

Evolving HCC Management: Therapies, Diagnostics, Insight

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Introduction

This review provides a comprehensive update on systemic therapies for hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), focusing on the evolving landscape of approved agents and clinical trial data. It highlights the shift towards combination immunotherapies and explores their efficacy across different stages of HCC, alongside discussing emerging targets and treatment sequencing strategies [1].

This AASLD Practice Guidance offers recommendations for the prevention, screening, and surveillance of hepatocellular carcinoma. It covers risk factors, recommended surveillance strategies for at-risk populations, and the role of imaging and biomarkers in early detection, aiming to improve outcomes through timely diagnosis [2].

This review delves into the landscape of molecularly targeted therapies and immunotherapies for HCC. It discusses the mechanisms of action, clinical efficacy, and resistance patterns of various agents, emphasizing the paradigm shift in treatment algorithms with the advent of immune checkpoint inhibitors and their combinations [3].

This article reviews the current state of prognostic and predictive biomarkers in HCC. It covers both circulating and tissue-based biomarkers, discussing their potential roles in risk stratification, guiding therapeutic decisions, and monitoring treatment response, aiming to personalize HCC management [4].

This update details the revisions to the Barcelona Clinic Liver Cancer (BCLC) staging system and its associated treatment algorithm for HCC. It emphasizes how the refined system integrates new systemic and locoregional therapies, providing a more precise framework for patient stratification and guiding optimal management strategies [5].

This paper explores the current status and future directions of immunotherapy in HCC. It covers the mechanisms of immune checkpoint inhibitors, their clinical efficacy in various settings, challenges related to patient selection and resistance, and promising combination strategies to further improve outcomes [6].

This study provides an updated analysis of the global burden of hepatocellular carcinoma based on the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019. It highlights regional disparities in incidence and mortality, identifies key risk factors contributing to the disease burden, and emphasizes the need for targeted prevention and control strategies worldwide [7].

This review explores the significant advances in imaging techniques for the diagnosis and characterization of HCC. It discusses the roles of MRI, CT, and ul-

trasound, including specific contrast agents and multiparametric approaches, in improving detection sensitivity, lesion characterization, and guiding treatment decisions [8].

This paper provides an overview of the current status and future perspectives in the surgical treatment of HCC. It covers various surgical approaches including resection and transplantation, discusses patient selection criteria, intraoperative strategies, and highlights ongoing advancements aimed at improving resectability and long-term outcomes for patients [9].

This review focuses on the cellular and molecular mechanisms driving hepatocellular carcinoma development and progression. It explores the genetic mutations, signaling pathways, and microenvironmental factors implicated in hepatocarcinogenesis, providing insights into potential therapeutic targets and biomarker development [10].

Description

Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC) treatment has seen profound developments, particularly in systemic therapies. Recent updates highlight an evolving landscape of approved agents and clinical trial data, with a distinct shift towards combination immunotherapies. These strategies are being rigorously evaluated for their efficacy across different stages of HCC, alongside efforts to identify emerging targets and optimize treatment sequencing strategies [1]. Molecularly targeted therapies and immunotherapies represent a paradigm shift in HCC treatment algorithms. Understanding their mechanisms of action, clinical efficacy, and resistance patterns is crucial, especially with the widespread adoption of immune checkpoint inhibitors and their various combinations [3]. The current status and future perspectives of immunotherapy in HCC are a major area of investigation. This includes detailed studies of immune checkpoint inhibitor mechanisms, their clinical effectiveness in diverse settings, challenges related to appropriate patient selection and managing resistance, and the exploration of promising combination strategies designed to further enhance patient outcomes [6].

Effective management of HCC begins with robust prevention, screening, and surveillance. AASLD Practice Guidance offers comprehensive recommendations, addressing key risk factors and outlining surveillance strategies for at-risk populations. The guidance underscores the pivotal role of advanced imaging and biomarkers in achieving early detection, ultimately aiming to improve patient prognosis [2]. The ongoing review of prognostic and predictive biomarkers in HCC is shaping personalized approaches. This encompasses both circulating and tissue-based biomarkers, exploring their potential utility in risk stratification, guiding

therapeutic choices, and monitoring treatment response to tailor interventions [4]. Staging systems are continuously refined to reflect therapeutic progress. An important update details revisions to the Barcelona Clinic Liver Cancer (BCLC) staging system and its associated treatment algorithm for HCC. This refined system effectively integrates new systemic and locoregional therapies, providing a more precise framework for patient stratification and guiding optimal management decisions [5]. Significant advancements in imaging techniques are crucial for HCC diagnosis and characterization. Reviews discuss the roles of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Computed Tomography (CT), and ultrasound, including specific contrast agents and multiparametric approaches. These innovations collectively improve detection sensitivity, refine lesion characterization, and directly influence treatment planning [8].

Surgical interventions remain a cornerstone of HCC treatment, with ongoing developments shaping current practices and future perspectives. This includes various surgical approaches like resection and transplantation, along with discussions on crucial patient selection criteria and optimized intraoperative strategies. Continuous advancements aim to improve tumor resectability and enhance long-term outcomes for patients [9]. Beyond individual patient care, understanding the broader context of HCC is vital. An updated analysis of the global burden of hepatocellular carcinoma, based on the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019, reveals significant regional disparities in incidence and mortality. It clearly identifies key risk factors contributing to this disease burden and highlights the urgent need for globally targeted prevention and control strategies [7].

At a fundamental level, research continues to unravel the cellular and molecular mechanisms driving HCC development and progression. This includes exploring genetic mutations, critical signaling pathways, and the microenvironmental factors intricately implicated in hepatocarcinogenesis. These deep biological insights are essential for identifying novel therapeutic targets and fostering biomarker development [10]. The integration of these various fields—from advanced systemic and immunotherapies [1, 3] to precise biomarkers [4] and refined staging—points towards a future of increasingly personalized and effective HCC management. This comprehensive understanding aims to improve patient care across the spectrum of HCC, from early detection and stratification to advanced therapeutic interventions.

Conclusion

Recent advancements in Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC) management span systemic therapies, diagnostics, and molecular insights. Updates on systemic therapies show a shift towards combination immunotherapies, exploring their efficacy across stages and identifying new treatment strategies. AASLD Practice Guidance provides key recommendations for HCC prevention, screening, and surveillance, covering risk factors, surveillance strategies, and the critical role of imaging and biomarkers for early detection. Molecularly targeted therapies and immunotherapies are transforming treatment algorithms, emphasizing mechanisms, efficacy, and resistance, particularly with immune checkpoint inhibitors and their combinations. Prognostic and predictive biomarkers, both circulating and tissue-based, are advancing to personalize HCC management by guiding risk stratification and therapeutic decisions. Revisions to the Barcelona Clinic Liver Cancer (BCLC) staging system integrate new systemic and locoregional therapies, offering a more precise framework for patient stratification. Immunotherapy's status and future directions are under continuous exploration, addressing patient selection, resistance, and promising combination strategies to improve outcomes. An updated analysis of the global burden of HCC highlights regional disparities in incidence and mortality, identifying key risk factors and emphasizing targeted prevention strategies. Significant advances in imaging techniques, including MRI, CT, and ultrasound with specific contrast agents, improve HCC diagnosis, lesion characterization, and

guide treatment decisions. Surgical treatment, encompassing resection and transplantation, continues to evolve with refinements in patient selection, intraoperative strategies, and advancements aimed at improving resectability and long-term outcomes. Fundamental research explores the cellular and molecular mechanisms driving HCC, including genetic mutations, signaling pathways, and microenvironmental factors, providing insights for therapeutic targets and biomarker development.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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