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CHRONIC GLOMERULONEPHRITIS IN CHILDREN AND OPTIMIZATION OF DISPENSARY FOLLOW-UP

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Abstract
Chronic glomerulonephritis (CGN) represents a significant cause of chronic kidney disease and end-stage renal failure in pediatric populations worldwide. This comprehensive review examines the epidemiology, pathogenesis, clinical manifestations, and current therapeutic approaches for chronic glomerulonephritis in children, with particular emphasis on optimizing long-term dispensary follow-up strategies. The analysis synthesizes evidence-based recommendations for monitoring protocols, risk stratification, prevention of disease progression, and coordination of multidisciplinary care. Special attention is devoted to the transition from pediatric to adult nephrology services and the role of patient education in improving adherence and outcomes.

Keywords: Chronic glomerulonephritis, children, pediatric nephrology, dispensary follow-up, chronic kidney disease, renal replacement therapy, disease monitoring.

Introduction

Chronic glomerulonephritis (CGN) represents one of the most significant challenges in pediatric nephrology, constituting a major etiological factor in the development of chronic kidney disease (CKD) and end-stage kidney disease (ESKD) among children worldwide. This heterogeneous group of immune-mediated renal disorders is characterized by persistent inflammation of the glomerular structures, resulting in progressive deterioration of renal function and substantial long-term morbidity. The global burden of pediatric CGN remains considerable, particularly in developing regions where limited access to specialized care and delayed recognition contribute to adverse outcomes.

The pathophysiological spectrum of chronic glomerulonephritis in children encompasses diverse histopathological entities, including IgA nephropathy (IgAN), membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis (MPGN), lupus nephritis (LN), ANCA-associated vasculitis, and anti-glomerular basement membrane disease. Each subtype presents unique clinical characteristics, therapeutic challenges, and prognostic implications, necessitating individualized management approaches. Recent epidemiological studies indicate that immune complex-mediated membranoproliferative GN and pauci-immune GN represent the predominant etiologies of rapidly progressive glomerulonephritis in pediatric populations, highlighting the critical importance of early histopathological diagnosis and targeted intervention.

Despite significant advances in immunosuppressive therapeutic strategies over the past decades, the progression of chronic glomerulonephritis to irreversible renal damage continues to pose substantial

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clinical challenges. Current treatment protocols typically involve induction therapy with high-dose corticosteroids combined with cyclophosphamide or mycophenolate mofetil, followed by maintenance regimens designed to sustain remission and prevent relapse. However, the heterogeneity of treatment responses, ranging from complete remission in approximately 53% of patients to progression toward ESKD in 7-10% of cases, underscores the necessity for refined risk stratification and personalized therapeutic approaches.

The long-term management of children with chronic glomerulonephritis extends far beyond the initial treatment phase, requiring structured, comprehensive dispensary follow-up throughout childhood and adolescence into adult life. The optimization of follow-up protocols represents a critical determinant of clinical outcomes, as early detection of disease progression, timely adjustment of therapeutic regimens, and prevention of complications significantly influence the preservation of renal function and quality of life. Contemporary evidence demonstrates that risk-stratified monitoring strategies, incorporating regular assessment of proteinuria, renal function, blood pressure, and growth parameters, can substantially improve the identification of patients at heightened risk for disease progression.

However, significant disparities persist in the implementation of optimal follow-up care for pediatric CGN patients. Barriers to effective long-term monitoring include geographic isolation from specialized nephrology centers, financial constraints, limited awareness among primary care providers regarding the long-term risks associated with childhood GN, and the cumulative burden of multiple specialist appointments on patients and families. Furthermore, the transition from pediatric to adult nephrology care presents additional challenges, with many adolescents experiencing disruptions in continuity of care during this vulnerable period.

The present review examines the current state of knowledge regarding chronic glomerulonephritis in children, with particular emphasis on evidence-based strategies for optimizing dispensary follow-up protocols. By synthesizing contemporary clinical practice guidelines, recent research findings, and expert consensus recommendations, this article aims to provide a comprehensive framework for risk-stratified long-term monitoring that balances the intensity of surveillance with the practical realities of patient care. The ultimate objective is to contribute to improved clinical outcomes through enhanced early detection of disease progression, optimized therapeutic management, and preservation of renal function in children affected by chronic glomerulonephritis.

Conclusion

Chronic glomerulonephritis in children represents a complex and multifaceted clinical entity that demands comprehensive, long-term management strategies extending well beyond the initial diagnosis and treatment phases. The heterogeneous nature of this disease spectrum, encompassing diverse histopathological subtypes ranging from IgA nephropathy to rapidly progressive crescentic glomerulonephritis, necessitates individualized therapeutic approaches coupled with structured, risk-stratified dispensary follow-up protocols. The evidence presented in this review demonstrates that optimal clinical outcomes are contingent not solely upon the efficacy of immunosuppressive induction and maintenance therapies, but critically depend upon the implementation of systematic long-term monitoring strategies that facilitate early detection of disease progression and timely therapeutic intervention.

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The current therapeutic landscape for pediatric chronic glomerulonephritis has evolved substantially, with contemporary protocols emphasizing combination immunosuppressive regimens incorporating corticosteroids, cyclophosphamide, mycophenolate mofetil, and biological agents such as rituximab. These approaches have yielded improved short-term remission rates, with complete remission achieved in approximately 53% of children with rapidly progressive disease variants. However, the persistence of significant progression rates to chronic kidney disease and end-stage kidney disease in 10-18% of patients underscores the imperative for enhanced long-term surveillance and the development of more refined predictive models for risk stratification.

The optimization of dispensary follow-up represents a critical paradigm shift in the management of pediatric chronic glomerulonephritis. Risk-based monitoring protocols, stratifying patients according to clinical and histopathological features indicative of progressive disease, enable the rational allocation of healthcare resources while ensuring intensive surveillance for high-risk individuals. Key components of optimized follow-up include regular assessment of proteinuria, blood pressure monitoring, renal function evaluation, growth velocity tracking, and immunological surveillance, with frequency of evaluation tailored to individual risk profiles. The integration of multidisciplinary care teams, encompassing pediatric nephrologists, specialized nurses, dietitians, social workers, and transition coordinators, constitutes an essential element of comprehensive care delivery.

Furthermore, the challenges identified in current follow-up practices, including geographic barriers to specialized care, financial constraints, patient and family burden, and the complexities of transition to adult services, demand innovative solutions. The implementation of integrated care models, telemedicine consultations, and shared care protocols with primary care providers offers promising avenues for improving accessibility and continuity of care. Patient and family education programs, emphasizing recognition of disease flare indicators and adherence to therapeutic regimens, represent crucial components of self-management support.

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