ISSN 2456-3110
Vol 9 · Issue 11
November 2024

JAiMS
INTERNATIONAL

Journal of Ayurveda and Integrated Medical Sciences

www.jaims.in

JAIMS

An International Journal for Researches in Ayurveda and Allied Sciences

Maharshi Charaka
Ayurveda

Indexed

Journal of
Ayurveda and Integrated Medical Sciences
ISSN 2456-3110
REVIEW ARTICLE November 2024

Ayurvedic Personalized Healthcare: Integrating Genomics, Epigenomics and Traditional Wisdom

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ABSTRACT

In the evolving landscape of personalized medicine, integrating *Ayurvedic* principles with modern genomic science presents a transformative opportunity for healthcare. This paper explores the concept of *Prakriti*, the unique constitution of individuals as defined in *Ayurveda*, and its potential correlation with genetic profiles. By merging *Ayurvedic* insights with genomic and epigenomic research, we propose a framework for personalized healthcare that considers both genetic predispositions and lifestyle factors. The study outlines practical approaches, including the use of Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) analysis to identify genetic variations linked to specific *Prakriti* types, and the role of epigenetics in understanding how lifestyle choices influence gene expression. Additionally, we discuss the implementation of Genome-Wide Association Studies (GWAS) to identify biomarkers that can enhance disease prevention and treatment strategies tailored to individual needs. By fostering collaboration between *Ayurvedic* practitioners and genomic researchers, we aim to promote a holistic understanding of health that bridges ancient wisdom with contemporary science. Ultimately, this integration not only enriches personalized healthcare but also paves the way for innovative treatment solutions that honor both genetic diversity and traditional knowledge.

Key words: *Ayurveda, Personalized healthcare, Genomics, Epigenomics, SNP Analysis, GWAS*

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of personalized medicine marks a significant shift in healthcare delivery, emphasizing the need for treatments tailored to individual genetic profiles.[1] *Ayurveda*, an ancient Indian system of medicine, provides a holistic framework for understanding health through the lens of individual constitution or *Prakriti*. This paper presents a practical approach to integrating *Ayurvedic* principles with modern genomic science to enhance personalized healthcare. A *Prakriti*-based approach to medicine holds significant potential in the evolving landscape of global health wisdom. *Ayurveda* contributes through its modalities of *Ahara* (diet), *Vihara (*lifestyle), and *Aushadhi* (medication), which serve as foundational pillars in creating a holistic healthcare system rooted in *Prakriti*, thereby establishing it as a comprehensive science.[2]

The concept of *Prakriti* encompasses physical, mental, and emotional attributes that define an individual. By correlating these attributes with genomic data, we can develop personalized treatment strategies that address not only genetic predispositions but also lifestyle and environmental factors. This integration has the potential to revolutionize healthcare by offering more effective prevention and treatment options.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this paper is to propose a framework for merging *Ayurvedic* principles with

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Submission Date: 12/10/2024 Accepted Date: 20/11/2024

Access this article online

Quick Response Code

Website: www.jaims.in

DOI: 10.21760/jaims.9.11.27

ISSN: 2456-3110 REVIEW ARTICLE November 2024

genomic and epigenomic research to advance the personalized healthcare. The specific aims include:

1. **To explore the relationship between genetic constitution and *Prakriti*:**

Understanding how genetic variations correspond to different *Ayurvedic* constitutions.

2. **To examine the role of lifestyle factors in gene expression:**

Investigating how diet, stress management, and other lifestyle choices influence health outcomes through epigenetic modifications.

3. **To identify genetic markers associated with *Prakriti* types:**

Utilizing Genome-Wide Association Studies (GWAS) to discover biomarkers that can inform disease prevention and treatment strategies.

Literature Review

A thorough review of existing literature was conducted to identify key findings on the intersection of Ayurveda and genomics. This review encompassed studies on Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) analysis and its relevance in understanding individual differences in health.

Practical Framework Development

1. SNP Analysis

We propose utilizing SNP analysis as a tool for identifying genetic variations linked to specific Ayurvedic constitutions. By examining SNPs associated with various health conditions prevalent in different *Prakriti* types, healthcare practitioners can tailor interventions accordingly.

2. Epigenetic Considerations

The role of epigenetics in modifying gene expression based on lifestyle factors is crucial. We suggest developing educational programs focused on diet, exercise, and stress management that align with individual *Prakriti* types to optimize health outcomes.

GWAS Implementation

Implementing GWAS can provide insights into genetic variations across different populations. By identifying specific biomarkers associated with each *Prakriti* type, we can enhance our understanding of disease susceptibility and treatment efficacy.

Integration Strategies

1. Collaborative Research Initiatives

Establishing partnerships between Ayurvedic practitioners and genomic researchers will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and resources necessary for integrating these fields effectively.

2. Public Awareness Campaigns

Raising awareness about the benefits of personalized healthcare through Ayurveda and genomics can encourage individuals to seek personalized treatment approaches based on their unique constitutions.

3. Technology Utilization

Leveraging technology such as mobile applications for dietary recommendations based on genetic profiles can enhance patient engagement and adherence to personalized health plans.

Result

Expected Outcomes

By implementing the proposed framework for integrating Ayurveda with genomics, we anticipate several positive outcomes:

1. Enhanced Personalization

Individuals will receive more tailored healthcare solutions that consider their unique genetic makeup and lifestyle factors.

2. Improved Health Literacy

Educational programs will empower individuals to make informed decisions about their health based on their *Prakriti* type.

3. Innovative Treatment Strategies

The identification of genetic markers linked to specific health conditions will lead to more effective prevention and treatment strategies tailored to individual needs.

Practical Applications

1. **Dietary Modifications:** Based on an individual's *Prakriti* type identified through SNP analysis,

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dietary recommendations can be customized to optimize metabolic health and prevent chronic diseases.

2. **Lifestyle Interventions:** Personalized lifestyle interventions focusing on stress reduction techniques suitable for different *Prakriti* types can improve overall well-being.
3. **Preventive Healthcare Models:** Developing preventive healthcare models that incorporate both Ayurvedic principles and genomic insights will promote proactive health management among individuals.

Discussion

Prakriti

Each individual is born with a distinct proportion of the *Tridoshas*, which is influenced not only by genetics but also by the environment during foetal development. The characteristics of a person are shaped by their predominant *Dosha Prakriti*, and the dominant *Dosha* plays a crucial role in regulating their physiology. Consequently, taking into account an individual's *Dosha Prakriti* when developing preventive and treatment strategies can help identify effective lifestyle interventions to be used in conjunction with medication. This approach is reflected in the concept of *Dashavidha Pariksha*, a fundamental principle of personalized medicine, which emphasizes the importance of considering an individual's *Dosha Prakriti (Charaka Samhita). Prakriti* refers to the unique combination of the three doshas that each individual is born with. The *Tridoshas* consist of the five *Mahabhutas* - Air (*Vayu*), Water (*Jal*), Fire (*Agni*), Earth (*Bhumi*), and Space (*Aakash*) - with one *Dosha* typically being predominant while the others exert a lesser influence. The *Vata Dosha* is composed of the *Mahabhutas Akasha* (space) and *Vayu* (air). *Pitta Dosha* is formed by the combination of *Tejas* or *Agni* (fire) and *Ap* (water) *Mahabhutas*. In contrast, *Kapha Dosha* consists of *Ap* (water) and *Prithvi* (earth) *Mahabhutas*. When there is an imbalance in the *Doshas*, an individual is identified as being dominant in *Vata*, *Pitta*, or *Kapha*. Each *Dosha* confers specific traits to the person, which allows for categorization into a particular *Dosha* type.[3]

Among the disorders associated with *Vata* are neurological, developmental, speech, and motor disorders, as well as dementia and arrhythmias. *Pitta* elevation is linked to conditions such as ulcers, skin diseases, and bleeding disorders, while *Kapha* elevation is associated with diabetes, obesity, and atherosclerotic conditions. The assessment of disturbances in specific *Doshas* is conducted through various indications, and the primary objective of *Ayurvedic* practitioners is to quantify the extent of these disturbances. This is followed by efforts to restore balance to the *Doshas* through appropriate dietary and therapeutic interventions.[4] While *Prakriti* and the *Tridoshas* form the foundational principles of personalized Ayurvedic practices for prognostic treatments, it is essential to establish their molecular basis.[5]

Genomics

A genome is a comprehensive set of DNA that comprises all of an organism's genes, as well as its hierarchical, three-dimensional structural configuration. The human genome consists of 23 pairs of chromosomes (diploid), each containing approximately 3 billion base pairs of DNA inherited from both parents. Variations in the human genome sequence, known as single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs), can occur. While some of these variations are common and found in a significant proportion of individuals, others are rare. Variations that occur in less than 1% of the population are typically classified as mutations. Many rare disorders are monogenic, resulting from mutations in a single gene, such as hemophilia and beta-thalassemia. In contrast, complex disorders like diabetes, asthma, and cardiovascular disease are multigenic, involving multiple genes.[6] Genomics provides a predictive, personalized understanding of an individual's genetic information, while *Ayurveda*, as an ancient system of personalized medicine, determines the appropriate treatments and dietary plans based on a detailed clinical assessment of the patient's disease characteristics, innate

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constitution, and current health status.[7] For the first time, the integration of *Prakriti* classification methods with modern genomics led to the identification of the molecular and genomic foundations of *Dosha Prakriti* theory. Healthy individuals with different *Prakriti* types, as defined by *Ayurveda*, exhibit notable variations in their biochemical and hematological parameters. Genomic research further revealed significant differences in gene expression among the main *Prakriti* types, particularly in genes related to immunity, cell division, blood coagulation, and other vital processes.[8] *Ayurveda* and genomics can complement each other, particularly in developing preventive healthcare strategies. Access to time-tested, personalized prevention and lifestyle recommendations would make it easier for individuals to practice self-care. For the first time, integrating *Prakriti* differentiation methods with modern genomics has revealed the molecular genetics foundation of the *Dosha Prakriti* concept.[9]

Epigenetics

Epigenetics examines heritable and stable changes in gene expression that arise from modifications to the chromosome, rather than changes to the DNA sequence itself. Although epigenetic mechanisms do not alter the DNA sequence directly, they regulate gene expression through chemical modifications of DNA bases and alterations to the chromosomal structure in which the DNA is organized.[10] This process leads to phenotypic changes without altering the genotype. The genotype refers to the genetic makeup that determines specific traits (coding genes) and remains unchanged unless there is toxic damage. On the other hand, an individual's phenotype - such as appearance, behaviour, and development - is influenced by the genotype. However, environmental factors like lifestyle or psychological influences can impact the phenotype, potentially affecting the expression of the genotype. Epigenetics is thought to play a crucial role in Ayurveda, as it integrates both genotypic and phenotypic variations. *Ayurveda* explains how various factors such as behaviour, lifestyle, stress, diet, digestion, and the environment influence *Deha Prakriti* (the psychological and physiological constitution), which corresponds to the phenotype, while *Janma Prakriti* relates to the genotype. By understanding this connection, the interaction between Ayurveda and the modern healthcare system can be enhanced, fostering a stronger integration of both fields in promoting overall health and well-being.[11] Four key factors influence the phenotype, or *Deha Prakriti*, either positively or negatively based on an individual's lifestyle: 1) behaviour and lifestyle, 2) digestion and diet, 3) stress, and 4) environmental conditions. *Ayurveda* identifies these aspects as essential for positively affecting both genotype and phenotype through epigenetic mechanisms. Consequently, epigenetics is considered a fundamental element in *Ayurveda*. Epigenetic changes can also have long-term effects, impacting future generations. Factors such as nutritional deficiencies, environmental toxins, and stress may trigger epigenetic modifications that are inherited, potentially leading to illness in descendants. Epigenomics explores how proteins, metabolic processes, and both genetic and non-genetic factors influence human physiology, highlighting key mechanisms that contribute to individual health risks. *Ayurgenomics* can offer insights into how current medications could be more effectively tailored when targeted at individuals with specific *Prakriti* types.[12]

Research Insights on Genomics and Epigenomics: Transforming Drug Development for Personalized Care

Numerous scientific articles highlight the effectiveness and potential of Ayurvedic medicines. For instance, during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, an in-silico evaluation of AYUSH-64 - a patented *Ayurvedic* formulation developed by India's Central Council of Research in Ayurvedic Sciences, which has been used clinically for several decades as an anti-malarial, anti-inflammatory, and anti-pyretic agent - indicated that this medicine could be a promising candidate for repurposing in the treatment of COVID-19.[13] A 2015 study discovered specific DNA methylation markers that differentiate among the various types of *Prakriti*. The findings indicate that DNA methylation may play a

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role in chromatin regulation, which influences the distinct phenotypes of *Prakriti*. This research offers valuable insights into the epigenetic mechanisms that support the personalized approach of *Ayurvedic* medicine.[14]

Numerous significant efforts have been undertaken to correlate *Prakriti* classification with genetic data, particularly by examining the association of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs), in an attempt to establish the genetic and molecular basis of *Prakriti*. One of the most comprehensive studies published in 2015 identified 52 SNPs that were significantly different among the three primary forms of *Prakriti*. SNPs (single nucleotide polymorphisms) are the most common type of genetic variation found in humans, representing changes at a single nucleotide level in the DNA sequence. The study also revealed that the SNP in the PGM1 gene (rs11208257), which is associated with energy generation, is more homogeneous and consistent in *Pitta* body types compared to *Kapha* and *Vata* types.[15]

Genetic marker studies and genome-wide expression analyses (GWAS) indicate that the majority of genetic variation arises from differences in genetic loci between individuals within a population. The vast diversity in gene expression and sequence variation, combined with interactions within genetic networks and environmental influences, plays a significant role in phenotypic variation, impacting both health and disease. In 2008, a comprehensive study conducted by her team examined the biological and genome-wide expression levels among participants from the three primary *Prakriti* groups—*Vata, Pitta,* and *Kapha*. The study involved healthy individuals representing the extreme variations of these *Prakriti* types. Researchers focused on the CYP2C19 gene, finding a strong association between this gene and the *Prakriti* phenotype. The results indicated that individuals with a *Pitta* dominance exhibited over-expression of genes related to immune response pathways. In contrast, *Kapha* males showed higher levels of metabolic syndrome and chronic inflammation markers compared to their *Vata* counterparts, which aligned with the increased expression of inflammatory response genes in these individuals. Additionally, prothrombin time, an indicator of blood coagulation, was found to be lower in *Kapha* males. The study also revealed increased expression of hemoglobin-related genes in *Pitta* individuals compared to both *Vata* and *Kapha*, which corresponded with higher hemoglobin levels and the characteristic skin redness observed in *Pitta* types. Furthermore, genes associated with fibrinolysis were down-regulated in *Kapha* males, while those involved in ATP and cofactor production were up-regulated. The researchers also noted that *Kapha* individuals had elevated levels of total cholesterol, triglycerides, high-density lipoprotein (HDL), and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) compared to both *Pitta* and *Vata* types.[16]

CONCLUSION

Integrating *Ayurveda* with genomics offers a promising pathway toward personalized healthcare that respects both ancient wisdom and modern scientific advancements. By focusing on individual constitutions through *Prakriti* while considering genetic predispositions and lifestyle factors, we can develop innovative healthcare solutions that enhance patient outcomes. This synthesis not only enriches our understanding of health but also paves the way for individualized treatments based on comprehensive insights into genetics and traditional practices. As we continue to explore these intersections, the future of personalized healthcare looks bright.

Challenges and Considerations

While the potential benefits are significant, several challenges must be addressed:

1. **Cultural Acceptance:** Ensuring that both practitioners and patients embrace this integrative approach requires cultural sensitivity and education about the benefits of personalized medicine.
2. **Regulatory Frameworks:** Developing appropriate regulatory frameworks will be essential for ensuring ethical practices in genomic testing and data usage within *Ayurvedic* contexts

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How to cite this article: Lakshmi Priya R, Devi S. Nair. Ayurvedic Personalized Healthcare: Integrating Genomics, Epigenomics and Traditional Wisdom. J Ayurveda Integr Med Sci 2024;11:192-197. http://dx.doi.org/10.21760/jaims.9.11.27

Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.