WORLD JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH
Coden USA: WJPRAP Impact Factor 8.63
Volume 15, Issue 13, 1452-1469. Review Article ISSN 2277–7105

# A REVIEW OF PHARMACOGENOMICS AND PERSONALIZED MEDICINE

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Article Received on 09 June 2026,
Article Revised on 29 June 2026,
Article Published on 01 July 2026

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21068739

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**How to cite this Article:** Arun Pandi S., Manoj Kumar P., Sree Nivasan V.S., Santhosh G., Arun J., Mehtaj Begum A.* (2026). A Review Of Pharmacogenomics And Personalized Medicine. World Journal of Pharmaceutical Research, 15(13), 1452-1469.



## ABSTRACT

Pharmacogenomics is a rapidly growing field that combines pharmacology and genomics to understand how genetic differences influence an individual's response to medications. Variations in genes involved in drug absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion, and pharmacological action contribute to significant differences in therapeutic outcomes among patients. While some individuals experience optimal treatment responses, others may encounter adverse drug reactions or inadequate therapeutic effects despite receiving the same medication and dosage. Pharmacogenomics aims to address these challenges by enabling personalized treatment strategies based on genetic information. Advances in genomic technologies, including next-generation sequencing, genome-wide association studies, and bioinformatics, have accelerated the discovery of clinically relevant gene–drug interactions. Personalized medicine uses this information to improve drug efficacy, reduce toxicity, optimize dosing, and enhance patient outcomes. Clinical applications are particularly evident in oncology, cardiology, psychiatry, neurology, infectious diseases, and pain management. Despite its promise, implementation faces challenges such as testing costs, infrastructure limitations, ethical concerns, data privacy issues, and inadequate clinician education. Continued research, policy development, and integration of genomic data into healthcare systems are essential for realizing the full potential of pharmacogenomics. This review summarizes the history, scientific principles, clinical applications, challenges, and future directions of pharmacogenomics and personalized medicine.

**KEYWORDS:** Pharmacogenomics; Pharmacogenetics; Personalized Medicine; Precision Medicine; Genomics; Drug Response; Biomarkers; Precision Healthcare; Genetic Polymorphism.

## INTRODUCTION

Modern medicine has achieved remarkable success in diagnosing and treating disease; however, substantial variability remains in how individuals respond to medications. A treatment that is highly effective for one patient may produce limited benefit or severe toxicity in another. Traditional prescribing methods generally rely on population averages derived from clinical trials, often overlooking the biological diversity that exists among individuals. Genetic variation is now recognized as one of the most important contributors to these differences in drug response.

Pharmacogenomics integrates pharmacology and genomics to investigate how inherited genetic differences influence medication outcomes. By understanding genetic variations affecting drug metabolism, transport, receptor activity, and immune responses, healthcare professionals can make more informed decisions regarding drug selection and dosing. This approach forms a cornerstone of precision medicine, which seeks to provide the right treatment to the right patient at the right time.

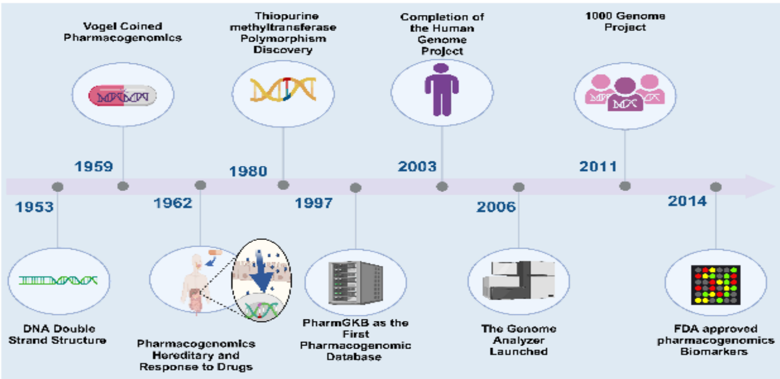
The completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 marked a major turning point in biomedical research. Advances in sequencing technologies and computational biology have since enabled researchers to identify numerous genetic variants associated with therapeutic efficacy and drug toxicity. Pharmacogenomics has therefore evolved from a research discipline into an increasingly important component of clinical care.

## HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF PHARMACOGENOMICS

The observation that individuals respond differently to medications predates modern genetics. Early clinicians noted unusual reactions to certain drugs, but the biological causes remained unclear. One of the earliest examples of genetically influenced drug response involved glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency, which predisposed some individuals to hemolytic anemia after exposure to specific medications or foods.

The term pharmacogenetics was introduced by Friedrich Vogel in 1959 to describe the study of inherited differences in drug response. Early research focused on single genes involved in drug metabolism, including N-acetyltransferase and members of the cytochrome P450 enzyme family. These discoveries established that genetic variability could significantly influence medication effectiveness and safety.

Advances in molecular biology during the late twentieth century, including polymerase chain reaction and DNA sequencing technologies, enabled more detailed genetic investigations. The Human Genome Project provided a comprehensive map of human DNA and facilitated the transition from pharmacogenetics to pharmacogenomics. Unlike pharmacogenetics, which focuses on individual genes, pharmacogenomics examines genome-wide influences on drug response.



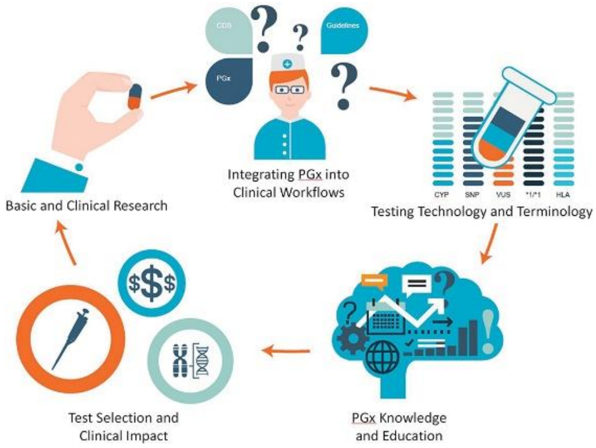

Subsequent development of high-throughput sequencing and genome-wide association studies expanded knowledge of clinically relevant gene–drug interactions. International organizations such as the Clinical Pharmacogenetics Implementation Consortium and the Dutch Pharmacogenetics Working Group now provide evidence-based guidelines for genotype-guided prescribing.

## BASIC CONCEPTS OF PHARMACOGENOMICS

Pharmacogenomics examines how genetic variation influences medication response. Several core concepts underpin the field.

Genotype refers to the genetic composition of an individual at a particular gene or group of genes. Pharmacogenomic testing identifies genetic variants associated with altered drug response.

Phenotype describes observable characteristics resulting from genetic and environmental influences. In pharmacogenomics, phenotype often refers to metabolizer status such as poor, intermediate, normal, rapid, or ultra-rapid metabolizers.



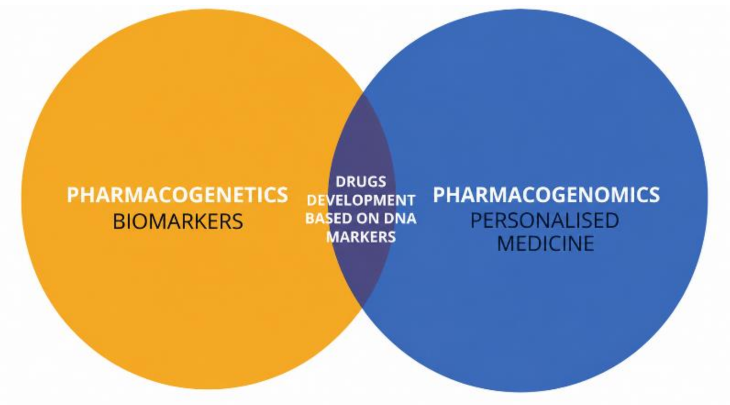

Genetic polymorphisms are naturally occurring DNA sequence variations present within populations. Some polymorphisms affect proteins involved in drug action and metabolism.

Single nucleotide polymorphisms are the most common type of genetic variation and involve changes in a single DNA base pair. These variations can alter enzyme function, receptor activity, or transporter performance.

Drug response is influenced by pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics.
Pharmacokinetics describes how the body absorbs, distributes, metabolizes, and excretes medications. Pharmacodynamics describes how drugs interact with biological targets to produce therapeutic or toxic effects.

## PHARMACOGENETICS VERSUS PHARMACOGENOMICS

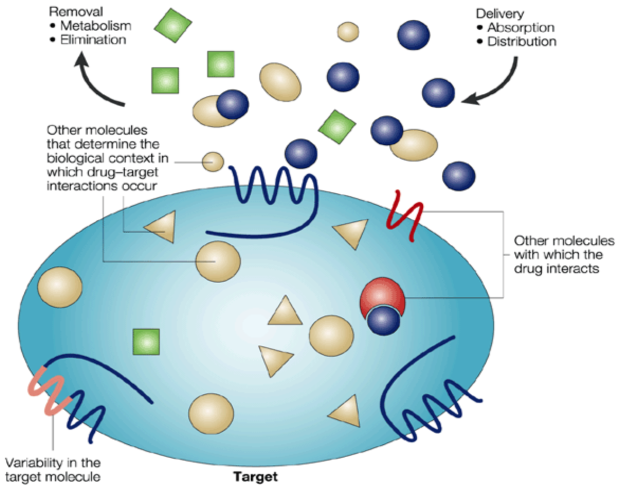
Although frequently used interchangeably, pharmacogenetics and pharmacogenomics are distinct concepts. Pharmacogenetics traditionally focuses on the influence of single genes on medication response. Classic examples include TPMT variants affecting thiopurine metabolism and CYP2D6 variants influencing opioid activation.



Pharmacogenomics takes a broader approach by examining multiple genes, pathways, and biological systems simultaneously. It incorporates advanced technologies such as whole-genome sequencing, transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, and bioinformatics. Because most medication responses are influenced by numerous genetic and environmental factors, pharmacogenomics better reflects the complexity of human biology and aligns closely with precision medicine.

## GENETIC BASIS OF DRUG RESPONSE

Drug response is influenced by genes affecting pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics.




Genes involved in pharmacokinetics determine how medications are absorbed, distributed, metabolized, and eliminated. Variants in these genes can alter drug concentrations and influence toxicity or efficacy.

Genes involved in pharmacodynamics affect how medications interact with receptors, enzymes, ion channels, and signaling pathways. Variations may alter sensitivity to treatment and contribute to differences in therapeutic outcomes.

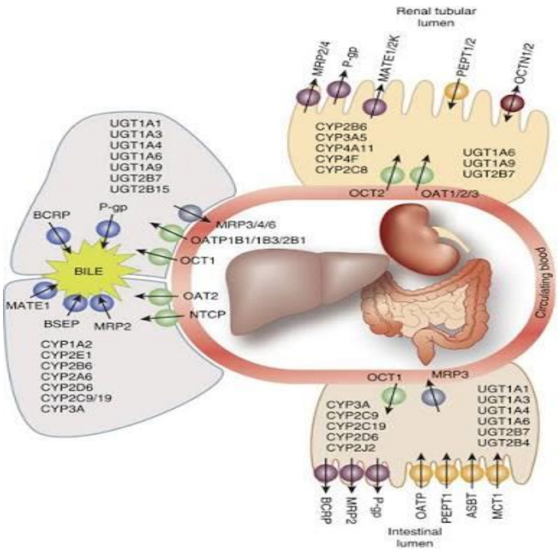
Immune-response genes also play an important role. Certain HLA variants are strongly associated with severe drug hypersensitivity reactions. For example, HLA-B*57:01 predicts abacavir hypersensitivity, while HLA-B*15:02 is associated with carbamazepine-induced Stevens–Johnson syndrome.

Epigenetic factors further influence drug response. DNA methylation, histone modification, and non-coding RNAs can regulate gene expression without altering DNA sequence. Environmental influences such as diet, smoking, stress, and disease states interact with genetic factors to shape medication outcomes.

## DRUG-METABOLIZING ENZYMES

Drug-metabolizing enzymes are among the most important determinants of pharmacogenomic variability. They convert medications into forms that can be eliminated from the body and influence therapeutic effectiveness.

Phase I metabolism involves oxidation, reduction, and hydrolysis reactions. The cytochrome P450 enzyme family performs most Phase I reactions.




CYP2D6 metabolizes approximately one-quarter of commonly prescribed drugs, including codeine, tramadol, tamoxifen, antidepressants, and beta-blockers. Genetic variants produce poor, intermediate, normal, rapid, and ultra-rapid metabolizer phenotypes. Poor metabolizers may experience toxicity, whereas ultra-rapid metabolizers may fail therapy or experience excessive activation of prodrugs.

CYP2C19 is essential for metabolism of clopidogrel, proton pump inhibitors, antidepressants, and antifungal agents. Loss-of-function variants reduce clopidogrel activation and increase cardiovascular risk.

CYP2C9 metabolizes warfarin, phenytoin, and several nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Reduced-function variants increase bleeding risk during anticoagulant therapy and often require dosage adjustments.

CYP3A4 and CYP3A5 collectively metabolize nearly half of all marketed drugs. CYP3A5 polymorphisms significantly affect tacrolimus dosing in transplant recipients.

Phase II metabolism involves conjugation reactions that increase water solubility and facilitate elimination. Important Phase II enzymes include TPMT, UGTs, and NAT2.

TPMT metabolizes thiopurines. Patients with low TPMT activity are at high risk of severe myelosuppression if standard doses are administered.

UGT1A1 variants influence irinotecan metabolism and increase susceptibility to neutropenia and diarrhea.

NAT2 polymorphisms affect isoniazid metabolism and contribute to variation in tuberculosis treatment toxicity.

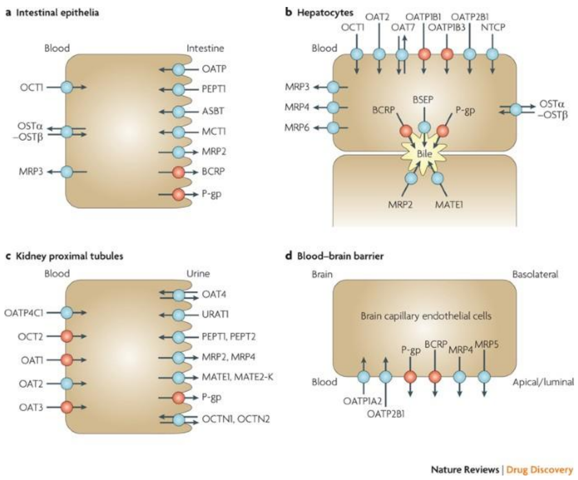
**DRUG TRANSPORTERS**

Drug transporters regulate movement of medications across biological membranes and significantly influence pharmacokinetics.

ATP-binding cassette transporters actively move compounds using energy derived from ATP. ABCB1, also known as P-glycoprotein, affects drug absorption, brain penetration, and elimination. Variations may influence chemotherapy resistance and adverse effects.

ABCG2 contributes to multidrug resistance and affects transport of methotrexate, rosuvastatin, and anticancer agents.

Solute carrier transporters facilitate uptake and distribution of drugs. SLCO1B1 encodes OATP1B1, which mediates hepatic uptake of statins. Reduced-function variants increase circulating statin concentrations and elevate the risk of muscle toxicity.

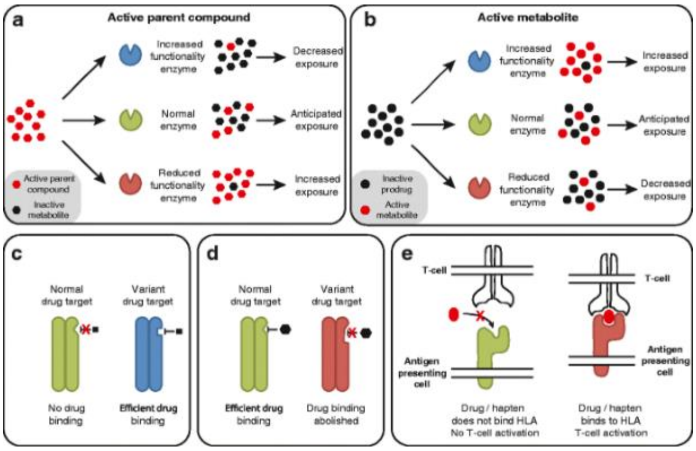



Organic cation transporters influence response to medications such as metformin and platinum-based chemotherapeutic agents.

## PHARMACOGENOMIC BIOMARKERS

Pharmacogenomic biomarkers are measurable genetic characteristics used to predict medication response. These biomarkers support drug selection, dosage optimization, and adverse reaction prevention.

Examples include CYP2D6 for codeine metabolism, CYP2C19 for clopidogrel activation, TPMT for thiopurine therapy, DPYD for fluoropyrimidine toxicity, UGT1A1 for irinotecan dosing, SLCO1B1 for statin-associated myopathy, HLA-B*57:01 for abacavir hypersensitivity, and HLA-B*15:02 for carbamazepine-induced severe skin reactions.




Validated biomarkers have improved treatment safety and effectiveness across multiple therapeutic areas and represent a key component of precision medicine.

## GENOMIC TECHNOLOGIES

Technological advances have driven the expansion of pharmacogenomics. Polymerase chain reaction remains a widely used method for detecting specific genetic variants. DNA microarrays allow simultaneous analysis of large numbers of genetic markers.

Next-generation sequencing has transformed genomic medicine by enabling rapid, comprehensive, and cost-effective analysis of genetic variation. Whole-genome sequencing examines the complete genome, while whole-exome sequencing focuses on protein-coding regions.

Genome-wide association studies identify genetic variants associated with therapeutic outcomes across populations. Bioinformatics platforms integrate genomic information with clinical data and facilitate interpretation of complex results.

## PERSONALIZED MEDICINE

Personalized medicine represents a shift from standardized treatment approaches toward individualized care. It integrates genetic information with clinical history, environmental exposures, lifestyle factors, biomarkers, and family history.

The goals of personalized medicine include improving therapeutic efficacy, minimizing adverse reactions, enhancing medication adherence, reducing healthcare costs, and improving long-term outcomes. Pharmacogenomics provides one of the most practical pathways for achieving these goals because medication therapy remains central to modern healthcare.

## CLINICAL APPLICATIONS IN ONCOLOGY

Oncology has become one of the most successful areas of pharmacogenomic implementation. Cancer is fundamentally a genetic disease characterized by molecular alterations that influence tumor behavior and treatment response.

Genomic profiling allows clinicians to identify actionable mutations and select targeted therapies. HER2 testing guides treatment decisions in breast cancer. EGFR, ALK, and ROS1 testing informs therapy selection in non-small cell lung cancer. KRAS and NRAS testing helps determine suitability for anti-EGFR therapy in colorectal cancer.

Pharmacogenomic testing also improves chemotherapy safety. TPMT and NUDT15 testing before thiopurine therapy reduces the risk of severe toxicity in patients with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Precision oncology has improved survival, reduced unnecessary toxicity, and transformed cancer treatment strategies worldwide.

## CLINICAL APPLICATIONS IN CARDIOLOGY

Cardiovascular medicine has increasingly incorporated pharmacogenomic principles. Warfarin dosing is influenced by CYP2C9 and VKORC1 variants. Incorporating genetic information improves dosing accuracy and reduces bleeding complications.

Clopidogrel requires activation by CYP2C19. Patients carrying loss-of-function alleles may experience inadequate platelet inhibition and increased risk of cardiovascular events. Alternative antiplatelet therapies may be more appropriate in these individuals.

SLCO1B1 variants increase susceptibility to statin-induced muscle toxicity. Pharmacogenomic testing can help identify patients who may benefit from dosage modifications or alternative therapies.

Genetic variation also affects metabolism and response to beta-blockers and other cardiovascular medications.

## CLINICAL APPLICATIONS IN PSYCHIATRY

Psychiatric disorders often require prolonged treatment and are characterized by substantial variability in medication response. Traditional prescribing frequently involves trial-and-error approaches that can delay symptom improvement.

CYP2D6 and CYP2C19 are among the most important pharmacogenes in psychiatry. Variants influence metabolism of antidepressants, antipsychotics, and anxiolytics. Patients with reduced enzyme activity may experience adverse effects due to elevated drug concentrations, while ultra-rapid metabolizers may not achieve therapeutic benefit.

Genes involved in serotonin signaling, including SLC6A4 and HTR2A, have also been investigated for their influence on antidepressant response.

Pharmacogenomic testing can support medication selection, dosage optimization, reduction of adverse reactions, and improved treatment adherence. Although it does not replace clinical assessment, it provides valuable information that complements psychiatric decision-making.

## PHARMACOGENOMICS IN INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Infectious disease treatment has benefited from several important pharmacogenomic discoveries. Screening for HLA-B*57:01 before abacavir therapy has dramatically reduced life-threatening hypersensitivity reactions in individuals receiving HIV treatment.

NAT2 polymorphisms influence isoniazid metabolism during tuberculosis therapy. Slow acetylators have a higher risk of hepatotoxicity and peripheral neuropathy, whereas rapid acetylators may experience reduced therapeutic exposure.

Host genetic factors have also influenced treatment approaches in viral hepatitis and other infectious diseases. These examples demonstrate how pharmacogenomics can improve both efficacy and safety in antimicrobial therapy.

## PHARMACOGENOMICS IN NEUROLOGY AND PAIN MANAGEMENT

Neurological disorders often require long-term medication use, making individualized treatment especially important. Carbamazepine is associated with severe cutaneous adverse reactions in patients carrying HLA-B*15:02 and HLA-A*31:01 variants. Routine testing is recommended in populations where these alleles are prevalent.

Research into Parkinson disease is exploring genetic determinants of levodopa response, including variants affecting dopamine metabolism.

Pain management represents another important area of application. Codeine and tramadol require CYP2D6-mediated activation. Poor metabolizers often experience inadequate analgesia, while ultra-rapid metabolizers face an increased risk of opioid toxicity. Pharmacogenomic testing can guide safer prescribing practices.

## PHARMACOGENOMICS IN RARE DISEASES

Rare diseases collectively affect millions of individuals worldwide. Many have a strong genetic basis, making them particularly suitable for precision medicine approaches.

Advances in genomic sequencing have improved diagnostic accuracy, identified disease-causing mutations, supported targeted therapy selection, and enhanced prognostic assessment. Examples include cystic fibrosis, spinal muscular atrophy, lysosomal storage disorders, and inherited metabolic conditions.

Gene-targeted therapies and precision diagnostics continue to expand treatment possibilities for patients with rare disorders.

## ETHICAL, LEGAL, AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The growing use of genetic information raises important ethical, legal, and social questions. Genetic data are highly personal and may remain relevant throughout an individual's lifetime. Protecting privacy and ensuring secure storage of genetic information are therefore essential.

Informed consent is critical before pharmacogenomic testing. Patients should understand the purpose of testing, possible outcomes, limitations, and privacy protections.

Concerns regarding genetic discrimination in employment and insurance remain significant. Several countries have introduced legal protections, but regulatory frameworks vary.

Equitable access is another important issue. High testing costs, limited laboratory infrastructure, and inadequate reimbursement policies can restrict availability. Ensuring that the benefits of pharmacogenomics are accessible across diverse populations remains a major priority.

## CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Despite substantial progress, several barriers continue to limit widespread implementation of pharmacogenomics.

Most pharmacogenomic research has been conducted in populations of European ancestry. Underrepresentation of African, Asian, Indigenous, and other populations limits the generalizability of findings and may contribute to healthcare disparities.

Implementation requires laboratory infrastructure, bioinformatics resources, clinical decision-support systems, and trained personnel. These requirements remain challenging in many healthcare settings.

Interpretation of genomic information is complex. Whole-genome sequencing generates enormous quantities of data, and distinguishing clinically actionable variants from uncertain findings requires expertise and standardized guidelines.

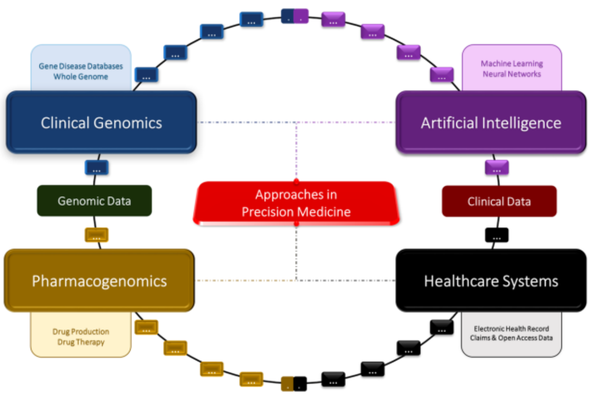
Many healthcare professionals receive limited formal training in pharmacogenomics. Expanding education within medical, pharmacy, nursing, and allied health curricula is essential for effective implementation.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND PHARMACOGENOMICS

Artificial intelligence has emerged as a powerful tool for analyzing complex genomic datasets. Machine learning algorithms can identify patterns linking genetic variation with therapeutic outcomes and adverse reactions.

Applications include prediction of drug efficacy, dosage requirements, toxicity risk, disease progression, and patient stratification. Random forests, support vector machines, neural networks, and deep learning models are increasingly used in pharmacogenomic research.

Clinical decision-support systems integrate pharmacogenomic information into electronic health records and provide evidence-based recommendations at the point of care. These systems facilitate interpretation of genetic results and support routine clinical implementation.




Artificial intelligence is also accelerating drug discovery through target identification, toxicity prediction, biomarker discovery, and optimization of clinical trials.

## FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The future of pharmacogenomics is closely linked to ongoing advances in genomic technologies, computational biology, and digital health.

Sequencing costs continue to decline, making routine genomic testing increasingly feasible. Comprehensive genomic profiles may eventually become part of lifelong electronic health records and be consulted whenever treatment decisions are required.

Future precision medicine will integrate multiple biological disciplines, including transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics, epigenomics, and microbiomics. Combining these approaches will provide a more complete understanding of disease and therapeutic response.

Gene-editing technologies such as CRISPR may complement pharmacogenomics by directly addressing disease-causing mutations. Digital health tools and wearable devices will further support individualized treatment monitoring and dynamic therapeutic adjustments.

## GLOBAL IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Implementation of pharmacogenomics varies widely across regions. High-income countries have benefited from national genomic initiatives, biobanks, and precision medicine programs. Organizations such as CPIC, DPWG, and PharmGKB provide evidence-based guidance for genotype-guided prescribing.

Many developing countries face challenges related to infrastructure, cost, training, and limited representation in research. However, decreasing sequencing costs and growing international collaborations offer opportunities for broader adoption.

Future priorities include development of local genomic databases, expansion of laboratory capacity, incorporation of pharmacogenomics into healthcare education, and promotion of public awareness. These efforts will help ensure equitable access to personalized medicine worldwide.

## CONCLUSION

Pharmacogenomics has transformed understanding of individual variability in drug response and has become a central component of precision medicine. By integrating genomic information into therapeutic decision-making, clinicians can move beyond generalized treatment approaches and provide care tailored to each patient's biological characteristics.

Advances in molecular genetics, sequencing technologies, bioinformatics, and artificial intelligence have accelerated identification of clinically relevant gene–drug interactions.

Pharmacogenomic testing has already demonstrated value in oncology, cardiology, psychiatry, neurology, infectious diseases, pain management, and rare diseases. These applications have improved treatment efficacy, reduced adverse reactions, and enhanced patient safety.


Nevertheless, challenges related to cost, infrastructure, education, ethical considerations, and population diversity remain. Continued investment in research, policy development, clinical training, and international collaboration will be necessary to overcome these barriers.

As genomic technologies become more affordable and integrated into routine healthcare, pharmacogenomics is expected to play an increasingly important role in clinical practice. Its successful implementation has the potential to improve outcomes, reduce medication-related harm, lower healthcare costs, and advance a more personalized and patient-centered model of medicine.

## COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

- ADR – Adverse Drug Reaction
- AI – Artificial Intelligence
- CDSS – Clinical Decision Support System
- CPIC – Clinical Pharmacogenetics Implementation Consortium
- CYP – Cytochrome P450
- DNA – Deoxyribonucleic Acid
- DPYD – Dihydropyrimidine Dehydrogenase
- GWAS – Genome-Wide Association Study
- HLA – Human Leukocyte Antigen
- ML – Machine Learning
- NGS – Next-Generation Sequencing

- PCR – Polymerase Chain Reaction
- SNP – Single Nucleotide Polymorphism
- TPMT – Thiopurine S-Methyltransferase
- UGT – UDP-Glucuronosyltransferase

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