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Review

The Growing Role of Genetics in Orthodontic Diagnosis and Treatment Planning

Waleed Hashim Farran[1], Khalid Waleed Tarabzouni[2], Taif Ati Almuqati[3], Nardeen Mohammed Khawaji[4], Muidh Mohammed Alasmari[5], Raghad Mohammed AlMoqbel[5], Razan Mohammed Alahmed[5], Afnan Mohammed Alasmari[6], Eilaf Ahmed AlShahrani[5], Razan Musaad Alsalamah[7], Dana Essam Aljarooshi[3]

[1] *Department of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedic, Al Thager Hospital, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia*
[2] *Department of Dental Services, Armed Forces Hospital, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia*
[3] *College of Dentistry, Umm Al-Qura University, Mecca, Saudi Arabia*
[4] *College of Dentistry, Princess Nourah Bint Abdul Rahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*
[5] *College of Dentistry, King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia*
[6] *Dental Department, Abha Primary Health Care, Abha, Saudi Arabia*
[7] *Dental Department, King Saud Hospital, Unaizah, Saudi Arabia*

Correspondence should be addressed to **Waleed Hashim Farran**, Department of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedic, Al Thager Hospital, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, email: dr.waleedfarran@gmail.com

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Abstract
Advancements in genetic research are revolutionizing orthodontic diagnosis and treatment planning by offering a more personalized approach. Genetic markers associated with craniofacial development and dental anomalies are being increasingly identified, providing deeper insights into the etiology of malocclusions. Specific genes such as MSX1, PAX9, and AXIN2 have been linked to conditions like tooth agenesis and jaw structure abnormalities, allowing for early diagnosis and targeted treatment planning. Personalized orthodontic treatment, based on an individual's genetic profile, enhances treatment efficiency and outcomes. For example, polymorphisms in genes such as IL-1 and TNF-α influence inflammatory responses during orthodontic tooth movement, allowing for adjustments in treatment force and preventive measures to mitigate complications like root resorption. Genetic research also holds promise for predicting the stability of orthodontic results. Variations in genes affecting bone metabolism, such as MMP20 and VDR, influence both treatment response and relapse risk, enabling orthodontists to develop more effective retention strategies. Additionally, gene therapy and pharmacogenomics offer future avenues for enhancing bone remodeling and optimizing drug responses based on genetic profiles, potentially reducing treatment duration and improving long-term stability. As genetic testing becomes more accessible, the early identification of genetic predispositions to dental and skeletal anomalies will become integral to routine orthodontic care. Early intervention, personalized treatment protocols, and improved retention strategies will help achieve better patient outcomes. The growing role of genetics in orthodontics is leading the field toward precision medicine, where treatments are tailored to the unique genetic makeup of each patient, ensuring more efficient and lasting results. Continued advancements in genetic research will further refine this approach, solidifying genetics as a key component of modern orthodontic practice.

Keywords: *genetic markers, orthodontic malocclusions, personalized treatment, craniofacial development, precision medicine*

Introduction

Orthodontics has long been recognized as a specialty that relies on precise diagnosis and individualized treatment plans to correct malocclusions and improve oral health. Traditionally, orthodontic treatment planning has depended on clinical assessments, radiographic imaging, and dental casts to determine the optimal interventions for each patient. However, advances in genetic research have increasingly shifted the paradigm toward understanding how genetic factors contribute to both dental and skeletal abnormalities, thus enhancing the precision of orthodontic diagnosis and treatment planning (1). The growing role of genetics in orthodontics promises to lead to more personalized treatment approaches, minimizing treatment times and improving outcomes.

One of the earliest insights into the genetic basis of dental malocclusions was the recognition that many orthodontic issues, such as tooth agenesis, crowding, and variations in jaw structure, often run in families. Twin studies and familial aggregation analyses have provided substantial evidence of the heritability of these traits, indicating that genetics plays a critical role in craniofacial growth and development (2). Furthermore, specific gene mutations and polymorphisms, such as those associated with the MSX1 and PAX9 genes, have been identified in individuals with congenitally missing teeth and other malocclusions, demonstrating a strong genetic component to certain dental anomalies (3).

With the advent of molecular genetics, researchers have begun to identify multiple genes involved in craniofacial development, contributing to a better understanding of how these genes interact with environmental factors during orthodontic treatment. Genetic screening is now being considered as part of a comprehensive diagnostic approach, allowing orthodontists to predict the risk of certain malocclusions, assess the potential response to treatment, and even anticipate the stability of results post-treatment (4). This personalized approach, based on genetic information, may revolutionize treatment planning by providing insights that go beyond traditional clinical assessments.

Incorporating genetics into orthodontic diagnosis and treatment planning not only provides an opportunity for more accurate interventions but also offers a glimpse into the future of orthodontics, where precision medicine will be the norm. As research continues to uncover the complexities of genetic influences on dental and skeletal development, the integration of genetic testing into clinical practice is likely to become a valuable tool for orthodontists worldwide.

Review

The integration of genetic insights into orthodontic practice has significantly broadened the understanding of malocclusion and craniofacial anomalies. Genetic markers associated with tooth development, craniofacial growth, and skeletal structures are increasingly being recognized as influential factors in orthodontic diagnosis and treatment. For example, mutations in genes such as MSX1 and PAX9 have been linked to conditions like tooth agenesis, a common issue that requires early orthodontic intervention (5). Understanding these genetic underpinnings allows for more accurate predictions regarding the development of malocclusion and can guide the choice of treatment modalities.

In addition to identifying genetic causes of dental anomalies, there is growing interest in the use of genetic testing to tailor orthodontic treatments. Personalized orthodontics, based on a patient's genetic profile, could lead to shorter treatment times, improved outcomes, and greater stability of results. Genetic factors have been shown to affect bone density and the response to orthodontic forces, which could significantly influence the movement of teeth and the overall success of treatment (6). As such, incorporating genetic testing into routine orthodontic care may help orthodontists optimize treatment plans, reduce the risk of relapse, and provide more patient-specific care.

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Genetic Markers and Their Influence on Orthodontic Malocclusions

Genetic markers have become an essential focus in understanding the etiology of orthodontic malocclusions. These markers, identified through various studies, have been shown to play a significant role in craniofacial development, tooth formation, and the overall structure of the dental arch. The identification of specific genetic variations associated with malocclusion can aid in early diagnosis and better prediction of orthodontic outcomes, ultimately leading to more personalized treatment approaches.

One of the key genetic markers influencing orthodontic malocclusions is the AXIN2 gene. Studies have shown that variations in this gene are linked to tooth agenesis and other dental anomalies. The AXIN2 gene is essential in regulating the WNT signaling pathway, which plays a crucial role in craniofacial development and tooth formation (7). Mutations in this gene can lead to the absence of one or more teeth, which is a common issue encountered in orthodontic practice. Identifying such genetic variations early on allows for more precise planning, especially in cases that may require prosthetic or orthodontic interventions to replace or adjust for missing teeth.

Another notable genetic marker is the EDA gene, which has been implicated in hypodontia and oligodontia. These conditions, characterized by the absence of fewer or more teeth than normal, can pose significant challenges in orthodontic treatment planning. Mutations in the EDA gene disrupt the development of dental tissues, leading to missing or malformed teeth. Understanding these genetic links can assist orthodontists in predicting the severity of dental anomalies and in tailoring treatment plans to address these specific challenges (8). Additionally, early identification of genetic markers such as EDA can influence the decision to initiate orthodontic treatment during the early developmental stages when interventions may be most effective.

Recent advances in genetic research have also pointed to the importance of the PAX3 gene in determining craniofacial structure and development. This gene has been linked to conditions such as cleft lip and palate, which are often associated with severe malocclusion. Variants in PAX3 can alter the normal development of facial tissues, leading to significant orthodontic challenges that require interdisciplinary management between orthodontists and surgeons (9). The ability to identify patients with PAX3 mutations may lead to earlier and more comprehensive treatment strategies, improving the long-term prognosis for these individuals. The increasing recognition of genetic markers such as AXIN2, EDA, and PAX3 underscores the importance of genetics in the diagnosis and treatment of orthodontic malocclusions. As genetic testing becomes more accessible, orthodontists will be able to incorporate these insights into personalized treatment plans, leading to improved patient outcomes and more efficient management of complex dental anomalies.

Personalized Orthodontic Treatment Based on Genetic Profiling

The concept of personalized orthodontic treatment has gained momentum as genetic research uncovers the intricate role that genetics play in influencing dental and craniofacial structures. Genetic profiling, which involves analyzing an individual's genetic markers, allows orthodontists to tailor treatment plans to the specific biological needs of each patient. This approach not only enhances the efficacy of treatment but also minimizes potential complications and reduces overall treatment time.

One of the key areas where genetic profiling is making a significant impact is in the prediction of treatment responses. Variations in genes such as IL-1 and TNF-α have been shown to affect the inflammatory response during orthodontic tooth movement. Individuals with certain polymorphisms in these genes may exhibit a heightened inflammatory response, leading to accelerated tooth movement or an increased risk of root resorption (10). By identifying these genetic predispositions early on, orthodontists can adjust the force applied during treatment or implement preventive measures to minimize adverse effects, thereby personalizing the treatment process. Genetic profiling also has the potential to predict the stability of orthodontic

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outcomes. Studies have shown that variations in the MMP20 gene, which encodes for an enzyme involved in enamel formation, can influence the relapse rate after orthodontic treatment (11). Patients with specific polymorphisms in this gene may have weaker enamel, which can lead to a higher likelihood of relapse following the removal of braces. Understanding these genetic factors can help orthodontists design retention strategies that are more effective for each patient, such as extended use of retainers or adjunctive treatments that strengthen enamel.

Moreover, genetic profiling allows orthodontists to identify patients who may benefit from adjunctive treatments, such as pharmacological interventions, to enhance orthodontic outcomes. For example, patients with variations in the VDR (Vitamin D receptor) gene may have altered bone metabolism, which can affect the speed and efficiency of tooth movement during orthodontic treatment (12). For such patients, orthodontists could consider supplementing Vitamin D or adjusting the treatment protocol to account for their specific metabolic profile. This personalized approach not only improves treatment efficacy but also optimizes patient comfort and satisfaction. As genetic research continues to advance, the potential for personalized orthodontic treatment based on genetic profiling will expand. By incorporating genetic information into routine clinical practice, orthodontists can move beyond the traditional one-size-fits-all approach, providing more individualized care that is tailored to each patient's genetic makeup, resulting in better long-term outcomes and patient experiences.

Future Implications of Genetic Research in Orthodontic Treatment Planning

The future of orthodontics is poised for transformation as genetic research continues to reveal critical insights into the biological processes that govern craniofacial development and dental anomalies. The integration of genetic testing into orthodontic practice has the potential to revolutionize diagnosis, treatment planning, and long-term patient care by offering a more precise, personalized approach. As advancements in genetic research progress, they are expected to impact several aspects of orthodontic treatment.

One promising area is the potential for early diagnosis and intervention. With the identification of genetic markers that influence tooth development and jaw growth, it may soon be possible to predict malocclusions and other orthodontic issues before they manifest. For example, variations in the RUNX2 gene, which plays a role in skeletal development, have been associated with craniofacial anomalies, including those affecting jaw structure and dental alignment (13). Detecting such genetic predispositions in young patients could allow orthodontists to intervene earlier, using preventive measures or growth modification techniques to mitigate the severity of future malocclusions. In addition to early diagnosis, genetic research may lead to the development of new therapeutic approaches that enhance orthodontic treatment. For instance, recent studies have explored the role of growth factors and gene therapy in accelerating bone remodeling, a crucial aspect of orthodontic tooth movement (14). The ability to manipulate the expression of genes involved in bone metabolism could reduce treatment times and improve the efficiency of orthodontic appliances. Furthermore, advances in pharmacogenomics—the study of how genes affect a person’s response to drugs—could enable orthodontists to prescribe medications tailored to a patient’s genetic profile, optimizing treatment outcomes and minimizing side effects.

Another key implication of genetic research is its potential to improve retention strategies and reduce relapse rates. One of the major challenges in orthodontics is maintaining the stability of treatment outcomes over time. Genetic variations in collagen metabolism and bone remodeling genes, such as COL1A1 and COL1A2, have been linked to tissue responses that may influence the likelihood of relapse (15, 16). By incorporating genetic testing into retention planning, orthodontists could develop personalized retention protocols, improving long-term treatment stability for each patient. As genetic research continues to evolve, its integration into orthodontic treatment planning will become

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increasingly important. The ability to predict malocclusions, enhance treatment modalities, and improve retention strategies based on an individual's genetic profile will allow for more precise, efficient, and effective orthodontic care. The future of orthodontics is moving toward a model of precision medicine, where genetic insights are a cornerstone of treatment planning.

Conclusion

The integration of genetic research into orthodontic diagnosis and treatment planning is transforming the field by enabling more personalized and precise care. Genetic markers provide valuable insights into the etiology of malocclusions, while genetic profiling enhances treatment outcomes and minimizes complications. As advancements in genetic science continue, orthodontic practices will increasingly incorporate these tools to optimize patient care, reduce treatment times, and improve long-term stability. The future of orthodontics is moving toward a model of precision medicine, driven by the growing understanding of genetic influences on dental and craniofacial development.

Disclosures

Author Contributions

The author has reviewed the final version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Not applicable

Consent for publications

Not applicable

Data Availability

All data is provided within the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no competing interest.

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