Perspective
Volume 10:04, 2025

Journal of Diabetic Complications and Medicine

ISSN: 2475-3211

Open Access

MicroRNAs: Key to Diabetic Complications and Therapies

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Introduction

MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are recognized as crucial regulators of gene expression, playing a significant role in the pathogenesis of diabetic complications. Their dysregulation contributes to cellular dysfunction and disease progression across various affected systems. This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted roles of specific miRNAs in key diabetic complications, including diabetic nephropathy, retinopathy, neuropathy, and cardiovascular disease, as well as discuss their therapeutic potential.

The pathogenesis of diabetic nephropathy is intricately linked to the dysregulation of miRNAs, which affects cellular processes vital for kidney function. Research has highlighted specific miRNAs that contribute to the development and progression of this complication. For instance, miRNA-146a has been identified as a key regulator in diabetic nephropathy, influencing inflammatory responses and fibrotic processes within the renal tissue. Its aberrant expression is associated with cellular dysfunction and damage characteristic of this condition. Understanding these regulatory mechanisms is paramount for developing targeted interventions [1].

Diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of vision loss, is also significantly influenced by miRNA activity. miRNAs involved in regulating angiogenesis, inflammation, and oxidative stress within retinal cells play a pivotal role in the development and progression of this complication. Certain miRNAs, such as members of the miR-200 family, have been implicated in the epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT) and subsequent fibrosis observed in the kidneys and other organs, highlighting their broad impact on diabetic complications [2].

The intricate molecular pathways underlying diabetic neuropathy involve a complex interplay of miRNAs that impact nerve cell survival, inflammation, and the integrity of the myelin sheath. Specific miRNAs have been identified as significant players in the neuroinflammatory processes and neuronal damage characteristic of diabetic neuropathy. These miRNAs can disrupt normal neuronal function and contribute to the progressive degeneration of peripheral nerves, leading to significant morbidity [3].

Cardiovascular complications, a major cause of mortality in individuals with diabetes, are also profoundly affected by miRNA dysregulation. miRNAs influence critical pathways involved in endothelial dysfunction, smooth muscle cell proliferation, and inflammatory responses within the cardiovascular system. This dysregulation can exacerbate conditions such as atherosclerosis and cardiac hypertrophy, increasing the risk of adverse cardiovascular events [4].

Emerging research has illuminated the role of exosomal microRNAs in the context of diabetic complications. These extracellular vesicles and their encapsulated miRNAs can be transferred between cells, mediating intercellular communication and influencing disease progression. Their presence and activity offer new insights into the mechanisms driving diabetic pathology and suggest novel diagnostic and therapeutic avenues [5].

In diabetic nephropathy, specific miRNAs like miR-21 have been shown to orchestrate disease progression through direct targeting of key signaling pathways. This miRNA is implicated in promoting fibrosis and inflammation within renal cells, underscoring its critical role in the pathogenesis of diabetic kidney disease. The elucidation of these specific targets and pathways provides a foundation for therapeutic strategies aimed at modulating miR-21 activity [6].

Furthermore, the therapeutic potential of inhibiting specific miRNAs, such as miR-155, is being explored for diabetic cardiovascular complications. miR-155 contributes to inflammatory processes and endothelial dysfunction in the diabetic milieu. Its inhibition has shown promise in attenuating these detrimental effects, suggesting it as a viable therapeutic target to protect against diabetes-induced cardiovascular damage [7].

The miR-200 family, as mentioned earlier, plays a significant role in epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT) and fibrosis, particularly in the kidneys. Dysregulation of these miR-200 members contributes to the progression of diabetic nephropathy and other fibrotic conditions. Therefore, modulating their activity emerges as a promising therapeutic strategy to combat these fibrotic processes [8].

Diabetic peripheral neuropathy presents a complex therapeutic challenge, and microRNA-based therapies are being investigated as a novel approach. The use of miRNA mimics or inhibitors to target specific miRNAs involved in nerve inflammation and degeneration offers a potential means to preserve nerve function in diabetic patients. Preclinical evidence supports the efficacy of these strategies in mitigating nerve damage [9].

Collectively, these studies underscore the pervasive and critical role of microRNAs in the pathogenesis of a wide spectrum of diabetic complications. The identification of specific miRNAs and their associated pathways provides a comprehensive understanding of the molecular underpinnings of these conditions. The translational potential of these miRNAs for both diagnostic and therapeutic applications is significant and warrants further investigation within the field of endocrinology and diabetic complications [10].

Description

MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are integral to the pathogenesis of diabetic complications, orchestrating gene expression that leads to cellular dysfunction. This article synthesizes current knowledge on specific miRNAs implicated in diabetic nephropathy, retinopathy, neuropathy, and cardiovascular disease, highlighting their roles in inflammation, oxidative stress, and fibrosis. Therapeutic strategies targeting these miRNAs are also discussed.

Diabetic nephropathy is a complex complication where miRNA dysregulation plays a critical role in disease progression. For instance, miRNA-146a has been identified as a key regulator in this condition, influencing inflammatory pathways and contributing to renal damage. Its aberrant expression is associated with the cellular dysfunction and fibrotic changes characteristic of diabetic kidney disease, making it a focal point for therapeutic interventions [1].

In the context of diabetic retinopathy, miRNAs are central to the regulation of angiogenesis, inflammation, and oxidative stress within the retinal microvasculature. Certain miRNAs, such as members of the miR-200 family, are implicated in the development and progression of this visual impairment. Their involvement in processes like epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT) and subsequent fibrosis in various organs underscores their broad impact on diabetic complications [2].

Diabetic neuropathy, affecting peripheral nerves, is characterized by nerve cell survival issues, inflammation, and myelin sheath integrity problems, all influenced by miRNA activity. Specific miRNAs like miR-133b and miR-219 are significantly involved in the neuroinflammatory processes and neuronal damage observed in this complication. The dysregulation of these miRNAs contributes to the progressive degeneration of nerve tissues [3].

The cardiovascular system is particularly vulnerable to diabetic complications, including atherosclerosis and cardiac hypertrophy, with miRNAs playing a significant role. They influence endothelial dysfunction, smooth muscle cell proliferation, and inflammatory responses, thereby contributing to the development and exacerbation of cardiovascular diseases in diabetic individuals. Specific miRNAs are key mediators in these processes [4].

Emerging research highlights the importance of exosomal microRNAs in mediating intercellular communication and influencing the progression of diabetic complications. These extracellular vesicles carry miRNAs that can be transferred between cells, impacting various cellular functions. Their role in diseases like diabetic nephropathy and retinopathy suggests potential as both biomarkers and therapeutic agents [5].

Within diabetic nephropathy, miR-21 has been identified as a significant promoter of renal fibrosis through its targeting of critical pathways like PTEN. This miRNA's activity exacerbates inflammation and fibrosis in renal cells, positioning it as a crucial player in the pathogenesis of diabetic kidney disease and a potential therapeutic target [6].

The therapeutic potential of inhibiting miR-155 is being actively investigated for its role in diabetic cardiovascular complications. miR-155 promotes inflammation and endothelial dysfunction. Inhibiting its activity has demonstrated an ability to attenuate diabetic atherosclerosis, indicating its value as a therapeutic target for mitigating diabetes-induced cardiovascular damage [7].

The miR-200 family's influence on epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT) and fibrosis is a key aspect of their role in diabetic nephropathy. Their dysregulation contributes to the fibrotic processes in the kidneys and other organs, making the modulation of miR-200 members a promising therapeutic strategy for managing these conditions [8].

For diabetic peripheral neuropathy, miRNA-based therapies offer a novel therapeutic avenue. The use of miRNA mimics or inhibitors to target specific miRNAs involved in nerve inflammation and degeneration aims to preserve nerve function. Preclinical studies provide evidence supporting the efficacy of these strategies in protecting against nerve damage [9].

In summary, the collective findings from these studies emphasize the widespread and critical involvement of microRNAs in the pathogenesis of diverse diabetic complications. The identification of specific miRNAs and their intricate network interactions provides a deeper understanding of these diseases and highlights their translational potential for both diagnosis and treatment, as further explored within the field of endocrinology and diabetic complications [10].

Conclusion

MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are central to the pathogenesis of diabetic complications, influencing gene expression in conditions like diabetic nephropathy, retinopathy, neuropathy, and cardiovascular disease. Their dysregulation contributes to cellular dysfunction, inflammation, oxidative stress, and fibrosis. Specific miRNAs such as miRNA-146a, miR-200 family, miR-21, and miR-155 have been identified as key players in these diseases. Emerging research also points to the role of exosomal miRNAs in intercellular communication and disease progression. Therapeutic strategies involving miRNA mimics and inhibitors are being developed as promising approaches to mitigate diabetic complications, offering potential for novel diagnostic and treatment interventions.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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How to cite this article: Kim, Sung-Ho. "MicroRNAs: Key to Diabetic Complications and Therapies." *J Diabetic Complications Med* 10 (2025):326.

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Received: 01-Aug-2025, Manuscript No. jdcm-26-182207; **Editor assigned:** 04-Aug-2025, PreQC No. P-182207; **Reviewed:** 18-Aug-2025, QC No. Q-182207; **Revised:** 22-Aug-2025, Manuscript No. R-182207; **Published:** 29-Aug-2025, DOI: 10.37421/2475-3211.2025.10.326