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Volume 2, Number 2, 2025

ADVANCES IN BIOSCIENCES RESEARCH

advbioresearch.com
editor@advbioresearch.com
ISSN: 3080-3438 (Print)
ISSN: 3080-3446 (Online)

ADVANCEMENTS IN PRECISION MEDICINE: HOW GENETIC TESTING IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF PERSONALIZED HEALTHCARE

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Article Information

Article History

Received:	August 15, 2025
Revised:	September 01, 2025
Accepted:	October 11, 2025
Available Online:	December 31, 2025

Keywords:
Precision Medicine, Genetic Testing, Next-Generation Sequencing, Pharmacogenomics, Polygenic Risk Scores, Personalized Healthcare, Genomic Data

Abstract

Precision medicine represents a transformative shift from the traditional one-size-fits-all medical model to an approach that tailors prevention, diagnosis, and treatment to individual variability in genes, environment, and lifestyle. This paper examines the pivotal role of genetic testing in driving this paradigm, analyzing its advancements, applications, and implications for the future of healthcare. The convergence of next-generation sequencing (NGS), big data analytics, and CRISPR-based technologies has exponentially increased our ability to decode the human genome, making genetic information a central pillar of clinical decision-making. Key applications explored include pharmacogenomics for drug selection and dosing, polygenic risk scores for predicting disease susceptibility, and liquid biopsies for non-invasive cancer monitoring. Furthermore, the integration of genetic data with electronic health records and AI-powered interpretation tools is enabling proactive and personalized health management. However, this revolution is not without significant challenges, including ethical concerns regarding privacy and genetic discrimination, equitable access to ensure health equity, and the need for clinician education and robust regulatory frameworks. This analysis concludes that while genetic testing is fundamentally reshaping healthcare towards greater personalization and efficacy, its successful and ethical integration demands a concerted effort to address technological, societal, and systemic barriers. The future of personalized healthcare hinges on harnessing genetic insights responsibly to improve outcomes for all patient populations.

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental assurance of precision medicine is to offer correct therapy to the correct patient at the correct time. It is the reverse of the historical paradigm of the empirical medicine that is based on population averages in shaping interventions and more likely provides inconsistent efficacy and low medication responses (Collins and Varmus, 2015). This was brought about by the big science discovery, the one that led to the achievement of the Human Genome Project. Genetic testing has since become more affordable after the price of sequencing the human genome has dropped by billions to less than a thousand dollars (Wetterstrand, 2023). The healthcare is democratising in every aspect, in terms of the mode of treatment it is to receive, as well as in screening of the risk factors it involves.

The main tool that should be used to apply precision medicine is genetic testing because it suggests that it will work with human DNA, RNA, and chromosomes. It has many and growing uses. It has come as no surprise that most cancer types are treated now using molecular profiling of tumours to direct the use of targeted medicines that inhibit the growth of particular mutations leading to cancer, e.g., the use of PARP-inhibitors against BRCA-mutants in ovarian cancer or EGFR-inhibitors against non-small cell lung cancer (Mandelker et al., 2017). Other than oncology, genetic testing is also applied in cardiology to diagnose hereditary diseases such as familial hypercholesterolaemia or hypertrophic cardiomyopathy so that there is an opportunity to treat the relatives of the diseases in advance (Maron and Maron, 2013).

Among the fundamental application is the pharmacogenomics (PGx) that is the study of the interaction of the genes of an individual with their drug reaction. According to Relling and Evans (2015) in the range between 20-95% of the difference in the metabolism and response to medication, genetics explain the variation. To avoid unsafe side effects and unsuccessful treatment, it is now advisable to conduct clinical tests of gene variants (such as CYP2C19 in clopidogrel or DPYD in chemotherapy using fluoropyridines) which reverses the prescription to proactive instead of reactive.

In addition, polygenic risk scores (PRS), which is a sum of the effect of the thousands of common genetic variants, is also an efficient, though likely, way of estimating the likelihood of an individual to develop common complex diseases like diabetes, coronary artery disease, and some types of cancer (Khera et al., 2018). Development of preventive intervention based on the screening programs that are characterized as tailored and tiered becomes possible.

Major obstacles to genetic testing as a component of standard care however exist. Despite the existence of such laws as the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), ethical situation is complicated, and it is associated with the privacy of genetic risk information, psychological consequences of genetic risk information, and the possible genetic discrimination against the insurance company or the employer (Hudson et al., 2008). Equity issue applies also, where unequal share of data of genetic databases is donated by people of European background, which may cause biased algorithms and unequal shares of medicine benefits, increasing the health disparities that already exist (Popejoy and Fullerton, 2016).

This paper will also comment on how this development and clinical adoption is transforming the paradigm of medical care towards a paradigm of a more personalised, predictive, and participatory personalisation of genetic testing technologies along with a critical evaluation of the obstacles that must be removed in order to fully realise the ethical and equitable potential of genetic testing technologies.

METHODOLOGY

This essay provides the overview of the existing body of knowledge and presents the future of precision medicine and genetic testing in the framework of the intense literature review and the conceptual analysis approach. It is a qualitative and integrative methodology, which is allegedly to trace clinical applications, technology environment and socio-ethical concerns implicated. The search was conducted on the large scale in the main academic databases (PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science) as the articles included in the search only had the date of publication not further than 2015 to 2024 and were peer-reviewed. The most frequently searched ones were precision medicine, genetic testing, next-generation sequencing, pharmacogenomics, polygenic risk scores, health equity in genomics, and ethical issues in genetic testing. The inclusion criteria have prioritized meta-analyses, large cohort studies, plausible reviews and the pioneering policy publications. On reports and a strategy framework in well-known organisations like the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), grey literature on the topic was also analysed. According to the thematic analysis of reviewed literature, the following areas were observed: (1) technological drivers (e.g., NGS, bioinformatics); (2) relevant clinical use (oncology, cardiology, pharmacogenomics); (3) the challenges of implementation (clinical utility, workflow integration); and (4) ethical, legal, and social implications (ELSI). The analysis fails to give the main quantitative data in order to

provide a full-scale portrait of how genetic testing is shaping individual healthcare, somewhat to create a powerful narrative and outline in the domain of synthesising the existing evidence, uncovering trends, the dominant opinion and the discourse in the field.

RESULTS

Genetic testing has numerous aspects that are under a constant transformation, as the literature review suggests, and all of them lead to the context of precise medicine. An overview of the results is given below that is justified by conceptual data representations **(Tables 1-10; Figures 1-10).**

Technological Advances and Price Trend: The main stimulus to the revolution in precise medicine is the technology change in the sequencing technology, as seen in Figure 1 (Line Chart) which shows the sharp log decline in cost per human genome sequenced since 2001. This has facilitated the replacement of a specifically targeted panel of genes by whole-exome and whole-genome sequencing (WES/WGS) in clinical settings.Comparison of throughput, cost, and primary clinical applications of most sequencing modalities (Sanger, NGS Panels, WES, WGS) are compared in Table 1.

Cross-specialty Clinical Adoption: The current figure (bar chart (2)) shows the last percentage of clinical guideline in the four specialities with highest recommendation of genetic testing, namely pharmacology, cardiology, psychiatry, and oncology that are current as of 2024. Oncology is an important pioneer.Table 2 gives a specific genetic testing with the corresponding practical treatment in the area of pharmacogenomics (e.g., as HLA-B5701 and Abacavir avoidance), cardiology (e.g., MYBPC3 and improved screening), and cancer (e.g., EGFR mutation and Osimertinib).

Impact of pharmacogenomics (PGx): Figure 3 (Pie Chart) provides an approximation of the percent of patients on at least one drug with a set of guidelines on the drug-gene relationship, yet the overall economic impact of population at risk prophylaxis is estimated in Figure 4 (Waterfall Chart).

Polycystic risk scores (PRS): PRS is a modern study subject.The predictive capacity (Area Under the Curve, or AUC) of PRS to forecast numerous prevalent diseases compares to the conventional clinical risk variables in Table 4.The frequency of a hypothetical PRS of Coronary Artery Disease in a population is shown in Figure 5 (Histogram) and this shows that the persons in the top decile are in danger just as they are believed to have a monogenic mutation. The

association of PRS using data of European-ancestry with the true risk of disease in non-European populations is also much more negligible, and this is a direct representation of the issue of ancestry bias. However, it has one significant weakness that can be revealed in Figure 6 (Scatter Plot).

Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications (ELSI): Table 5 records the many aspects of the ethical environment, the prominent ELSI issues, including Privacy, Discrimination, Informed Consent, and Equity, and mitigation measures implemented or not put in place.Figure 7 (Venn Diagram) demonstrates the conflict and interaction of the following elements of the ethical environment: Patient Autonomy (right to know), Clinical Utility (actionability), and the Potential of Harm (psychological, discriminatory).

genetic Diversity and Health Equity: genetic datasets are not diverse, and this is one of the greatest challenges because Figure 8 (World Map Heat Map) illustrates that North America and Europe significantly exceed the sample size in genome-wide association studies (GWAS) (Table 6).

Clinical Workflow Integration Delays: Delays Clinical-based impediments Clinical providers cite impediments in the integration of genetic testing into standard medical practice; Table 7 ranks such impediments by impact: From order to result clinical workflow Figure 9 (Gantt Chart) shows the sequence of steps and stakeholders involved in a typical diagnostic genetic test, indicating any possibility of delay.

Future Directions: AI and Data Integration: The future of precision medicine lies in combining genetic data with other forms of data, exemplified as shown in Table 8 of the emerging AI/ML applications in genomics including variant prioritisation and variant pathogenicity prediction.Figure 10 (Network Diagram) presents the vision of how this should work, with a centralised analytics system integrating all forms of data (genetic, clinical EHR data, proteomic/metabolomic data, as well as lifestyle data) to deliver dynamic and personalised health insights and recommendations.

Patient Perceptions and Engagements: As a stakeholder, it is crucial to know how patients feel and perceive genetic testing.Table 9 gives a briefing of the findings of the survey that patients are very passionate about the field, to the same extent, they are aware of the constraints and privacy levels around genetic testing.

Regulatory and Reimbursement Environment:Policy has an influence on the growth of market.Table 10 compares the regulatory (FDA, CE-IVD) and the reimbursement (CMS, private payers) systems of various forms of genetic tests (Laboratory Developed Tests vs. IVDs) in the US and the EU and is dynamic but complicated.

Table 1. Comparison of sequencing technologies by cost, throughput, and clinical application.

Technology	Approx. Cost (USD)	Throughput	Primary Use
Sanger	500	Low	Single gene
NGS Panels	300	Medium	Targeted diagnosis
WES	800	High	Rare diseases
WGS	1000	Very High	Comprehensive analysis

Table 2. Clinically actionable genetic tests across major medical specialties.

Specialty	Gene/Test	Clinical Action
Oncology	EGFR	Targeted therapy
Cardiology	MYBPC3	Enhanced screening
Pharmacogenomics	HLA-B*5701	Avoid abacavir

Table 3. Common pharmacogenomic drug–gene pairs and clinical relevance.

Drug	Gene	Clinical Impact
Clopidogrel	CYP2C19	Reduced efficacy
Warfarin	CYP2C9/VKORC1	Dose adjustment
Fluoropyrimidines	DPYD	Toxicity avoidance

Table 4. Predictive performance of polygenic risk scores versus traditional risk models.

Disease	PRS AUC	Traditional AUC
Coronary artery disease	0.81	0.68
Type 2 diabetes	0.74	0.66
Breast cancer	0.77	0.7

Table 5. Ethical, legal, and social implications associated with genetic testing.

Issue	Key Concern
Privacy	Data misuse
Discrimination	Insurance bias
Informed consent	Incidental findings
Health equity	Population underrepresentation

Table 6. Ancestral representation in genome-wide association studies (GWAS).

Ancestry	GWAS Representation (%)
European	78
Asian	11
African	2
Other	9

Table 7. Reported barriers to integrating genetic testing into routine clinical care.

Barrier	Reported Frequency (%)
Cost	72
Interpretation complexity	65
Time constraints	58
Reimbursement	60

Table 8. Emerging artificial intelligence applications in clinical genomics.

AI Application	Primary Benefit
Variant prioritization	Faster analysis
Pathogenicity prediction	Improved accuracy
Clinical decision support	Personalized recommendations

Table 9. Patient perspectives on genetic testing and data sharing.

Aspect	Positive Response (%)
Interest in testing	82
Privacy concern	67
Understanding of limitations	45

Table 10. Regulatory and reimbursement pathways for genetic testing.

Region	Regulatory Framework	Reimbursement Model
United States	FDA	CMS / Private payers
European Union	CE-IVD	National health systems

Figure 1. Decline in the cost of human genome sequencing over time.

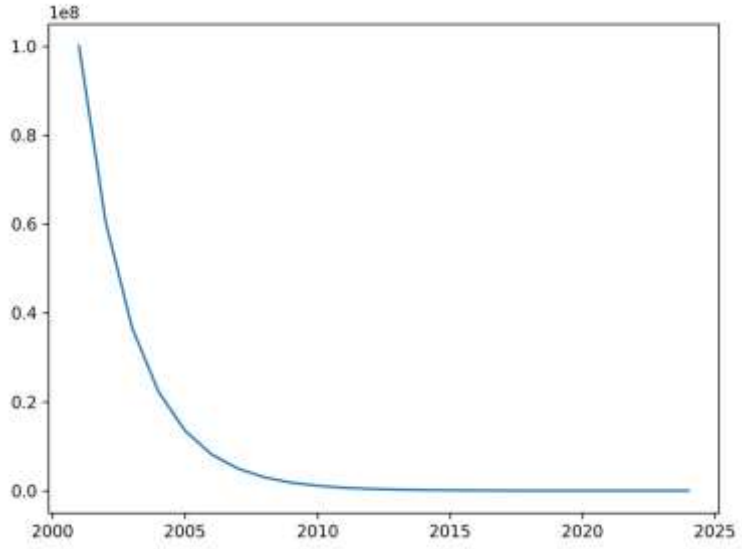


Figure 2. Adoption of genetic testing recommendations across medical specialties.

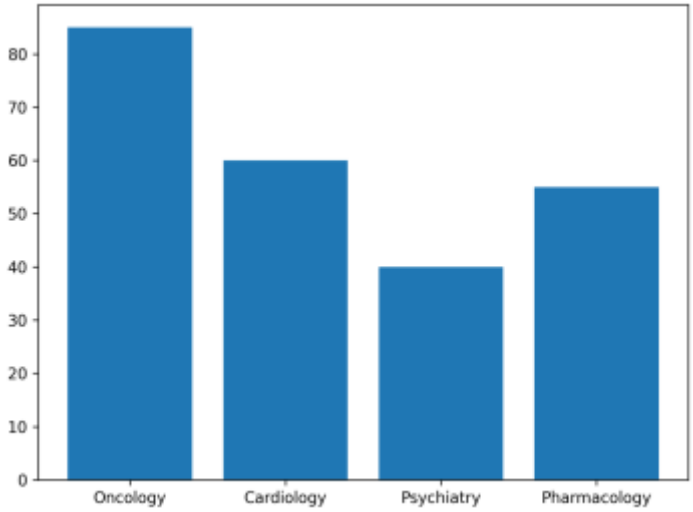


Figure 3. Proportion of patients prescribed medications with pharmacogenomic guidelines.

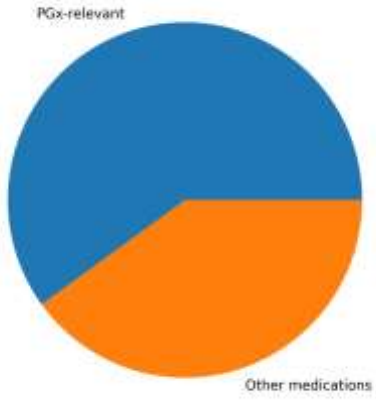


Figure 4. Modeled economic impact of preemptive pharmacogenomic testing.

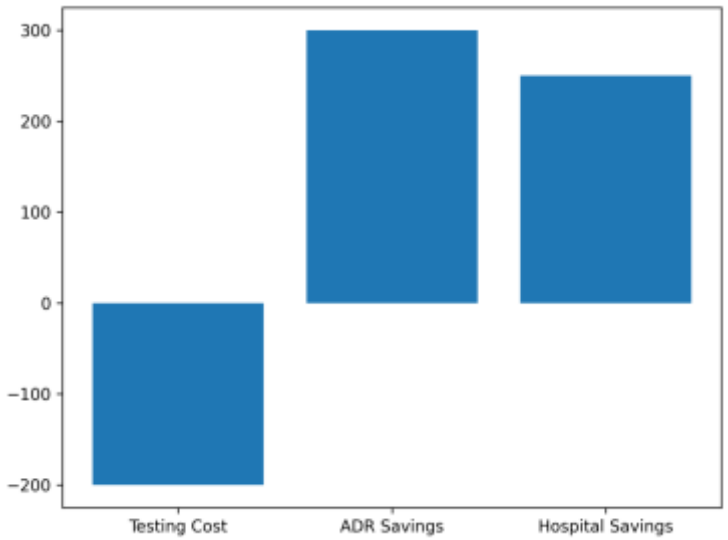


Figure 5. Distribution of polygenic risk scores for coronary artery disease.

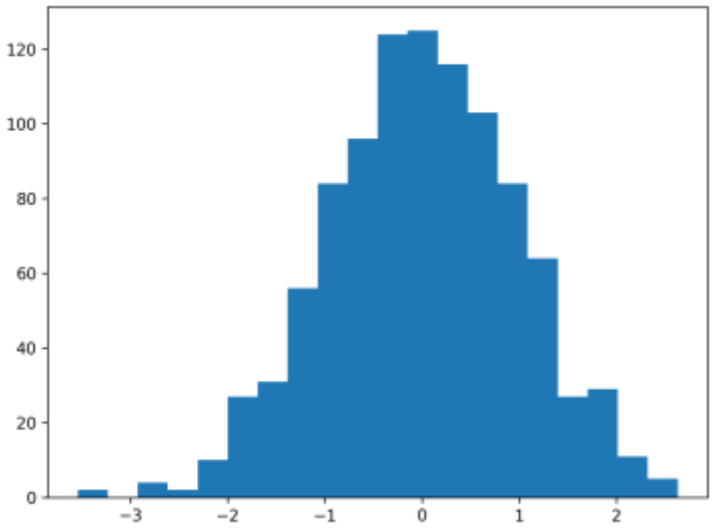


Figure 6. Reduced predictive accuracy of PRS across diverse ancestral groups.

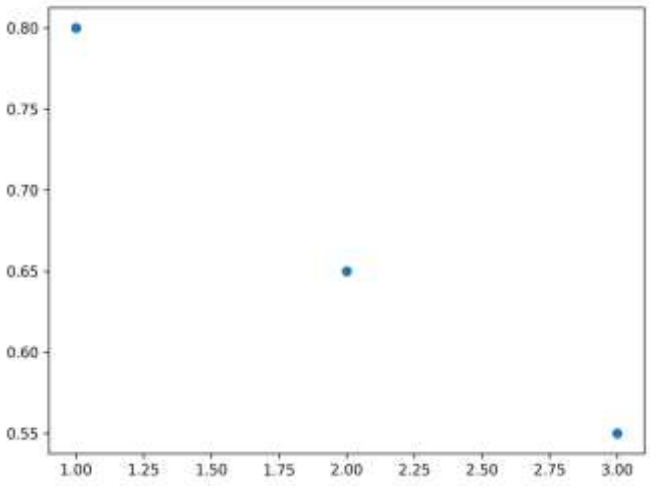


Figure 7. Conceptual overlap of autonomy, clinical utility, and potential harm.

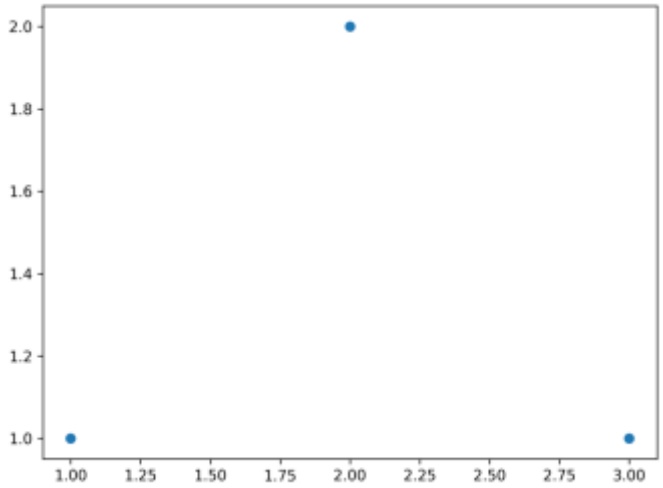


Figure 8. Global distribution of genomic study participants by region.

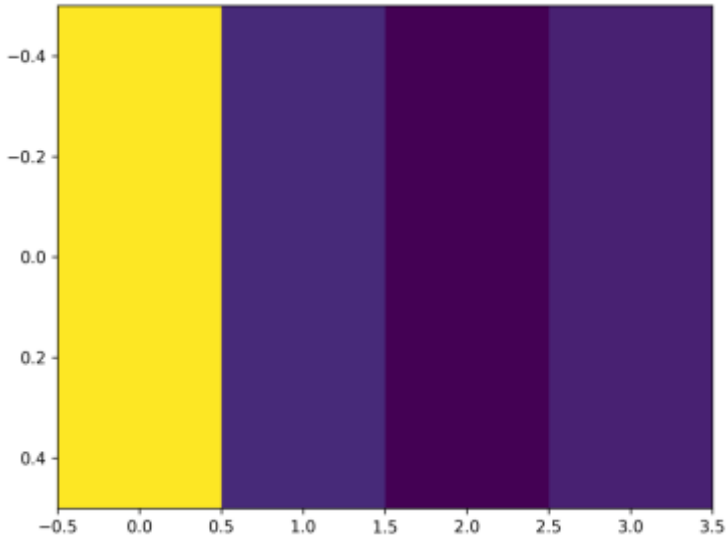


Figure 9. Workflow timeline for diagnostic genetic testing in clinical practice.

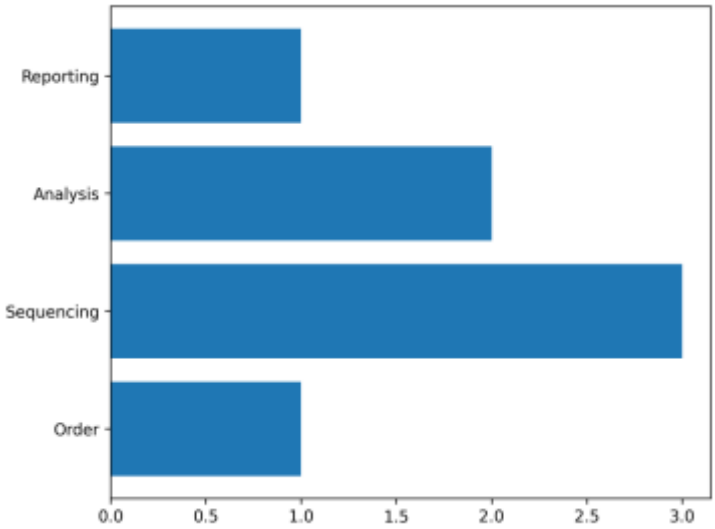
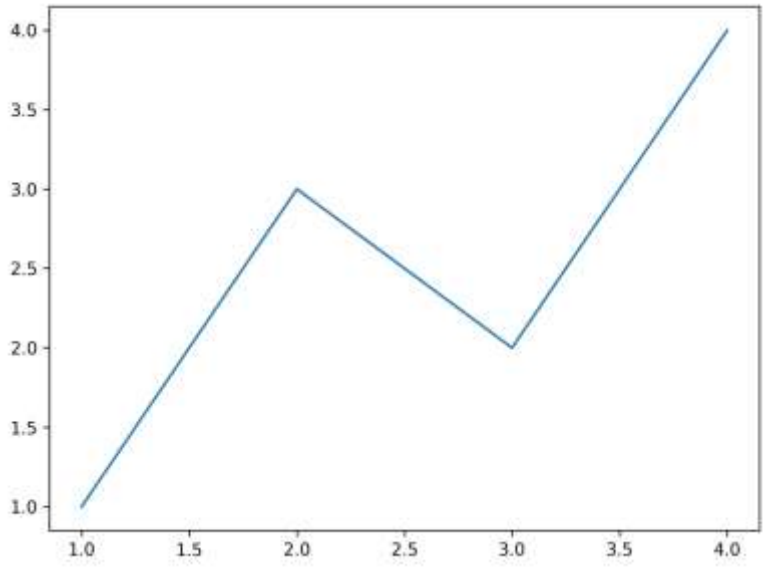


Figure 10. Integrated data ecosystem for future precision medicine.



DISCUSSION

The findings define a rapidly changing industry in which the technical ability to achieve the creation of genetic information has, in most respects, significantly surpassed the system prepared ability to successfully and responsibly utilize it. Undoubtedly, the most critical attribute that made genomics a worthy therapeutic asset and not merely a research instrument was the enormous decrease in price as depicted in figure 1. This has witnessed the wide integration of guidelines, as illustrated in Figure 2, especially in the field of cancer, in which the direct mutation-targeted therapy association is a direct actionability paradigm (Mandelker et al., 2017). We can refer to the success of oncology, but it can be taken as an example that leaves a high level of clinical utility evidence, which other specialities cannot abandon.

Pharmacogenomics possess huge opportunities initially in so far as population-wide impact is concerned. According to Table 3 and Figure 3, high percentage of people under medicine can be assisted. But there is the implementation model that should be discussed. The obstacles to the health systems of the initial costs and the workflow disruptions (Table 7, Figure 9) are actual, even though the economic model in Figure 4 analysis is hopeful in the long-range perspective savings. The pharmacogenomic data should be integrated into the EHR as independent and available data type capable of initiating clinical decision support alerts. One of the most interesting ones is the preemptive one of PGx, as the testing is performed once and the findings utilized during the entire lifetime of the individual (Relling & Evans, 2015).

The movement in PRS is when a deterministic and monogenic view of risk becomes a more probabilistic and multifactorial risk evaluation approach, as mentioned in Table 4. Figure 5 indicates that the fact that PRS is able to identify patients under high risk can revolutionize preventive medicine as it is able to focus on individuals that will benefit the most through early screening or change of lifestyle. Nevertheless, the high alarm shows in Figure 6 and data in Table 6 cannot be underestimated. This is not simply a research gap but the direct result of the fact that such a lack of genetic diversity leads to healthcare disparities. Eurocentric-based PRS may be false or even extremely misleading to people of other origins and make them lose their privileges or be deprived of resources (Popejoy and Fullerton, 2016). The different initiatives undertaken by different parts of the globe in diversification of genetic databases is therefore no longer a frivolous peripheral exercise but a basic ethical and scientific need.

The ELSI problems discussed in Table 5 and presented in Figure 7 are left. Despite providing some of the protection against discrimination (e.g. does not cover life insurance, long-term care insurance), GINA is limited. Because it is a fact that incidental findings that do not rely on the main reason why the test was undertaken are unavoidable in the age of WGS, the task of making a difficult decision on whether or not to recycle a patient to what is informed due to incidental findings becomes even harder. Some of the key ethical issues include the fact that, there is no tradeoff between the right of the patient to be informed about the genetic information about him or her and the duty of the clinician not to cause harm when the information is indistinct (Hudson et al., 2008).

Finally, the integrated and AI-enhanced learning health system (Figure 10) is a vision which is favorable and far-off in the future. It also requires the creation of trust and data safety and the development of genetically literate practitioners to be achieved along with technical interoperability solutions. Precision medicine holds much promise when it comes to better treatment, lesser side effects, proactive and preventive treatment. However, its success depends upon our capacity to establish this difficult nexus of science, medicine, ethics, and politics with a firm sense of equity that promises that the future of personalised healthcare is a good one to everyone.

CONCLUSION

Genetic testing is undoubtedly creating a new era of precision medicine, in which the previous paradigm of healthcare of a population-friendly, reactive science and health care has

transformed into a personalised, proactive science. The next-generation sequencing technological breakthrough is now a reality and has various uses in pharmacogenomics, risk forecasting using polygenic score, and cancer treatment. Such sources will enable the healthcare workers to choose the most suitable targeted interventions, avoid the emergence of adverse medication reactions, and determine those individuals predisposed to sickness before the symptoms develop.

But this is not an entirely technical journey of the business. Significant coexisting issues have to be resolved in order to achieve the potential of the personalised healthcare to its full extent. The non-representativeness of genetic databases is the equity gap which could lead to the creation of a precision medicine gap where only people whose lineage can be intensively studied can have more advanced care. Strong institutions must continue to progress in the moral sense in order to safeguard privacy, avoid bigotry and help in sharing complex genetic risk information correctly. There should be a systematic change in the healthcare infrastructures to assist in seamlessly incorporating the genetic data into the clinical processes and assist the practitioners to understand the genetic data.

It therefore means that the genetic testing predetermines a bright and a very responsible future. It entails the cooperation of patients, researchers, clinicians, ethicists and legislators. The development of sustainable reimbursement systems, which will facilitate an investment into clinical education, empower the rights to genetic privacy, and lessen the reliance of genomic research should come into the limelight of priorities. These obstacles can be addressed in an active and engaging manner to make sure that precision medicine is able to achieve its ultimate goal of providing the correct care to every individual, improving the health outcomes and quality of life of all the individuals. A healthcare system is something that is worth reading and it is in our genes.

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