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Opinion Article

Pharmacovigilance of Gene Therapies and Cell Therapies

Michael Hoerger*

Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Paris Saclay, Gif-sur-Yvette, France

ABOUT THE STUDY

Gene therapies and cell therapies have emerged as potential treatments for a wide range of diseases, offering the potential to target the underlying genetic or cellular defects. While these innovative therapies show great potential, they also present unique challenges in terms of safety and monitoring. Pharmacovigilance, the science of monitoring and assessing the safety of medical products, plays a significant role in ensuring the continued benefit-risk balance of gene therapies and cell therapies. This article explores the importance of pharmacovigilance in the context of these advanced therapies.

Gene therapies involve the introduction, modification, or deletion of genetic material within a patient's cells to treat or prevent disease. Cell therapies, on the other hand, involve the transplantation or modification of specific cells to restore or enhance their function. These therapies have demonstrated remarkable success in treating conditions like certain types of inherited disorders, cancer, and autoimmune diseases. Notable examples include CAR-T cell therapies for leukemia and spinal muscular atrophy gene therapy.

Gene and cell therapies often involve permanent changes to a patient's genetic or cellular makeup. As such, long-term safety assessment is essential to monitor for potential adverse effects that may emerge over time. Pharmacovigilance efforts must extend well beyond the initial clinical trials to track patient outcomes for years or even decades.

Patients receiving gene or cell therapies may develop immune responses against the therapeutic product. These immune reactions can range from mild to severe and must be closely monitored to understand their impact on treatment efficacy and safety.

Gene therapies, in particular, run the risk of unintended genetic alterations. Pharmacovigilance efforts should focus on identifying and mitigating any off-target effects that could lead to unforeseen consequences.

Some gene therapies involve the integration of new genetic material into the patient's genome. Pharmacovigilance must closely monitor this integration process to detect any potential mutagenic effects or disruptions of normal cellular function.

Gene and cell therapies are highly complex to manufacture. Variability in manufacturing processes can impact product quality and safety. Vigilance is necessary to ensure consistent quality and efficacy across batches.

Patient-reported outcomes and experiences should be incorporated into pharmacovigilance efforts. Patients often provide unique insights into their treatment journeys and any unexpected side effects they may encounter.

Regulatory agencies play a critical role in ensuring the safety and efficacy of gene and cell therapies. They require rigorous data collection and post-marketing surveillance as part of the approval process. Continuous communication and collaboration between manufacturers, healthcare providers, and regulators are essential for effective pharmacovigilance.

CONCLUSION

Gene therapies and cell therapies represent innovative advancements in medicine, encourage for patients with previously untreatable conditions. However, their complexity and potential for long-term effects demand a robust pharmacovigilance framework. Long-term safety monitoring, assessment of immune responses, detection of off-target effects, and consistent manufacturing are all critical components of effective pharmacovigilance in this field. By prioritizing patient safety and continuously monitoring the benefit-risk balance, we can unlock the full potential of these innovative therapies while minimizing potential risks.

Correspondence to: Michael Hoerger, Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Paris Saclay, Gif-sur-Yvette, France, E-mail: michaelerger@protonmail.com

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