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Perspective

Improving Therapy and the Significance of Therapeutic Drug Surveillance

Wilson Zhang*

Department of Pharmacy, University of Sao Paulo, Butanta, Sao Paulo, Brazil

DESCRIPTION

In the scope of modern medicine, the evolution of pharmacotherapy has brought about significant advancements in the treatment of various diseases. However, alongside these advancements, a growing awareness of individual variability in drug response has underscored the need for more personalized approaches to medication management. Enter Therapeutic Drug Monitoring (TDM), a crucial tool that allows clinicians to optimize drug dosing regimens for improved therapeutic outcomes. TDM involves the measurement of drug concentrations in biological fluids, typically blood, to ensure that a patient is receiving an appropriate dosage of a medication. It provides valuable insights into a drug's pharmacokinetics like how the body absorbs, distributes, metabolizes and eliminates the drug and helps clinicians adjust dosages to achieve desired therapeutic effects while minimizing adverse reactions. This customized approach to medication management has immense potential across various medical specialties, ranging from psychiatry to oncology.

One of the primary benefits of TDM is its ability to individualize treatment regimens. Each patient possesses a unique physiological makeup that influences how their body interacts with drugs. Factors such as age, weight, genetics, liver and kidney function, and concomitant medications can all impact drug metabolism and response. By monitoring drug levels in real-time, clinicians can customize dosages to suit a patient's specific needs, thereby maximizing efficacy and minimizing toxicity. In psychiatric practice, TDM has a crucial role in optimizing the use of psychotropic medications. Drugs such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, and mood stabilizers exhibit considerable inter-individual variability in response, making it challenging to predict the optimal dose for each patient. TDM helps psychiatrists navigate this complexity by fine-tuning medication doses based on individual drug concentrations, leading to better symptom control and improved patient outcomes.

Moreover, TDM proves invaluable in the field of infectious diseases, particularly in the era of antimicrobial stewardship. Antibiotics, antivirals, and antifungals often require precise dosing to achieve therapeutic efficacy while preventing the emergence of drug-resistant pathogens. TDM enables clinicians to strike a delicate balance between achieving therapeutic concentrations and avoiding suboptimal dosing, thus mitigating the risk of treatment failure and antimicrobial resistance. In oncology, where chemotherapy drugs have narrow therapeutic windows and can cause severe side effects, TDM offers a means to optimize treatment while minimizing toxicity. By closely monitoring drug levels, oncologists can adjust dosages to achieve the desired anticancer effects while reducing the likelihood of adverse reactions such as neutropenia, thrombocytopenia, and nephrotoxicity. This proactive approach not only improves patient safety but also improves treatment adherence and quality of life.

Furthermore, TDM has potential in the management of chronic diseases such as epilepsy and autoimmune disorders. Antiepileptic drugs (AEDs) require careful titration to prevent seizures while avoiding adverse effects, and TDM provides a means to monitor drug levels and ensure therapeutic efficacy. Similarly, in autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease, TDM aids in optimizing the use of immunosuppressive medications, striking a balance between disease controls and minimizing the risk of infection and other complications. Despite its undeniable benefits, widespread adoption of TDM faces several challenges. One significant barrier is the lack of standardized protocols and guidelines for implementing TDM across different clinical settings. Variability in assay methodologies, reference ranges, and interpretation criteria can complicate the use of TDM and hinder its integration into routine clinical practice. Moreover, limited accessibility to TDM services and high costs associated with testing may restrict its availability, particularly in resource-constrained healthcare settings.

Correspondence to: Wilson Zhang, Department of Pharmacy, University of Sao Paulo, Butanta, Sao Paulo, Brazil, E-mail: zhangw@gmail.com

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