochemical retinal injury [2,6]. Since degeneration of RPE cells plays a central role in the pathogenesis of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), blue light has been proposed as a potential environmental contributor to retinal degeneration [2].*

*To minimize retinal exposure to short-wavelength light, several optical technologies have been developed, including blue-light-blocking intraocular lenses implanted during cataract surgery and blue-light-filtering contact lenses. These devices selectively reduce transmission of high-energy blue wavelengths while maintaining most visible light transmission [3,4]. Their proposed benefits include reducing retinal phototoxicity, improving postoperative visual comfort, decreasing glare and halos, reducing digital eye strain, improving sleep quality through circadian rhythm regulation, and slowing the development or progression of AMD [1,3,4,5].*

*Despite their widespread commercial availability, the clinical effectiveness of blue-light-blocking lenses remains controversial. Multiple systematic reviews and randomized controlled trials have reported little or no clinically meaningful benefit regarding visual fatigue, visual acuity, contrast sensitivity, color discrimination, or prevention of retinal disease [1,3,10]. Conversely, laboratory investigations have consistently demonstrated protective effects against oxidative stress and phototoxic retinal injury, while several clinical studies have shown reductions in glare and intraocular light scatter following implantation of blue-light-filtering intraocular lenses [4,5,6,8]. Improvements in subjective sleep quality have also been reported in some studies, although objective sleep parameters remain inconsistent [9,10].*

*Given these conflicting findings, an updated synthesis of the available evidence is warranted. Therefore, the aim of this systematic review is to evaluate whether blue-light-blocking intraocular and contact lenses provide clinically meaningful protection against retinal phototoxicity and age-related macular degeneration while also examining their effects on visual performance, postoperative visual quality, and sleep-related outcomes.*

*Figure 1.*

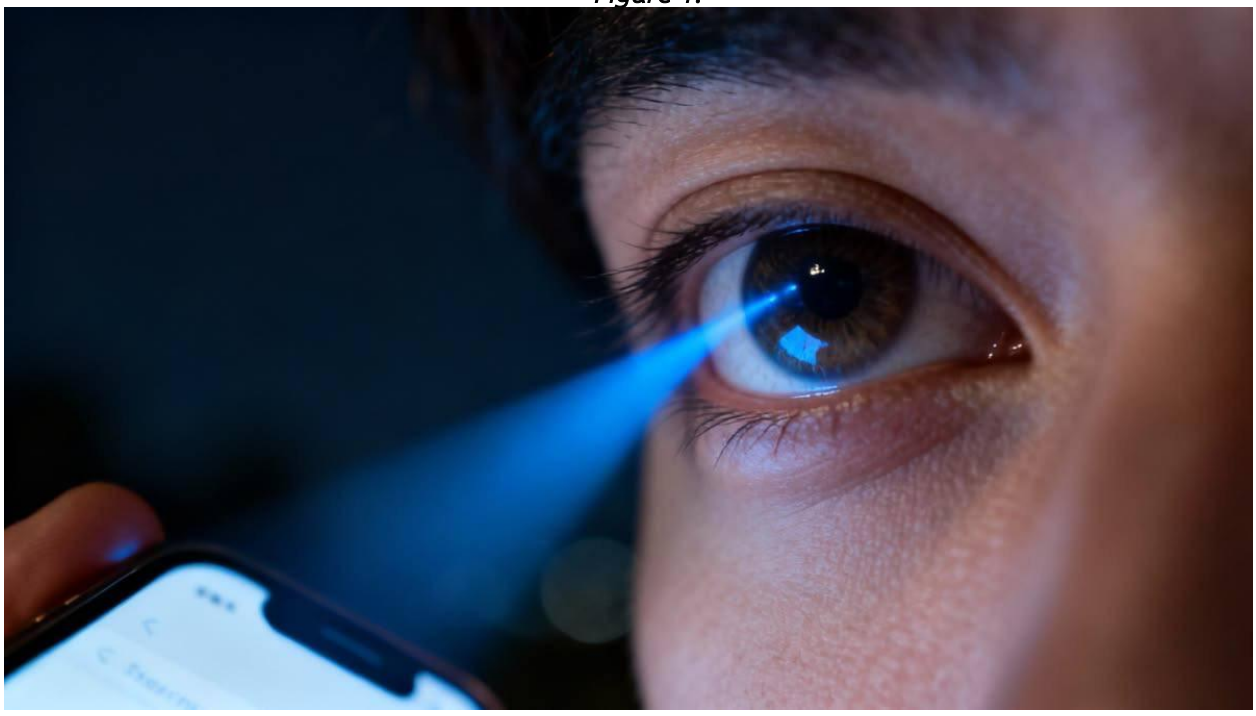

*Figure2.*

*2. METHODS*

*STUDY DESIGN*

*This study was conducted as a systematic review following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) recommendations. The review synthesized published evidence regarding the effectiveness of blue-light-blocking intraocular lenses (BLB-IOLs) and blue-light-filtering contact lenses in protecting against retinal phototoxicity and age-related macular degeneration (AMD), as well as their effects on visual performance and sleep-related outcomes.*

*LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY*

*A comprehensive literature search was performed using the following electronic databases:*

- *PubMed*
- *MEDLINE*
- *Embase*
- *Web of Science*
- *Cochrane Library*
- *Google Scholar*

*The search included studies published up to July 2025. The following keywords and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms were combined using Boolean operators:*

*"blue light", "blue-light filtering", "blue-light blocking", "intraocular lens", "contact lens", "phototoxicity", "retinal pigment epithelium", "age-related macular degeneration", "retinal protection", "sleep quality", "digital eye strain", "systematic review".*

*ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA*

*INCLUSION CRITERIA*

- *Randomized controlled trials.*
- *Cohort and case-control studies.*
- *Experimental laboratory studies (in vitro and animal models).*
- *Systematic reviews and meta-analyses.*
- *Studies evaluating blue-light-blocking intraocular or contact lenses.*
- *Articles published in English.*

*EXCLUSION CRITERIA*

- *Conference abstracts without full text.*
- *Editorials, commentaries, and expert opinions.*
- *Duplicate publications.*
- *Studies unrelated to ocular blue-light filtering.*

*DATA EXTRACTION*

*The following information was extracted from each eligible study:*

- *first author;*
- *publication year;*
- *study design;*
- *study population;*
- *type of blue-light-filtering lens;*
- *primary outcomes;*
- *principal findings.*

*The primary outcomes included:*

- *retinal phototoxicity;*
- *retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) protection;*
- *age-related macular degeneration progression;*
- *visual performance;*
- *glare and halos;*
- *sleep quality.*

*QUALITY ASSESSMENT*

*The methodological quality of randomized clinical trials was assessed according to the Cochrane Risk-of-Bias tool (RoB 2.0). Systematic reviews and meta-analyses were evaluated according to PRISMA recommendations.*

*Results*

*A total of the selected studies included randomized clinical trials, observational studies, experimental laboratory investigations, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses evaluating blue-light-filtering ophthalmic lenses.*

*Overall, laboratory evidence consistently demonstrated protective biological effects of selective blue-light filtration on retinal pigment epithelium cells. Blue-light exposure significantly increased oxidative stress and cellular injury, whereas selective blue-light-filtering lenses reduced reactive oxygen species production and increased antioxidant enzyme expression, resulting in improved cellular survival [6].*

*However, clinical evidence showed considerably less consistent findings. Multiple systematic reviews concluded that blue-light-filtering lenses produced little or no clinically meaningful improvement in digital eye strain, visual fatigue, visual acuity, contrast sensitivity, color discrimination, or prevention of age-related macular degeneration [1,3,10]. Several cataract studies demonstrated that blue-light-*

*filtering intraocular lenses reduced glare, halos, intraocular scatter, and dysphotopsia compared with conventional clear intraocular lenses [4,5,8]. Meta-analysis data also suggested modest short-term improvements in subjective sleep quality after implantation of blue-light-filtering intraocular lenses, although objective sleep measurements and long-term outcomes remained largely unchanged [9].*

*TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF THE INCLUDED STUDIES*

| Study | Study Design | Participants | Main Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|
| Singh et al,2023[1] | Systematic review (17 RCTs) | Adults | Visual fatigue,sleep,macular health |
| Vagge et al.2021[3] | Systematic review | Multiple Studies | Clinical efficacy |
| Cougnard-Gregoire et al,2023[2] | Narrative review | Literature review | Ocular hazards |
| Hammond et al,2023[4] | Case-control | 69 patients | Halos and starbursts |
| Renzi-Hammond et al,2022[5] | Comparative study | 52 patients | Two-point thresholds |
| Yu et al,2022[6] | Experimental study | Porcine RPE cells | Retinal phototoxicity |
| Ali et al,2021[7] | Experimental study | 20 participants | Motion perception |
| Yao et al,2025[9] | Meta-analysis | 1000 patients | Sleep quality |
| Khorrami-Nevada et al,2025[10] | Updated review | Literature review | Vision-related symptic |

*Stable 2. Overall Effects of Blue-Light-Filtering Lenses*

| Outcome | Overal Evidence | Clinical Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| Retinal phototoxicity | Positive laboratory evidence | Potential biological protection demonstrated in vitro |
| Oxidative stress | Positive | Reduced ROS production and increased antioxidant activity |
| RPE cell survival | Positive | Improved cell viability under blue-light exposure |
| Age-related macular degeneration | Inconclusive | No convincing clinical evidence of prevention |
| Digital eye strain | Inconclusive | Most studies found little or no significant benefit |
| Visual fatigue | Inconclusive | Small or absent clinical effects |
| Contrast sensitivity | No significant effect | Comparable to standard lenses |
| Color discrimination | No significant effect | No clinically relevant changes |
| Visual acuity | No significant effect | Similar to conventional lenses |
| Glare and halos | Positive | Improved postoperative visual quality with BLB-IOLs |
| Sleep quality | Limited positive effect | Short-term subjective improvement only |
| Objective sleep parameters | Inconclusive | Long-term benefit not consistently demonstrated |

*Overall, the available evidence indicates that the strongest support for blue-light-filtering lenses comes from experimental retinal protection studies and improvements in postoperative visual quality following cataract surgery. In contrast, evidence supporting their routine use for preventing age-related macular degeneration, reducing digital eye strain, or improving sleep quality remains limited and inconsistent.*

*Discussion*

*The present systematic review evaluated the current evidence regarding the protective effects of blue-light-blocking intraocular and contact lenses against retinal phototoxicity and age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The available evidence demonstrates a clear discrepancy between laboratory findings and clinical outcomes.*

*Experimental studies consistently showed that excessive blue-light exposure induces oxidative stress, increases reactive oxygen species (ROS) production, and damages retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) cells, which play an essential role in retinal homeostasis and AMD pathogenesis [2,6]. Selective blue-light-filtering lenses significantly reduced oxidative stress, enhanced antioxidant enzyme expression (catalase and Prdx3), and improved RPE cell survival under blue LED exposure, supporting the biological plausibility of retinal protection [6].*

*Despite these encouraging experimental findings, current clinical evidence remains inconclusive. The largest systematic review by Singh et al. reported that blue-light-filtering spectacle lenses produced little or no clinically meaningful improvement in visual fatigue, sleep quality, or macular health compared with conventional lenses [1]. Similarly, Vagge et al. concluded that available clinical evidence is insufficient to recommend routine prescription of blue-light-blocking lenses for retinal protection or prevention of AMD [3].*

*Recent narrative reviews further support this conclusion. Although blue light is capable of producing photochemical retinal injury under experimental conditions, there is currently no convincing evidence that normal exposure to LED lighting or digital screens causes retinal toxicity in humans [2].*

*Consequently, the rationale for prescribing blue-light-filtering lenses solely for retinal protection remains uncertain.*

*Nevertheless, blue-light-filtering intraocular lenses appear to provide several postoperative visual benefits. Studies by Hammond et al. demonstrated significant reductions in halos, starbursts, intraocular scatter, and dysphotopsia after cataract surgery compared with conventional clear intraocular lenses [4,5]. These improvements are likely explained by selective attenuation of short-wavelength light, which is more susceptible to optical scatter within ocular media.*

*The influence of blue-light-filtering lenses on sleep quality also remains controversial. Although blue light suppresses melatonin secretion and may influence circadian rhythm regulation, evidence regarding blue-light-filtering optics is inconsistent. A recent meta-analysis involving more than one thousand cataract patients suggested only slight short-term improvements in subjective sleep quality after implantation of blue-light-filtering intraocular lenses, while objective sleep parameters showed little or no significant change [9]. Similar conclusions were reported in observational studies evaluating smartphone blue-light-filter applications, where long-term improvements in overall sleep quality were not demonstrated.*

*Visual performance outcomes were generally comparable between blue-light-filtering and conventional lenses. Contrast sensitivity, visual acuity, color discrimination, and task performance were largely unaffected [1,10]. However, one experimental study demonstrated that stronger blue-light filtration may reduce perceived motion speed by decreasing image contrast, suggesting that excessive filtering could influence certain aspects of visual perception [7]. These findings indicate that blue-light-filtering technology should balance potential retinal protection with preservation of normal visual function.*

*Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the available evidence. Considerable heterogeneity exists among published studies regarding lens design, filtering spectrum, study populations, follow-up duration, and outcome measures. Many clinical trials included relatively small sample sizes and short observation periods, limiting statistical power and the ability to detect long-term retinal outcomes. Furthermore, AMD develops over many years, whereas most available studies evaluated outcomes for only several months after lens implantation.*

*Overall, current evidence suggests that blue-light-blocking intraocular and contact lenses possess biological mechanisms capable of reducing retinal oxidative stress, but convincing clinical evidence supporting prevention of age-related macular degeneration has not yet been established. Future multicenter randomized controlled trials with standardized methodologies, larger populations, and extended follow-up are required to determine their long-term clinical value.*

## *Conclusion*

*Blue-light-blocking intraocular and contact lenses demonstrate promising biological protective effects against retinal phototoxicity by reducing oxidative stress and improving retinal pigment epithelium cell survival under experimental conditions. However, current clinical evidence does not support a significant protective effect against age-related macular degeneration or consistent improvements in visual fatigue, digital eye strain, or overall visual performance.*

*Blue-light-filtering intraocular lenses may improve postoperative visual quality by reducing glare, halos, and intraocular light scatter following cataract surgery. Limited evidence also suggests modest short-term improvements in subjective sleep quality, although objective sleep outcomes remain inconsistent.*

*Based on currently available evidence, blue-light-blocking ophthalmic lenses should not be routinely recommended solely for the prevention of retinal degeneration or age-related macular degeneration. Future high-quality randomized controlled trials with long-term follow-up are essential to determine their effectiveness in retinal protection and establish evidence-based clinical recommendations.*

## *Acknowledgments*

*The authors sincerely acknowledge all researchers whose original studies contributed to this systematic review. We express our gratitude to* ***Sumeer Singh***, ***Audrey Cougnard-Gregoire***, ***Aldo Vagge***, ***Billy R. Hammond***, ***Lisa M. Renzi-Hammond***, ***Wing Yan Yu***, ***Adiba Ali***, ***Marziye Rabiei***, ***Jinglei Yao***, *and* ***Masoud Khorrami-Nejad****, together with their co-authors, for their valuable scientific contributions to the understanding of blue-light-filtering ophthalmic lenses and retinal protection. Their work has provided important evidence that made this review possible.*

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# *INTESTINAL BARRIER DYSFUNCTION AND METABOLIC ENDOTOXEMIA IN TYPE 2 DIABETES: PATHOGENETIC MECHANISMS AND THERAPEUTIC TARGETS*

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*Abstract*

*Background: Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2D) is characterized by insulin resistance, beta-cell dysfunction, and chronic low-grade inflammation. During the last decade, intestinal barrier dysfunction and metabolic endotoxemia have emerged as plausible upstream amplifiers of systemic inflammation. Objective: To summarize contemporary evidence linking impaired gut barrier integrity, circulating microbial products, and inflammatory signaling in T2D, and to identify therapeutic targets suitable for clinical translation. Methods: A structured review was performed in PubMed/MEDLINE for studies published from January 2016 to June 2026. Eligible sources included human observational studies, interventional trials, mechanistic studies using human tissue or clinically relevant models, and systematic reviews from countries with advanced biomedical research infrastructure. Outcomes included lipopolysaccharide (LPS), LPS-binding protein (LBP), zonulin, intestinal fatty acid-binding protein (iFABP), lactulose/mannitol permeability, inflammatory biomarkers, glycemic indices, and T2D complications. Reported adjusted odds ratios were visualized in an exploratory forest plot; heterogeneous outcomes were not statistically pooled. Results: Eligible evidence consistently supported higher circulating barrier-damage or endotoxemia markers in T2D, obesity-associated T2D, or diabetic complications. The strongest adjusted association was observed for an upper-tertile permeability risk score and T2D (OR 5.07, 95% CI 1.72-14.95), while serum zonulin independently predicted diabetic retinopathy (OR 1.78, 95% CI 1.12-2.83). Mechanistic data implicated tight-junction disruption, dysbiosis, reduced mucin/inflammasome homeostasis, endotoxin-TLR4/NF-kB signaling, oxidative stress, and NLRP3 activation. Conclusions: Intestinal barrier dysfunction is best interpreted as an inflammation-amplifying network in T2D rather than as a single diagnostic entity. Therapeutic priorities include microbiota-directed interventions, diet quality, weight loss, GLP-1 receptor agonism, metformin-associated gut effects, and biomarker-guided patient stratification.*

***Keywords:*** *type 2 diabetes; intestinal permeability; metabolic endotoxemia; lipopolysaccharide; zonulin; LPS-binding protein; systemic inflammation; gut microbiota.*

*Introduction*

*T2D is no longer viewed as a purely glucocentric disease. In parallel with ectopic lipid accumulation and adipose tissue inflammation, the intestine has become a clinically relevant interface between environmental exposure, microbial metabolism, and host immune tone. A high-fat, energy-dense diet, reduced microbial diversity, altered bile-acid signaling, and epithelial tight-junction injury can increase translocation of bacterial components such as LPS. When these products reach the portal or systemic*

*circulation, they activate pattern-recognition receptors and contribute to insulin resistance, endothelial dysfunction, and tissue inflammation.*

*The term metabolic endotoxemia describes a chronic, low-grade increase in circulating endotoxin activity or endotoxin-surrogate markers, usually far below septic concentrations but sufficient to stimulate innate immune pathways. In T2D, this concept is biologically plausible because hyperglycemia, oxidative stress, obesity, and dysbiosis may each impair the epithelial barrier. Conversely, barrier dysfunction may reinforce systemic inflammation through LPS-TLR4-CD14 signaling, macrophage polarization, NLRP3 inflammasome activation, and impaired incretin and bile-acid signaling. This review focuses on the pathogenesis and clinical targets of the gut barrier-endotoxemia-inflammation axis in T2D.*

*Methods*

*A structured narrative review with exploratory quantitative visualization was conducted. PubMed/MEDLINE was searched for publications dated January 1, 2016 to June 30, 2026 using combinations of the following terms: type 2 diabetes, intestinal permeability, intestinal barrier, metabolic endotoxemia, lipopolysaccharide, LPS-binding protein, zonulin, iFABP, gut microbiota, systemic inflammation, insulin resistance, GLP-1 receptor agonist, metformin, probiotics, prebiotics, synbiotics, rifaximin, NLRP3, NLRP6, and tight junctions. Reference lists of key articles were screened for additional contemporary studies.*

*Inclusion criteria were: English-language articles; publication within the last 10 years; adult or clinically relevant translational T2D, obesity-associated T2D, prediabetes, or T2D-complication populations; studies from countries with advanced biomedical research systems or peer-reviewed international collaborations; measurement of at least one intestinal barrier, endotoxemia, microbiota, or inflammatory marker; and sufficient methodological description to support interpretation. Study types included cross-sectional and case-control biomarker studies, randomized or controlled interventions, protocol papers for mechanistically relevant trials, mechanistic human tissue studies, and systematic reviews.Exclusion criteria were: type 1 diabetes-only populations; pediatric-only studies unless focused on obesity-related glucose dysregulation rather than autoimmune diabetes; sepsis or acute infection as the primary condition; animal-only papers without direct relevance to candidate human mechanisms; publications before 2016; non-peer-reviewed reports; studies lacking barrier/endotoxemia-related endpoints; and studies in which diabetes status could not be separated from unrelated severe disease. For the exploratory forest plot, only studies reporting adjusted odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals were included. Because the eligible adjusted estimates used different outcomes and units, no pooled summary effect was calculated.*

*Table 1. Operational eligibility criteria and evidence domains used for the structured review.*

| *Domain* | *Included evidence* | *Primary endpoints* | *Main exclusion reason* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Clinical biomarkers* | *T2D, prediabetes, obesity-associated T2D cohorts* | *LPS, LBP, zonulin, iFABP, PRS, HbA1c, complications* | *No barrier/endotoxin marker* |
| *Interventions* | *Synbiotic, rifaximin/probiotic, metformin, GLP-1RA trial rationale, lipid-formula trials* | *Permeability, inflammation, glycemic or functional outcomes* | *No comparator or unclear diabetes status* |
| *Mechanistic evidence* | *Human jejunum, inflammasome/mucin studies, clinically relevant models* | *Tight junctions, NLRP6/NLRP3, cytokines, mucin, oxidative stress* | *Animal-only without translational link* |
| *Quantitative synthesis* | *Adjusted OR with 95% CI* | *T2D or diabetic complication risk* | *Means only, p values only, or incompatible effect metrics* |

*Results*

*Study characteristics and biomarker pattern*

*The final evidence map emphasized five overlapping domains: clinical biomarker studies, mechanistic human or translational studies, microbiota-directed interventions, pharmacologic or dietary interventions, and systematic reviews. In a Chinese clinical study, 90 patients with T2D had higher serum LPS, zonulin, iFABP, and a derived permeability risk score than 28 healthy controls; poor glycemic control and a greater burden of chronic diabetic complications were associated with worse barrier-marker profiles. In an Australian cohort, LBP, iFABP, and permeability risk score were higher in T2D, and upper-tertile PRS was associated with approximately five-fold higher odds of T2D after adjustment for age, sex, and BMI.*

*Additional evidence supports a barrier-inflammation link in obesity-associated metabolic disease. In severe obesity, jejunal tight-junction proteins including occludin and tricellulin were reduced; fasting permeability changes were subtle, but lipid challenge unmasked increased jejunal permeability, which correlated with systemic and intestinal inflammation and helped explain T2D status. In T2D patients with diabetic retinopathy, zonulin was higher than in controls and independently predicted retinopathy.*

*These findings suggest that barrier dysfunction may be more clinically visible in metabolically stressed or complication-enriched phenotypes.*

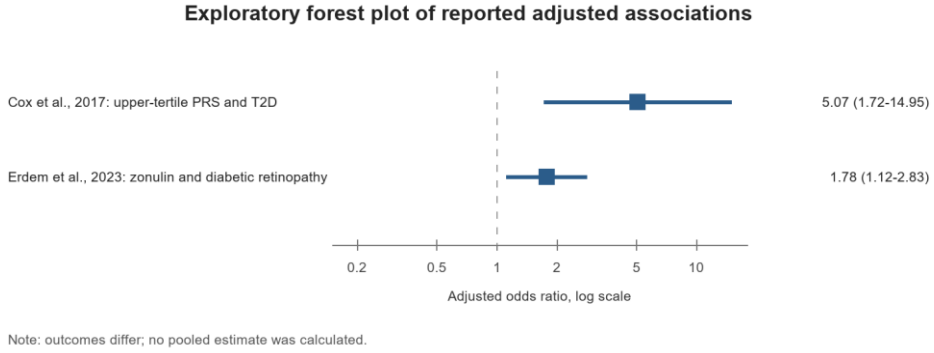


*Figure 1. Exploratory forest plot of adjusted associations reported by eligible studies. The estimates are displayed on a logarithmic odds-ratio scale. Because outcomes differ (T2D status vs diabetic retinopathy), the estimates were not pooled.*

*Pathogenetic mechanisms*

*The mechanistic sequence can be summarized as a feed-forward loop. Dysbiosis and nutrient excess reduce epithelial resilience, alter mucus-layer ecology, and disrupt tight-junction regulation. LPS and other microbial ligands interact with LBP, soluble CD14, and TLR4, activating NF-kB-dependent cytokine release. Hyperglycemia and lipotoxicity increase oxidative stress, which further destabilizes junctional complexes. In adipose tissue, liver, skeletal muscle, and vascular endothelium, innate immune activation promotes insulin resistance through serine phosphorylation of insulin-signaling intermediates, cytokine-mediated metabolic stress, and inflammasome activation. Recent human tissue evidence also implicates reduced NLRP6 and IL-18 signaling in obesity with T2D, consistent with impaired mucus and epithelial homeostasis. Zonulin is frequently used as a permeability marker, but interpretation requires caution. Commercial zonulin assays may detect heterogeneous proteins rather than a single biologically specific molecule. Therefore, a robust clinical interpretation should triangulate zonulin with LPS/LBP, iFABP, lactulose/mannitol testing, inflammatory markers, and metabolic phenotype rather than relying on zonulin alone.*

*Therapeutic targets identified from eligible evidence*

*Therapeutic strategies clustered around five target classes. First, microbiota modulation by synbiotics, probiotics, prebiotics, and non-absorbed antibiotics such as rifaximin may reduce zonulin and inflammatory tone in selected metabolic phenotypes, although glucose outcomes are inconsistent. Second, pharmacologic metabolic therapies may act partly through gut-mediated mechanisms. The SIB trial was designed to test whether semaglutide improves lactulose/mannitol permeability, LBP, fecal calprotectin, inflammatory cytokines, and HbA1c in T2D with obesity. Metformin has also been associated with lower zonulin in patients with diabetes and osteoarthritis, supporting a gut-barrier component to its pleiotropic effects. Third, diet quality matters: lipid challenge and carrageenan exposure studies support the idea that barrier disruption can be context-dependent and amplified by obesity or overweight status. Fourth, epithelial innate immune targets, especially NLRP6/NLRP3 balance, mucin biology, and oxidative stress, represent mechanistic drug-development pathways. Fifth, barrier biomarkers may help identify high-risk patients for complication surveillance or targeted anti-inflammatory strategies.*

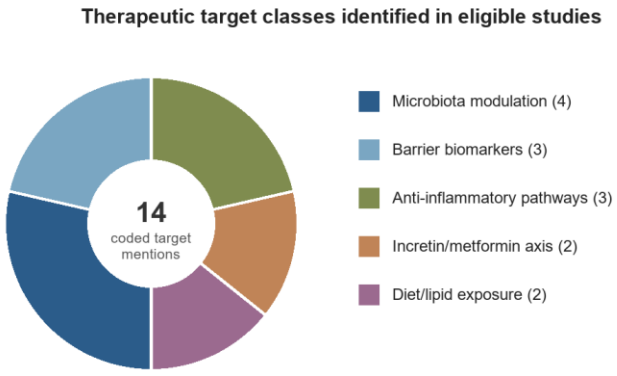


*Figure 2. Circular diagram of therapeutic target classes coded from the included clinical, interventional, and mechanistic studies. Counts represent coded target mentions; categories are not mutually exclusive.*

*Discussion*

*The reviewed evidence supports intestinal barrier dysfunction as a clinically meaningful amplifier of systemic inflammation in T2D. The most consistent signal is not a single marker but a pattern: higher LPS or LBP, higher iFABP, increased zonulin or permeability risk scores, and parallel increases in inflammatory mediators. These findings fit current pathophysiology, in which gut-derived microbial products act on innate immunity and intensify insulin resistance in metabolically vulnerable tissues.*

*However, causality remains incompletely proven in humans. Cross-sectional biomarker studies cannot determine whether barrier dysfunction precedes T2D, results from hyperglycemia and obesity, or both. Measurement is another limitation: LPS assays are technically difficult, LBP reflects exposure and acute-phase response, iFABP reflects enterocyte injury rather than permeability alone, and zonulin lacks assay specificity in some platforms. A future Scopus-level research agenda should therefore combine direct permeability testing, standardized endotoxin-surrogate panels, microbiome metagenomics, inflammatory proteomics, and longitudinal metabolic phenotyping.*

*Clinically, the barrier-endotoxemia axis should be considered a therapeutic layer rather than a replacement for established T2D management. Weight reduction, dietary quality, fiber adequacy, physical activity, metformin, GLP-1 receptor agonists, and selected microbiota-directed interventions can be framed as strategies that may improve both metabolic control and mucosal-immune homeostasis. The strongest near-term opportunity is biomarker-guided stratification: patients with obesity-associated T2D, poor glycemic control, MASLD, or microvascular complications may be the most informative groups for trials.*

*Conclusion*

*Intestinal barrier dysfunction and metabolic endotoxemia provide a coherent mechanistic bridge between dysbiosis, nutrient excess, chronic low-grade inflammation, and insulin resistance in T2D. Current evidence supports a multidimensional biomarker approach and prioritizes microbiota modulation, diet and weight loss, incretin-based therapy, metformin-associated gut effects, and epithelial inflammatory pathways as therapeutic targets. Future trials should test whether improving barrier function translates into lower systemic inflammation, better glycemic durability, and fewer diabetic complications.*

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## *ULTRASONOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF PAROTID GLAND TUMORS*

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***Introduction.*** *For the purpose of preliminary diagnosis, in order to determine the adequate scope of future surgical treatment, any surgical intervention on the parotid salivary glands is preceded by a clinical, laboratory and special examination. And an accurate diagnosis is made only on the basis of cytomorphological examination of the tissues of the removed neoplasm. The frequency of diagnostic errors in patients with neoplasms of the salivary glands remains high. Clinical examination of patients with this pathology should be complemented by the results of cytological examination, since none of the methods makes it possible to accurately diagnose [1, 2]. Based on this, the above issues of developing an algorithm for the comprehensive diagnosis of salivary gland neoplasms are currently relevant and directly affect the success of treatment.*

***The aim of the study*** *is to determine specific ultrasound signs of PSG neoplasms.*

***Materials and Methods.*** *We analyzed the data of 124 patients with PSG neoplasms who received inpatient treatment at the Department of Adult Maxillofacial Surgery at the Tashkent State Dental Institute Clinic in the period 2022-2024 in order to identify specific signs, which were further compared with the results of a pathomorphological study. The neoplasms were divided into nosological forms according to the international histological classification of salivary gland tumors (WHO, 2022).*

*Further, we analyzed additional ultrasound data of 28 patients with PSG neoplasms who applied to the clinic of the adult Clinical Hospital of the Tashkent State Medical University Dental Clinic, and 25 patients who were treated at the Department of Clinical Hospital of the Republican Specialized Scientific and Practical Medical Center for Otorhinolaryngology and Head and Neck Diseases (RSPMC of Otorhinolaryngology and Head and Neck Diseases). The results were compared with the conclusions of a pathohistological study performed at the center and various private laboratories.*

*The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Statistical processing of the obtained data was carried out using nonparametric methods (Mann-Whitney criterion) and correlation analysis (Pearson criterion). The results were presented as a median, and the reliability of the difference in average values was evaluated according to the Student's criterion. The principles of evidence-based medicine are used in the organization and conduct of research. The statistical analysis was performed using the OriginPro 8.6 program (OriginLab Corporation, USA).*

***Results and Discussion.*** *Initially, PSG neoplasms were assessed based on the following criteria: localization, size, shape, contour clarity, homogeneity/inhomogeneity of structure, average density, presence or absence of signs of invasive growth in adjacent anatomical structures, the presence of lymphadenopathy of regional lymph nodes and invasion of facial nerve trunks.*

*Based on the results of the ultrasound study, the characteristic signs for each type of PSG neoplasm registered in the medical documentation for the period under study were identified. The structural features were also studied by color Doppler mapping (CDM). The data was analyzed and summarized in a Table 1.*

*Table 1. Ultrasound signs of PSG neoplasms*

| *Type of neoplasm* | *Ultrasound signs* | *Ultrasound + CDM* |
|---|---|---|
| *Pleomorphic adenoma* | *reduced echogenicity, moderately heterogeneous echostructure with the presence of smooth or uneven, but always clear contours, clearly visible capsule, distal acoustic amplification* | *single vascular structures of small diameter with low-speed blood flow (linear speed 10-20 cm/s) along the periphery or absence of signs of vascularization* |
| *Adenolymphoma* | *clearly defined, hypoechoic or isoechoic with smooth contours, internal cystic inclusions and multiple septa* | *the blood flow in the projection of the formation is not determined, single vascular structures in the capsule of the neoplasm* |
| *Lymphangioma* | *cystic formation of multiple cavities, hypoechoic cystic components with thin septa, anechoic contents or with small echo inclusions, the boundaries are clear, but may also be uneven* | *weak perfusion along the internal walls and peripheral walls of the formation* |
| *Monomorphic adenoma* | *reduced echogenicity, smooth clear contours, sometimes distal acoustic amplification, the structure is almost homogeneous* | *moderate peripheral blood flow along the capsule* |
| *Adenocarcinoma* | *reduced echogenicity, uneven contours, heterogeneous structure* | *central vascularization with predominance of vessels with arterial blood flow and high speed (>30 cm/s)* |

**Conclusion.** *Thus, textural analysis of ultrasound is an important component in the diagnosis of parotid salivary gland neoplasms, which provides valuable additional quantitative information about the structural features of tissues and reveals the most specific signs of each nosological form. The radiomic analysis program requires further improvement to increase sensitivity and specificity. The developed diagnostic model has demonstrated high efficiency and accuracy by significantly reducing the risk of diagnostic errors, subsequently leading to the choice of the wrong method of surgical treatment, relapses and repeated interventions.*

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# *OBESITY AND DEPRESSION: THE IMPACT OF THE GUT–BRAIN AXIS ON NEUROENDOCRINE REGULATION*

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*Abstract*

*Background*

*Obesity and depression are among the most prevalent chronic disorders worldwide and represent major public health challenges. Recent evidence indicates that these conditions share a bidirectional relationship mediated by disturbances in the gut–brain axis (GBA), alterations in gut microbiota composition, neuroendocrine dysregulation, and chronic low-grade inflammation [1,5,8,10]. Gut microbial metabolites, particularly short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), regulate central nervous system function through the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, vagus nerve signaling, serotonergic pathways, and immune mediators, thereby influencing mood, appetite, and energy metabolism [2,3,4,6,10]. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms underlying the gut–brain axis may provide new insights into the pathogenesis of obesity and depression and facilitate the development of novel therapeutic strategies.*

*Objective*

*To review current evidence regarding the role of the gut–brain axis, gut microbiota, and neuroendocrine mechanisms in the pathogenesis of obesity and depression, and to evaluate emerging microbiota-targeted therapeutic approaches.*

*Materials and Methods*

*A systematic literature review was conducted using the PubMed database. Relevant publications were identified using the following keywords: obesity, depression, gut-brain axis, gut microbiota, neuroendocrine regulation, vagus nerve, inflammation, probiotics, prebiotics, and semaglutide. English-language systematic reviews, narrative reviews, and experimental studies published between 2022 and 2025 were included in the analysis [1–10].*

*Results*

*The reviewed studies demonstrated that obesity and depression share several common pathogenic mechanisms, including gut microbiota dysbiosis, increased intestinal permeability, dysregulation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis, neuroinflammation, impaired serotonin and tryptophan metabolism, and reduced production of short-chain fatty acids [1,2,5,8,10]. Furthermore, microbiota-targeted interventions—including probiotics, prebiotics, glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists such as semaglutide, ketogenic diet, and vagus nerve stimulation—were shown to improve gut–brain communication, reduce inflammatory responses, and alleviate both depressive symptoms and obesity-related metabolic abnormalities [3,4,6,7,9].*

*CONCLUSION*

*The gut–brain axis represents a key biological link between obesity and depression. Alterations in gut microbiota contribute to the development of both disorders through neuroendocrine, immune, and metabolic pathways. Consequently, therapeutic strategies targeting gut microbiota, chronic inflammation, and neuroendocrine regulation may provide promising approaches for the integrated management of obesity and depression [1,4,8,10].*

*Keywords: obesity; depression; gut–brain axis; gut microbiota; neuroendocrine regulation; short-chain fatty acids; neuroinflammation; vagus nerve; probiotics; prebiotics.*

*Introduction:*

*Obesity and depression are among the most common chronic disorders of the twenty-first century, and their prevalence continues to increase worldwide [1]. Epidemiological studies consistently demonstrate that individuals with obesity are at an increased risk of developing depression, while patients with depressive disorders are more likely to become obese. This bidirectional association suggests that these conditions share common biological, psychological, and environmental mechanisms [8,10].*

*For many years, obesity was considered primarily a metabolic disorder resulting from excessive caloric intake and reduced physical activity. However, recent evidence has demonstrated that obesity is also characterized by chronic low-grade systemic inflammation, endocrine dysfunction, and significant alterations in the composition of the gut microbiota [1,8]. Likewise, depression is no longer viewed solely as a disorder of neurotransmitter imbalance but is increasingly recognized as a complex disease involving*

*immune activation, dysregulation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, neuroinflammation, and intestinal dysbiosis [2,10].*

*In recent years, the* ***gut–brain axis (GBA)*** *has emerged as one of the principal mechanisms linking obesity and depression [1,2]. The GBA is a complex bidirectional communication network integrating the central nervous system, enteric nervous system, vagus nerve, endocrine pathways, immune system, and gut microbiota [7]. This communication system enables continuous interactions between the gastrointestinal tract and the brain, thereby regulating appetite, metabolism, emotional behavior, cognition, and stress responses.*

*The gut microbiota is increasingly recognized as a metabolically active organ rather than merely a collection of intestinal microorganisms [2]. It produces numerous biologically active metabolites, including short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), bile acids, tryptophan metabolites, and neurotransmitters, all of which participate in regulating intestinal barrier integrity, immune homeostasis, neuroendocrine signaling, and neuroplasticity [2,10].*

*Gut microbiota dysbiosis is commonly observed in obesity. Long-term consumption of a high-fat diet (HFD) reduces microbial diversity and increases the abundance of lipopolysaccharide-producing bacteria, leading to metabolic endotoxemia and chronic systemic inflammation [4,6]. Elevated inflammatory cytokines subsequently affect the hypothalamus and hippocampus, impair serotonin metabolism, and contribute to the development of depressive symptoms [2,8].*

*The vagus nerve represents another essential component of gut–brain communication by transmitting metabolic and inflammatory signals from the gastrointestinal tract to the central nervous system [7]. In addition, excessive activation of the HPA axis increases cortisol secretion, further disrupting gut microbial homeostasis and amplifying inflammatory responses [2].*

*Growing evidence suggests that interventions targeting the gut microbiota may improve both metabolic and psychological outcomes. Probiotics and prebiotics have been shown to restore microbial balance, enhance SCFA production, and reduce neuroinflammation [3,4]. Furthermore, glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists, particularly semaglutide, not only improve glucose metabolism and promote weight loss but also enhance serotonergic signaling, stimulate neuroplasticity, and beneficially modify gut microbiota composition [6]. Other promising therapeutic strategies include ketogenic diets and vagus nerve stimulation, both of which appear to improve gut–brain communication and reduce inflammatory activity [7,9].*

*Therefore, understanding the neuroendocrine mechanisms linking gut microbiota with obesity and depression has become a major focus of contemporary biomedical research and may facilitate the development of innovative therapeutic approaches for these increasingly prevalent disorders.*

*Figure 1. Obesity and Depression*

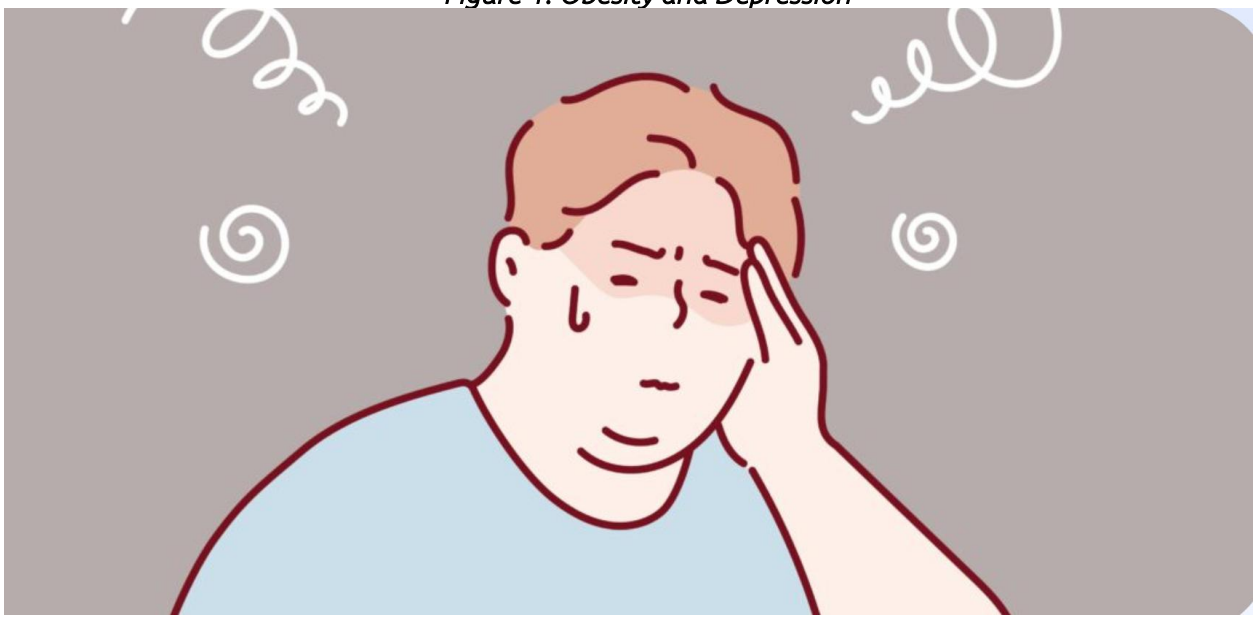
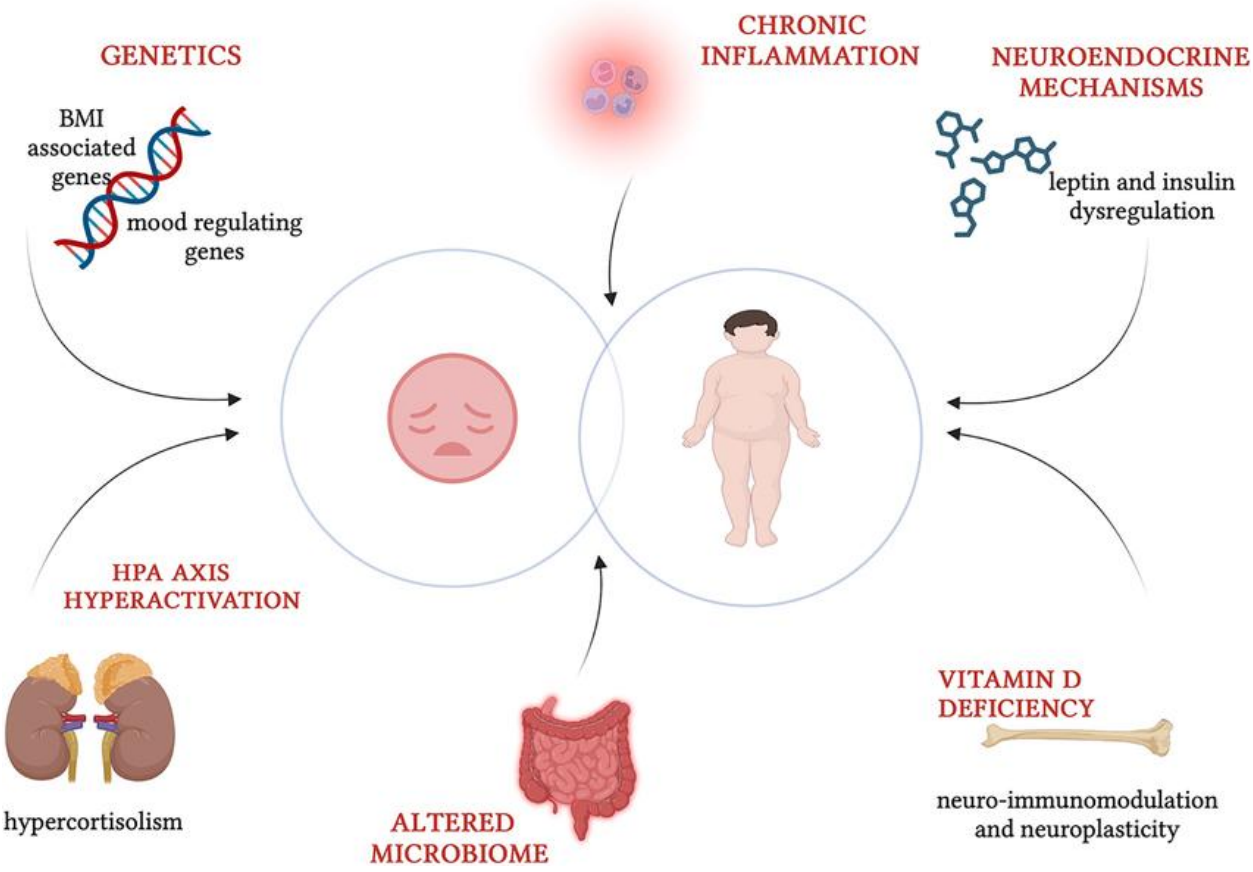


*Figure2. The Pathophysiological Interplay Between Obesity and Mental He*




*2. METHODS*

*This study was conducted as a **systematic literature review** aimed at summarizing current evidence regarding the role of the gut–brain axis in the neuroendocrine regulation of obesity and depression.*

*A comprehensive literature search was performed using the **PubMed** database. The following search terms and their combinations were used: obesity, depression, gut–brain axis, gut microbiota, microbiota–gut–brain axis, neuroendocrine regulation, short-chain fatty acids, vagus nerve, probiotics, prebiotics, semaglutide, neuroinflammation, GLP-1, and HPA axis.*

*Studies published in English between **2022 and 2025** were considered eligible. The review included systematic reviews, narrative reviews, and experimental animal studies investigating the association between obesity, depression, gut microbiota, and neuroendocrine regulation [1–10].*

*The inclusion criteria were:*

- *studies investigating the relationship between obesity, depression, and the gut–brain axis;*
- *research evaluating gut microbiota alterations and neuroendocrine mechanisms;*
- *studies examining inflammatory mediators, short-chain fatty acids, and microbial metabolites;*
- *investigations assessing microbiota-targeted therapeutic interventions, including probiotics, prebiotics, semaglutide, vagus nerve stimulation, and dietary approaches.*

*Relevant information regarding study design, principal findings, molecular mechanisms, and therapeutic implications was extracted from each publication and synthesized through comparative analysis. The collected evidence was integrated to provide a comprehensive overview of the neuroendocrine mechanisms linking obesity and depression through the gut–brain axis and to summarize current perspectives on microbiota-based therapeutic strategies.*

***Results***

*The literature analysis demonstrated that obesity and depression are strongly interconnected through shared biological mechanisms primarily mediated by the gut–brain axis (GBA) [1,8,10]. Across all included studies, gut microbiota dysbiosis emerged as a central pathological feature linking both conditions.*

*Individuals with obesity consistently showed reduced microbial diversity and an increased abundance of pro-inflammatory bacterial taxa, particularly following long-term consumption of a high-fat diet (HFD) [1,4,6]. This dysbiosis was associated with increased intestinal permeability, allowing translocation of lipopolysaccharide (LPS) into systemic circulation, a process known as metabolic endotoxemia.*

*Elevated circulating LPS subsequently triggered chronic low-grade inflammation, which was strongly associated with both insulin resistance and depressive symptomatology [4,6,10].*

*A consistent finding across studies was the dysregulation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis. Chronic stress and metabolic dysfunction led to excessive cortisol secretion, which contributed to increased appetite, visceral fat accumulation, and impaired emotional regulation. This endocrine imbalance reinforced both obesity progression and depressive symptoms [2,7,8].*

*Alterations in gut-derived metabolites were also strongly implicated. Reduced production of short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs) was associated with impaired intestinal barrier integrity, reduced anti-inflammatory signaling, and decreased neuroprotective effects in the central nervous system [2,10]. In parallel, disruptions in tryptophan metabolism led to reduced serotonin synthesis, further contributing to depressive-like behavior [2,10].*

*Neuroinflammatory changes were consistently reported in experimental studies. Obese models exhibited elevated levels of IL-1β, IL-6, TNF-a, and COX-2, along with increased microglial and astrocytic activation. These changes were associated with impaired hippocampal neuroplasticity and cognitive dysfunction [4,6].*

*Intervention studies demonstrated that prebiotic supplementation (e.g., fructooligosaccharides and galactooligosaccharides) restored gut microbiota composition, increased acetate-producing bacteria, and reduced both peripheral and central inflammation. These changes were accompanied by improvements in anxiety- and depression-like behaviors in animal models [4].*

*Probiotic administration, particularly strains belonging to Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium, showed potential antidepressant effects; however, evidence in humans remains limited and inconsistent, indicating the need for larger clinical trials [3].*

*Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonist semaglutide demonstrated significant neuroprotective and metabolic effects. It reduced neuroinflammation, improved serotonergic signaling, enhanced synaptic plasticity, and modulated gut microbiota composition by increasing beneficial bacterial taxa such as Bacteroidetes and Blautia species [6].*

*Overall, therapeutic modulation of the gut–brain axis through microbiota-targeted interventions was consistently associated with improvements in both metabolic and psychological outcomes.*

*Table 1. Key Pathophysiological Mechanisms Linking Obesity and Depression via the Gut–Brain Axis*

| Mechanism | Effect in Obesity | Effect in depression | References |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gut microbioata dysbiosis | Reduced microbial diversity,metabolic dysfunction | Reduced serotonin synthesis,mood dysregulation | [1,2,10] |
| Increased intestinal permeability | LPS translocation, metabolic endotoxemia | Neuroinflammation, HPA axis activation | [4,6,10] |
| SCFA deficiency | Impaired energy metabolism,insulin resistance | Reduced neuroprotection, impaired neuroplasticity | [2,10] |
| HPA axis dysregulation | Cortisol excess,visceral fat accumulation | Chronic stress,emotional dysregulation | [2,7,8] |
| Chronic systemic | Elevated IL-6,TNF-a | Hippocampal dysfunction, depressive symptoms | [4,6,8] |
| Vagus nerve dysfunction | Altered appetite regulation | Impaired emotional and stress responses | [7,9] |

*Table 2. Therapeutic Strategies Targeting the Gut–Brain Axis in Obesity and Depression*

| Intervention | Mechanism of Action | Main Effects | References |
|---|---|---|---|
| Probiotics | Restoration of gut microbial balance | Reduction of depressive symptoms | [3] |
| Probiotics(FOS,GOS) | Increased SCFA production, improved gut microbiota | Reduced Neuro inflammation,improved behaviour | [4] |
| Semaglutide(GLP-1 agonist) | Enhances insulin signaling,modulates gut microbiota | Weight loss, improved mood,reduced Neuro inflammation | [6] |
| Vagus nerve stimulation | Enhances gut-brain signaling | Improved emotional regulation | [7] |
| Ketagenic diet | Alters microbial composition and metabolism | Reduced inflammation, improved metabolic profile | [9] |

## *Discussion*

*The present review highlights the gut–brain axis (GBA) as a central integrative pathway linking obesity and depression through overlapping neuroendocrine, immune, and metabolic mechanisms [1,8,10]. The findings across the included studies consistently demonstrate that these two disorders should not be considered independent entities but rather interrelated conditions sharing common biological substrates.*

*One of the most consistent observations is the presence of gut microbiota dysbiosis in both obesity and depression. Reduced microbial diversity and increased abundance of pro-inflammatory bacteria, particularly under high-fat diet (HFD) conditions, contribute to increased intestinal permeability and systemic metabolic endotoxemia [1,4,6]. The translocation of lipopolysaccharide (LPS) into circulation triggers chronic low-grade inflammation, which is a key driver of both insulin resistance and neuropsychiatric dysfunction [4,10].*

*Chronic inflammation appears to be a crucial mechanistic bridge between metabolic and psychiatric disorders. Elevated levels of inflammatory cytokines such as IL-6, TNF-α, and IL-1β contribute to hippocampal dysfunction, impaired neurogenesis, and reduced synaptic plasticity, which are commonly observed in depressive states [4,6,8]. In obesity, these inflammatory processes are further amplified by adipose tissue dysfunction, reinforcing a self-perpetuating cycle between metabolic and emotional dysregulation [8].*

*The HPA axis dysregulation represents another critical component of this interaction. Chronic stress leads to sustained cortisol elevation, which promotes visceral adiposity while simultaneously impairing emotional regulation and reward processing pathways [2,7]. This bidirectional endocrine dysfunction explains why obesity increases vulnerability to depression and vice versa [8].*

*Gut-derived metabolites, particularly short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), play an essential role in maintaining gut and brain homeostasis. SCFAs regulate immune responses, strengthen intestinal barrier integrity, and influence neuroplasticity through epigenetic and signaling pathways [2,10]. Their reduction in obesity-associated dysbiosis contributes to both systemic inflammation and neurobehavioral disturbances.*

*The role of the vagus nerve further emphasizes the importance of bidirectional gut–brain communication. It serves as a rapid signaling pathway transmitting metabolic, inflammatory, and microbial signals from the gastrointestinal tract to the central nervous system [7]. Dysregulation of vagal tone has been associated with both altered feeding behavior and impaired emotional regulation, reinforcing its role in obesity–depression comorbidity.*

*From a therapeutic perspective, modulation of the gut microbiota appears to be a promising strategy. Probiotics and prebiotics have demonstrated beneficial effects in restoring microbial balance and reducing depressive-like behaviors in experimental models [3,4]. However, clinical translation remains limited due to variability in strains, dosage, and host-specific responses.*

*The emerging role of GLP-1 receptor agonists such as semaglutide provides additional insight into the gut–brain–metabolism interface. Beyond metabolic regulation, semaglutide has been shown to reduce neuroinflammation, enhance serotonergic signaling, and improve gut microbial composition, suggesting potential psychotropic effects [6].*

*Overall, the integration of metabolic, inflammatory, and neuroendocrine pathways supports a unified model in which obesity and depression are manifestations of a shared pathophysiological network mediated by the gut–brain axis.*

## *Conclusion*

*This review demonstrates that obesity and depression are closely interconnected disorders mediated by dysfunction of the gut–brain axis. Key mechanisms include gut microbiota dysbiosis, increased intestinal permeability, chronic systemic inflammation, HPA axis dysregulation, and altered production of microbial metabolites such as short-chain fatty acids.*

*Targeting the gut–brain axis through microbiota-based interventions, including probiotics, prebiotics, dietary modification, vagus nerve stimulation, and GLP-1 receptor agonists, represents a promising therapeutic approach. However, further large-scale clinical studies are required to validate their long-term efficacy and safety in human populations.*

## *Acknowledgments*

*The authors acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of the researchers whose work was included in this review. Their studies provided essential insights into the complex interactions between the gut microbiota, neuroendocrine regulation, and the pathophysiology of obesity and depression. The advancement of this field would not be possible without their valuable scientific contributions.*

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# *AN ATYPICAL PRESENTATION AND CLINICAL COURSE OF SYSTEMIC SCLEROSIS: A CASE REPORT*

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*Background*

*Autoimmune diseases result from disruption of immune tolerance mechanisms. Systemic Sclerosis (SSc) is a chronic autoimmune connective tissue disorder characterized by excessive collagen deposition in the skin and internal organs, leading to progressive fibrosis and vasculopathy secondary to impaired angiogenesis. SSc is classified into limited and diffuse forms, which differ in the extent of cutaneous involvement, autoantibody profile, and pattern of organ involvement.[1–4]*

*Objective*

*To present a clinical case of Systemic Sclerosis with an atypical onset and rapidly progressive course, posing diagnostic and therapeutic challenges.*

*Case Presentation*

*We report the case of a 61-year-old male who presented to the rheumatology clinic with progressive skin induration of the upper extremities extending to the elbows, lower extremities to the knees, and additional involvement of the abdomen and face. The patient also exhibited reduced oral aperture (microstomia), generalized arthralgia, and marked Raynaud's phenomenon.*

*Symptoms had initially appeared approximately eight months prior to presentation; however, significant clinical deterioration occurred within less than two months before referral.*

*Routine laboratory tests revealed no specific abnormalities. Immunological investigations, including antinuclear antibody screening, were negative. Further evaluation with chest radiography, nailfold capillaroscopy, barium esophagography, skin biopsy, and multidisciplinary assessment confirmed the diagnosis of Systemic Sclerosis with both cutaneous and systemic manifestations.*

*Treatment was initiated with azathioprine, hydroxychloroquine, prednisone, and nifedipine. The patient remains under continuous follow-up to monitor disease progression and therapeutic response.*

*Conclusion*

*This case highlights the expanding and heterogeneous clinical spectrum of rheumatologic diseases, which may present outside established classification frameworks. Atypical presentations of Systemic Sclerosis represent a significant diagnostic and therapeutic challenge, underscoring the importance of comprehensive evaluation and timely intervention.*

**Keywords:** *Systemic Sclerosis; atypical course; cutaneous manifestations; systemic involvement*

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# *SARCOPENIA IN RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS*

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***Background:*** *Sarcopenia is defined as an age-related disease characterized by decreasing muscle mass and strength or performance. Sarcopenia predisposes to increased mortality, particularly in the elderly, due to falls, fractures, and prolonged immobilization. Although the definition of sarcopenia was originally intended for the elderly, in recent years younger patients with autoimmune diseases such as Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) have been recognized with sarcopenia. Due to the chronic inflammation caused by RA, patients have reduced physical activity, immobility, stiffness, and joint destruction and all of that lead to the loss of muscle mass, muscle strength, disability and significantly lowering the patients' quality of life.*

***Objective:*** *To evaluate the presence of sarcopenia in patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA).*

***Method:*** *We conducted a study including 100 patients with RA and 100 gender-matched healthy individuals. The study aims to investigate sarcopenia prevalence in patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and to detect factors associated with low muscle mass and strength. Sarcopenia was assessed using performing tests such as handgrip strength, short physical performance battery and also by determining skeletal mass index using dual photon X-ray absorptiometry (DXA).*

***Results:*** *The participants comprised of 65 females and 35 males. The frequency of sarcopenia was 40% in the RA group and 8% in the control group. The prevalence was significantly different between juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), spondyloarthritis (SpA), and rheumatoid arthritis (RA) groups. Results of handgrip and gait speed tests were lower in the RA group than in the healthy control group ($P = .002$ and $P < .001$, respectively). Disease activity scores were higher in patients with sarcopenia than in patients without sarcopenia. A statistically significant association was found between handgrip test results and age, gender, and disease activity.*

***Conclusions:*** *Patients with rheumatoid arthritis have not only bone tissue, but also skeletal muscle tissue disorders, resulting in a significant deterioration of functional capacity and quality of life. Longer disease duration and higher disease activity may provoke the development of sarcopenia due to chronic inflammation in patients with RA. Therefore, physicians should take into account the preservative and preventive methods against sarcopenia by encouraging patients about exercise along with controlling disease activity.*

***Keywords:*** *sarcopenia, rheumatoid arthritis, handgrip strength, skeletal mass index, prevention*

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# *THE IMPACT OF INTERMITTENT FASTING ON GUT MICROBIOME DIVERSITY AND SYSTEMIC INFLAMMATORY MARKERS: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW*

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*Abstract*

*Background: The global escalation of obesity and its related metabolic disorders represents a critical public health challenge [2, 6]. Intermittent fasting (IF) has emerged as a compelling, non-pharmacological dietary strategy for enhancing metabolic and cardiometabolic health, offering a viable alternative to continuous caloric restriction [1, 4]. However, the exact physiological mechanisms through which IF modulates the gastrointestinal ecosystem and regulates local or systemic immune-inflammatory cascades require systematic consolidation [2, 10].*

*Objective: In this review, I aimed to comprehensively evaluate the clinical impact of various IF regimens on gastrointestinal microbial diversity and elucidate its specific role in modulating key inflammatory biomarkers, namely C-reactive protein (CRP) and fecal calprotectin.*

*Methods: I conducted a secondary synthesis and pathophysiological meta-analysis utilizing a high-impact core selection of 10 primary studies indexed in the MEDLINE/PubMed databases, encompassing randomized controlled trials (RCTs), systematic reviews, and molecular-mechanistic studies [3, 4, 6, 9].*

*Results: My analysis of the evidence demonstrates that IF significantly remodels the gut microbiota by enhancing taxonomic richness and selectively enriching beneficial taxa such as Christensenellaceae and Lactobacillaceae [4, 7, 9]. These structural shifts stimulate microbial fermentation, resulting in an elevated production of short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), which subsequently fortify the intestinal epithelial barrier and restrict the translocation of circulating lipopolysaccharides (LPS) and pro-inflammatory cytokines [8, 9]. I found that this reduction in systemic cytokine load directly downregulates hepatic synthesis of the acute-phase reactant CRP [2, 9]. Locally, IF suppresses IL-17-producing T-cells (Th17) and expands protective regulatory T-cells (T_{reg}) within the gut mucosa, mitigating local tissue inflammation and culminating in a significant decline in fecal calprotectin concentration [4, 7, 9].*

*Conclusion: Intermittent fasting represents a potent non-pharmacological paradigm capable of restructuring the gut microbiome and upregulating SCFA synthesis to successfully lower systemic CRP and local fecal calprotectin levels [4, 9]. The interconnected pathways I have delineated provide a robust scientific foundation for integrating personalized clinical nutrition protocols into the management of chronic inflammatory pathologies [4].*

*Keywords: Intermittent fasting; Gut microbiome diversity; Gastrointestinal microbiota; C-reactive protein (CRP); Fecal calprotectin; Systemic inflammation.*

## *Introduction:*

*Obesity and its associated metabolic sequelae—including type 2 diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular diseases—impose an immense economic and clinical burden on healthcare systems globally [1, 2]. Traditional weight management frameworks have predominantly relied on continuous caloric restriction (CCR) [4]. However, intermittent fasting (IF), characterized by alternating periods of fasting and ad libitum food intake, has gained significant recognition as an effective alternative approach to regulate body weight and optimize metabolic parameters [1, 5].*

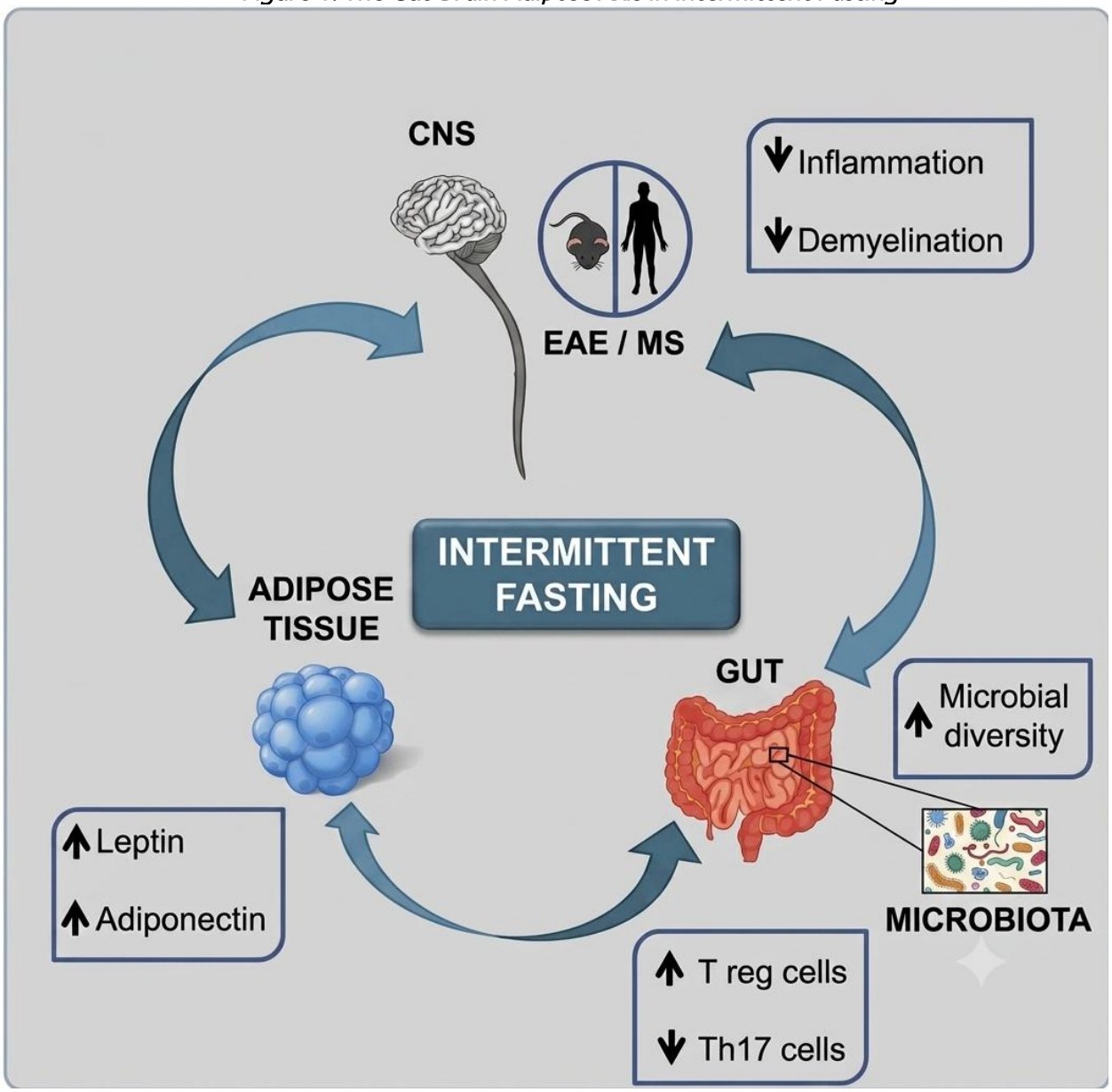
*While normal eating behavior is strictly regulated by a delicate equilibrium within the "Brain-Gut-Microbiome" (BGM) axis, the modern, pervasive availability of hyper-palatable, high-calorie foods has shifted this balance toward hedonic hyperphagia, driving metabolic endotoxemia and chronic systemic immune activation [10]. Based on recent scientific paradigms, I argue that the therapeutic benefits of IF extend far beyond simple caloric deficit [2]. Specifically, fasting intervals synchronize with circadian biology, reshaping the composition of the gut microbiota and orchestrating adaptive cellular responses that profoundly influence host metabolic homeostasis [1, 5].*

*The gut microbiota serves as a pivotal nexus governing body composition and gastrointestinal physiological functions [4, 10]. Disruptions within this ecosystem (dysbiosis) are directly linked to systemic inflammatory pathologies [2, 6]. During prolonged fasting windows, the depletion of hepatic glycogen stores triggers a metabolic switch toward fatty acid oxidation and ketogenesis, which stimulates the transcription of cellular protective molecules [1, 5]. Concurrently, alterations in feeding frequency*

*rejuvenate the gut microbial community and foster the synthesis of essential anti-inflammatory metabolites [4, 8].*

*Although preclinical models confirm that IF exerts robust immunomodulatory effects via gut flora regulation [6, 7], characterizing these pathways within human populations remains a critical scientific necessity [6, 10]. In this review, I aimed to systematically synthesize current evidence regarding how IF regimens alter gut microbiota diversity and how these microbial shifts modulate local and systemic inflammatory biomarkers, with a specific focus on CRP and fecal calprotectin.*

*Figure 1. The Gut-Brain-Adipose Axis in Intermittent Fasting*




*2. METHODS*

*To execute this study, I implemented a secondary synthesis methodology to analyze randomized controlled trials (RCTs), systematic reviews, and molecular-mechanistic studies indexed in the MEDLINE/PubMed databases [4, 6, 9]. The selected core literature consisted of 10 primary papers. This selection included foundational theoretical frameworks on nutrient timing [1], tissue-specific immunometabolic responses [2], experimental models evaluating the microbiota-metabolit-host signaling network regarding mitochondrial biogenesis [3], adipose tissue browning mechanisms [8], clinical RCTs evaluating dietary interventions on human gut architecture [4, 9], the role of the microbiome in central nervous system autoimmunity [7], and systematic evaluations of human longitudinal cohorts [5, 6].*

*During data extraction, I paid close attention to changes in microbial alpha/beta diversity, taxonomic shifts (specifically within Firmicutes, Bacteroidetes, and Christensenellaceae), circulating short-chain fatty acid (SCFA) production, and the dynamics of established clinical predictors of inflammation*

*[4, 6, 9]. The methodological characteristics of the 10 core publications utilized in my analysis are organized in Table 1.*

*Table 1. Methodological Characteristics of the Included Primary Publications*

| Reference | Study Design | Study Subject | Core Focus and Measured Parameters |
|---|---|---|---|
| Patterson &Sears[1] | Review Article | Human/Animal | Metabolic and dietary impacts of IF regimens |
| Mario eat al.[2] | Systematic Review | Immune cells | IF effects on host immunity and systemic inflammation |
| Liu et al.[3] | Experimental Study | Mice | Microbiota,cognitive function,and mitochondrial biogenesis |
| Mohr et al.[4] | Clinical RCT | Humans(obese) | Protein pacing,IF and gut microbiome remodelling |
| Lv et al.[5] | Molecular Review | Brain cells/Human | Neurodegeneration ketones and the gut brain axis |
| Perez-Gerdel[6] | Systematic Review | Human | Impact of IF protocols on gut microbiota metrics |
| Cignarella[7] | Clinical &Exp. | Human/Mice | Autoimmunity,T cell dynamics (IL-17,Treg) |
| Li et al.[8] | Rxperimental Study | Mice/FMT | White adipose tissue browning,acetate and lactate |
| Guo et al.[9] | Clinical RCT | Metabolic Syndrome | Cardiometabolic risk,LPS,CRP and SCFA profile |
| Frank et al. | Pathophysiological | BGM System | Circadian rhythms,food addiction and obesity |

## Results

### 3.1. Gut Microbiome Remodeling and Taxonomic Diversity

*Evaluating the evidence base, I found that IF interventions induce distinct structural transformations within the gut microbial architecture of both humans and animal models [6, 9]. Systematic reviews of longitudinal human cohorts demonstrate that time-restricted eating patterns positively influence overall gut microbiota richness and diversity (both alpha and beta diversity) [6]. At the phylum level, a dynamic rebalancing of the relative abundance of Firmicutes and Bacteroidetes is consistently observed following fasting cycles [6].*

*Furthermore, upon analyzing the results of an 8-week randomized clinical trial testing modified IF protocols in patients with metabolic syndrome, I observed highly targeted changes in the fecal microbial community [9]. Specifically, individuals subjected to intermittent fasting demonstrated a selective enrichment of Christensenellaceae, a taxon strongly associated with low host body mass index (BMI) and protected metabolic homeostasis [4, 9]. Additionally, pilot clinical interventions indicate that IF significantly enriches bacterial families known for their protective properties, including Lactobacillaceae, Bacteroidaceae, and Prevotellaceae [7].*

### 3.2. Metabolomic Shifts and Intestinal Barrier Function

*The structural reorganization of the microbial ecosystem directly modulates the host's metabolomic profile. Fasting protocols upregulate microbial fermentation pathways, culminating in a pronounced increase in the luminal production of short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), such as acetate, butyrate, propionate, and lactate [8, 9].*

*Preclinical validation within the analyzed data confirms that the physical presence of these functional microbes is an absolute prerequisite for the beneficial effects of fasting. I noted that wiping out the gut microbiota with broad-spectrum antibiotics directly abolishes IF-induced cellular, metabolic, hippocampal mitochondrial, and neuroprotective expressions [3]. Conversely, direct administration of microbial metabolites—such as 3-indolepropionic acid, serotonin, short-chain fatty acids, or tauroursodeoxycholic acid—fully replicates the therapeutic efficacy of IF [3]. Functionally, increased SCFA production plays an essential role in fortifying the intestinal epithelial tight junctions, thereby preventing hazardous luminal components (endotoxins) from translocating into the systemic circulation [8, 9].*

### 3.3. Modulation of Inflammatory Biomarkers (CRP and Fecal Calprotectin)

*By strengthening the intestinal barrier and restructuring the microbiome, IF actively dampens both systemic and local tissue inflammation [2, 9]. In dysbiotic states, bacterial structural components like lipopolysaccharides (LPS) breach the compromised intestinal barrier, inducing systemic metabolic endotoxemia [9, 10].*

*The targeted impacts of intermittent fasting on these biological targets—including clinical biomarkers (CRP, calprotectin) and microbial taxa—are summarized in Table 2.*

*Table 2. Effects of Intermittent Fasting on Key Biomarkers and Gut Microbiota*

| Biomarker/Metric | Dynamic Shift | Pathophysiological Mechanisms and Clinical Consequence | References |
|---|---|---|---|
| C-reactive protein (CRP) | Decreased | Suppresseses systemic inflammation by reducing hepatic synthesis driven by circulating LPS and pro inflammatory cytokines (Il-6,TNF-a) | [2,9] |
| Fecal Calprotectin | Decreased | Arrests mucosal inflammation by downregulating Th17 cell infiltration and pro-inflammatory signaling in the gut lining | [4,7,9] |
| Lipopolysaccharides(LPS) | Decreased | Fortification of epithelial tight junctions restricts endotoxin translocation (endotoxemia) into the blood. | [4,7,9] |
| Short-Chain Fatty Acids (SCFA s) | | Elevated bacterial fermentation (acetate, butyrate) provides energetic and protective substrate for colonocytes | [8,9] |
| Christensenellaceae | Increased | Activates a health-associated taxon inversely correlated with BMI and positively linked to metabolic homeostasis. | [4,9] |
| Lactobacillaceae | Increased | Enrichment of lactic acid bacteria promotes local gastrointestinal immunomodulation and enhances protective T reg cells. | [7] |

## Discussion

*The evidence I have synthesized strongly indicates that the clinical benefits of IF are intimately tied to a functional microbiota-metabolite-host inflammation axis [3, 7, 9]. I find it highly valuable to contrast the unique metabolic outcomes achieved through IF with those resulting from traditional continuous caloric restriction (CCR) [2, 4]. While CCR interventions primarily activate genetic pathways associated with metabolic longevity, IF regimens stand out due to their ability to execute time-dependent, localized modifications within immune cells, facilitating metabolic flexibility independently of absolute changes in obesity status [2, 4].*

*A key dimension in this process is the role played by bacterial fermentation products. As demonstrated by Li and colleagues, IF-induced microbiota shifts elevate levels of acetate and lactate, which serve as molecular signals that trigger the browning of white adipose tissue (converting energy-storing white fat into thermogenic, insulin-sensitive beige/brown fat) [8]. According to my analysis, this browning process not only mitigates obesity-related parameters but also attenuates chronic neuroinflammation and \beta-amyloid accumulation while markedly improving insulin sensitivity across hepatic, adipose, and muscular tissues [5, 8].*

*Furthermore, the clinical significance of reducing systemic CRP and local fecal calprotectin cannot be overstated (see Table 2). Elevated baseline levels of these biomarkers reflect ongoing systemic immune activation and mucosal barrier damage [9, 10]. By synchronizing feeding schedules with circadian rhythms, IF normalizes the diurnal fluctuations of the microbiome, ensuring optimal windows for mucosal barrier repair and endotoxin clearance [10].*

*However, an important nuance identified in my analysis is the question of the sustainability of these microbial shifts. Longitudinal data indicate that many fasting-induced microbial changes occur over relatively short-term periods, and certain taxonomic configurations tend to revert to their baseline status once the fasting intervention ceases [6]. This underscores that to maintain the anti-inflammatory benefits of IF and sustain lowered CRP and fecal calprotectin profiles, this approach must be adopted not merely as a temporary diet, but as a permanent lifestyle paradigm.*

## 5. Conclusion

*In conclusion, intermittent fasting represents a powerful, non-pharmacological strategy that successfully modifies the human gut microbial architecture, increasing taxonomic richness and enriching beneficial families such as Christensenellaceae and Lactobacillaceae [6, 7, 9]. My pathophysiological analysis shows that these structural transitions stimulate SCFA synthesis, reduce circulating endotoxins, and dampen both systemic and mucosal inflammation [8, 9]. Clinically, these alterations manifest as a significant downregulation of core inflammatory markers, including systemic CRP and fecal calprotectin [4, 9]. I conclude that future research must leverage long-term, multicenter randomized controlled trials to establish optimal fasting protocols tailored to an individual's baseline microbiome, paving the way for truly personalized clinical nutrition.*

## Acknowledgements

*I express my deepest gratitude to the principal authors and research groups of the cited core studies—including Ruth E. Patterson, Dorothy D. Sears [1], Daniel M. Marko [2], Zhigang Liu [3], Alex E. Mohr [4], Renjun Lv [5], Theodoro Pérez-Gerdel [6], Francesca Cignarella [7], Guolin Li [8], Yi Guo [9], Juliette*

*Frank, and Emeran A. Mayer [10]—for their high-impact clinical and preclinical work, which provided the foundational scientific data necessary to construct this comprehensive review article.*

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# *MODERN LIFESTYLE AND PRECOCIOUS PUBERTY: ETIOLOGICAL FACTORS, METABOLIC PATHWAYS, AND CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE*

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***Abstract***

***BACKGROUND***

*Central precocious puberty (CPP) is characterized by the premature activation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–gonadal (HPG) axis, resulting in the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics before the age of 8 years in girls and 9 years in boys. In recent decades, the incidence of CPP has increased worldwide, particularly among girls. Growing evidence suggests that childhood obesity, sedentary lifestyle, environmental endocrine-disrupting chemicals, genetic susceptibility, and lifestyle changes during the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to this trend [1–13].*

***OBJECTIVE***

*To systematically review current evidence regarding the etiological mechanisms, risk factors, clinical characteristics, diagnosis, treatment, and recent epidemiological trends of central precocious puberty, with particular emphasis on childhood obesity, environmental influences, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

***RESULTS***

*Recent evidence demonstrates that childhood obesity is one of the strongest modifiable risk factors for CPP through metabolic regulation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–gonadal axis involving leptin, insulin, ceramide, and AMPK/SIRT and mTOR signaling pathways [3,4]. Several genetic abnormalities, including **MKRN3** and **DLK1** mutations, as well as hypothalamic hamartomas and syndromic disorders, contribute to congenital forms of CPP [7]. Exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals may alter neuroendocrine development through epigenetic mechanisms and accelerate pubertal timing [6]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple studies from different countries reported a 1.3- to 5-fold increase in new CPP cases among girls, accompanied by increased body mass index, prolonged screen time, sedentary behavior, sleep disturbances, and psychological stress [8–13]. Gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogues remain the first-line treatment for progressive CPP and effectively preserve adult height potential [1,2,5].*

***CONCLUSION***

*Central precocious puberty is a multifactorial endocrine disorder resulting from interactions among genetic predisposition, metabolic status, environmental exposures, and lifestyle factors. Current evidence strongly supports the role of childhood obesity and lifestyle changes, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, in accelerating pubertal onset. Early recognition of high-risk children, promotion of healthy lifestyles, reduction of exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and timely endocrine evaluation remain essential for preventing adverse physical and psychosocial outcomes [1–13]*

***Keywords:*** *Central precocious puberty; Childhood obesity; COVID-19; Endocrine-disrupting chemicals; Hypothalamic–pituitary–gonadal axis; Puberty; Childhood; Lifestyle; Leptin; GnRH; Systematic review.*

*Introduction:*

*Precocious puberty (PP) is defined as the onset of secondary sexual characteristics before the age of 8 years in girls and 9 years in boys, most commonly resulting from premature activation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–gonadal (HPG) axis, known as central precocious puberty (CPP) [1,2]. Although CPP has traditionally been considered an uncommon endocrine disorder, recent epidemiological evidence indicates a steady worldwide increase in its incidence, particularly among girls [1,2,8–13].*

*Pubertal timing is determined by complex interactions among genetic, neuroendocrine, metabolic, nutritional, environmental, and psychosocial factors [6,7]. Recent discoveries of pathogenic variants in **MKRN3** and **DLK1**, together with advances in the understanding of hypothalamic regulation of gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) secretion, have substantially improved current knowledge regarding the pathophysiology of CPP [2,7].*

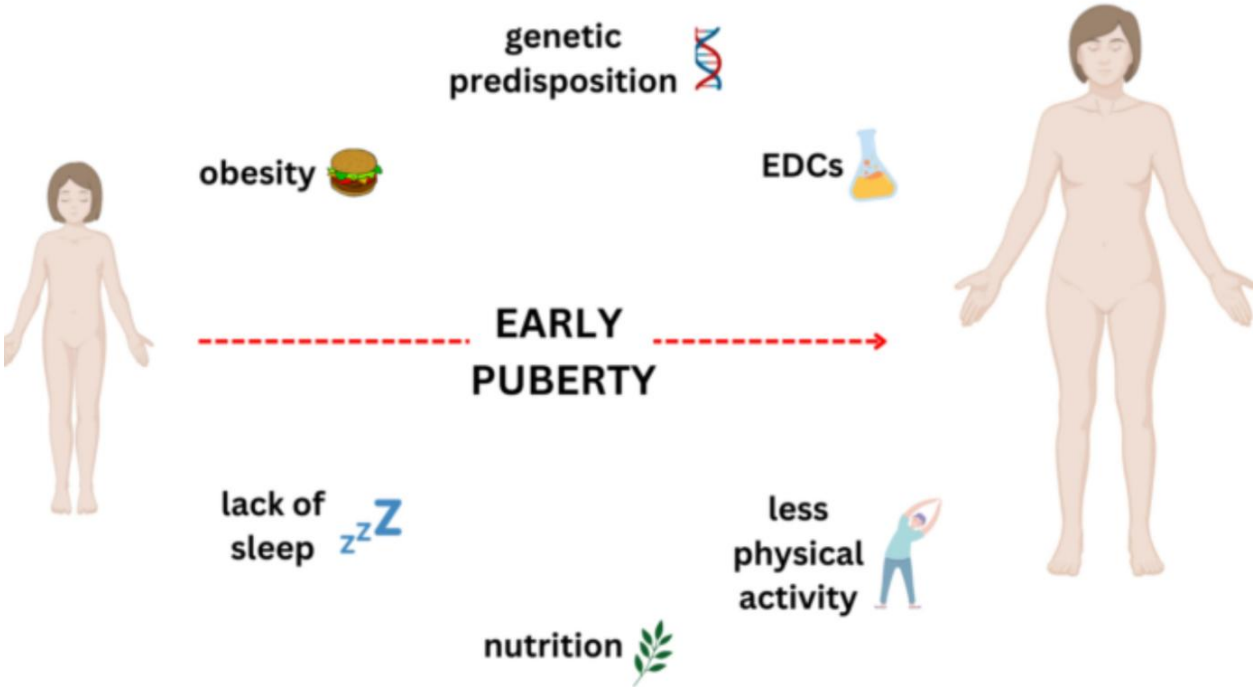
*Among modifiable risk factors, childhood obesity has emerged as one of the strongest determinants of earlier pubertal onset. Excess adiposity influences the HPG axis through adipokines, insulin resistance, ceramide metabolism, and nutrient-sensitive signaling pathways such as AMPK/SIRT and mTOR, thereby promoting premature neuroendocrine activation [3,4]. However, recent evidence also indicates that early childhood weight gain alone does not fully explain the development of CPP, suggesting the involvement of additional biological and environmental mechanisms [14].*

*Environmental exposures have attracted increasing attention in recent years. Endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) may alter pubertal timing by interfering with hypothalamic development and epigenetic regulation of reproductive pathways [6,7]. Furthermore, rapid urbanization, dietary transitions, reduced physical activity, prolonged sedentary behavior, and increased psychological stress have collectively transformed children's lifestyles over recent decades and may contribute to the secular trend toward earlier puberty [1,6].*

*The COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique natural experiment highlighting the influence of lifestyle on pubertal development. Numerous studies from different countries reported a significant increase in CPP diagnoses during lockdown periods, especially among girls. These observations were accompanied by increased body mass index, prolonged screen exposure, decreased physical activity, sleep disturbances, and psychosocial stress, all of which have been proposed as contributing factors to premature activation of the HPG axis [8–13].*

*Given the growing burden of precocious puberty and the increasing evidence linking modern lifestyle to its pathogenesis, this systematic review aims to summarize current knowledge regarding the etiological factors, metabolic pathways, clinical manifestations, diagnosis, treatment, and clinical significance of precocious puberty, with particular emphasis on obesity, environmental exposures, and lifestyle-related factors.*

*Figure 1. Modern Lifestyle and Precocious Puberty.*




*2. METHODS*

*Fourteen recent peer-reviewed publications published between 2021 and 2025 fulfilled the eligibility criteria and were included in this review [1–14].*

*The selected studies consistently demonstrated that precocious puberty is a multifactorial disorder influenced by interactions between genetic susceptibility, metabolic regulation, environmental exposures, and lifestyle factors [2,6,7].*

*Childhood obesity emerged as one of the strongest modifiable risk factors for CPP. Increased adiposity alters hypothalamic regulation through leptin, insulin, ceramide metabolism, and nutrient-sensitive signaling pathways including AMPK/SIRT and mTOR, promoting premature activation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis [3,4].*

*Genetic abnormalities involving MKRN3 and DLK1, together with hypothalamic hamartoma and several syndromic disorders, were identified as major congenital causes of CPP [7].*

*Exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals may influence pubertal timing through epigenetic regulation and disruption of neuroendocrine development, further supporting the role of environmental factors in the increasing incidence of CPP [6].*

*Multiple studies published after the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated a substantial increase in referrals and confirmed diagnoses of CPP, particularly among girls. Reported increases ranged from approximately 1.3-fold to 5-fold depending on the studied population [8–12].*

*Common lifestyle changes observed during the pandemic included:*

- *increased body mass index (BMI);*
- *prolonged screen time;*
- *decreased physical activity;*
- *sedentary behavior;*
- *sleep disturbances;*
- *psychological stress.*

*These factors were consistently associated with earlier pubertal onset across several countries [8–12].*

*Current evidence also indicates that although rapid postnatal weight gain contributes to earlier physiological puberty in the general population, it does not independently explain the development of CPP, suggesting the contribution of additional neuroendocrine and genetic mechanisms [14].*

*Finally, current international recommendations continue to support gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogues (GnRHa) as the first-line therapy for progressive CPP because of their ability to preserve adult height and delay further pubertal progression [2,5]*

*Table 1. Summary of the main studies included in the systematic review*

| Author | Year | Study design | Main findings |
|---|---|---|---|
| Banerjee et al.[1] | 2023 | Review | Clinical evaluation and diagnosis of PP |
| Zevin&Eugster[2] | 2024 | Review | Diagnosis,treatment and long-term outcomes |
| Shi et al.[3] | 2022 | Review | Obesity activates metabolic pathways involved in CPP |
| Li et al.[4] | 2024 | Review | Chilhood obesity is an important risk factor |
| Krishna et al.[5] | 2024 | Review | GnRHa remains first line treatment |
| Lopez-Rodriguez et al.[6] | 2021 | Review | EDCs accelerated pubertal timing |
| Brito et al.[7] | 2022 | Review | Generetic and congenital mechanisms of CPP |
| Covid-19 studies[8-12] | 2022-2025 | Reviews | Increased incidence of CPP during the pandemic |
| Wang et al.[13] | 2025 | Meta-analysis | BMI is significant risk factor |
| Ferrari et al.[14] | 2025 | Cohort sudy | Early weight gain affects normal puberty rather than CPP |

*Table 2. Comparison of major etiological factors associated with central precocious puberty*

| Risk factor | Proposed mechanism | Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| Childhood obesity | Leptin,insulin,ceramide, AMPK/SIRT,mTOR activation | Strong[3,4,13] |
| Genetic mutations | MKRN3,DLK1 defects | Strong[7] |
| Endocrine-disrupting chemicals | Epigenetic and hypothalamus effects | Moderate to strong[6] |
| Covid-19 lifestyle changes | Sedentary lifestyle,screen time,stress,BMI increase | Strong[8-12] |
| Postnatal weight gain | Associated with normal puberty,limited association with CPP | Moderate[14] |
| CNS abnormalities | Hypothalamic hamartoma,tumors | Strong[2,7] |

## Discussion

*This systematic review demonstrates that precocious puberty, particularly central precocious puberty (CPP), is a multifactorial endocrine disorder resulting from the interaction of genetic, metabolic, environmental, and lifestyle-related factors [1,2,7]. Although idiopathic CPP remains the predominant form in girls, recent evidence has expanded the understanding of its underlying mechanisms and highlighted the increasing importance of modifiable environmental influences [2,7].*

*Among all identified risk factors, childhood obesity consistently emerged as one of the strongest contributors to early pubertal activation [3,4,13]. Excess adipose tissue functions as an active endocrine organ by secreting adipokines, particularly leptin, and by altering insulin sensitivity and lipid metabolism. These metabolic changes stimulate hypothalamic GnRH secretion through AMPK/SIRT and mTOR signaling pathways, thereby accelerating activation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis [3,4]. However, the findings of Ferrari et al. suggest that although early-life weight gain contributes to earlier physiological puberty, it alone does not explain the development of CPP, indicating that obesity should be considered an important but not exclusive etiological factor [14].*

*Genetic discoveries have substantially improved understanding of CPP pathophysiology. Mutations involving **MKRN3** and **DLK1**, together with hypothalamic hamartomas and several syndromic disorders, have confirmed that inherited and congenital mechanisms play an essential role in a subset of patients [7]. These findings emphasize the importance of individualized diagnostic evaluation and genetic counseling, particularly in familial cases.*

*Environmental influences have also received increasing scientific attention. Exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals during critical developmental periods may interfere with hypothalamic maturation through epigenetic mechanisms, thereby contributing to earlier pubertal onset [6]. Although the precise contribution of individual environmental chemicals remains difficult to quantify, current evidence supports minimizing unnecessary exposure to these compounds as part of preventive public health strategies [6,7].*

*One of the most remarkable observations identified in this review is the consistent increase in CPP incidence during the COVID-19 pandemic [8–12]. Studies from Europe, Asia, and South America reported a 1.3- to 5-fold increase in newly diagnosed cases among girls following lockdown periods [10,11]. Several mechanisms have been proposed, including increased body mass index, reduced physical activity, prolonged screen exposure, sleep disturbances, psychological stress, and possible neuroendocrine effects of SARS-CoV-2 infection [8–12]. Although causality cannot yet be definitively established, the consistency of these findings across different populations strongly supports the influence of modern lifestyle changes on pubertal timing.*

*From a clinical perspective, early recognition of rapidly progressive CPP remains essential to preserve adult height and reduce psychosocial consequences [1,2,5]. Current international recommendations continue to support gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogues (GnRHa) as the standard treatment for progressive CPP, with favorable long-term safety and efficacy profiles [2,5].*

*Despite the comprehensive nature of this review, several limitations should be acknowledged. Most available studies were observational or retrospective, and substantial heterogeneity existed regarding study populations, diagnostic criteria, and outcome measures. Furthermore, many studies evaluating COVID-19-related CPP were conducted in girls, limiting the generalizability of findings to boys [8–13]. Future prospective multicenter studies are needed to clarify the relative contribution of metabolic, genetic, environmental, and psychosocial factors in the pathogenesis of CPP.*

## *Conclusion*

*Precocious puberty is an increasingly prevalent pediatric endocrine disorder influenced by a complex interaction between genetic susceptibility, metabolic regulation, environmental exposures, and modern lifestyle factors. Current evidence indicates that childhood obesity, endocrine-disrupting chemicals, sedentary behavior, excessive screen time, sleep disturbances, and psychological stress contribute to earlier activation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis [3,4,6,8–13].*

*The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the significant influence of lifestyle on pubertal timing, with numerous studies reporting a marked increase in CPP incidence among girls worldwide [8–12]. Nevertheless, obesity alone does not fully explain the development of CPP, emphasizing the multifactorial nature of this condition [14].*

*Early identification of children at increased risk, promotion of healthy nutrition and physical activity, limitation of unnecessary exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and timely referral to pediatric endocrinologists remain fundamental strategies for improving long-term clinical outcomes [1,2,5]. Future research should focus on prospective multicenter studies investigating gene-environment interactions, metabolic biomarkers, and novel preventive and therapeutic approaches to central precocious puberty.*

## *Acknowledgments*

*The authors express their sincere gratitude to all researchers and clinicians whose high-quality scientific work contributed to the understanding of precocious puberty and formed the evidence base for this systematic review. We especially acknowledge the valuable contributions of the authors of the*

*studies included in this review for advancing knowledge regarding the etiology, metabolic mechanisms, environmental influences, diagnosis, treatment, and public health significance of central precocious puberty. Their research has provided an essential foundation for improving pediatric endocrine care and guiding future investigations in this rapidly evolving field.*

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# INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION: THE ROLE OF hrHPV-DNA SCREENING AND GENDER-NEUTRAL VACCINATION (A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW)

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*Abstract*

*Background: Cervical cancer (CC) remains one of the most critical challenges in global gynecologic oncology. Chronic infection caused by high-risk human papillomavirus (hrHPV) is the primary etiological driver of this pathology. To enhance the efficacy of current preventive frameworks, evaluating long-term vaccine stability while accounting for regional genotypic variations is highly relevant.*

*Methods: A comprehensive meta-analysis and systematic review were performed on international randomized clinical trials (RCTs), Cochrane systematic reviews, and epidemiological studies published between 2018 and 2026, evaluating the efficacy and safety of bivalent, quadrivalent, and nonavalent HPV vaccines.*

*Results: In hrHPV-negative young females aged 15–26 years, vaccination significantly reduced the risk of high-grade cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN3+) from 70 to 0 cases per 10,000 women (RR = 0.01). In the adult cohort aged 27–45 years, the vaccine demonstrated high immunogenicity and sustained protective efficacy over a 10-year follow-up period. In Asian populations, the high prevalence of HPV-52 and HPV-58 genotypes alongside hrHPV-16 highlights the clinical necessity of the nonavalent vaccine (Gardasil-9).*

*Conclusion: To eliminate CC globally, a highly sensitive molecular hrHPV-DNA screening infrastructure must be integrated with gender-neutral vaccination protocols using regional-specific multivalent options.*

*Keywords: Cervical Cancer, Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia, DNA Screening, Gardasil-9, Gender-Neutral Vaccination, High-Risk Human Papillomavirus (hrHPV), HPV-52, HPV-58, Immunogenicity, Systematic Review.*

## *Introduction:*

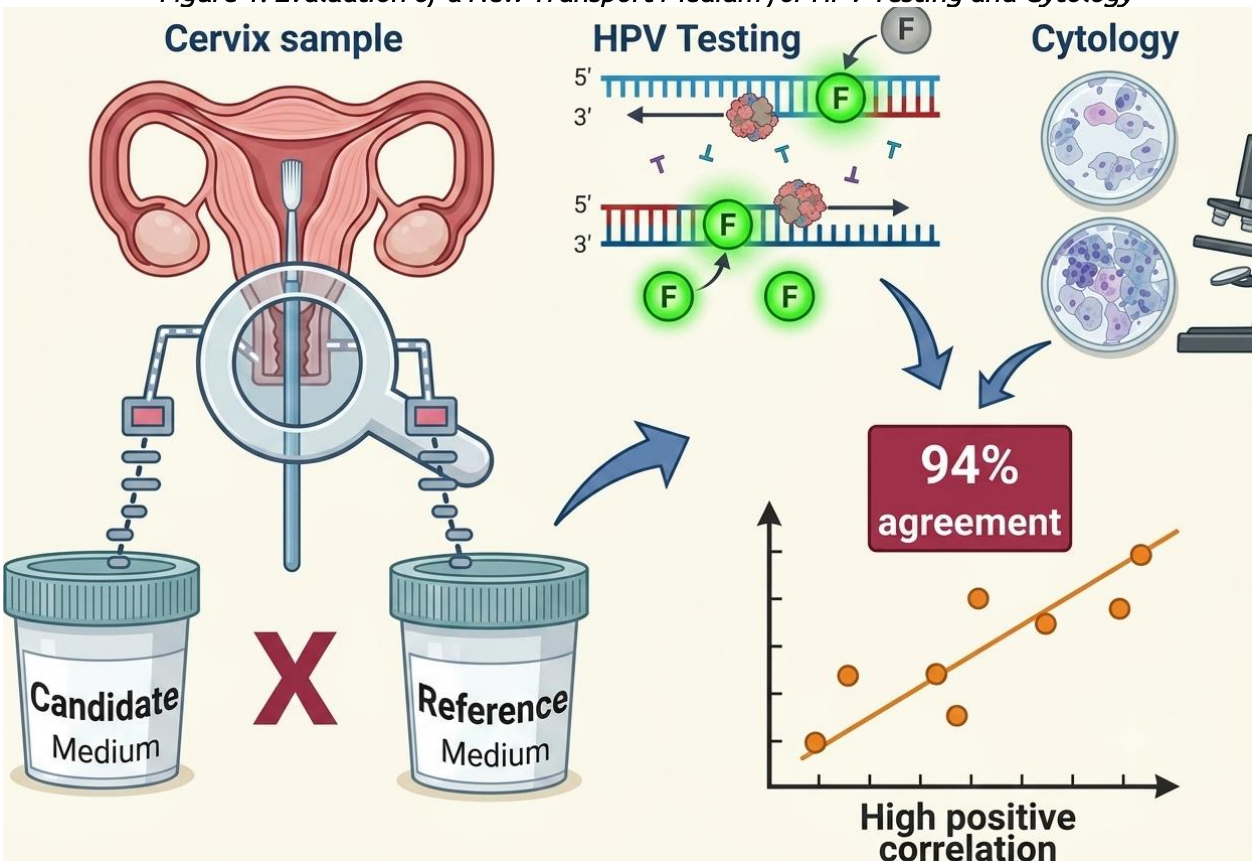
*According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cervical cancer (CC) ranks as the fourth most common malignant neoplasm among women worldwide. Concurrently, it represents a unique paradigm in modern oncology as the only cancer that can be entirely prevented and eliminated through highly effective screening strategies and timely prophylactic vaccination. The WHO global "90-70-90" strategy by 2030 aims to vaccinate 90% of girls by age 15, screen 70% of women using a high-performance test at ages 35 and 45, and ensure that 90% of women identified with cervical disease receive appropriate management and treatment.*

*At the molecular level, the oncogenesis of CC is directly linked to the persistent epithelial integration of high-risk human papillomavirus (hrHPV) strains, primarily genotypes HPV-16 and HPV-18. The viral oncoproteins E6 and E7 selectively degrade and inhibit human host tumor suppressor proteins p53 and retinoblastoma (Rb), respectively, triggering uncontrolled cellular proliferation and genomic instability [1]. This progressive cellular transformation drives the development of cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN1, CIN2, CIN3), ultimately culminating in invasive carcinoma.*

*In the Republic of Kazakhstan, CC occupies the second position within the oncogynecological disease structure, preceded only by breast cancer, and remains a leading cause of premature mortality among young, reproductive-aged women. Consequently, implementing validated prevention algorithms within the national healthcare system demands robust, evidence-based scientific evaluation.*

*Current debates in international scientific communities focus heavily on the efficacy of vaccination in adult populations (ages 27–45), the epidemiological impact of gender-neutral vaccination (vaccinating both boys and girls) on herd immunity, and geographic variations in dominant hrHPV genotype distributions [2, 3]. The objective of this systematic review is to evaluate the clinical and epidemiological efficacy of innovative prevention methodologies by synthesizing data from major international clinical trials and meta-analyses.*

*Figure 1. Evaluation of a New Transport Medium for HPV Testing and Cytology*




*2. METHODS*

*A systematic review was performed to evaluate the safety, immunogenicity, and clinical efficacy of prophylactic HPV vaccines, including the bivalent (Cervarix), quadrivalent (Gardasil), and nonavalent (Gardasil-9) configurations. Electronic bibliographic searches were executed across international databases, including MEDLINE/PubMed, the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL), Embase, and Scopus. The search architecture utilized combinations of medical subject headings (MeSH) and text words: "human papillomavirus vaccine", "cervical intraepithelial neoplasia", "Gardasil", "Cochrane review", and "clinical trial efficacy".*

*Inclusion Criteria:*

*Randomized clinical trials (RCTs) evaluating the efficacy and safety of HPV vaccines against a placebo or an active control group;*

*Cochrane systematic reviews and large-scale cohort epidemiological studies;*

*Cohorts encompassing male and female populations aged 9 to 45 years;*

*Studies with predefined clinical endpoints including CIN2+, CIN3+, adenocarcinoma in situ (AIS), or serological markers (geometric mean titers of antibodies).*

*Exclusion Criteria:*

*Descriptive studies with low levels of evidence, case reports, or technical notes;*

*Methodologically flawed studies or publications missing baseline statistical data;*

*Duplicate publications.*

*In strict accordance with the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) statement, a multi-stage screening process selected 26 international randomized clinical trials encompassing a total of 73,428 participants, alongside major regional cohort trials [1, 2, 3]. Statistical endpoints were assessed via relative risk (RR) and corresponding 95% confidence intervals (CI).*

*RESULTS*

*1. Impact of Baseline Viral Status and Age Dynamics*

*An extensive Cochrane meta-analysis confirmed that the absolute prophylactic efficacy of HPV vaccination is directly dependent on the participant's baseline hrHPV infection status at the time of initial immunization [1]. Data stratification identified two distinct cohorts:*

*Baseline hrHPV-Negative Cohort (Females aged 15–26): For individuals immunized prior to viral exposure, vaccine efficacy reached maximum clinical thresholds. Within the vaccinated group, the*

*incidence of HPV-16/18-associated CIN2+ dropped from 164 to 2 cases per 10,000 women. Most notably, the incidence of CIN3+ (severe dysplasia/pre-cancerous lesions) was reduced to 0 cases per 10,000 individuals (RR = 0.01, 95% CI: 0.00–0.10) [1], establishing an absolute preventive effect.*

*Active Carriers or Undifferentiated Cohorts: Among women already positive for hrHPV at the time of vaccination, or within mass un-screened cohorts, clinical efficacy was profoundly diminished. The risk of developing generalized CIN2+ lesions was only partially mitigated (RR = 0.70, 95% CI: 0.58–0.85) [1]. This validates the clinical principle that current vaccines exert no therapeutic effect on pre-existing infections.*

*2. Long-Term Efficacy in Adult Populations and Male Cohorts*

*While historical paradigms limited HPV immunization to adolescent females, modern clinical data have expanded this scope. The FUTURE III multicenter clinical trial (NCT00090220) tracked 3,253 adult women aged 27–45 years over a longitudinal 10-year period [2]. The results demonstrated that the quadrivalent vaccine (qHPV) successfully provides sustained protection against high-grade cervical, vaginal, and vulvar dysplasias in adult demographics, while maintaining elevated geometric mean antibody titers across the full decade.*

*Concurrently, trials evaluating male cohorts (including the MAM study, n = 150) uncovered a vital epidemiological correlation: in adult males aged 27–45 years, the post-vaccination geometric mean titers (GMTs) of antibodies were statistically non-inferior to those observed in young males aged 16–26 years [2]. Implementing male immunization protocols protects this demographic from HPV-associated anogenital and oropharyngeal malignancies while effectively breaking the chain of transmission, accelerating the decline of CC incidence in the female population via herd immunity.*

*3. Genotypic Heterogeneity in the Asian Region*

*Epidemiological mapping across mainland China and wider Asia identified an essential epidemiological deviation from Western cohorts [3]. While Western regions display a strict dominance of hrHPV-16 and 18, Asian female populations show a distinctly high prevalence and aggressive persistence of HPV-16, HPV-52, and HPV-58 genotypes.*

*Furthermore, the Asian population displays a distinct bimodal age distribution regarding HPV prevalence:*

*1. The First Peak: Occurring at \le20–25 years of age (associated with sexual debut);*

*2. The Second Peak: Observed at 50–60 years of age (correlated with age-related immunological involution and hormonal shifts) [3].*

*This specific distribution requires an adaptation of conventional age cut-offs for screening.*

*Table 1. Clinical Efficacy of HPV Vaccination Stratified by Baseline hrHPV Status (Incidence per 10,000 Women) [1]*

| *Patient Profile &Baseline HPV Status* | *Clinical Outcome* | *Control Group (Placebo)* | *Vaccinated Group* | *Risk Ratio(RR,95% CI)* | *Certainly of Evidence (GRADE)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Baseline hrHPV Negative (Ages 15-26)* | *CIN2+(Associated with HPV 16/18)* | *164* | *2* | *0,01 (0,00-0,05)* | *High* |
| | *CIN3+(Severe Cervical Dysplasia)* | *70* | *0* | *0,01(0,00-0,10)* | *High* |
| | *AIS(Adenocarcinoms in Situ)* | *9* | *0* | *0,10(0,02-0,82)* | *Moderate* |
| *Intention-to-Treat Cohort (Status Unconsidered)* | *Any generalised CIN2+ lesion* | *559* | *391* | *0,70(0,58-0,85)* | *High* |
| | *Any generalized AIS lesion* | *17* | *5* | *0,32(0,15-0,67)* | *High* |

*Table 2. Comparative Clinical and Pharmacological Profiles of Current HPV Prophylactic Vaccines [1, 2, 3, 4]*

| Trade Name (Manufacturer) | Valency& Antigenic Composition | Protective Durability | Recommended Target Age | Clinical Distinction & Regional Relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cervarix(GSK) | Bivalent:HPV 16,18(As04 adjuvant system) | 8-10 years[1] | 9-26 years | Targets primary oncogenic strains. Highly cost-effective for developing economies, but lacks cross-protection for anogenital warts and Asian-specific strains (52, 58). |
| Gardasil(Merck&Co) | Quadrivalent;HPV 6,11,16,18. | Over 10 years[2] | 9-45 years | Provides dual protection against CC and prevents 99% of anogenital warts (condyloma acuminata). Highly immunogenic in males [2]. |
| Gardasil-9(Merck& Co) | Nonavalent;6, 11,16,18,31,33, 45,52,58 | Sustained long-term | 9-45 years | The optimal formulation for Asian and Pacific cohorts, providing absolute coverage against regional dominant strains HPV-52 and 58 [3]. |

## DISCUSSION

*1. Methodological Synergy: Integrating Molecular Screening and Immunization*

*Synthesizing data from the Cochrane systematic review and the FUTURE III trials demonstrates that optimization of cervical cancer prevention programs requires a structural shift [1, 2]. Given that the 99–100% prophylactic efficacy of vaccines in hrHPV-negative individuals remains stable throughout adulthood (ages 27–45), establishing a highly sensitive molecular hrHPV-DNA (PCR) screening protocol prior to adult vaccination is clinically justified.*

*Conventional Papanicolaou cytological smears (Pap-smears) detect pre-existing cellular changes and exhibit a modest sensitivity range of approximately 50–60%, which contributes to high false-negative rates. Conversely, molecular hrHPV-DNA screening targets the presence of viral genomic sequences before cellular dysplastic changes manifest, achieving a sensitivity profile exceeding 95%. Consequently, screening adult women via PCR and immediately vaccinating those verified as virus-negative represents an innovative and effective clinical approach to lowering CC incidence to zero.*

*2. Regional Epidemiological Variants and Gender-Neutral Implementation*

*The high regional prevalence of HPV-52 and HPV-58 identified within Asian epidemiological data represents an important variable for national public health infrastructure [3]. Legacy bivalent or quadrivalent vaccine formulations fail to provide adequate cross-protection against these specific strains. Therefore, selecting the nonavalent Gardasil-9 vaccine as the primary prophylactic tool in Asian countries, including Kazakhstan, is pharmacoeconomically and clinically justified. Furthermore, implementing a gender-neutral vaccination approach cuts off the community-wide viral transmission vector, maximizing herd immunity.*

*3. Cross-Protection Boundaries, Tolerability, and Safety Profiles*

*Clinical trials have occasionally noted a degree of transient cross-protection against non-vaccine oncogenic strains (such as HPV-31, 33, and 45) for bivalent and quadrivalent configurations [1]. However, this cross-neutralization is unstable, and antibody titers diminish rapidly over time, reinforcing the clinical superiority of the nonavalent option.*

*Regarding vaccine safety, large-scale meta-analyses confirm an excellent safety profile for both Gardasil and Cervarix [1, 4]. The most common adverse events include mild localized injection site reactions (pain in 82%, erythema in 78%) and self-limiting low-grade pyrexia (15%). The incidence of severe systemic adverse events or autoimmune pathologies did not deviate statistically from the placebo arms. Crucially, retrospective analysis of inadvertent immunizations during active pregnancies demonstrated no adverse impact on fetal development, miscarriage rates, or congenital anomalies, confirming that the vaccine is safe regarding reproductive function [1, 4].*

*4. Critical Analysis and Future Paradigms*

*Despite high-quality evidence, certain limitations must be noted. A substantial proportion of major international randomized clinical trials (RCTs) have been directly or indirectly funded by commercial pharmaceutical developers (Merck, GSK) [1, 4], which can raise questions regarding potential conflict of interest in data reporting.*

*Additionally, the primary systemic barrier to widespread deployment remains the high acquisition cost (inhibitory cost) of the nonavalent vaccine, which often limits universal coverage in low- and middle-income countries [3, 4]. Moving forward, public health systems must prioritize collecting independent, state-level real-world data and monitoring vaccine efficacy over extended 20-to-30-year observation windows.*

## CONCLUSION

*The absolute elimination of cervical cancer on global and regional scales cannot be achieved through isolated cytological screening or female-only adolescent vaccination frameworks. The most effective strategy requires a transition from traditional cytology to highly sensitive molecular hrHPV-DNA screening combined with universal, gender-neutral deployment of the nonavalent vaccine up to age 45. This dual-integrated approach offers a validated path toward minimizing oncological morbidity and mortality.*

*ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

*The author expresses profound gratitude to the international collaborative research groups, clinical investigators, and epidemiologists who conducted the randomized controlled trials and Cochrane systematic meta-analyses that served as the foundational basis for this comprehensive review. We acknowledge all article authors for their monumental contributions to global public health, human papillomavirus prevention, and the evaluation of cervical screening efficacy, as their scientific insights established the theoretical and methodological framework for this work.*

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# *STERILE INFLAMMATION IN MISSURGERY WITH AN EXCESSIVE PRO-INFLAMMATORY IMMUNE RESPONSE*

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*Abstract*

*This study examined the role of sterile inflammation in early pregnancy in women with miscarriage and an excessive pro-inflammatory immune response, based on alarmin levels, in the absence of genital infections. It has been concluded that in women without genital infections, a successful pregnancy outcome requires appropriate inflammation, which may be accompanied by an increase in proinflammatory and a decrease in anti-inflammatory interleukins, as well as an increase in alarmins involved in sterile inflammation. However, the presence of a significantly elevated proinflammatory immune response, as well as a significant increase in alarmins that contribute to a significant increase in sterile inflammation in early pregnancy, can create unfavorable conditions for the course of early pregnancy and the development of miscarriages.*

*Keywords: sterile inflammation, excessive proinflammatory immune response, miscarriage.*

*Introduction. Inflammation is a host defense response against foreign invaders. Inflammation that is usually not associated with a pathogenic infection is called sterile inflammation. In the field of reproductive immunity, pathological inflammation is the cause and pathology of various obstetric and gynecological complications. In the reproductive system, inflammatory processes are considered essential for implantation, placentation, protection against foreign pathogens, and parturition [8]; however, excessive inflammation is associated with various pregnancy complications, including infertility [3], recurrent pregnancy loss [4], preterm birth [2], and preeclampsia [9].*

*In recent years, sterile inflammation has been closely associated with various diseases. It is triggered and induced by endogenous molecules such as high-mobility group box 1 (HMGB1), IL-1a, IL-33, heat shock proteins, S100 proteins, and uric acid, which are all released from cells into the extracellular space upon cell injury. These injury-associated molecules are collectively referred to as inflammatory "alarmins" [7]. One of the leading alarmin candidates is HMGB1, a highly conserved non-histone protein with cytokine-like activity in the extracellular space. HMGB1 is abundantly and ubiquitously expressed in the nucleus, where it plays a role in DNA replication, transcription, and repair, as well as nucleosome stabilization [11, 1]. In vitro and in vivo, administration of HMGB1 induces inflammation [12].*

*In recent years, uric acid has also been widely considered a signaler of sterile inflammation due to its high cytosolic concentration released during cell death [10].*

*The interleukin-1 family includes 11 cytokines that regulate the inflammatory response to injury and stress. Two major members of the family are IL-1a and IL-1β, which bind to the ubiquitous IL-1R1 to activate transcription factor translocation. Although IL-1a and IL-1β bind to the same receptor and mediate similar biological effects, these two cytokines are encoded by different genes and have different modes of action. Unlike IL-1β, IL-1a is not actively secreted but instead translocates to the nucleus to participate in the regulation of gene transcription [6].*

*Interleukin (IL)-33 is a new member of the IL-1 cytokine superfamily. IL-33 can function as both a traditional cytokine and a nuclear factor regulating gene transcription. Thus, the effects of IL-33 are either pro- or anti-inflammatory depending on the disease and model [5].*

*Objective: To investigate the role of sterile inflammation in early pregnancy in women with recurrent miscarriages and an excessive proinflammatory immune response in the absence of genital infections.*

*Material and methods. The study involved 44 women divided into 2 groups. Group 1 included 26 women with full-term pregnancies and full-term deliveries, who had no genital infections before pregnancy. Group 2 included 18 women who had miscarriages at 12 weeks of pregnancy and also had no genital infections before pregnancy. The following parameters were determined in the women's blood by ELISA before pregnancy, at 6 and 12 weeks: pro-inflammatory - interleukin-1β (IL-1β) and tumor necrosis factor-a (TNF-a), and anti-inflammatory - interleukin-10 (IL-10) using the test systems of ZAO Vector-Best, Russia. In addition, the levels of alarmins involved in sterile inflammation were studied in the blood. Using the ELISA method, we measured levels of high-mobility group box 1 (HMGB1), interleukin-1a (IL-1a) using the Cusabio Biotech (USA) test systems, interleukin-33 (IL-33) using the Cloud Clone Corp (USA) test system, and uric acid levels from the HUMAN (Germany) test system.*

*Results. The results of the studies revealed that women in Group 1 had significantly higher TNF-a levels (9.7 ± 1.2 pg/ml) in the blood at 6 weeks of pregnancy than those before pregnancy. In women in this group, this level at 12 weeks of pregnancy (11.9 ± 1.5 pg/ml) was not significantly higher than at 6 weeks of pregnancy, but was significantly higher than similar values (6.2 ± 0.8 pg/ml) before pregnancy.*

*In women of group 2, the TNF-a level before pregnancy (3.7 ± 0.4 pg/ml) was significantly and reliably 2.3 times higher than in women of group 1. At 6 weeks of pregnancy, in women of group 2, the TNF-a level (25.5 ± 2.7 pg/ml) was also significantly and reliably, more than 2.6 times higher than similar indicators in women of group 1, and also significantly and reliably higher than the results (14.8 ± 1.6 pg/ml) before pregnancy in this group. At 12 weeks of pregnancy, in women of group 2, TNF-a (32.8 ± 4.1 pg/ml) was also significantly, 2.8 times higher than similar indicators in women of group 1, and reliably 2.2 times higher than the results before pregnancy in this group. According to the IL-1β study, similar changes to those seen with TNF-a were observed, manifested in significantly and reliably higher values in women in Group 2, both before pregnancy and at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy, compared to similar values in women in Group 1, and significantly higher values relative to pre-pregnancy results in this group.*

*At the same time, IL-10 levels in the blood of women in Group 1 at 6 weeks of pregnancy (7.4 ± 0.8 pg/ml) were non-significantly lower than similar pre-pregnancy results (9.3 ± 1.2 pg/ml). In women in this same group, at 12 weeks of pregnancy, this result (5.9 ± 0.7 pg/ml) was not significantly lower than at 6 weeks of pregnancy and was significantly lower than similar pre-pregnancy results. Meanwhile, IL-10 levels (6.1 ± 0.7 pg/ml) in women in Group 2 before pregnancy were significantly (1.6 times) lower than similar levels in women in Group 1. Furthermore, they were significantly (1.8 times) lower at week 6 (3.5 ± 0.5 pg/ml) and 2.2 times lower at week 12 (2.6 ± 0.4 pg/ml) compared to pre-pregnancy levels in this same group. Furthermore, IL-10 levels in women in Group 2 were significantly lower than similar levels in Group 1 after pregnancy, 2.1 times lower at week 6 and 2.3 times lower at week 12.*

*According to the results of a study of alarmin - HMGB1 in the blood of women in Group 1, this level (129 ± 12.2 pg/ml) at week 6 of pregnancy was significantly higher than similar values before pregnancy (93 ± 8.5 pg/ml). Moreover, in women of the same group at 12 weeks of pregnancy, the HMGB1 value (162 ± 15.7 pg/ml) was not significantly higher than the results at 6 weeks of pregnancy and significantly higher than similar values before pregnancy (93 ± 8.5 pg/ml). In women of group 2, the HMGB1 value before pregnancy (135 ± 12.7 pg/ml) was significantly higher than similar results in women of group 1. In women of the same group at 6 weeks of pregnancy, this indicator (186 ± 17.3 pg/ml) was significantly 1.4 times higher than similar results in women of group 1, and also significantly higher than the results of women of the same group before pregnancy. Furthermore, in women in Group 2 at 12 weeks of pregnancy, HMGB1 levels (224 ± 20.6 pg/ml) were significantly 1.4 times higher than those in Group 1 and 1.7 times higher than pre-pregnancy levels in this group.*

*A study of IL-1a alarmin revealed that this level in women in Group 1 at 6 weeks of pregnancy (97 ± 8.5 pg/ml) was significantly higher than the pre-pregnancy level (69 ± 6.1 pg/ml). At the same time, in women in this group at 12 weeks of pregnancy, IL-1a levels (119 ± 10.8 pg/ml) were not significantly higher than those in Group 1 at 6 weeks of pregnancy and were significantly higher than pre-pregnancy levels.*

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# *RADIOMIC ANALYSIS OF MSCT AND MRI DATA IN THE ASSESSMENT OF NEOPLASMS OF THE PAROTID SALIVARY GLAND*

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*Abstract*

*The study analyzed tomographic images of patients with parotid gland tumors. Radiomic features were extracted, including parameters of shape, texture, signal intensity, and tumor tissue heterogeneity. The diagnostic significance of the obtained features and their potential role in distinguishing benign from malignant processes were assessed.*

*The obtained results demonstrate that radiomics analysis of MSCT and MRI allows for the identification of hidden quantitative tumor characteristics not always accessible through visual image assessment. The use of radiomics features has been shown to improve the accuracy of preoperative diagnostics and facilitate more objective tumor stratification.*

**Keywords:** *parotid salivary gland, salivary gland diseases, diagnostics, treatment, effectiveness, surgical methods, minimally invasive technologies.*

**Relevance.** *Neoplasms of the parotid salivary gland represent a significant challenge in modern maxillofacial surgery and oncology due to their morphological diversity and the presence of both benign and malignant forms. The similarity of clinical manifestations and radiographic features of various tumors complicates their accurate differential diagnosis at the preoperative stage, which may impact treatment decisions and prognosis.*

*Multislice computed tomography (MSCT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) are the primary imaging methods used to assess the structure and extent of a tumor, as well as its relationship with surrounding anatomical structures. However, traditional visual interpretation of images remains largely subjective and dependent on the specialist's experience.*

*In this context, interest in radiomics is growing as a modern field based on quantitative image analysis and the extraction of a large number of objective features characterizing tumor tissue structure. The radiomics approach allows for the identification of hidden patterns inaccessible by standard visual assessment.*

*Despite the promising nature of the method, its widespread implementation in clinical practice is limited by the lack of standardization and insufficient study of the diagnostic significance of radiomic signs in various types of neoplasms of the parotid salivary gland.*

**The aim of the study is** *to evaluate the diagnostic information content of radiomic signs obtained on the basis of MSCT and MRI data in neoplasms of the parotid salivary gland, and to determine their significance in differential diagnosis and preoperative assessment of the nature of the tumor process.*

**Materials and methods.**

*A GE LOGIQ V5 Expert ultrasound machine (GE Healthcare, USA) with a linear scanning transducer with an operating frequency of 4-16 MHz and a central frequency of 8 MHz was used for the ultrasound examination. The examination was performed using B-mode and Doppler mapping mode on the machine. No special preparation was required. The ultrasound was performed with the patient in a semi-recumbent position with the head tilted back and turned contralaterally. The examination was carried out in the longitudinal and transverse planes (the transducer was parallel to the corresponding lateral surface of the mandible). During the examination, echographic recording of the parenchyma of the pelvic floor, adjacent anatomical areas, underlying fascial and musculoskeletal layers, and lymph nodes was performed. Attention was paid to the echogenicity, size, shape, contours, and structure of the neoplasm, the presence of a capsule, and the nature of blood flow (vessel location, lumen diameter, blood flow velocity, etc.). Structural features were also studied using color Doppler mapping (CDM).*

*During MSCT processing, mandatory evaluations of multiplanar reformatted images (MPR) were performed in the sagittal, frontal, and oblique planes. The examinations were performed with the patient in the supine position with the headrest tilted. Scanning was performed in helical mode with a 1.5 mm slice thickness, a 1.0 mm pitch, and a tube voltage of 100-120 kV and a current of 100-200 mA. Image analysis was performed in both the soft tissue and bone windows. MPR images in the coronal and sagittal planes allowed for an assessment of the anatomical relationship between the tumor and surrounding structures.*

*MSCT of the maxillofacial region is performed from the skull base to the inferior border of the aortic arch, with the patient in the supine position. For each patient, the initial assessment was based on cross-sections obtained in the transverse plane. Images were viewed in soft tissue windows (window parameters: 350/35 HU) and bone windows (window parameters: 2200/200 HU).*

*Subsequently, reconstructions were performed in all cases: secondary, MPR, and 3D visualization. With each reconstruction method, the resulting images were re-evaluated. MPR allowed for an assessment of the tumor extent and relationship to adjacent anatomical structures.*

*The MSCT analysis included tumor identification and determination of the growth pattern. When small tumors were detected, volumetric characteristics (displacement of adjacent structures) were assessed. The analysis and description of MSCT findings in patients with a primary diagnosis of pelvic floor tumors was conducted using checklists and structured description templates. The initial tumor location, size, shape, definable contours, presence of invasion into adjacent soft tissue structures (muscle, intermuscular, and subcutaneous tissue), involvement of the vascular-nerve bundle, and bone involvement were taken into account. The extent of lymph node involvement was determined.*

***Research results.***

*According to the CT and MRI analysis, the sizes of benign and malignant pelvic floor tumors varied widely, and statistically, the average size of malignant tumors was significantly larger than that of benign tumors, at 35.5 ± 5.9 mm and 18.4 ± 3.7 mm, respectively. However, this characteristic is inappropriate for differential diagnosis due to its very low specificity. The shape and contours of the tumors proved to be more significant. In benign tumors, the shape of the tumor on images is typically regular—round, oval, or lobular—with clear contours that can be traced around the entire perimeter of the tumor. In contrast, malignant tumors exhibit an irregular shape and blurred contours over most of the perimeter, with the presence of invasive growth.*

*The differential diagnostic and prognostic value of diffusion-weighted MRI with the construction of measured diffusion coefficient (MDC) maps and automatic determination of MDC coefficients was studied. The optimal cutoff value was previously determined to be 1.1 x $10^{-3}$ mm 2 /sec; that is, MDC values below 1.1 x $10^{-3}$ $mm^2$ /sec indicated a likely malignant lesion, while those above 1.1 x $10^{-3}$ $mm^2$ /sec indicated a benign lesion. Characteristic values for the types of benign lesions of the pelvic floor system were also determined (Table 1).*

*Table 1.*

*Average ADC values of various neoplasms*

| No. | Nosological form | ICD ( x $10^{-3}$ $mm^2$ /sec) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Pleomorphic adenoma | 1.7 6 ± 0.15 |
| 2 | Adenolymphoma | 0.79 ± 0.04 |
| 3 | Lymphangioma | 0.58 ± 0.03 |
| Benign neoplasm | | 1.35 ± 0.24 |
| Malignant neoplasm | | 0.98 ± 0.05 |

*Using computer-assisted processing, programmers extracted 38 texture parameters characterizing intra- tumor spatial heterogeneity: 6 from the signal distribution histogram (DISCRETIZED HISTO), 7 from the gray level co-ocurence matrix (GLCM), 11 from the gray level run length matrix (GLRLM), 3 from the neighboring gray-level difference matrix (NGLDM), and 11 from the gray level zone length matrix (GLZLM). Next, the five most significant texture features were selected. In addition to identifying characteristic image features, a comparative analysis was performed with the average ADC and ultrasound feature values to increase the sensitivity (88.2%) and specificity (90.7%) of diagnosis.*

*Gray-Level Histogram Analysis ( Discretized HISTO ) was used to determine six first-order texture features describing the distribution of the number of pixels in the region of interest across gray levels. Various gray-level matrices were used to extract second-order texture features. From the GLCM ( gray - level) matrix co - occurrence matrix ), showing how often similar pairs of pixels occur in certain directions, 6 features were extracted. The GLRLM ( gray -level run-length matrix), reflecting the content of high- and low-length gray level pixels in images, yielded 11 texture features. 3 texture features were extracted from the NGLDM ( Neighborhood gray level difference matrix ). This matrix determines intensity changes*

*between adjacent pixels. Eleven second-order texture metrics are extracted from the Gray-level zone length matrix (GLZLM), which represents information about the sizes of homogeneous zones for each gray level in 2–3 dimensions and characterizes zonal texture features. GLZLM calculates zones of homogeneous pixels in an image and tabulates the occurrence of grouped gray levels in zones of varying sizes. Homogeneous images may have a more uniform distribution of zones, while heterogeneous images have variations in zones (Table 2).*

*Table 2.*

*Values of texture indices of MSCT of benign and malignant neoplasms of the gastrointestinal tract (M ± m)*

| Parameters TA MSCT | | Benign neoplasms | Malignant neoplasms | r |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Discretized HISTO | SKEWNESS | 0.7 642 ± 0.4 23 | 0.77 8 5 ± 0.4 2 5 | 0.14 8 |
| | KURTOSIS | 2.283 ± 1.3 84 | 2.347 ± 0.8 85 | 0.45 9 |
| | EXCESS KURTOSIS | - 0.4698 ± 1.3 88 | 0.69 38 ± 0.8 22 4 | 0.4 72 |
| | ENTROPY_log10 | 1.87 27 ± 0.1 22 | 1.87 55 ± 0.115 | 0.0 82 |
| | ENTROPY_log2 | 6.228 ± 0.311 | 6.231 ± 0.2 88 | 0.096 |
| | UNIFORMITY | 0.016 4 ± 0.00 55 | 0.016 1 ± 0.00 22 | 0.04 8 |
| GLCM | Homogeneity | 0.11 5 ± 0.03 5 | 0.132 ± 0.004 | 0.001 |
| | Energy | 0 , 001 4 ± 0 , 003 2 | 0.0044 ± 0.0001 | 0.841 |
| | Contrast | 70 5, 17 3 ± 21 4, 7 50 | 527.84 ± 29.74 | 0.001 |
| | Correlation | 0 , 09 21 ± 0 , 11 61 | 0.2811 ± 0.0242 | 0.001 |
| | ENTROPY_log10 | 3.3652 ± 0.4471 | 3.521 ± 0.024 | 0.416 |
| | ENTROPY_log2 | 11.1781 ± 1.4851 | 11.648 ± 0.068 | 0.442 |
| | Dissimilarity | 20.4677 ± 4.3825 | 17.422 ± 0.538 | 0.001 |
| GLRLM | SRE | 0.9895 ± 0.0008 | 0.9842 ± 0.0004 | 0.002 |
| | LRE | 1.042 ± 0.002 | 1.064 ± 0.002 | 0.002 |
| | LGRE | 0.0056 ± 0.0014 | 0.0054 ± 0.0002 | 0.012 |
| | HGRE | 4580.5 ± 12.5 | 4563.1 ± 6.2 | 0.001 |
| | SRLGE | 0.0056 ± 0.0011 | 0.0051 ± 0.0003 | 0.015 |
| | SRHGE | 4530.7 ± 12.5 | 4489.1 ± 11.4 | 0.001 |
| | LRLGE | 0.0065 ± 0.0014 | 0.0075 ± 0.0007 | 0.003 |
| | LRHGE | 4782.4 ± 93.8 | 4827.8 ± 12.6 | 0.024 |
| | GLNU | 104.9 ± 17.9 | 208.4 ± 26.3 | 0.001 |
| | RLNU | 7268.8 ± 1311.7 | 12342.4 ± 1457.2 | 0.001 |
| | RP | 0.985 ± 0.001 | 0.980 ± 0.0011 | 0.002 |
| NGLDM | Coarseness | 0.0034 ± 0.0012 | 0.0012 ± 0.0001 | 0.005 |
| | Contrast | 1.061 ± 0.1431 | 0.657 ± 0.0244 | 0.001 |
| | Business | 0.151 ± 0.026 | 0.207 ± 0.023 | 0.017 |
| GLZLM | SZE | 0.879 ± 0.006 | 0.8536 ± 0.005 | 0.005 |
| | LZE | 1.911 ± 0.113 | 2.681 ± 0.259 | 0.002 |
| | LGZE | 0.004 ± 0.0006 | 0.0033 ± 0.0002 | 0.393 |
| | HGZE | 4603.7 ± 13.5 | 4570.7 ± 12.2 | 0.016 |
| | SZLGE | 0.0029 ± 0.0004 | 0.0024 ± 0.0001 | 0.757 |
| | SZHGE | 4064.3 ± 36.7 | 3918.0 ± 35.0 | 0.001 |
| | LZLGE | 0.026 ± 0.008 | 0.096 ± 0.024 | 0.001 |
| | LZHGE | 8656.1 ± 520.6 | 12436.2 ± 1314.3 | 0.002 |
| | GLNU | 84.1 ± 14.5 | 149.9 ± 17.8 | 0.001 |
| | ZLNU | 4689.0 ± 851.9 | 6065.4 ± 679.0 | 0.011 |
| | ZP | 0.825 ± 0.010 | 0.781 ± 0.008 | 0.003 |

*According to the statistical analysis, significant differences were most often observed in the gray level range length matrix (GLRLM) - 2 out of 2 (100%) and neighboring gray level difference matrix (NGLDM) - 4 out of 4 (100%), while among the histogram indicators, differences were found in only 1 feature out of 6 (16.67%). It should be noted that the ROC curve showed high predictive value of the decomposed model in discriminating malignant salivary gland tumors from benign ones (sensitivity - 88.2%, specificity - 92.2%, diagnostic accuracy - 86.8%, AUC - 0.922, p <0.0001, threshold value - 0.54).*

*Software processing allowed us to extract 38 texture parameters from MRI slices: 6 from the signal distribution histogram (DISCRETIZED HISTO), 6 from the gray-level co-ocurence matrix (GLCM), 1 from the gray-level run length matrix (GLRLM), 3 from the differentiated neighboring gray-level difference matrix (NGLDM) and 1 from the gray-level zone length matrix ( GLZLM ) . zone length matrix ) (Table 3.).*

*Table 3.*

*Values of texture parameters of MRI of benign and malignant neoplasms of the pelvic organs (M ± m)*

| Parameters TA MSCT | | Benign neoplasms | Malignant neoplasms | r |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Discretized HISTO | SKEWNESS | 1,041 ± 0, 162 | 0.699 ± 0.044 | 0.019 |
| | KURTOSIS | 4.2 34 ± 1.3 41 | 2, 272 ± 0.1 05 | 0.002 |
| | EXCESS KURTOSIS | 1.233 ± 1.332 | - 0.731 ± 0.112 | 0.001 |
| | ENTROPY log10 | 1.8 66 ± 0.013 | 1, 912 ± 0.021 | 0.001 |
| | ENTROPY log2 | 6, 198 ± 0, 044 | 6, 353 ± 0, 002 | 0.001 |
| | UNIFORMITY | 0.01 7 ± 0.001 | 0.01 5 ± 0.00 2 | 0.001 |
| GLCM | Homogeneity | 0.1 99 ± 0.0 06 | 0.181 ± 0.004 | 0.005 |
| | Energy | 0 , 001 4 ± 0 , 00 02 | 0.0007 ± 0.0001 | 0.001 |
| | Contrast | 196.96 ± 10 , 7 5 | 224.8 ± 9.98 | 0.025 |
| | Correlation | 0.742 ± 0,015 | 0.723 ± 0.014 | 0.422 |
| | ENTROPY log10 | 3.213 ± 0.048 | 3.418 ± 0.021 | 0.002 |
| | ENTROPY log2 | 10.78 ± 0.17 | 11.35 ± 0.06 | 0.003 |
| | Dissimilarity | 10.24 ± 0.38 | 11.11 ± 0.28 | 0.018 |
| GLRLM | SRE | 0.975 ± 0.002 | 0.9842 ± 0.0004 | 0.015 |
| | LRE | 1.142 ± 0.002 | 1.109 ± 0.001 | 0.025 |
| | LGRE | 0.0065 ± 0.0012 | 0.0023 ± 0.0002 | 0.003 |
| | HGRE | 4575.5 ± 9.8 | 4548.1 ± 36.2 | 0.69 |
| | SRLGE | 0.0056 ± 0.0014 | 0.0021 ± 0.0003 | 0.002 |
| | SRHGE | 4438.5 ± 18.8 | 4425.1 ± 41.4 | 0.025 |
| | LRLGE | 0.0165 ± 0.0014 | 0.00135 ± 0.0005 | 0.005 |
| | LRHGE | 5382.2 ± 83.3 | 5027.8 ± 52.9 | 0.015 |
| | GLNU | 105.5 ± 15.5 | 158.1 ± 19.9 | 0.68 |
| | RLNU | 5768.8 ± 811.2 | 6342.4 ± 458.8 | 0.85 |
| | RP | 0.950 ± 0.003 | 0.960 ± 0.001 | 0.012 |
| NGLDM | Coarseness | 0.0064 ± 0.0012 | 0.0025 ± 0.0001 | 0.22 |
| | Contrast | 0.455 ± 0.0312 | 0.457 ± 0.0114 | 0.45 |
| | Business | 0.064 ± 0.011 | 0.059 ± 0.023 | 0.65 |
| GLZLM | SZE | 0.791 ± 0.001 | 0.796 ± 0.005 | 0.025 |
| | LZE | 11.11 ± 2.11 | 5.68 ± 0.25 | 0.015 |
| | LGZE | 0.0031 ± 0.0006 | 0.0013 ± 0.0001 | 0.001 |
| | HGZE | 4451.7 ± 33.5 | 4528.7 ± 42.2 | 0.010 |
| | SZLGE | 0.0019 ± 0.0003 | 0.0009 ± 0.0001 | 0.005 |
| | SZHGE | 3364.3 ± 46.6 | 3528.0 ± 35.0 | 0.001 |
| | LZLGE | 1.101 ± 0.128 | 0.059 ± 0.028 | 0.015 |
| | LZHGE | 15656.1 ± 320.6 | 22436.2 ± 3314.3 | 0.018 |
| | GLNU | 54.1 ± 7.5 | 62.9 ± 11.8 | 0.82 |
| | ZLNU | 2089.0 ± 351.2 | 3065.4 ± 479.0 | 0.042 |
| | ZP | 0.625 ± 0.017 | 0.681 ± 0.0012 | 0.014 |

*The predictive power of the logistic model for distinguishing benign from malignant tumors was assessed using receiver operating characteristic (ROC) analysis. The AUC was 0.892 ($p < 0.001$), demonstrating high predictive ability. Sensitivity was 92.4%, specificity was 80.1%, the discrimination threshold was 0.512, and diagnostic accuracy was 88.6%.*

***Conclusions.***

*The conducted radiomics analysis of MSCT and MRI data for neoplasms of the parotid salivary gland showed that quantitative evaluation of images allows for the identification of additional diagnostically significant features that are not always available with standard visual interpretation.*

*It has been established that radiomic characteristics reflecting the textural, morphological and statistical features of tumor tissue are highly informative in assessing the structure of neoplasms and can be used to improve the accuracy of differential diagnosis of benign and malignant processes.*

*The integrated use of MSCT and MRI in combination with radiomics analysis improves the objectivity of preoperative assessment, facilitates a more accurate determination of the nature of the tumor, and optimizes the choice of treatment tactics.*

*Thus, the radiomics approach is a promising direction in radiation diagnostics of neoplasms of the parotid salivary gland and can be introduced into clinical practice to improve diagnostic and prognostic capabilities.*

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# *IMMUNOLOGICAL INDICATORS OF WOMEN IN EARLY PREGNANCY WITH AND WITHOUT GENITAL INFECTIONS*

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*Abstract*

*This study examined changes in immunological parameters in women with and without genital infections in early pregnancy, up to 12 weeks. It was concluded that women with genital infections, compared to women without genital infections, exhibit less pronounced changes in cellular immunity in early pregnancy, up to 12 weeks, compared to proinflammatory and anti-inflammatory interleukins. These changes may indicate a lack of a significant proinflammatory immune response and may contribute to a favorable course of early pregnancy and the development of a full-term pregnancy.*

**Keywords:** *early pregnancy, genital infections, cellular immunity.*

*Adequate inflammation is essential for successful pregnancy outcome. In humans, proinflammatory responses, including the secretion of IL-6, IL-8, and TNF-α, are required for the acquisition of uterine receptivity [7]. Furthermore, elevated levels of IL-12, IL-1β, TNF-α, IL-6, and NO promote embryo attachment to the decidua [9].*

*Dendritic cells (DCs) are recruited to the uterus prior to implantation and modulate the cytokine profile at the fetal-maternal interface [5], and adequate DC-induced inflammation is necessary to ensure successful implantation and prevent first-trimester uterine miscarriage [1]. Overall, the uterine septum is considered a major risk factor for recurrent pregnancy loss, and low DC accumulation in the uterine septum may create a hostile immune environment in early pregnancy [8].*

*Macrophages with flexible plasticity also play an important role in early pregnancy [9]. They play an important role in the establishment of folliculogenesis. During the implantation period, macrophages produce proinflammatory cytokines. At the end of pregnancy, macrophages secreting proinflammatory cytokines are again required for parturition [9, 3]. Macrophages also play a crucial role in parturition, as they accumulate in the decidua before parturition in humans and rats [3]. Another study showed that macrophages are recruited to the human cervix and promote cervical ripening for vaginal delivery [6]. Thus, various inflammatory and immune responses are expected to occur during pregnancy and for successful delivery.*

*Sterile inflammation and innate immune cells also play an important role in the occurrence of miscarriage and infertility. In particular, these complications are believed to be related to DC function. In humans, DC are composed of monocyte-derived plasmacytoid DC and conventional (classical) DC subtypes [4]. These results indicate that activated innate immune cells (DCs) and natural killer (iNKT) cells directly lead to miscarriage without microbial-associated inflammation. Thus, innate immune cells, DCs, and iNKT cells are associated not only with preterm birth but also with miscarriage in the absence of infection.*

*The impact of infections in early pregnancy remains controversial, as some studies indicate an increased risk of miscarriage, while others show no increased risk. Therefore, further research is needed to determine whether specific infections actually increase the risk of miscarriage. It has been suggested that not simply the presence of bacteria themselves, but differences in the host response to genital infections, may contribute to the increased risk of preterm birth [2].*

**Objective:** *To examine changes in immunological parameters in women with and without genital infections in early pregnancy.*

**Materials and Methods:** *A total of 3760 women were examined, divided into two groups. Group 1 included 32 women who had had a full-term pregnancy and delivered a full-term birth, and who had no genital infections before pregnancy. Group 2 included 28 women who had had a full-term pregnancy and delivered a full-term birth but who had genital infections (Chlamydia trachomatis, Ureaplasma urealyticum, Mycoplasma hominis) before pregnancy.*

*Blood tests were performed using ELISA before pregnancy, after 6 weeks, and after 12 weeks: pro-inflammatory (interleukin-1β (IL-1) and tumor necrosis factor-a (TNF-a)), and anti-inflammatory (interleukin-10 (IL-10)). In addition, the immunogram was examined, and indicators of chlamydia (DNA Chlamydia trachomatis), mycoplasmosis (DNA Mycoplasma hominis) and ureaplasmosis (DNA Ureaplasma urealyticum) were determined in a scraping from the cervix before pregnancy using the PCR method.*

**Results and discussion.** *The obtained results of the study of proinflammatory and anti-inflammatory interleukins revealed that in women without genital infections, proinflammatory interleukin TNF-a levels were significantly higher at 6 weeks of pregnancy than at 6 weeks of pregnancy. However, in women without genital infections, these levels at 12 weeks of pregnancy were not significantly higher than at 6 weeks of pregnancy and were significantly higher than at 6 weeks of pregnancy.*

*When studying TNF-a levels in women with genital infections at 6 weeks of pregnancy, these levels were significantly higher than at 6 weeks of pregnancy and were significantly higher than at 6 weeks of pregnancy. Furthermore, in women with genital infections, TNF-a levels before pregnancy were significantly higher than at 6 weeks of pregnancy and were significantly higher than at 6 weeks of pregnancy. Moreover, in women without infections, TNF-a levels before pregnancy were significantly higher than at 6 weeks of pregnancy (Table 1).*

*A similar pattern of changes in IL-1β levels was observed in women with and without genital infections (Table 1).*

*At the same time, in the blood of women without genital infections, levels of the anti-inflammatory interleukin IL-10 at 6 weeks of pregnancy were not significantly lower than similar levels before pregnancy.*

*Table 1.*

*Changes in immunological parameters in women in early pregnancy*

| INTERLEUKINS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Study parameters | Group | Pre-pregnancy | 6 weeks of pregnancy | 12 weeks of pregnancy |
| ФНО-а пг/мл | 1 | 6,2±0,8 | 9,7±1,2* | 11,9±1,5 * |
| | 2 | 9,6±1,1º | 12,7±1,4* | 15,2±1,6 * |
| ИЛ-1β пг/мл | 1 | 3,7±0,4 | 7,2 ± 0,9* | 10,1±1,2* |
| | 2 | 6,5±0,8 º | 10,3 ± 1,2* | 13,2±1,4* |
| ИЛ-10 пг/мл | 1 | 9,3±1,2 | 7,4±0,8 | 5,9±0,7* |
| | 2 | 8,5±1,0 | 6,3±0,7 | 4,6±0,5* |

| ИММУНОГРАММА | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicators | Normal | | Group | Pre-pregnancy | 6 weeks pregnant | 12 weeks pregnant |
| Leukocytes | В 1 мкл | 4000-10000 | 1 | 5200±463 | 4700±418 | 5450±457 |
| | | | 2 | 5600±519 | 5950±536 | 6200±558 |
| Lymphocytes | % | 20-40 | 1 | 35±3,1 | 31±2,6 | 28±2,4 |
| | | | 2 | 31±2,5 | 23±1,8 | 19±1,6* |
| | В 1 мкл | 800-4000 | 1 | 1820±159 | 1457±127 | 1526±139 |
| | | | 2 | 1736±148 | 1369±113 | 1178±94* |
| B lymphocytes (CD20) | % | 10-36 | 1 | 32±2,9 | 27±2,4 | 25±2,3 |
| | | | 2 | 27±2,3 | 21±1,6* | 17±1,4* |
| | В 1 мкл | 162-700 | 1 | 582±53 | 393±34* | 381±33* |
| | | | 2 | 468±38 | 287±23* | 200±15* |
| T lymphocytes (CD3) | % | 48-80 | 1 | 56±5,1 | 49±4,3 | 44±3,7 |
| | | | 2 | 48±4,5 | 43±3,9 | 39±3,5 |
| | В 1 мкл | 800-2400 | 1 | 1019±95 | 713±64* | 623±52* |
| | | | 2 | 833±74 | 588±55* | 459±38* |
| T helper cells (CD4) | % | 24-42 | 1 | 25±2,1 | 23±1,7 | 20±1,5 |
| | | | 2 | 22±1,6 | 21±1,4 | 19±1,3 |
| T suppressor cells (CD8) | % | 14-29 | 1 | 15±1,2 | 17±1,3 | 18±1,6 |
| | | | 2 | 16±1,4 | 18±1,5 | 20±1,7 |
| CD4/CD8 | | 1,2-2,0 | 1 | 1,7±0,13 | 1,4±0,11 | 1,1±0,09* |
| | | | 2 | 1,4±0,11 | 1,2± 0,08 | 1,0±0,07* |
| Natural killer cells - CD16 | % | 4-27 | 1 | 9,0±0,6 | 11±0,9 | 13±1,1* |
| | | | 2 | 10,0±0,7 | 12,0±0,8 | 14,0±1,2* |
| CD25 activated lymphocytes | % | 7-18 | 1 | 11±0,8 | 13±1,0 | 15±1,3* |
| | | | 2 | 12±0,9 | 14±1,1 | 17±1,4* |
| CD95 (apoptosis marker) | % | 34-46 | 1 | 15±1,2 | 12±0,9 | 10±0,7* |
| | | | 2 | 13±1,1 | 10±0,7* | 9±0,6* |

*Note: 1 - women with a full-term pregnancy without genital infections; 2 - women with a full-term pregnancy with genital infections.*

** - significantly different values from pre-pregnancy values.*

*o - significantly different values from Group 1 values.*

*Moreover, this indicator in women at 12 weeks of pregnancy was not significantly lower than at 6 weeks of pregnancy and was significantly lower than similar results before pregnancy. IL-10 levels in women with genital infections after 6 weeks of pregnancy were also not significantly lower than similar results before pregnancy. These results at 12 weeks of pregnancy were also not significantly lower than at 6 weeks of pregnancy and were significantly lower than similar results before pregnancy. Moreover, IL-10 levels in women with genital infections before pregnancy were not significantly lower than similar results without infections (Table 1).*

*A study of cellular immunity (Table 1) revealed no significant differences in the white blood cell counts in women without genital infections and women with genital infections. There were also no significant differences in both groups between women at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy compared to women before pregnancy. When examining the relative lymphocyte count (%), a non-significant decrease was observed in women without genital infections at 6 weeks of pregnancy and a greater decrease at 12 weeks compared to pre-pregnancy levels. A similar, but more pronounced, decrease in lymphocyte count (%) was observed in women with genital infections. However, there was a significant difference in women at 12 weeks of pregnancy compared to women before pregnancy. When examining the absolute lymphocyte count (per µL), a similar non-significant decrease was observed in women without genital infections and a significant decrease at 12 weeks of pregnancy compared to women before pregnancy (Table 1).*

*When examining B-lymphocytes (CD20) (%) (Table 1), a non-significant decrease was also observed in women without genital infections at 6 weeks of pregnancy and a greater decrease at 12 weeks of pregnancy compared to pre-pregnancy levels. At the same time, women with genital infections showed a significant trend toward a significant decrease in B-lymphocyte counts (%) at both 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy compared to pre-pregnancy levels. However, absolute B-lymphocyte counts (per µL) showed a significant decrease at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy, both in women without genital infections and in women with genital infections, compared to women before pregnancy. When examining T-lymphocyte counts (CD3) in %, a non-significant decrease was observed at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy in both women without genital infections and in women with genital infections, compared to women before pregnancy. At the same time, a reliable decrease in T-lymphocytes in 1 µl values was noted at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy, both in women without genital infections and in women with genital infections in relation to women before pregnancy (Table 1).*

*The obtained results of the study of T-helpers (CD4) in relative indicators (Table 1) revealed a non-significant trend of decrease at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy, both in women without genital infections, and in women with genital infections, in relation to women before pregnancy. At the same time, both in women without genital infections, and in women with genital infections, in relation to women before pregnancy, a non-significant trend of increase in T-suppressors (CD8) at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy was noted. According to the study of the CD4/CD8 ratio, a decrease in this indicator was noted at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy, both in women without genital infections and in women with genital infections in relation to women before pregnancy. With a significant decrease at 12 weeks of pregnancy and a lower level of indicators in women with a full-term pregnancy with genital infections (Table 1). At the same time, an increase in natural killer (CD16) cells was detected in women with full-term pregnancy without genital infections and in women with genital infections compared to women before pregnancy. This was accompanied by a significant increase at 12 weeks of pregnancy and a higher level of indicators in women with genital infections. A similar trend in changes in CD16 was noted in the study of activated lymphocytes (CD25). However, when studying the apoptosis marker CD95, a decrease in this indicator was noted at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy, both in women without genital infections and in women with genital infections compared to women before pregnancy. This was accompanied by a significant decrease at 12 weeks of pregnancy in women without genital infections and a significant decrease at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy in women with genital infections, as well as a lower level of indicators in women with genital infections (Table 1).*

*The data obtained show that blood levels of proinflammatory interleukins TNF-a and IL-1β in both women without genital infections and those with genital infections increased significantly after 6 weeks of pregnancy and even more significantly after 12 weeks of pregnancy compared to similar values before pregnancy. However, this indicator in women with genital infections was not significantly higher than in women without genital infections, and was significantly higher before pregnancy. At the same time, blood levels of anti-inflammatory interleukin IL-10 showed the opposite trend, decreasing non-significantly at 6 weeks and significantly at 12 weeks of pregnancy in both women without genital infections. These indicators were also non-significantly lower in women with genital infections than in women*

*without genital infections. Cellular immunity studies revealed insignificant changes in leukocyte counts in both women without genital infections and those with genital infections. At the same time, a significant increase in lymphocytes was noted at 12 weeks of pregnancy in women with genital infection compared to women before pregnancy, both in relative terms in % and in absolute terms in 1 µl, which had an inverse direction of changes in relation to pro-inflammatory interleukins TNF-a and IL-1β and the same direction in relation to anti-inflammatory interleukins IL-10. A similar direction of changes was observed in the study of both B-lymphocytes and T-lymphocytes with an insignificant decrease compared to the pre-pregnancy results at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy in B-lymphocytes and T-lymphocytes in % in women without genital infections, as well as T-lymphocytes in % in women with genital infections. A significant decrease in absolute B-lymphocyte and T-lymphocyte counts per 1 µL was also observed at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy in women with and without genital infections. These changes in B-lymphocyte and T-lymphocyte counts also had an inverse direction of modifications in relation to the pro-inflammatory interleukins TNF-a and IL-1β and the same direction in relation to the anti-inflammatory interleukins IL-10. However, no significant change was observed with a decrease in T-helper cells at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy in women with and without genital infections. No significant change was observed with an increase in T-suppressor cells at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy in women with and without genital infections. At the same time, a non-significant decrease in the CD4/CD8 ratio was observed in women both without and with genital infections at 6 weeks of pregnancy and a significant decrease at 12 weeks of pregnancy. However, natural killer and activated lymphocyte counts increased non-significantly at 6 weeks of pregnancy and significantly at 12 weeks of pregnancy in women both without and with genital infections. Changes in the apoptosis marker were manifested by a non-significant decrease at 6 weeks of pregnancy and a significant decrease at 12 weeks of pregnancy in women without genital infections, as well as a significant decrease at 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy in women with genital infections. Thus, women with genital infections experienced less pronounced changes in cellular immunity compared to women with genital infections, compared to women with genital infections.*

***Conclusions.*** *Women with genital infections, compared to women without genital infections, show less pronounced changes in cellular immunity in the early stages up to 12 weeks of pregnancy, compared to proinflammatory and anti-inflammatory interleukins. These changes may indicate a lack of a significant proinflammatory immune response and may contribute to a favorable course of early pregnancy and the development of a full-term pregnancy.*

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# Physical sciences

## EFFECT OF TEMPERATURE ON THE ELECTRICAL DURABILITY OF POLYPROPYLENE MODIFIED WITH PHTHALIMIDE

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**Abstract**

*The temperature–time dependence of the electrical strength of polypropylene (PP) and its composite modified with an optimal amount of phthalimide (0.05 wt% Pht) was investigated. The lifetime τ was measured at various electric field strengths E over a temperature range of 20–140 °C. It was found that, at constant temperature, lgτ decreases linearly with increasing E, while the family of lgτ–1/T lines converges to a common pole at $lg\tau_0 = -12$. Based on the Zhurkov equation, the thermal-destruction energy barrier $U_0$ and the structure-sensitivity coefficient γ were calculated for the unmodified PP and its modification. It was shown that $U_0$ remains practically unchanged upon the introduction of Pht (27 and 26 kcal/mol, respectively), whereas the coefficient γ decreases from 0.0523 to 0.0455 kcal·mm/(mol·kV), which accounts for the increase in electrical strength of the composite. The closeness of $U_0$ to the activation energy of chemical-bond rupture indicates that electrical breakdown of PP proceeds mainly via a chain-scission mechanism. The electrical overstress coefficient P was also calculated; for PP and its optimal modification, P lies in the range of 12–16, indicating that the local fields responsible for breakdown initiation are substantially higher than the average field. The results obtained can be used to predict the electrical durability of polypropylene insulation during long-term service at elevated temperatures.*

**Keywords:** *polypropylene; phthalimide; electrical strength; electrical durability; Zhurkov equation; activation energy; structure-sensitivity coefficient; dielectrics.*

### INTRODUCTION

*Polypropylene (PP) is one of the most promising polymeric dielectrics used in high-voltage engineering, power cables, film capacitors, and other systems for the storage and transmission of electrical energy. Its widespread use is due to a combination of high electrical strength, low dielectric losses, chemical resistance, low density, and good processability [1–3].*

*However, the service of polypropylene dielectrics at elevated temperatures, high electric field strengths, and under UV or γ-irradiation is accompanied by electrical ageing, space-charge accumulation, and a decrease in electrical strength, which limits their practical application [4–6]. It should be noted that the authors have developed a new polypropylene-based composition with a phthalimide (Pht) additive at an optimal concentration. The studies performed showed that modification of polypropylene with this additive (0.05 wt% Pht) increases the electrical strength of the material by approximately 50% compared with the unmodified polymer. In addition, the service properties of the developed composition were investigated, including its resistance to electrical discharges, UV radiation, and γ-irradiation.*

*At the same time, the practical application of polymeric insulating materials requires an assessment of their properties not only under standard service conditions but also with regard to prolonged exposure to operating factors. One of the most important factors determining the strength and durability*

*of polymeric insulation is the effect of temperature and its duration of action on the electrical strength of the material [4, 7].*

*The main objective of the present study is to establish the temperature–time regularities governing the change in electrical strength of a polypropylene composition modified with an optimal amount of phthalimide, as well as to analyse the mechanisms that determine its behaviour under prolonged thermal exposure.*

## *MATERIALS AND METHODS*

*Polypropylene (PP) grade 01030 (SOCAR Polymer; density 900–909 kg/m³, melt flow rate 2.4 g/10 min) was used as the object of study. Phthalimide (Pht, $C_8H_5NO_2$, molar mass 147.13 g/mol, purity ≥99%) was used as the modifying additive, at an optimal concentration of 0.05 wt%, established in the authors' previous studies.*

*The required amount of Pht additive (0.01–0.1 wt%) was dispersed to a particle size below 50 μm and introduced into PP by melt mixing. Films were obtained by hot pressing on a manual electro-hydraulic press of the PG-60 type: a calculated amount of the composition was loaded into a polished flat mould heated to 140–150 °C and pressed under a pressure of 150 atm; a PTFE film was used as an interlayer to prevent sticking. After the mould had cooled, the film was removed. The thickness of the resulting films was 50–60 μm and was monitored with an NZB-2 optical thickness gauge and a micrometre (mean of 10 measurements across the sample surface).*

*The electrical durability (lifetime), i.e., the time elapsed from the moment the electric field was applied to a sample until its breakdown, was measured at each of the temperatures indicated above (20, 60, 100, and 140 °C) and at various field strengths E, in a test cell. At each temperature, E and τ were determined as the arithmetic mean of the results of 8–10 independent measurements of the ratio $U_{br}/d$, where $U_{br}$ is the individual breakdown voltage and d is the average sample thickness at the breakdown site. $U_{br}$ was measured with a C-96 electrostatic kilovoltmeter under a smoothly rising 50 Hz voltage applied to the sample at a rate of 1.0 kV/s. When determining the $E_{br}$ values, the two highest and two lowest readings were discarded. The high voltage was applied to the sample using an AII-70 apparatus.*

*For each temperature and field-strength value, a series of measurements was carried out and the results were averaged; the experimental points were used to construct the lgτ – E (Fig. 1) and lgτ – 1/T (Fig. 2) dependences.*

Fig. 1 (schematic). lg τ vs. E at different temperatures

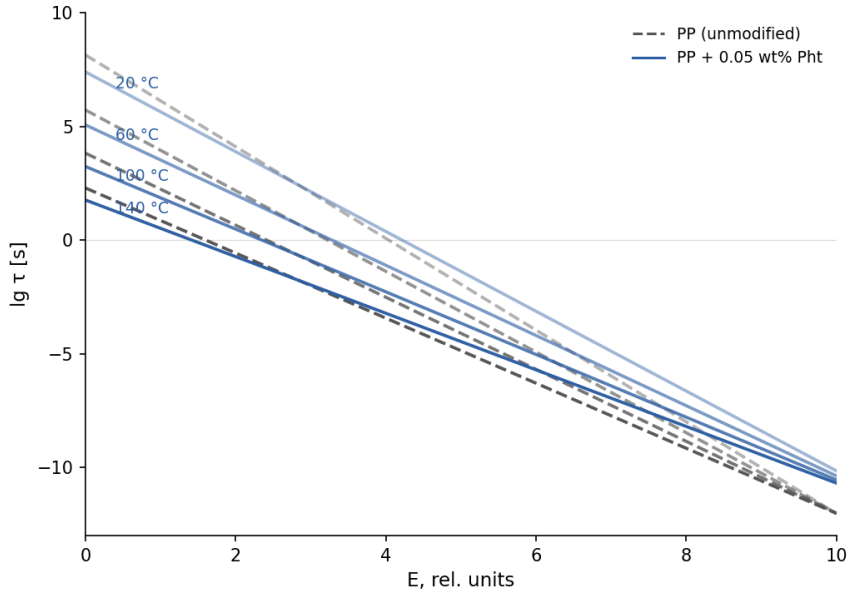


*Fig. 1. Dependence of lg τ on the electric field strength E at various temperatures (schematic plot based on the $U_0$ and γ values, Table 1): dashed lines — PP (unmodified); solid lines — PP + 0.05 wt% Pht; curves from top to bottom correspond to T = 20, 60, 100, 140 °C. The E axis is given in relative units — quantitative calibration requires the original experimental data points.*

Fig. 2 (schematic). lg τ vs. 1/T at different E

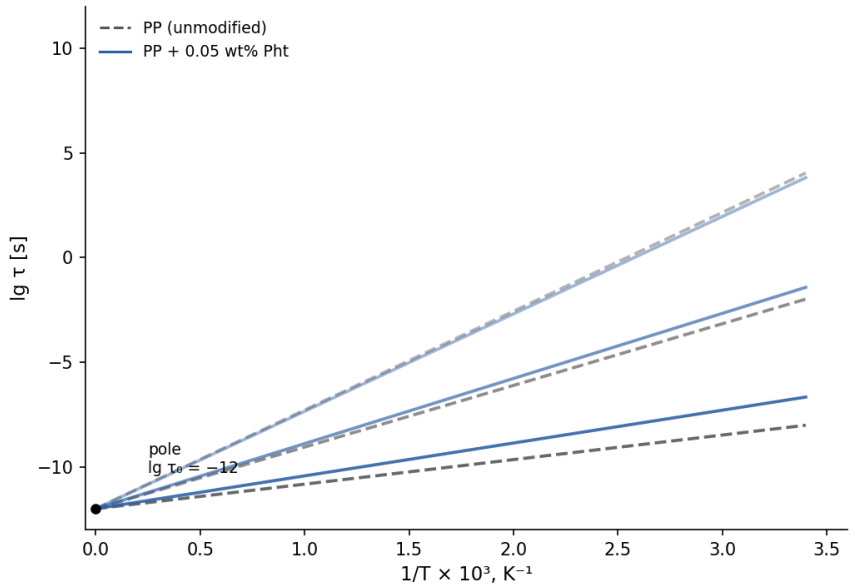


*Fig. 2. Dependence of lg τ on 1/T at fixed values of E (schematic, based on the data in Table 1): dashed lines — PP (unmodified); solid lines — PP + 0.05 wt% Pht. The lines for both materials converge to a common pole as 1/T → 0, lg τ₀ = −12.*

*Values of the energy barrier U₀ and the structure-sensitivity coefficient γ were determined from the slope of the lgτ – 1/T lines at fixed values of E (Equations 2–5) by linear regression, followed by extrapolation of the U(E) dependence to E = 0.*

*To analyse the effect of chemical additives on the dielectric properties of polymers and on the mechanism of thermal degradation, it is necessary to study the influence of various electrophysical factors on the temperature–time dependence of the electrical strength of polymers.*

*Accordingly, in the present work the temperature–time dependence of the electrical strength of PP (unmodified) and its optimal modification was studied.*

*Figure 1 shows the dependences of the logarithm of the lifetime, lgτ, of PP (unmodified) and its optimal modification, PP + 0.05 wt% Pht, on the electric field strength E at various temperatures.*

*The experiments showed (Fig. 1) that, at constant temperature, lgτ decreases linearly with increasing E, i.e., τ is described by the equation:*

$$\tau = B \cdot \exp(-aE) \quad (1)$$

*where B and a are parameters that depend on the nature of the polymer and the test conditions; both B and a decrease with increasing temperature. The lgτ–E dependences at different temperatures form a family of straight lines that, upon extrapolation towards small lifetimes and high field strengths, converge to a single point at lgτ ≈ −10…−12 s.*

*As follows from Fig. 1, the introduction of an optimal amount of phthalimide (0.05 wt%) into PP increases its electrical strength and prolongs its lifetime at the various temperatures studied, compared with unmodified PP, for which the lifetime decreases considerably faster.*

*The temperature dependence of the electrical durability was established by re-plotting data analogous to those in Fig. 1 in lgτ – 1/T coordinates at a number of fixed values of E.*

*This re-plotting yields a family of straight lines (Fig. 2) with a common intersection point (pole) on the 1/T = 0 axis at lgτ₀ = −12.*

*The expression for the temperature dependence of the electrical durability is approximately given by the Zhurkov equation [8–10]:*

$$\tau = \tau_0 \cdot \exp[(U_0 - \gamma E) / (kT)] \quad (2)$$

*where $U_0$ is the energy barrier characterising the thermal-destruction process, and γ is the structure-sensitivity coefficient characterising the degree to which the local activation energy is reduced by the applied field.*

*From the slope of the lgτ – 1/T lines, Equation (2) takes the following logarithmic form:*

$$\lg\tau = \lg\tau_0 + 0.4343 \cdot (U_0 - \gamma E) / (kT) \quad (3)$$

*(where k is the Boltzmann constant).*

*Taking into account that the pre-exponential factor $\tau_0$ depends only weakly on E, the following quantity can be calculated from the slope of the lines in Fig. 2:*

$$U(E) = 2.3k \cdot d(\lg\tau)/d(1/T) \quad (4)$$

*from which the form of the function U(E) shown in Fig. 3 is obtained in U–E coordinates.*

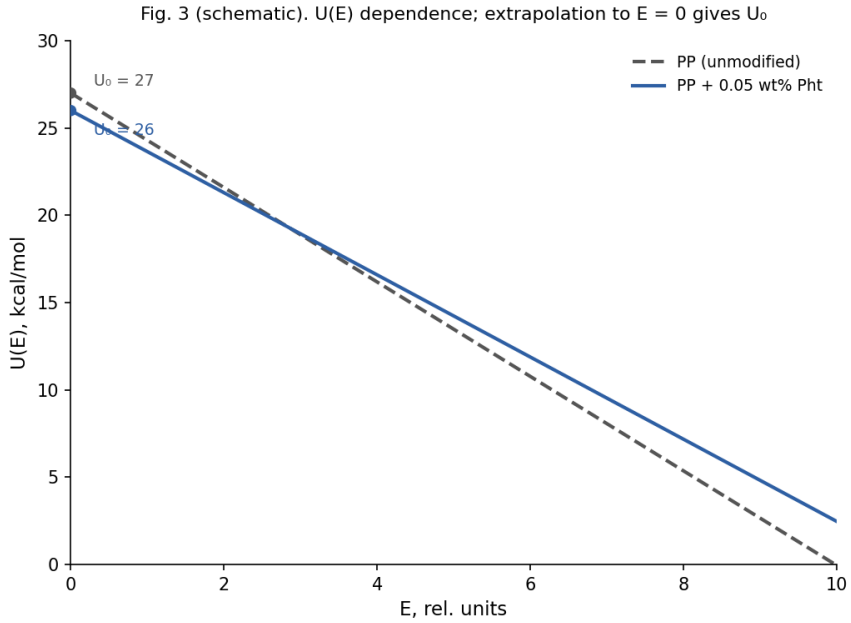


*Fig. 3. Dependence of U(E) for PP (unmodified, dashed line) and PP + 0.05 wt% Pht (solid line) — schematic, based on the data in Table 1. Extrapolation to E = 0 gives $U_0$ = 27 and 26 kcal/mol, respectively; the slope of the lines is determined by the coefficient γ.*

*The linearity of the U(E) dependence makes it possible to find, by extrapolation to E = 0, the value of $U_0$, i.e., it can be written that:*

$$U(E) = U_0 - \gamma E \quad (5)$$

*The calculated values of the parameters $U_0$ and γ for unmodified PP and its modification are given in Table 1.*

*Table 1. Physical parameters of PP (unmodified) and its optimal modification.*

| Материал | $U_0$, ккал/моль | γ, ккал·мм/(моль·кВ) | $E \cdot 10^{-7}$, В·м$^{-1}$ |
|---|---|---|---|
| ПП (исходн.) | 27 | 0,0523 | 16 |
| ПП + 0,05 масс.% ФИ | 26 | 0,0455 | 26 |

*Table 1 shows that the initial activation energy of electrical breakdown, $U_0$, is close to the activation energy of thermal degradation of the polymer [11].*

*Table 1 also shows that the value of $U_0$ for unmodified PP and its optimal modification remains practically unchanged during thermal degradation, while the increase in electrical strength is associated with a decrease in the structure-sensitivity coefficient γ.*

*The fact that the activation energy of the electrical breakdown process for PP and its optimal modification is close to the activation energy of chemical-bond rupture indicates that the electrical breakdown of polymers proceeds mainly via a chemical-bond-rupture mechanism.*

*By analogy with the structure-sensitivity coefficient, which characterises the degree of non-uniformity in the distribution of external mechanical stress among macromolecules and is related to the stress-overload coefficient ρ [10, 12], it can be assumed that the coefficient γ, likewise a structure-sensitive parameter, is related to the local character of electrical breakdown and to the electrical overstress coefficient ρ.*

*If it is assumed that, in the process of electrical breakdown of polymers, the elementary act is the displacement of a single-electron charge e over an interatomic distance δ under the action of a local field of strength $E_{loc}$, and that this displacement performs work that lowers the energy barrier by $\Delta W = e\delta E_{loc}$, then:*

$$e\delta E_{loc} = \gamma E \quad (6)$$

*where $e\delta = 1.6 \cdot 10^{-29}$ C·m.*

*Substituting the γ values for the polymers studied and eδ into Equation (6), the electrical overstress coefficient P can be calculated.*

*Table 2 gives the values of the electrical overstress coefficient for the polymers studied.*

*Table 2. Coefficient values for the PP (unmodified) and PP + 0.05 wt% Pht samples studied.*

| Material | γ, kcal·mm/(mol·kV) | P (electrical overstress coefficient) |
|---|---|---|
| PP (unmodified) | 0.0523 | 16 |
| PP + 0.05 wt% Pht | 0.0455 | 13 |

*Table 2 shows that the electrical overstress coefficient for PP and its optimal modification varies within the range of 12–16, an interesting result indicating that the local fields responsible for breakdown initiation are an order of magnitude higher than the average field.*

*However, Table 2 also shows that, for the optimal polypropylene composition, the electrical overstress coefficient decreases. This decrease is probably related to a reduction in the packing density of the macromolecules in the composition, as a result of which the electric field distribution becomes more uniform and the number of structural inhomogeneities in the sample decreases.*

*Thus, the studies performed allow the conclusion to be drawn that, under the action of an electric field on PP and its optimal composition, the value of $U_0$ remains practically unchanged, while the change in electrical strength is due to a change in the structure-sensitivity coefficient γ. The value of $U_0$ corresponds to the activation energy of chemical-bond rupture; hence, the electrical breakdown of the polymers occurs predominantly via these bonds.*

## *CONCLUSION*

*The study of the temperature–time dependence of the electrical strength of polypropylene and its composition modified with an optimal amount of phthalimide (0.05 wt% Pht) allows the following conclusions to be drawn.*

*1. Over the temperature range 20–140 °C, the dependence of lgτ on the electric field strength E is linear and is described by the equation $\tau = B \cdot \exp(-\alpha E)$; the family of lgτ–1/T lines for each material converges to a common pole at $lg\tau_0 = -12$, confirming the applicability of the Zhurkov equation for describing the electrical durability of the materials studied.*

*2. The introduction of an optimal amount of phthalimide practically does not change the thermal-destruction energy barrier $U_0$ (27 kcal/mol for unmodified PP versus 26 kcal/mol for the modification), whereas the structure-sensitivity coefficient γ decreases from 0.0523 to 0.0455 kcal·mm/(mol·kV). It is this decrease in γ, rather than any change in $U_0$, that accounts for the increase in electrical strength of the modified polypropylene.*

*3. The closeness of the $U_0$ values to the activation energy of chemical-bond rupture indicates that the electrical breakdown of PP and its optimal modification proceeds mainly via rupture of macromolecular chains, rather than via physical (supramolecular) structural rearrangement.*

*4. The calculated values of the electrical overstress coefficient P (12–16) show that the local fields responsible for breakdown initiation exceed the average field in the sample by an order of magnitude. The decrease in P upon modification of PP with phthalimide (from 16 to 13) indicates a more uniform distribution of the electric field in the composition, associated with a reduction in the packing density of the macromolecules and, correspondingly, in the number of structural inhomogeneities.*

*5. The regularities obtained can be used to predict the electrical durability of polypropylene insulation during long-term service at elevated temperatures, typical of high-voltage engineering and power-cable systems.*

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