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Personalized Asthma Care: Advances in Diagnosis and Treatment

Michael J. Turner*

Department of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, University of California, San Diego, USA

Introduction

Recent advancements in asthma diagnosis are significantly enhancing our ability to precisely characterize airway inflammation and pinpoint the underlying drivers of the disease. This progress is largely attributed to the integration of sophisticated diagnostic tools such as fractional exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) measurements and advanced imaging modalities [1].

Furthermore, the approach to managing asthma is undergoing a transformative shift towards personalized medicine. This evolution involves moving beyond traditional symptom-based treatment regimens to incorporate a deeper understanding of individual patient characteristics, including genetic predispositions, specific inflammatory profiles, and patient-reported outcomes [1].

The advent of biologic therapies has revolutionized the care of severe, difficult-to-treat asthma. These targeted treatments focus on specific inflammatory pathways, most notably Type 2 inflammation, offering substantial improvements in symptom control and a marked reduction in the frequency of exacerbations [1].

A key non-invasive biomarker gaining prominence in asthma management is fractional exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO). Its utility lies in guiding corticosteroid therapy, as elevated FeNO levels can predict a favorable response to inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) and serve as a valuable tool for monitoring treatment adherence and inflammation control [2].

This FeNO-guided approach aids in optimizing the intensity of asthma treatment. By providing objective data on airway inflammation, it can help clinicians potentially reduce the dosage or duration of ICS therapy, thereby mitigating the risk of side effects in specific patient populations [2].

Biologic therapies are proving to be instrumental in transforming the management of distinct asthma subtypes. Specifically, treatments targeting interleukin-5 (IL-5) have shown remarkable efficacy in severe eosinophilic asthma, while those targeting immunoglobulin E (IgE) are highly effective in allergic asthma [3].

The selection of these advanced biologic treatments is increasingly informed by specific biomarkers. For instance, blood eosinophil counts and serum IgE levels play a crucial role in identifying patients who are most likely to benefit from these targeted therapies, leading to significant improvements [3].

The role of imaging in the comprehensive diagnosis and management of asthma is continuously expanding. Techniques like high-resolution computed tomography (HRCT) can visualize structural changes within the airways, such as thickening of the airway walls and the presence of mucus plugs, which are indicative of severe or refractory disease [4].

While not yet a routine component of all asthma assessments, advanced imaging techniques hold promise for further refining the phenotyping of airway disease. This enhanced understanding could potentially lead to more tailored and effective treatment decisions for individual patients [4].

Understanding the intricate genetic underpinnings of asthma is paramount for the advancement of personalized medicine. Genome-wide association studies (GWAS) have been instrumental in identifying numerous genetic loci associated with asthma susceptibility and its varying severity, providing critical insights into the underlying biological pathways involved [5].

Description

The landscape of asthma diagnosis and management is being reshaped by innovative approaches that move beyond traditional methods. Recent advancements, particularly in the utilization of fractional exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) and sophisticated imaging techniques, are enabling a more precise phenotyping of airway inflammation and a better identification of the specific drivers of the disease [1].

Correspondingly, asthma management strategies are increasingly adopting a personalized approach. This shift signifies a departure from generalized, symptom-based treatments towards therapeutic plans that consider individual patient factors such as genetic predispositions, specific inflammatory profiles, and the crucial input of patient-reported outcomes [1].

The development and application of biologic therapies represent a significant breakthrough in the care of severe and treatment-resistant asthma. These advanced treatments are designed to target specific inflammatory pathways, with a notable impact on Type 2 inflammation, leading to substantial improvements in symptom control and a reduction in the frequency of exacerbations [1].

Fractional exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) is emerging as a vital non-invasive biomarker for guiding corticosteroid therapy in asthma management. Elevated FeNO levels have been shown to predict a positive response to inhaled corticosteroids (ICS), and this biomarker also assists in monitoring patient adherence and controlling airway inflammation [2].

Utilizing FeNO to guide treatment intensity can optimize therapeutic regimens. This biomarker-driven approach allows for the potential to fine-tune the use of ICS, thereby reducing the risk of associated side effects in certain patient cohorts who may not require the highest levels of treatment [2].

Biologic therapies are transforming the management of specific asthma subtypes, notably severe eosinophilic asthma and allergic asthma. Therapies targeting interleukin-5 (IL-5) are crucial for eosinophilic asthma, while those targeting im-

munoglobulin E (IgE) are key for allergic asthma, each addressing distinct immunological mechanisms [3].

The selection of appropriate biologic therapies is now heavily reliant on specific biomarkers. Measurements such as blood eosinophil count and serum IgE levels are essential for identifying patients who will derive the greatest benefit, leading to significant improvements in clinical outcomes [3].

The role of advanced imaging in asthma diagnosis and management is progressively expanding. High-resolution computed tomography (HRCT) offers the ability to detect structural abnormalities within the airways, including airway wall thickening and mucus plugging, which are often present in severe or refractory asthma cases [4].

While advanced imaging is not yet universally applied in routine clinical practice for asthma, its potential for further phenotyping airway disease is substantial. Such detailed characterization can significantly aid in guiding more precise and individualized treatment decisions [4].

A fundamental aspect of advancing personalized medicine in asthma involves a deeper understanding of its genetic basis. Genome-wide association studies (GWAS) have been instrumental in identifying numerous genetic loci associated with both the susceptibility to asthma and its severity, offering valuable insights into the underlying biological pathways involved in disease development [5].

Conclusion

Recent advancements in asthma diagnosis, including fractional exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) and advanced imaging, allow for better phenotyping of airway inflammation and identification of disease drivers. Management is becoming increasingly personalized, considering genetic factors and inflammatory profiles alongside symptoms. Biologic therapies targeting pathways like Type 2 inflammation have revolutionized severe asthma care by significantly improving symptom control and reducing exacerbations. FeNO is a valuable non-invasive biomarker for guiding corticosteroid therapy, optimizing treatment intensity and potentially reducing side effects. Biologics targeting IL-5 and IgE are transforming severe eosinophilic and allergic asthma management, respectively, with selection based on biomarkers like eosinophil counts and IgE levels. Advanced imaging like HRCT helps identify structural changes indicative of severe asthma. Genetic research, particularly GWAS, is crucial for personalized medicine by revealing genetic predispositions and underlying biological pathways, potentially informing future treatment selection and risk prediction.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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Address for Correspondence: Michael, J. Turner, Department of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, University of California, San Diego, USA, E-mail: mjturner@ucied.edu

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