NARRATIVE REVIEW

Polyphenols as Epigenetic Modulators of Health: A Holistic Approach to the Therapy and Prevention of Chronic Diseases

Polyphénols en tant que modulateurs épigénétiques de la santé : Une approche holistique pour la thérapie et la prévention des maladies chroniques

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Abstract

Background: The rising prevalence of chronic diseases, including cancer, metabolic disorders, neurodegenerative, and cardiovascular conditions, presents a growing challenge to modern medicine and public health.
Aim: This article investigates the potential of polyphenols as modulators of epigenetic mechanisms in the context of chronic disease.
Methods: A comprehensive review of scientific literature was conducted, with emphasis on key epigenetic processes such as DNA methylation, histone modifications, and microRNA regulation.
Results: Polyphenols like resveratrol, curcumin, quercetin, and catechins exert protective actions by modulating gene expression, counteracting harmful epigenetic changes, and supporting cellular health.
Conclusion: Advancing our understanding of how polyphenols influence epigenetic pathways may lead to innovative therapeutic strategies combining conventional and personalized approaches.

Keywords: Polyphenols, Epigenetics, Chronic Diseases, DNA Methylation, Epigenetic Modulators, Nutrigenomics, Antioxidants, Health, Therapeutic Strategies, Prevention

Résumé

Introduction: L'augmentation de la prévalence des maladies chroniques, telles que le cancer, les troubles métaboliques, les maladies neurodégénératives et cardiovasculaires, constitue un défi majeur pour la médecine moderne et la santé publique.
Objectif : Cet article examine le potentiel des polyphénols en tant que modulateurs épigénétiques dans le contexte des maladies chroniques.
Méthodes: Une revue approfondie de la littérature scientifique a été réalisée, en mettant l'accent sur les mécanismes épigénétiques impliqués, notamment la méthylation de l'ADN, les modifications des histones et la régulation des microARN.
Résultats : Des composés tels que le resvératrol, la curcumine, la quercétine et les catéchines montrent des effets protecteurs via la modulation de l'expression génique, en neutralisant les altérations pathologiques.
Conclusion : Les avancées dans la compréhension des effets épigénétiques des polyphénols peuvent contribuer au développement de stratégies thérapeutiques intégrant des approches conventionnelles et personnalisées.

Mots-clés: Polyphénols, Épigénétique, Maladies chroniques, Méthylation de l'ADN, Modulateurs épigénétiques, Nutrigénomique, Antioxydants, Stratégies thérapeutiques, Prévention

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Introduction

The increasing incidence of civilization-related diseases, such as cancer, metabolic disorders, neurodegenerative diseases, and cardiovascular conditions, represents one of the greatest challenges for modern medicine and public health. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), chronic diseases account for over 70% of all deaths worldwide, with environmental and dietary factors playing a key role in their pathogenesis. As researchers seek to understand how external factors influence the development of these chronic conditions, growing attention has been directed toward the biological mechanisms that mediate the body's response to environmental stimuli. An increasing body of research suggests that health is not solely determined by genetic predisposition but also by epigenetic mechanisms that regulate gene expression in response to environmental stimuli.

Epigenetics is a dynamic field of biology that investigates heritable yet reversible changes in gene expression that occur without alterations in the DNA sequence. It encompasses mechanisms such as DNA methylation, histone modifications, and regulation by non-coding RNAs (e.g., microRNAs, miRNAs). Epigenetic dysregulation has been linked to the pathogenesis of various diseases, including hypermethylation of tumor suppressor genes in cancer and epigenetic deregulation of metabolic pathways in type 2 diabetes. Importantly, epigenetic changes are potentially reversible, offering opportunities for modification through dietary, pharmacological, and environmental interventions.

In this context, there is growing interest in nutrigenomics—a discipline that explores the impact of dietary components on gene expression through genetic mechanisms—and nutriepigenetics, which focuses on the impact of dietary components on epigenetic regulation of gene expression. These fields explore how compounds in food can influence gene expression via genetic and epigenetic pathways. A particular focus has been placed on polyphenols, bioactive plant compounds that exhibit strong antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective properties. Initially, polyphenols were primarily studied for their role as antioxidants; however, in recent years, it has been discovered that they can also function as epigenetic modulators of health, influencing DNA methylation, the activity of epigenetic enzymes (e.g., DNMT, HDAC), and miRNA expression.

Research indicates that certain polyphenols, such as resveratrol, curcumin, quercetin, and catechins, can inhibit adverse epigenetic changes and restore the proper function of genes associated with health protection. Due to these properties, polyphenols may represent a significant component of therapeutic strategies aimed at the prevention and treatment of civilization-related diseases. Understanding their epigenetic mechanisms of action could lead to the development of novel dietary therapeutic strategies that support conventional treatments and promote a personalized approach to health.

Interdisciplinary Approach to Polyphenol Research

Research on the epigenetic effects of polyphenols integrates various scientific disciplines, including molecular biology, biotechnology, pharmacology, medicine, and nutrition. The importance of interdisciplinarity in this field is immense—the development of advanced DNA sequencing technologies, epigenomic studies, and transcriptomic analyses has significantly enhanced our understanding of their mechanisms of action. The implementation of methods such as ChIP-seq, RNA-seq, and global DNA methylation analyses enables precise investigation of the impact of polyphenols on the human epigenome.

Methods

This analysis is based on a review of current scientific studies on the epigenetic mechanisms of polyphenols. Publications were sourced from scientific databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science, focusing on in vitro, in vivo, and clinical studies. Particular attention was given to methods for assessing epigenetic modifications, including DNA sequencing techniques, DNA methylation analysis, histone modifications, and non-coding RNA expression. Studies examining the impact of a polyphenol-rich diet on the epigenome, as well as their potential applications in the prevention and treatment of civilization-related diseases, were also considered.

Objective of the Study

The aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of polyphenols as epigenetic regulators of health. The molecular mechanisms underlying their action, as well as their potential applications in the therapy and prevention of civilization-related diseases, will be discussed. Particular emphasis will be placed on an integrative approach that combines diet, lifestyle, and therapeutic interventions, which may contribute to the development of more effective strategies for promoting public health in the face of the growing burden of chronic diseases.

Results

Epigenetic Mechanisms of Health Regulation

Epigenetics investigates changes in gene expression that do not result from alterations in the DNA sequence but are heritable and potentially reversible. These mechanisms play a crucial role in maintaining homeostasis, cellular differentiation, and responses to environmental factors. Epigenetic patterns can be modified by diet, lifestyle, and environmental exposures, opening new therapeutic possibilities for the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases [1].

Fundamental Epigenetic Mechanisms

DNA Methylation

DNA methylation is one of the most extensively studied epigenetic modifications. This process involves the attachment of methyl groups ($-CH_3$) to cytosine residues within CpG dinucleotides, leading to the formation of 5-methylcytosine. This reaction is catalyzed by DNA methyltransferase enzymes (DNMT1, DNMT3A, DNMT3B) [2].

Impact of DNA Methylation on Health:

• Cancer – Excessive methylation of CpG islands in the promoters of tumor suppressor genes (e.g., TP53, BRCA1) leads to their silencing, promoting oncogenic transformation [3].
• Type 2 Diabetes – Hypermethylation of genes involved in glucose and insulin metabolism, such as PDX1 and IGF2, may increase the risk of insulin resistance [4].
• Neurodegenerative Diseases – In Alzheimer's disease, hypermethylation of the APP gene may contribute to beta-amyloid accumulation [5].

Impact of Polyphenols on DNA Methylation

Polyphenols have been shown to influence DNA methylation patterns, often acting as modulators of gene expression through the regulation of methylation processes. Certain polyphenols, such as resveratrol and curcumin, can inhibit the hypermethylation of tumor suppressor genes, potentially reversing epigenetic changes that contribute to cancer development. Additionally, polyphenols may help regulate the methylation of genes involved in metabolic processes and inflammatory pathways, offering promising therapeutic potential for chronic diseases linked to epigenetic dysregulation.

Histone Modifications

Histones are proteins around which DNA is wrapped, forming nucleosomes. Histone modifications, including acetylation, methylation, phosphorylation, and ubiquitination, regulate chromatin structure and gene activity [6].
• Histone Acetylation – Catalyzed by histone acetyltransferases (HATs), this modification loosens chromatin structure and facilitates transcription.
• Histone Deacetylation – Carried out by histone deacetylases (HDACs), leading to chromatin condensation and gene repression [7].
• Histone Methylation – Depending on the site and degree of methylation, it can either activate (e.g., H3K4me3) or silence (e.g., H3K27me3) gene expression.
Role of Histone Modifications in Disease:
• Cancer – Overexpression of HDACs in various cancers (e.g., breast cancer, colorectal cancer) promotes uncontrolled tumor cell growth [7].
• Cardiovascular Diseases – Dysregulated histone acetylation in endothelial cells contributes to the development of atherosclerosis [8]. Recent studies have shown that HDAC inhibition can reduce vascular inflammation and atherosclerotic lesion formation in animal models [8]. Furthermore, histone modifications in vascular smooth muscle cells have been linked to the development of atherosclerosis and its progression.
MicroRNA (miRNA) and Other Non-Coding RNAs
MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are short, single-stranded RNA molecules that regulate gene expression at the post-transcriptional level. They function by binding to target mRNA, leading to translational repression or transcript degradation [9].

Examples of miRNAs in Disease Pathogenesis:
• miR-21 – Overexpressed in cancers (e.g., lung cancer, breast cancer), leading to the suppression of apoptotic genes [10].
• miR-29 – Involved in fibrosis-related processes in diabetes and cardiovascular diseases [11].

Impact of Environmental and Dietary Factors on the Epigenome

Diet plays a crucial role in regulating the epigenome, as it provides essential methyl donors and influences the activity of epigenetic enzymes.
Methyl Donors
• Folic acid, vitamin B12, betaine, choline, and methionine – These are essential components of the methylation cycle, and their deficiency can lead to DNA hypomethylation [12].
Polyphenols as Epigenetic Modulators

Polyphenols exhibit strong epigenetic activity:
• Resveratrol – Inhibits DNMT and HDAC activity, restoring the expression of tumor suppressor genes [13].
• Curcumin – Modifies histones and influences miRNA expression associated with inflammation and cancer regulation [14, 15].
• Catechins (EGCG from green tea) – Have been shown to alter DNA methylation patterns and regulate miRNA expression [16, 17].
Exposure to Environmental Pollutants
• Heavy metals (e.g., cadmium, arsenic) – Can induce hypermethylation of tumor suppressor genes [18].
• Air pollutants – Affect miRNA regulation and are linked to respiratory diseases [19].

Polyphenols – Characteristics and Sources

Polyphenols are a vast and diverse group of plant-derived secondary metabolites characterized by the presence of at least one phenolic group in their chemical structure. They exhibit a wide range of biological activities, including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and cell-signaling modulation properties.
Main Groups of Polyphenols and Their Dietary Sources

Bioavailability of Polyphenols – Factors Influencing Absorption and Metabolism

The bioavailability of polyphenols, defined as the degree and rate at which these compounds are absorbed and available at their site of action, is influenced by several factors:

• Chemical Structure: Polyphenols exist in food in both free and sugar-bound forms (glycosides). Glycosylated forms often require hydrolysis by intestinal enzymes or gut microbiota before absorption [20].
• Gut Microbiota: Intestinal microorganisms play a crucial role in polyphenol metabolism, converting them into active metabolites that are more easily absorbed and exhibit enhanced biological activity [24].
• Interactions with Other Dietary Components: The presence of macronutrients such as proteins and fats can affect the solubility and availability of polyphenols. For example, fats may enhance the absorption of lipophilic polyphenols [20].
• Food Processing: Technological processes such as cooking, fermentation, and freezing can modify the content and bioavailability of polyphenols. Some processes increase polyphenol availability by breaking down cell structures, while others may lead to degradation [25].

Understanding these factors is essential for optimizing polyphenol intake and maximizing their health benefits.

Table 1. Main Polyphenol Groups, Dietary Sources, and Selected Biological Activities [20, 21, 22,23]

Polyphenol Group	Subgroup / Example Compound	Dietary Sources	Biological Activity
Flavonoids [20]	Flavonols (e.g., quercetin)	Onions, apples, tea	Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory
	Flavanols (e.g., catechins)	Green tea, cocoa	Vascular protection, blood pressure regulation
	Isoflavones (e.g., genistein)	Soy products	Estrogenic activity, hormonal balance
Phenolic Acids [21]	Caffeic acid	Coffee, whole grains, certain fruits	Oxidative stress protection, anti-inflammatory
	Chlorogenic acid	Coffee, artichokes, eggplants	Glucose metabolism regulation
Stilbenes [22]	Resveratrol	Grape skins, red wine, peanuts	Cardioprotective, anticancer
Lignans [23]	–	Flaxseeds, sesame seeds	Hormonal modulation, anticancer effects

Polyphenols as Epigenetic Modulators of Health

Impact of Polyphenols on Epigenetic Mechanisms

Polyphenols have the ability to modulate epigenetic mechanisms, which play a crucial role in regulating gene expression. The main epigenetic pathways influenced by polyphenols include:

• Inhibition of DNA Methylation: Polyphenols can inhibit the activity of DNA methyltransferases (DNMTs), leading to DNA demethylation and reactivation of tumor suppressor genes, thereby inhibiting cancer cell proliferation [26].
• Modulation of Epigenetic Enzymes: Certain polyphenols, such as resveratrol, affect histone deacetylases (HDACs), altering histone acetylation levels and influencing the expression of genes regulating the cell cycle and apoptosis [27].
• Regulation of miRNA Expression: Polyphenols can influence microRNA (miRNA) expression, leading to the regulation of genes involved in cell proliferation, differentiation, and oxidative stress response. For instance, curcumin modulates the expression of miR-21, a key miRNA involved in cancer processes [28].

Examples of Polyphenol Action at the Molecular Level

• Epigallocatechin Gallate (EGCG): Found in green tea, EGCG inhibits DNA methylation by blocking DNMTs, leading to the reactivation of tumor suppressor genes. Studies have shown that EGCG reverses hypermethylation of the p16INK4a promoter, resulting in the suppression of esophageal cancer cell proliferation [29, 30].
• Resveratrol: Present in grapes and red wine, resveratrol influences histone modifications by inhibiting HDACs, leading to increased acetylation of histone H3 and activation of tumor suppressor genes such as p53. Research on prostate cancer cells has demonstrated that resveratrol effectively inhibits HDAC1 activity, contributing to reduced tumor cell growth [31].
• Curcumin: The main component of turmeric, curcumin modulates the expression of miRNAs involved in cancer processes. Studies on pancreatic cancer cells have shown that curcumin downregulates miR-21, leading to increased expression of pro-apoptotic genes and inhibition of cancer cell proliferation [28, 32].

Discussion

Polyphenols play a crucial role in epigenome regulation by affecting DNA methylation, histone modifications, and miRNA expression. Their actions may contribute to cancer prevention and therapy by modulating epigenetic pathways responsible for cell proliferation, apoptosis, and differentiation.

The Role of Polyphenols in the Prevention and Treatment of Civilization Diseases

Polyphenols are a group of chemical compounds that naturally occur in plants, including fruits, vegetables, tea, wine, and other plant-based products. They exhibit a wide range of health-promoting effects, including anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, anticancer, and neuroprotective properties. Research on the role of polyphenols in the prevention and treatment of civilization diseases, such as cancer, neurodegenerative diseases, diabetes, metabolic disorders, and cardiovascular diseases, highlights their therapeutic potential. Below, the latest research findings on this topic are discussed.

Cancer – Inhibition of Oncogenes and Activation of Tumor Suppressor Genes

Polyphenols, as natural plant-derived compounds, exhibit significant anticancer activity, including the inhibition of oncogenes and activation of tumor suppressor genes. The anticancer effects of these compounds involve interactions with various signaling pathways that play a key role in cancer development and progression.

Resveratrol and quercetin, two well-studied polyphenols, exhibit notable anticancer properties through their modulation of key molecular pathways. Resveratrol, found in grapes and red wine, has been shown to activate the p53 protein, a tumor suppressor involved in triggering apoptosis in cancer cells. It also inhibits the activity of NF-κB, a transcription factor responsible for pro-inflammatory cytokine production, thereby reducing inflammation in tumors and their microenvironment. Additionally, resveratrol suppresses kinases involved in cancer progression, including PI3K and AKT, which regulate cell growth and survival. It also downregulates oncogenes such as HER2 and ras, commonly overexpressed in cancers like breast and colorectal cancer, leading to reduced cancer cell proliferation and treatment resistance [33].

Quercetin, found in plant-based foods such as apples, onions, and berries, also shows strong anticancer potential by affecting gene expression related to apoptosis and the cell cycle. It induces cell cycle arrest in the G1 phase and promotes programmed cell death by activating caspases. In vitro studies on prostate cancer cells demonstrate that quercetin inhibits the AKT signaling pathway, which contributes to both apoptosis induction and the reduction of cancer cell migration—important factors in preventing metastasis [34].

Neurodegenerative Diseases – Influence on Neuroprotective Pathways

Polyphenols exhibit neuroprotective effects by regulating signaling pathways aimed at protecting neurons from oxidative stress and inflammation. Curcumin, found in turmeric, and epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) from green tea interact with molecular mechanisms responsible for neurodegeneration, showing potential in the prevention and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease. Curcumin, by inhibiting the transcription factor NF-κB, reduces inflammation in the nervous system, leading to decreased production of pro-inflammatory cytokines, which play a key role in inflammatory processes associated with neurodegeneration [35]. This action is particularly significant in the context of Alzheimer’s disease, where chronic inflammation and oxidative stress contribute to neuronal damage and progressive cognitive decline. Research findings indicate that curcumin has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties and, in Alzheimer’s disease models, reduces beta-amyloid levels, which may help slow disease progression [36].

On the other hand, EGCG, a component of green tea, activates the ERK1/2 pathway, which is involved in neuroplasticity processes, promoting the regeneration of damaged neurons and supporting synaptogenesis—the formation of new intercellular connections in the brain. This effect may be particularly relevant in neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson’s disease, where neurodegeneration and the loss of dopaminergic neurons lead to motor impairments and other clinical symptoms. EGCG also exhibits neuroprotective effects in Parkinson’s disease by inhibiting the aggregation of alpha-synuclein, a protein that plays a crucial role in the development of this disease [37].

Additionally, EGCG influences molecular mechanisms significant in Alzheimer’s disease. Wang et al. [38] demonstrated that epigallocatechin gallate exerts neuroprotective effects by protecting neurons from neurodegeneration and also supports neuroplasticity pathways. By affecting mechanisms such as the ERK1/2 pathway, EGCG promotes the regeneration of damaged neurons and enhances synaptogenesis, which may contribute to improved cognitive function and the slowing of brain aging.

Due to these properties, polyphenols such as curcumin and EGCG represent a promising therapeutic strategy in combating neurodegenerative diseases by protecting neurons from damage and supporting their regeneration.

Diabetes and Metabolic Disorders – Regulation of Glucose and Lipid Metabolism

Polyphenols such as resveratrol, quercetin, and anthocyanins play a crucial role in regulating glucose and lipid metabolism, which is essential for the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes and other metabolic disorders. Resveratrol, a natural polyphenol found in grapes and red wine, has been shown to enhance tissue insulin sensitivity, leading to a reduction in blood glucose levels. Clinical studies have confirmed that resveratrol supplementation improves glucose homeostasis in individuals with type 2 diabetes, highlighting its therapeutic potential in managing this condition. For instance, research by Jang et al. [39] demonstrated that resveratrol ameliorates insulin resistance and supports the proper functioning of pancreatic beta cells, contributing to improved glycemic control.

Quercetin, present in foods such as onions, apples, and grapes, exhibits strong anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. These effects help reduce oxidative stress in pancreatic beta cells, enhancing their function and insulin secretion. Animal studies have shown that quercetin improves pancreatic function and reduces oxidative stress, which may contribute to better blood glucose management [40]. Additionally, research by Seyed Alishahi et al. [41] demonstrated that quercetin supplementation enhances beta-cell function and mitigates oxidative stress, which is critical in the context of type 2 diabetes treatment.

Anthocyanins, found in fruits such as blueberries and black currants, positively influence lipid profiles, which is particularly relevant in the management of lipid disorders commonly associated with type 2 diabetes. Anthocyanins have been shown to lower LDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels while increasing HDL cholesterol, thereby reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases [42]. Studies by Basu et al.

[42] revealed that blueberry consumption improves lipid profiles in obese individuals by decreasing triglyceride and LDL cholesterol levels while increasing "good" HDL cholesterol levels, suggesting their potential as an adjunctive therapeutic strategy for lipid disorders in patients with type 2 diabetes.
The findings from these studies confirm the beneficial effects of polyphenols in the management of diabetes and other metabolic disorders. Resveratrol has been shown to enhance insulin sensitivity and lower blood glucose levels in individuals with type 2 diabetes [43]. Quercetin reduces oxidative stress and improves pancreatic cell function, as demonstrated in animal studies [41]. Furthermore, anthocyanin supplementation, particularly in the diet of obese individuals, improves lipid profiles by lowering LDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels while increasing HDL cholesterol, underscoring their potential role in lipid metabolism regulation in individuals with metabolic disorders [42].

Cardiovascular Diseases – Anti-inflammatory and Antioxidant Effects

Polyphenols, including flavonoids, resveratrol, and anthocyanins, exhibit significant anti-inflammatory and antioxidant activity, which plays a crucial role in the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. Their mechanisms of action include improving endothelial function, reducing oxidative stress, lowering inflammation levels, and positively influencing lipid profiles, all of which support cardiovascular health.
Flavonoids, present in many plant-based products, including cocoa, exert protective effects on the vascular endothelium, which is key in preventing the development of atherosclerosis and hypertension. Rosenblat et al. [44] indicated that flavonoids improve endothelial function by increasing nitric oxide production, which has a vasodilatory effect, thereby lowering blood pressure. These effects are particularly evident with regular consumption of cocoa, which is rich in these compounds. Additionally, flavonoids possess antioxidant properties, neutralizing free radicals and reducing oxidative stress, which plays a crucial role in the development of heart disease.
Resveratrol, a polyphenol found mainly in grapes, red wine, and berries, exhibits strong anti-inflammatory properties. Micek et al. [45] demonstrated that resveratrol inhibits the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines such as TNF-α (tumor necrosis factor-alpha) and IL-6 (interleukin-6), which are strongly associated with the development of cardiovascular diseases. The reduction of these cytokines leads to a decrease in systemic inflammation, which is critical in preventing conditions such as heart attacks and strokes.
Anthocyanins, present in berries, black currants, and other dark-colored fruits, have proven protective effects in the context of cardiovascular diseases. Studies by Basu et al. [42] showed that regular anthocyanin consumption reduces LDL cholesterol levels, commonly referred to as "bad" cholesterol, and prevents platelet aggregation, thereby reducing the risk of blood clot formation and atherosclerosis development. Furthermore, anthocyanins help increase HDL cholesterol levels, or "good" cholesterol, improving the lipid profile and reducing the risk of heart disease.
Research findings confirm the beneficial impact of polyphenols on the cardiovascular system. Clinical studies, such as those conducted by Timmers et al. [46], indicate that resveratrol can improve lipid profiles and lower blood pressure in individuals with hypertension, which is a critical factor in cardiovascular disease prevention. Additionally, anthocyanins, through their ability to reduce LDL cholesterol levels and prevent platelet aggregation, have a significant impact on lipid profiles and the reduction of cardiovascular incidents.
In summary, polyphenols, including flavonoids, resveratrol, and anthocyanins, play a key role in protecting the cardiovascular system through their anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and lipid-regulating effects. Their regular consumption, especially in the form of natural products such as cocoa, grapes, and berries, can significantly reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases.

Comparative Effectiveness of Selected Polyphenols

While all polyphenols discussed demonstrate beneficial health effects, differences in their mechanisms of action and potency can be observed. Resveratrol stands out in the regulation of glucose metabolism and insulin sensitivity, making it particularly effective in managing type 2 diabetes [47]. Curcumin, on the other hand, exerts its strongest impact in neuroinflammation and neuroprotection, showing significant potential in delaying the progression of Alzheimer's disease [48]. EGCG, due to its ability to enhance neuroplasticity and inhibit neurotoxic protein aggregation, is highly promising in both Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease [49]. Anthocyanins show broad-spectrum effects, especially in cardiovascular protection and lipid profile improvement [50]. Quercetin, with its potent antioxidant action, plays a supportive role in both metabolic and inflammatory pathways [20]. These differences highlight the importance of selecting polyphenol types tailored to specific health goals or conditions.

Synergy of Polyphenols with Other Dietary and Lifestyle Factors

Interactions of Polyphenols with Macro- and Micronutrients

Polyphenols, plant-derived compounds with strong anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, interact with various nutrients, which can influence their bioavailability and biological activity. According to recent studies, combining polyphenols with vitamins, minerals, and other bioactive compounds may lead to synergistic health effects. In particular, vitamins such as vitamin C, vitamin E, and B vitamins, when combined with polyphenols, may exhibit enhanced antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, contributing to improved metabolic functions and protection against oxidative damage [51]. Research suggests that a diet rich in polyphenols, such as resveratrol and epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), has a synergistic impact on metabolic pathways related to the prevention of metabolic diseases and cancer [52].

The Role of Lifestyle and Environmental Factors in Epigenome Modulation

Lifestyle and environmental factors play a crucial role in modifying the epigenome, regulating gene expression without altering the DNA sequence. Lifestyle factors, including diet, physical activity, exposure to stress, and environmental influences such as air pollution, have a direct impact on epigenetic changes that can modify the risk of developing various diseases, including cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and neurodegenerative disorders. Recent studies indicate that a diet rich in polyphenols, such as those found in red wine (resveratrol) and green tea (EGCG), can influence the expression of genes related to inflammatory and apoptotic processes, which is significant for the prevention of chronic diseases [53]. Moreover, physical activity combined with a polyphenol-rich diet may exert beneficial effects on epigenetic mechanisms, reducing the risk of developing lifestyle-related diseases [54].

Holistic Approach to Health: Diet, Physical Activity, Stress Reduction

The holistic approach to health considers the comprehensive interaction of various lifestyle factors, such as diet, physical activity, and stress reduction techniques, on the human body. The intake of polyphenols as part of a healthy diet, regular physical activity, and effective stress management can collectively contribute to optimizing metabolic health, improving immune function, and enhancing resilience to stress.

Research indicates that a diet rich in polyphenols, such as those found in berries, cocoa, and green tea, may improve metabolic parameters by reducing inflammation and enhancing lipid profiles in individuals with overweight or obesity [55]. Moreover, physical activity, which supports metabolism and reduces oxidative stress, exhibits a synergistic effect with polyphenols, contributing to improved cognitive function and a reduced risk of neurodegenerative diseases [46].

Challenges and Future Research Directions

Limitations of Research on the Epigenetic Effects of Polyphenols

Although polyphenols exhibit promising epigenetic properties, several limitations exist in studying their effects. Many of the current studies focus on in vitro research and animal models, which do not always fully reflect the complexity of interactions between polyphenols and the human epigenome. The results obtained from these studies do not always translate into clinical effects in humans, posing a major challenge in this field [56].

Additionally, there is a need for a deeper understanding of the molecular mechanisms underlying the epigenetic changes induced by polyphenols. Detailed studies on the effects of different types of polyphenols on specific epigenetic modifications—such as DNA methylation, histone modifications, and microRNA regulation—are still lacking.

Suggestions for Future Research and Standardization

To address the current limitations, future studies should focus on more comprehensive clinical trials involving human subjects, ensuring that the results obtained from in vitro and animal models can be effectively translated into clinical settings. Larger, well-designed cohort studies, using diverse populations, could provide more accurate insights into the true epigenetic impact of polyphenols on human health.

Moreover, there is a critical need to standardize the dosages of polyphenols used in these studies. Establishing optimal dosages that are both safe and effective is essential for drawing meaningful conclusions. Variability in dosage across studies can lead to conflicting results and limit the generalizability of findings.

Furthermore, exploring the synergistic effects of polyphenols when combined with other bioactive compounds or dietary factors could reveal new therapeutic strategies. Investigating how polyphenols interact with various micronutrients, vitamins, and minerals may enhance their epigenetic impact and offer valuable insights into their potential health benefits.

Future research

In summary, future research should aim to bridge the gap between preclinical and clinical findings, while also addressing the need for standardized dosing regimens and exploring polyphenol synergy with other dietary factors.

The Need for Clinical Research and Dose Standardization

Despite numerous preclinical studies, one of the greatest challenges in the clinical application of polyphenols is the lack of consistent results and standardized dosing. Contemporary clinical studies rarely account for the diversity of polyphenol sources, making comparisons difficult and hindering the determination of optimal dose efficacy.

Moreover, despite the well-documented bioactivity of many polyphenols, there are still no unified guidelines for their therapeutic doses in the context of epigenetic mechanisms of action [57]. Therefore, future research must focus on developing appropriate dosing regimens tailored to individual patient needs, as well as identifying which polyphenols are most effective in the treatment of specific metabolic and oncological diseases.

Potential Applications of Polyphenols in Personalized Therapy

Looking ahead, one of the most promising research directions is the development of personalized therapies utilizing polyphenols. Such therapies take into account individual genetic, epigenetic, and environmental differences, allowing for a more precise and effective approach to treatment. Polyphenols can serve as a tool for therapy personalization, particularly in the context of epigenetic changes induced by environmental factors such as diet and lifestyle.

One example is the use of polyphenols in modulating the expression of genes responsible for metabolism, immune response, and repair mechanisms [55]. In the future, research may focus on developing epigenetic biomarkers that enable the assessment of patient responses to specific polyphenols, as well as creating therapies tailored to individual patient needs, potentially revolutionizing the treatment of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer.

Ethical Aspects of Personalized Polyphenol-Based Therapies

As personalized therapies involving polyphenols continue to evolve, it is important to address the ethical dimensions associated with these approaches. Ensuring equitable access to personalized treatments and epigenetic diagnostics is crucial to prevent widening health disparities. Moreover, the collection and use of sensitive genetic and epigenetic data necessitate strict standards for data protection, patient confidentiality, and informed consent. Ethical oversight is also essential to avoid the over-commercialization of personalized supplements and to ensure that therapeutic claims are supported by robust scientific evidence. Integrating ethical frameworks into the development and implementation of polyphenol-based personalized therapies will help ensure that these innovations benefit patients and society in a responsible and inclusive manner.

In summary, research on the epigenetic effects of polyphenols is promising but requires further development, particularly in the context of clinical studies and dose standardization. Future efforts should focus on identifying specific molecular mechanisms underlying polyphenol-induced epigenetic modifications and on designing personalized therapies that leverage these compounds for the treatment of chronic diseases. At the same time, research should aim to develop reliable biomarkers that enable the monitoring of therapy effectiveness and its optimization based on individual patient needs.

Conclusions

Research on the epigenetic effects of polyphenols has demonstrated that these bioactive compounds can influence various molecular mechanisms, including DNA modifications, histone modifications, and microRNA regulation. Polyphenols, such as flavonoids, resveratrol, anthocyanins, and catechins, have the ability to modulate gene expression related to metabolism, immune response, and DNA repair mechanisms. These processes are particularly important in the prevention and treatment of lifestyle diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and neurodegenerative disorders. Although preclinical findings are promising, clinical studies remain limited, highlighting the need for further well-designed research on the impact of polyphenols on the human epigenome.

A diet rich in polyphenols may be an essential component of health prevention strategies aimed at reducing the risk of lifestyle diseases. Polyphenols found in fruits, vegetables, green tea, nuts, and dark chocolate exhibit anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antimutagenic properties that support health at the molecular level. Regular consumption of these compounds may contribute to a lower risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and cancer. Educating the population about the benefits of a polyphenol-rich diet is a key element in improving public health. Therefore, dietary recommendations promoting the consumption of polyphenol-rich foods should become an integral part of health programs.

Due to their epigenetic properties, polyphenols may play a crucial role in the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases, particularly in the context of personalized therapy. By modulating gene expression, polyphenols can influence various physiological mechanisms, such as lipid metabolism, glucose regulation, blood pressure control, and inflammatory response. Therapies utilizing polyphenols may be particularly effective for individuals with genetic predispositions to metabolic disorders, such as obesity or type 2 diabetes, as well as in the treatment of cardiovascular diseases. Additionally, polyphenols may be used in cancer treatment by modulating inflammatory processes and protecting against DNA damage. Further research is needed to determine optimal dosages and application methods for polyphenols to enable their effective use in clinical therapy, including in combination with other treatments.

Polyphenols, due to their epigenetic properties, can play a significant role in the prevention and therapy of lifestyle diseases. Their ability to modulate gene expression, as well as their anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects, provide the foundation for developing new therapeutic strategies for metabolic, cardiovascular, oncological, and neurodegenerative diseases. Integrating polyphenols into the diet and further research on their therapeutic properties are key to improving public health and individualized medical care, particularly in the prevention of lifestyle diseases.

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