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REVİEW ARTICLE

The Role of Genomics in Precision Medicine and Personalized Treatment in Diabetes Mellitus

Fatma Hilal Yagin[1]* | **Badicu Georgian[2]**

[1]Biostatistics and Medical Informatics, Faculty of Medicine, Inonu University, Malatya, Türkiye
[2]Department of Physical Education and Special Motricity, Transilvania University of Brasov, 00152 Brasov, Romania

ABSTRACT

Diabetes mellitus, a chronic metabolic disorder marked by persistent hyperglycemia, represents a significant global health challenge. The disease manifests in various forms, including Type 1 diabetes (T1D), Type 2 diabetes (T2D), gestational diabetes, and rare monogenic types, each with distinct etiologies. Advances in omics technologies, particularly genomics, have provided significant advances in the understanding of diabetes by providing insight into its genetic and molecular basis. This study delves into the role of genomics in diabetes research, highlighting how genome-wide association studies (GWAS) have uncovered numerous genetic loci associated with T1D and T2D. The findings elucidate the hereditary basis of these conditions and propose potential targets for personalized treatments. Genomic discoveries have critical implications for risk prediction, pathophysiological insights, and the development of targeted interventions, thereby paving the way for precision medicine in diabetes care. However, challenges such as the complexity of polygenic influences and gene-environment interactions necessitate ongoing research to fully exploit the potential of genomics in combating diabetes.

Keywords: Diabetes Mellitus, Genomics, Precision Medicine, Polygenic Influences

***Corresponding:** Fatma Hilal Yagin; hilal.yagin@inonu.edu.tr
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INTRODUCTION

Diabetes mellitus, commonly referred to as diabetes, stands as one of the most pressing public health challenges. A metabolic disorder characterized by chronic hyperglycemia resulting from impaired insulin production, insulin action, or both, diabetes affects millions of individuals worldwide, with a significant impact on their quality of life, healthcare systems, and economies. The disease comes in various forms, with the two primary classifications being Type 1 diabetes (T1D) and Type 2 diabetes (T2D), in addition to gestational diabetes, monogenic forms, and other less common variants. Diabetes not only poses a substantial personal burden but also exacts an enormous societal cost. Thus, it demands multifaceted research and innovative approaches for its comprehension, prevention, and treatment (Buchanan & Xiang, 2005; Janghorbani, Van Dam, Willett, & Hu, 2007; Tuomi, 2005).

In recent years, the advent of omics technologies, encompassing genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, and metabolomics, has revolutionized biomedical research. Omics approaches allow for the comprehensive study of biological molecules at various levels, from genes to proteins to metabolites, providing an unprecedented opportunity to unravel the molecular intricacies underlying complex diseases such as diabetes. These techniques have afforded researchers a new lens through which to explore the genetic, molecular, and metabolic underpinnings of diabetes, offering valuable insights into disease etiology, progression, and the development of personalized treatments (Bain et al., 2009; Misra & Misra, 2020; Ogunjobi et al., 2024; Singh, Sarma, Verma, Nagpal, & Kumar, 2023). This study aims at the importance of genomics in diabetes research, focusing on its contributions and potential application.

Understanding Diabetes

Diabetes, known as diabetes mellitus in medical terminology, is a complex and chronic metabolic disorder characterized by persistent hyperglycemia, which results from the impaired production and/or utilization of insulin. Understanding the intricacies of diabetes is crucial for the development of effective diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive strategies. In this section, we will delve into the various facets of diabetes, including its types, global prevalence, and the need for advanced research tools like omics approaches to tackle this growing public health challenge (Acharjee, Ghosh, Al-Dhubiab, & Nair, 2013; Deshpande, Harris-Hayes, & Schootman, 2008; Raciti et al., 2015).

Types of Diabetes

Diabetes encompasses a spectrum of conditions, each with distinct etiologies and underlying mechanisms. The primary types of diabetes include:

Type 1 Diabetes (T1D): T1D is characterized by autoimmune destruction of the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas. This results in an absolute insulin deficiency, necessitating lifelong insulin therapy for affected individuals. The onset of T1D is often in childhood or adolescence, making it a prevalent pediatric condition. Genetics plays a role in susceptibility, but environmental factors, such as viral infections, may trigger the autoimmune response (Acharjee, Ghosh, Al-Dhubiab, & Nair, 2013).

Type 2 Diabetes (T2D): T2D, the most common form of diabetes, typically develops in adulthood, although its prevalence among children and adolescents is increasing. It is marked by insulin resistance, where the body's cells do not respond effectively to insulin, coupled with reduced insulin secretion by the pancreas. T2D is closely associated with lifestyle factors, including obesity, physical inactivity, and poor dietary choices. Genetic predisposition also plays a role in T2D susceptibility, but environmental factors are prominent contributors (Raciti et al., 2015).

Gestational Diabetes: This form of diabetes occurs during pregnancy and typically resolves after childbirth. Gestational diabetes is a significant concern due to potential complications for both the mother and the child. It often results from hormonal changes during pregnancy that affect insulin sensitivity (Buchanan & Xiang, 2005).

Monogenic Diabetes: Monogenic forms of diabetes are rare and are caused by mutations in a single gene. These genetic mutations disrupt normal insulin production or function, leading to diabetes. Understanding these monogenic forms provides insights into the role of specific genes in diabetes pathophysiology (Bonnefond et al., 2023).

In addition to these primary classifications, secondary forms of diabetes may result from other medical conditions, such as pancreatic diseases or drug-induced diabetes. A comprehensive understanding of the various types of diabetes is crucial for tailoring diagnosis and treatment strategies.

Genomics

Genomics is the field of study focused on understanding the complete set of an individual's genes, collectively known as their genome. The term "genome" encompasses all the genetic material, including DNA, present in an organism's cells (Bustamante, De La Vega, & Burchard, 2011).

DNA Sequencing: Genomics involves determining the exact sequence of the DNA in an organism's genome. This process helps identify the specific genes, their variations, and their locations within the genome. DNA sequencing is essential for understanding the genetic code that governs an organism's development, functioning, and heredity (Shendure et al., 2017).

Genetic Variation: Genomics investigates genetic variation within and between populations. This variation includes single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs), copy number variations (CNVs), and other types of genetic changes. Understanding genetic diversity is crucial for comprehending the causes of diseases, genetic predisposition, and the evolutionary history of populations (Jorde & Wooding, 2004).

Functional Genes and Non-Coding Regions: Genomics explores both protein-coding genes and non-coding regions of the genome. While protein-coding genes are well-studied for their roles in synthesizing proteins, non-coding regions, including regulatory elements and non-coding RNAs, are increasingly recognized for their vital functions in gene expression and regulation (Palazzo & Lee, 2015).

Genomic Structure and Organization: Genomics investigates the structure and organization of the genome, including the arrangement of genes, repetitive sequences, and chromosomal architecture. This knowledge helps researchers understand how genetic information is stored, maintained, and transmitted through generations (Makałowski, 2001).

Gene Expression: Genomics also encompasses the study of gene expression, which involves understanding when and where specific genes are active or inactive. Technologies like transcriptomics allow researchers to explore the patterns of gene expression under different conditions and in various tissues (Schena, 1996).

Comparative Genomics: Comparative genomics involves comparing the genomes of different species to identify shared genetic elements, evolutionary relationships, and differences in genetic content. This approach can shed light on the evolution of species and the genetic adaptations that have occurred over time (Hardison, 2003).

Functional Genomics: Functional genomics investigates the roles of genes and their products in biological processes. This includes studying the functions of genes, proteins, and regulatory elements in various cellular and physiological contexts (Fields, Kohara, & Lockhart, 1999).

Pharmacogenomics: This subfield of genomics explores how an individual's genetic makeup influences their response to drugs. Understanding the genetic factors that affect drug metabolism and efficacy can lead to personalized medicine approaches, where treatments are tailored to an individual's genetic profile (Roden et al., 2006).

Disease Genetics: Genomics plays a critical role in uncovering the genetic underpinnings of various diseases. By identifying genetic variants associated with conditions like cancer, diabetes, and rare genetic disorders, researchers can better understand disease mechanisms, develop diagnostic tests, and explore potential therapeutic targets (Claussnitzer et al., 2020).

Population Genetics: Genomics is integral to studying the genetic diversity within and between populations. This field helps elucidate human migration patterns, genetic adaptations to different environments, and the origins of specific genetic traits (Lewontin, 1985).

Genomics and Its Evolving Role in Diabetes Research

In recent years, genomics has assumed a central role in diabetes research. Genomics, the study of the complete set of an individual's DNA, has provided a wealth of information about the genetic underpinnings of diabetes, contributing significantly to our understanding of the disease's complexity. This section delves deeper into the evolving role of genomics in diabetes research, exploring the latest advances, prospects, and the broader impact of genomic studies on both T1D and T2D (Addissouky, Ali, El Sayed, & Wang, 2023).

The Genomic of Type 1 Diabetes (T1D)

T1D, often referred to as juvenile diabetes, is characterized by the autoimmune destruction of insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas. This immune-mediated process involves genetic predisposition, environmental triggers, and a complex interplay of immune cells. Genomic studies have been instrumental in uncovering the genetic basis of T1D, shedding light on the hereditary factors that influence disease susceptibility. T1D Genome-Wide Association Studies (GWAS) have identified over 60 genetic loci associated with the disease, emphasizing the multifactorial nature of T1D. While HLA (Human Leukocyte Antigen) genes have long been known to play a significant role in T1D susceptibility, non-HLA genes have also been identified as key contributors. Non-HLA genes, such as INS (insulin), PTPN22 (protein tyrosine phosphatase, non-receptor type 22), and CTLA4 (cytotoxic T-lymphocyte-associated protein 4), offer insights into the immune dysregulation involved in T1D development. Genomic studies in T1D have furthered our understanding of the disease by unraveling the complex genetic architecture that includes genes related to immune system function and immune response. The identification of these genetic factors not only highlights the hereditary basis of T1D but also provides potential targets for immunomodulatory therapies aimed at preventing or delaying the onset of the disease (Cerna, 2011; Grant & Hakonarson, 2009; Pociot & McDermott, 2002).

Genomics and Type 2 Diabetes (T2D)

T2D, the more prevalent form of diabetes, is influenced by both genetic and environmental factors. Genomic research has identified numerous genetic variants that contribute to T2D risk, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the disease's etiology. T2D GWAS have been pivotal in the discovery of hundreds of genetic loci associated with the disease. These loci encompass genes related to insulin secretion, insulin resistance, pancreatic beta-cell function, and other factors integral to glucose homeostasis. While no single gene is solely responsible for T2D, the cumulative effect of multiple genetic variants with modest effects significantly contributes to disease susceptibility. The first genetic variant associated with T2D was TCF7L2, a gene involved in the Wnt signaling pathway. Subsequent GWAS have expanded our knowledge of the genetic architecture of T2D, identifying additional key genes like PPARG (peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor gamma), KCNJ11 (potassium voltage-gated channel subfamily J member 11), and FTO (fat mass and obesity-associated protein). Collectively, these genetic variants affect insulin sensitivity, glucose metabolism, and beta-cell function, all of which are crucial in T2D pathophysiology. Understanding the genetic factors contributing to T2D risk offers multiple advantages. It enables the development of precision medicine approaches, where treatment strategies are tailored based on an individual's genetic profile. For individuals at high genetic risk of T2D, interventions focused on improving insulin sensitivity or beta-cell function may be implemented early, potentially delaying or preventing the onset of the disease. Additionally, genomic insights provide potential targets for drug development and therapeutic interventions aimed at modulating specific pathways or proteins implicated in T2D (del Bosque-Plata, Martínez-Martínez, Espinoza-Camacho, & Gragnoli, 2021; Hara, Kadowaki, & Odawara, 2016; Wheeler & Barroso, 2011; Wysham & Shubrook, 2020).

Implications of Genomic Discoveries

Risk Prediction: Genetic information can be used to predict an individual's risk of developing diabetes. Polygenic risk scores (PRS) provide a personalized assessment of an individual's genetic predisposition. PRS are calculated by considering the collective effects of multiple genetic variants associated with the disease. Individuals with higher PRS values are at an increased risk of developing diabetes. The use of PRS is becoming more widespread in clinical settings and research to identify individuals at high risk who may benefit from early intervention or more frequent monitoring (Ala-Korpela & Holmes, 2020; Kotze et al., 2015).

Pathophysiological Insights: Genetic findings shed light on the underlying mechanisms of diabetes. For example, genes associated with insulin production or immune regulation in T1D and genes involved in insulin signaling in T2D. Understanding the specific genes and pathways involved in diabetes pathophysiology is instrumental in designing targeted therapies and interventions (Sayed & Nabi, 2021).

Targeted Interventions: Genomic insights can inform the development of targeted interventions. Specific pathways or proteins identified through genetic studies may be targeted for therapeutic development. Understanding the genetic factors contributing to diabetes risk provides potential targets for drug development. Certain genes and proteins can be targeted to improve insulin sensitivity or enhance beta-cell function (Nageeta et al., 2023).

Precision Medicine: The concept of precision medicine involves tailoring medical care to individual patients based on their genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors. In diabetes, precision medicine aims to develop treatment strategies that are personalized to an individual's genetic risk profile. For example, individuals at high genetic risk for T2D may be offered interventions that focus on improving insulin sensitivity, while those with high T1D genetic risk may be closely monitored for early signs of the disease (Ashley, 2016).

Conclusion

The integration of genomics into diabetes research has markedly enhanced our comprehension of the genetic and molecular construction of the disease. Genome-wide association studies have been instrumental in identifying numerous genetic loci implicated in both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, providing valuable insights into the hereditary components and potential therapeutic targets. These advancements hold significant promise for the development of precision medicine approaches, enabling tailored interventions based on an individual's genetic profile. Despite these strides, the complexity of diabetes as a polygenic disease and the intricate gene-environment interactions presents ongoing challenges. Future research must focus on expanding our understanding of this information and translating genomic findings into clinical practice to improve prevention, diagnosis, and treatment strategies. Ultimately, the continued improvement of genomics in diabetes research underscores the potential for innovative solutions to one of the most pressing public health issues.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, F.H.Y. and B.Y.; methodology, F.H.Y, A.P.; formal analysis, B.Y.; in vestigation, A.P.; data curation, F.Y.H.; writing—original draft preparation, F.H.Y, B.Y., A.P.; writing—review and editing, F.H.Y, B.Y, A.P.

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Participants took part in the research voluntarily and the research was conducted in line with the Declaration of Helsinki.

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