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Commentary

Integrating Pharmacogenomics and Pharmacoproteomics in Oncology: Towards Precision Cancer Therapy

Leonardo Martinez*

Department of Molecular Oncology, University of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina

DESCRIPTION

Cancer remains one of the most formidable challenges in medicine, responsible for millions of deaths worldwide each year. Despite progress in early detection and therapeutic strategies, the clinical management of cancer patients is often complicated by heterogeneous responses to treatment. Some patients experience remarkable benefits from chemotherapy or targeted therapies, while others develop resistance or suffer severe toxicities. The variability in treatment response is influenced not only by tumor biology but also by the patient's genetic and proteomic landscape. This is where pharmacogenomics and Pharmacoproteomics intersect, offering a path toward precision cancer therapy. By integrating insights from both fields, clinicians and researchers can refine drug selection, dosing, monitoring, tailoring therapies to maximize efficacy while minimizing harm.

Pharmacogenomics has already demonstrated its value in oncology. Variants in genes that regulate drug metabolism or drug targets have been shown to alter the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of chemotherapeutic agents. For example, mutations in *TPMT* can result in life-threatening myelosuppression in patients treated with thiopurine-based therapies, while polymorphisms in DPYD are associated with severe toxicity from fluoropyrimidines such as 5-fluorouracil and capecitabine. Clinical guidelines now recommend pre-treatment genetic screening for these variants to avoid unnecessary complications. Similarly, genetic testing for EGFR mutations or ALK rearrangements is essential in selecting targeted therapies for non-small-cell lung cancer.

While pharmacogenomics focuses on inherited or acquired DNA variations, Pharmacoproteomics adds another crucial dimension by analyzing the proteins that are the ultimate effectors of drug action. Tumors are driven by dysregulated protein networks; therapies often succeed or fail depending on how these proteins respond. Proteomic profiling can identify biomarkers of drug sensitivity or resistance, enabling oncologists to predict outcomes more accurately than genomics alone. For instance, in breast cancer, proteomic analysis has revealed that overexpression of HER2 predicts benefit from trastuzumab, while the absence of HER2 amplification suggests lack of efficacy. Moreover, proteomic studies have uncovered resistance mechanisms, such as activation of alternative signaling pathways, that can guide the design of combination therapies.

The integration of pharmacogenomics and Pharmacoproteomics is particularly powerful in the context of personalized treatment planning. A patient's tumor may harbor a mutation in a drug gable gene, suggesting sensitivity to a targeted therapy. However, proteomic profiling might reveal that downstream signaling proteins are already activated through alternative mechanisms, predicting resistance. By combining genomic and proteomic insights, clinicians can avoid prescribing ineffective drugs and instead choose therapies that align with both the genetic and proteomic context. This prevents unnecessary side effects and reduces treatment costs while improving patient outcomes.

One example of this integration is in the management of colorectal cancer. Pharmacogenomics studies have shown that mutations in *KRAS* or *NRAS* predict resistance to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies such as cetuximab. However, not all patients with wild-type *KRAS* respond to therapy. Proteomic investigations have revealed that other pathways, including MET or ERBB2 signaling, may drive resistance even in the absence of RAS mutations. Therefore, combined genomic and proteomic profiling provides a more comprehensive view, ensuring that only those patients who are likely to benefit receive anti-EGFR treatment.

Another promising area is immuno-oncology, where checkpoint inhibitors such as pembrolizumab and nivolumab have revolutionized cancer therapy. While pharmacogenomics can identify mutations that predict neoantigen presentation, proteomics can assess the actual expression of immune checkpoint proteins like PD-L1. Moreover, proteomic profiling of the tumor microenvironment can reveal the abundance of immune cell subsets and cytokine networks that influence

***Correspondence to:** Leonardo Martinez, Department of Molecular Oncology, University of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina, E-mail: l.martinez@uba.edu.ar

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response to therapy. Integrating these datasets allows oncologists to stratify patients more effectively, ensuring that immunotherapies are used in those most likely to respond.

Beyond treatment selection, pharmacogenomics and Pharmacoproteomics also improve toxicity prediction. Chemotherapy often damages healthy tissues; susceptibility varies between individuals. Genetic variants in drug transporters or metabolizing enzymes can predict higher systemic exposure, while proteomic biomarkers can provide early warning of organ-specific toxicities. For instance, proteomic analysis has identified circulating proteins that rise before the onset of anthracycline-induced cardiotoxicity, enabling preemptive dose adjustments or cardio protective interventions. Together, genomic and proteomic monitoring may help oncologists strike a delicate balance between therapeutic efficacy and safety.

Despite these advances, challenges remain. The implementation of integrated omics in clinical oncology requires robust infrastructure, including next-generation sequencing, high-throughput proteomic platforms, advanced bioinformatics pipelines. Data integration is particularly complex, as genomic and proteomic datasets differ in scale, variability, interpretability. Furthermore, translating research findings into clinical practice requires validation in large, diverse patient cohorts, which demands significant investment and collaboration.

Ethical considerations also arise. Genetic and proteomic data are deeply personal, carrying implications not only for the individual but also for their family members. Questions about data ownership, privacy, informed consent must be addressed to build trust and ensure responsible use of these technologies. Additionally, the high cost of multi-omics profiling raises concerns about equitable access. Without deliberate efforts to make these tools affordable, precision oncology may exacerbate existing disparities between high- and low-income populations.

Nevertheless, the trajectory of oncology is clear. As sequencing and proteomic technologies become faster, cheaper, more reliable, integrated pharmacogenomics-proteomic profiling is likely to become a standard of care. Clinical decision support systems will incorporate multi-omics data into predictive algorithms, guiding oncologists toward the optimal treatment for each patient. Drug development pipelines will also evolve, using genomic and proteomic data to identify patient subgroups most likely to benefit, thereby increasing trial efficiency and success rates.