PIONEER
ACADEMIC PUBLISHING LIMITED

Current Research in **Medical Sciences**

Volume 4, Number 4 **September 2025**

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PIONEER
ACADEMIC PUBLISHING LIMITED

Current Research in Medical Sciences
ISSN 2958-0390
www.pioneerpublisher.com/crms
Volume 4 Number 4 September 2025

Pharmacovigilance Consider as a Leader for Drug Design

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doi:10.56397/CRMS.2025.09.01

Abstract

Pharmacovigilance tell us the side effects of the drugs after introduce to the market and used by patients, hence some drugs e.g., thalidomide when used to treat the emesis in pregnant women appear the phocomelia which characterized by abnormal development of limbs where the long bones (like: humerus - femur) or either shortened or absent causing the hands and feet to be attached close to the body, this is due to isomer of thalidomide (S) which is teratogenic but the (R) is a sedative and more safe due to the pharmacovigilance of thalidomide so that the pharmacovigilance led us to use (R) isomer but not (S) isomer in medicine.

Captopril appears to cause cough in patients when used as an antihypertensive drug, due to the SH group of captopril. Hence, captopril was modified to enalapril to avoid the cough symptom that appears when using captopril.

Cimetidine is H2 antagonist, the first H2 antagonist modified from histamine to used treatment peptic ulcer, the pharmacovigilance tell us with side effects of cimetidine, the major of them decrease the blood cell counts especially WBCs (agranulocytosis), so the cimetidine modified to synthesis of famotidine which is less side effect than cimetidine.

Keywords: pharmacovigilance, thalidomide, ACE inhibitor, H2 antagonists, isomers, stereochemistry

1. Introduction

The pharmacovigilance is the science and activities focus on detecting, assessing, understanding and preventing adverse effects or other medicine related problems associated with pharmaceutical products. It is critical processes for insuring the safe use of medicines and vaccines. The main job of pharmacovigilance is monitoring medications even after they are approved for use as some side effects may only apparent with wider use, where detection concern identifying the adverse effects or other problems related to medication, assessment concern with evaluating the likelihood and

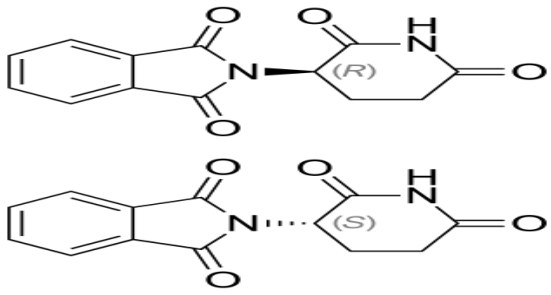
severity of side effects understanding concern with analyzing the causes and contributing factors to side effects, prevention concern to take the action to minimize or prevent future occurrence of side effects and monitoring concern with continuously tracking the safety of medicines after they are on the market.

Pharmacovigilance is important for ensuring patient safety and public health, and it contributes to the overall safety of the healthcare system. It supports the continuous improvement of drugs to increase efficacy and reduce side effects. Informed decision-making supports healthcare professionals and regulators, and global collaboration between various stakeholders—including regulatory agencies, pharmaceutical companies, healthcare professionals, and patients—is essential.

Pharmacovigilance is a vital process for ensuring that the medications we use are as safe and effective as possible. For example, thalidomide, which was used to treat emesis in pregnant women, led to serious birth defects; captopril, used for hypertensive patients, caused cough; and cimetidine, an H_2 antagonist used to treat peptic ulcers, showed side effects—especially on blood—such as decreased RBC count and agranulocytosis.

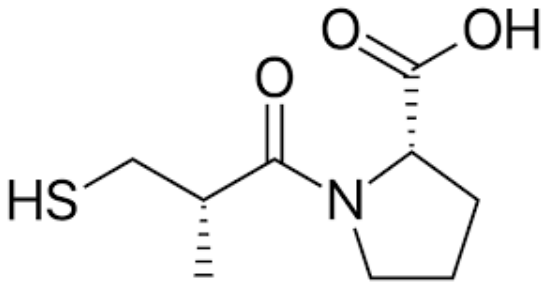
2. Chemistry and Pharmacology

(1) Thalidomide:

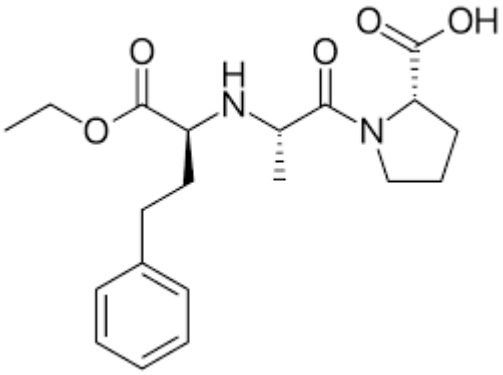


1- Thalidomide was first used in the late 1950s. It was very effective as an antiemetic and was used to treat morning sickness in pregnant women. However, after delivery, some babies were born with phocomelia—a condition characterized by abnormal limb development, where long bones (e.g., humerus, femur) are shortened or absent, causing the hands and feet to be attached close to the body. These characteristics prompted scientists to investigate the cause, which was found to be related to the (S)-isomer of thalidomide. In contrast, the (R)-isomer was relatively safer, showing sedative and anti-inflammatory properties. Although thalidomide was initially withdrawn, it was later modified to synthesize several anticancer drugs—for example, those used to treat multiple myeloma, graft-versus-host disease, and several dermatological conditions such as leprosy complications. Thalidomide has also been used to manage conditions associated with HIV, including aphthous ulcers and Kaposi's sarcoma.

(2) Captopril and enalapril:



(Captopril)



(Enalapril)

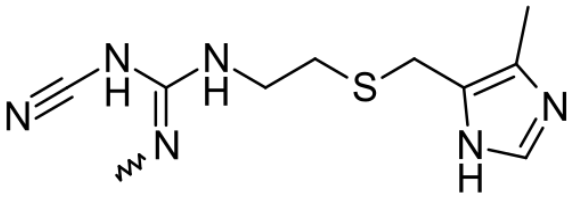
Captopril is used to treat high blood pressure (hypertension), which, if left uncontrolled for a long time, adds to the workload of the heart and arteries, and may cause them to not work properly.

Captopril is an angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor that blocks the conversion of angiotensin I to the potent vasoconstrictor angiotensin II, and simultaneously inactivates the vasodilator peptide bradykinin. Besides its blood pressure-lowering properties, it also exhibits various immunomodulatory functions.

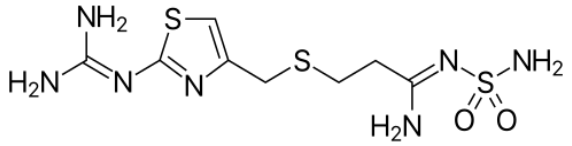
Captopril revealed some side effects after its use by patients, e.g., itching and cough, which led scientists to investigate these effects. The

presence of a sulfhydryl (–SH) group was found to be responsible for these side effects. Hence, enalapril was developed as a modified version of captopril that does not cause itching and cough, due to the absence of the sulfhydryl group present in captopril.

(3) Cimetidine and famotidine:



(Cimetidine)



(Famotidine)

Cimetidine is a modified drug for histamine and was used to treat peptic ulcer, which acts as an H2 receptor antagonist, competitively blocking the histamine from stimulating the H2 receptors located on the gastric parietal cells. These cells are responsible for hydrochloric acid secretion and secretion of the intrinsic factor. But the side effects of cimetidine, e.g., breast enlargement in men (gynecomastia) and decreased RBC count, were revealed through pharmacovigilance. So the scientists modified the cimetidine into famotidine, which does not reveal gynecomastia and decrease in RBCs and agranulocytosis. The pharmacovigilance was important for the withdrawal of the drugs from the markets which cause teratogenicity, e.g., (S) isomer, and modified the (R) isomer to be used for treatment of many diseases. The first ACE inhibitor, captopril, is modified to the more effective and less side effect enalapril through the pharmacovigilance of captopril, and cimetidine is withdrawn from the market.

The pharmacovigilance is considered a leader of drug design and lead us modification of some drugs.

3. Conclusion

Pharmacovigilance is a vital post-marketing tool that ensures the continued safety and effectiveness of drugs by identifying and analyzing adverse effects. Historical examples such as thalidomide, captopril, and cimetidine demonstrate how pharmacovigilance has guided safer drug development. The discovery of the teratogenic (S)-isomer of thalidomide led to the selective use of the safer (R)-isomer. Captopril's side effects, including cough, led to the development of enalapril, while cimetidine's hematological side effects prompted the creation of famotidine. These cases illustrate how pharmacovigilance not only protects public health but also drives innovation and improvement in pharmaceutical therapy.

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PIONEER
ACADEMIC PUBLISHING LIMITED

Current Research in Medical Sciences
ISSN 2958-0390
www.pioneerpublisher.com/crms
Volume 4 Number 4 September 2025

Burnout, Job Satisfaction, and Mental Health Among Healthcare Workers in China

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doi:10.56397/CRMS.2025.09.02

Abstract

This study explores the complex relationships among burnout, job satisfaction, and mental health in China's healthcare workforce. Drawing on national reports and recent empirical studies, the research identifies structural, cultural, and organizational determinants shaping clinician well-being. Burnout remains prevalent across multiple specialties, particularly in emergency, ICU, and pediatrics, with anxiety, depression, and insomnia affecting over 40% of healthcare staff. Institutional factors—such as long working hours, limited recognition systems, and authoritarian leadership—exacerbate psychological distress, while emerging programs like Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and peer-support initiatives demonstrate potential to mitigate its effects. Significant disparities are observed between urban and rural healthcare systems, revealing inequities in workload, professional resources, and access to mental health services. The paper proposes a sustainable multi-level framework that integrates individual resilience training, organizational reforms, and policy-driven mental health standards. Ultimately, improving clinician well-being is essential not only for staff retention but also for enhancing patient safety and healthcare quality across China.

Keywords: burnout, job satisfaction, mental health, healthcare workers, China, hospital management, occupational well-being

1. Introduction

The Chinese healthcare system, while rapidly expanding in capacity and sophistication, faces mounting structural and human resource pressures that directly affect the mental health and job satisfaction of its workforce. Over the past two decades, China has made significant progress in expanding healthcare access, with the *National Health Commission (NHC)* reporting that the total number of licensed doctors increased from 2.0 million in 2010 to 4.7 million in 2023. However, this growth has not kept pace with rising healthcare demand driven by an aging population, urbanization, and increased public expectations for quality care. As a result, the average doctor-to-population ratio remains uneven, with tertiary hospitals often overloaded while primary care facilities remain underutilized.

One major challenge is the intensification of clinical workload. Studies have shown that physicians in urban tertiary hospitals frequently work 50–70 hours per week, substantially higher than the OECD average of 44 hours. Many clinicians also report extended on-call duties, frequent night shifts, and growing non-clinical

administrative responsibilities, such as digital record management, patient satisfaction tracking, and insurance documentation. These factors have collectively contributed to a sense of "time scarcity," limiting opportunities for recovery and personal life. According to the *Chinese Medical Doctor Association's 2022 Survey*, more than 68% of respondents reported feeling "frequently exhausted," and over 40% considered leaving their profession within five years if working conditions do not improve.

Another significant systemic issue lies in the imbalance between administrative and clinical priorities. The ongoing hospital reform policies emphasize efficiency, performance metrics, and patient throughput, leading to bureaucratic expansion within medical institutions. Physicians increasingly spend a disproportionate amount of time fulfilling administrative targets rather than engaging in patient-centered care. This shift has fostered frustration and reduced professional autonomy—a core predictor of burnout and job dissatisfaction in multiple cross-national studies.

Moreover, workforce distribution disparities between regions exacerbate stress among healthcare workers. In economically developed areas such as the Yangtze River Delta and the Pearl River Delta, the patient load per clinician is far higher than in inland or western provinces. The *WHO China Health Workforce Brief (2022)* estimated that while China's overall density of doctors reached 2.9 per 1,000 population, in large urban centers this figure masks severe internal disparities—some tertiary hospitals report daily patient volumes exceeding 200 visits per physician, creating chronic overload and limiting quality of care.

The cumulative effect of these systemic pressures is a medical workforce caught between increasing societal expectations and constrained institutional capacity. Doctors and nurses are not only required to meet escalating technical standards but are also burdened with the emotional labor of managing patient anxiety, hospital competition, and public scrutiny—especially following high-profile medical disputes in recent years. These challenges form the foundation for understanding why burnout, declining job satisfaction, and deteriorating mental health have become pervasive among Chinese healthcare professionals.

2. Interconnections Between Burnout, Job Satisfaction, and Mental Health

Burnout, job satisfaction, and mental health are deeply intertwined phenomena within the healthcare profession, forming a mutually reinforcing cycle that shapes both individual well-being and institutional performance. In the Chinese medical context—characterized by high patient volumes, limited autonomy, and social pressure—this triad operates as a complex psychosocial mechanism rather than a set of isolated issues.

Burnout is commonly conceptualized through the *Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)* framework, which identifies three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion occurs when chronic stress and excessive workload deplete emotional resources, leading to fatigue and detachment from patients. Depersonalization manifests as cynicism and emotional withdrawal, while reduced personal accomplishment reflects feelings of inefficacy and stagnation in one's professional role. These symptoms are frequently reported among Chinese healthcare workers. For instance, a 2023 meta-analysis covering over 25,000 Chinese clinicians found that 49.3% experienced moderate to severe burnout symptoms—significantly higher than the global average of around 35%.

Job satisfaction functions as both a buffer and a potential amplifier within this relationship. According to the *Job Demand–Resource (JD-R) Model*, high job demands—such as long hours, administrative overload, and emotional labor—drain psychological resources, leading to burnout. Conversely, access to supportive leadership, fair compensation, and opportunities for professional growth can replenish those resources, improving job satisfaction and mitigating stress. However, many Chinese clinicians report low satisfaction scores due to limited upward mobility and inadequate recognition of non-quantifiable contributions such as mentorship and patient care quality. A 2022 survey conducted by the *Chinese Hospital Association* found that only 37% of healthcare workers were satisfied with their current job conditions, while over 60% cited "poor work-life balance" as their primary source of dissatisfaction.

The connection between burnout and mental

health is particularly critical. Prolonged burnout not only leads to decreased professional engagement but also contributes to psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Empirical studies in major Chinese hospitals indicate that healthcare workers with high burnout scores are 2.5 times more likely to exhibit depressive symptoms and 3 times more likely to report clinical insomnia compared to their low-burnout peers. These effects, in turn, reduce job satisfaction and increase turnover intentions, creating a self-perpetuating downward spiral that threatens both worker well-being and the quality of patient care.

Furthermore, the cultural dimension of Chinese healthcare plays a subtle but important role. The societal expectation that medical professionals demonstrate self-sacrifice and endurance can discourage individuals from acknowledging emotional exhaustion or seeking psychological help. This cultural ideal, while historically rooted in Confucian notions of duty and collective harmony, often leads to internalized pressure and underreporting of mental health issues. Consequently, the interconnection among burnout, job satisfaction, and mental health is reinforced by both institutional structures and cultural norms, requiring interventions that address not only workload but also the broader psychosocial environment of healthcare work in China.

3. Institutional and Environmental Causes of Burnout

3.1 Extended Work Hours, Shift Frequency, and Chronic Fatigue

One of the most direct institutional contributors to burnout among healthcare professionals in China is the persistence of extended working hours and high shift frequency, which foster a pervasive sense of chronic fatigue. Despite recent reforms intended to optimize scheduling and improve work-life balance, excessive workloads remain the norm in most Chinese hospitals, particularly within tertiary-level institutions that serve as regional referral centers.

According to the *National Health Commission (NHC) Health Statistics Yearbook 2023*, the average weekly working time for physicians in tertiary hospitals exceeds 55 hours, while nurses frequently report over 50 hours, not including overnight on-call duties. In departments such as emergency medicine, intensive care, and surgery, clinicians routinely work 10–12-hour shifts, often extending into weekends to meet patient demand. A national survey conducted by the *Chinese Medical Doctor Association (CMDA)* found that 72% of hospital physicians work more than the statutory 44-hour workweek, and 41% perform continuous duty exceeding 24 hours at least once a month.

Table 1. Weekly Working Hours and Burnout Scores by Profession (n=600)

Profession	Mean Weekly Hours	% Working > 55 hrs	Mean Burnout Score (0–100)
% Reporting High Fatigue	Physicians	57.3	72%
68.4	64%	Nurses	51.8
65%	62.7	59%	Technicians
48.5	42%	55.3	47%

Source: Compiled from CMDA 2023 Physician Survey and WHO China Health Workforce Data.

The data presented in Table 1 reveal a consistent pattern of excessive work hours and fatigue across professional categories, with physicians displaying the highest burnout scores. These findings confirm that chronic overwork and fatigue are not isolated experiences, but systemic features of China's healthcare environment. Over 60% of respondents in national surveys report symptoms of physical and emotional exhaustion, suggesting a strong correlation between long working hours and burnout severity.

Moreover, the rotational nature of shift work compounds this fatigue. Nurses and resident physicians often undergo irregular schedules that disrupt circadian rhythms and erode sleep quality. Studies in *BMC Nursing* (2023) and *Frontiers in Public Health* (2022) have demonstrated that healthcare workers engaged in night-shift rotations exhibit 1.8 times higher odds of high burnout scores compared to those in daytime positions. These results are consistent with international evidence linking shift work to impaired decision-making, mood instability, and reduced empathy—all crucial

factors for patient-centered care.

Finally, cultural norms in China's medical profession tend to normalize overwork as professional devotion. The ethos of *"endurance and sacrifice"* (*坚持奉献*) remains deeply embedded in hospital culture, reinforcing the perception that fatigue is an unavoidable cost of dedication. While such values contribute to resilience in crisis conditions, they simultaneously discourage open discussion of exhaustion or the need for institutional support. Consequently, chronic fatigue evolves into a structural form of psychological strain, making it one of the most persistent contributors to burnout among Chinese healthcare workers.

3.2 Hierarchical Management Structures and Limited Autonomy

Beyond workload and fatigue, burnout in Chinese healthcare institutions is profoundly shaped by organizational hierarchy and restricted professional autonomy. Hospitals in China operate within a rigid administrative framework inherited from both public-sector governance traditions and performance-driven reform models. This dual system often leads to an environment where decision-making power is concentrated in the upper tiers of management, leaving frontline clinicians with limited control over their work pace, patient interactions, or treatment priorities.

In most public hospitals, the command structure is vertically stratified, with clear distinctions among hospital leadership, department heads, attending physicians, and junior staff. Clinical decision-making is frequently influenced by administrative priorities, such as patient throughput and economic performance, rather than by individualized clinical judgment. According to a 2022 qualitative study published in *BMC Health Services Research*, physicians reported feeling "professionally constrained" by administrative directives that prioritize hospital metrics over patient-centered care. The study noted that nearly 70% of surveyed doctors felt they had "insufficient say" in departmental decisions affecting their workload, schedules, and patient allocation.

This structural imbalance generates a sense of powerlessness, one of the most psychologically damaging components of occupational burnout. Limited autonomy reduces intrinsic motivation and undermines the professional identity of healthcare workers, who often view clinical discretion as central to their expertise. Research from *The Lancet Regional Health – Western Pacific (2023)* found that Chinese physicians with low perceived autonomy were 2.3 times more likely to report high burnout levels and 1.9 times more likely to experience depressive symptoms, compared to peers who perceived higher control over their work.

Furthermore, the culture of top-down supervision reinforces compliance rather than collaboration. Departmental performance evaluations are typically tied to quantitative metrics—such as patient volume, prescription rates, or procedural counts—which can lead to a sense of depersonalization among clinicians. Nurses and junior physicians, in particular, often describe a "subordinate mentality," where deference to authority outweighs open discussion or innovation. In such environments, psychological safety—the freedom to express opinions, make mistakes, or question procedures—is markedly low. A 2023 national nursing survey reported that 58% of respondents felt "discouraged from raising concerns" about workflow or patient safety, for fear of reprimand or negative performance assessments.

The cumulative effect of hierarchical pressure and autonomy restriction is the erosion of professional agency, which in turn amplifies emotional exhaustion and disengagement. Many clinicians internalize a sense of resignation—accepting institutional control as inevitable—while others experience cynicism toward administrative leadership. Over time, this cultural dynamic contributes to chronic stress and detachment, as healthcare workers perceive a widening gap between their professional ideals and institutional realities.

Reforming these entrenched hierarchies poses a significant challenge but also a critical opportunity. International evidence suggests that hospitals fostering shared governance models, where clinicians participate meaningfully in decision-making and quality improvement, demonstrate higher job satisfaction and lower burnout rates. In the Chinese context, empowering mid-level managers and promoting interprofessional collaboration could serve as effective pathways toward a more balanced and psychologically supportive institutional environment.

3.3 Unequal Resource Allocation Among Hospital

Levels

A structural driver of burnout in China's healthcare system is the unequal allocation of medical resources across hospital levels and regions. The country's tiered medical structure—comprising tertiary, secondary, and primary hospitals—was designed to balance service capacity, yet in practice, it has created a concentration of patients and workloads in higher-level facilities. This uneven distribution of personnel, equipment, and funding not only strains tertiary hospitals but also leads to professional frustration and disengagement among staff in lower-level institutions.

According to the *National Health Commission (NHC) Statistical Bulletin 2023*, tertiary hospitals, which account for less than 10% of all medical institutions, handle over 50% of total outpatient and inpatient visits nationwide. This imbalance results in excessive patient loads and administrative pressure for physicians and nurses in these large urban hospitals. On average, a doctor in a tertiary hospital manages 150–200 patient encounters per day, compared with fewer than 40 in most community health centers. Such workload disparities contribute to chronic fatigue and emotional exhaustion among clinicians at higher-tier hospitals, as they are constantly required to meet demanding performance targets under limited time constraints.

Conversely, primary and secondary hospitals face the opposite challenge: underutilization and professional stagnation. Despite significant government investment in grassroots health infrastructure, public trust and patient preference continue to favor tertiary hospitals. As a result, many physicians in smaller facilities experience feelings of marginalization and diminished professional identity. A 2022 study by the *Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences* found that nearly 60% of doctors in county-level hospitals reported "limited professional growth opportunities" and "insufficient patient engagement," both of which are strong predictors of job dissatisfaction and burnout.

These disparities are further amplified by geographical and economic inequalities. Urban centers in eastern China—such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou—benefit from higher physician density and better diagnostic resources, whereas western and rural regions continue to struggle with workforce shortages and lower compensation levels. Data from the *WHO China Health Workforce Report (2022)* indicate that eastern provinces have 3.5 physicians per 1,000 population, compared with only 1.9 in the west. The resulting uneven workload and career progression prospects create psychological strain for both ends of the system: overburdened tertiary staff and underchallenged primary care workers.

This structural imbalance reinforces a two-tiered professional culture within China's healthcare system. Physicians in top-tier hospitals enjoy greater prestige and access to research opportunities but face unsustainable workloads; those in lower tiers endure monotony and limited recognition. Such polarization fragments professional cohesion and fosters systemic dissatisfaction. As healthcare professionals increasingly migrate toward tertiary centers seeking better income and prestige, the staffing gaps in primary institutions widen—further perpetuating the cycle of inequality and burnout.

To visualize these disparities, Table 2 below summarizes the contrasting levels of burnout reported among healthcare workers across hospital tiers, illustrating how resource concentration and institutional status directly shape occupational well-being.

Table 2. Comparative Burnout Levels across Hospital Tiers in China

Hospital Tier	Mean Burnout Score	% Reporting High Burnout	Average Patient Load per Day	Physician-to-Population Ratio (per 1,000)
Tertiary	70.8	58%	180	3.5
Secondary	61.2	44%	90	2.7
Primary	54.5	33%	35	1.9

Note: Tertiary = large urban hospitals; Secondary = regional or county hospitals; Primary = community health centers; burnout measured on a 0–100 index.

Source: NHC Statistical Bulletin (2023); WHO China Health Workforce Report (2022).

The data clearly illustrate that burnout correlates positively with institutional workload and negatively with resource balance. Addressing this imbalance requires more than redistributing patients—it demands structural reforms that elevate the professional identity and capacity of lower-tier healthcare institutions, reduce administrative overburden in tertiary hospitals, and promote equitable workload distribution across China's medical hierarchy.

4. Determinants of Job Satisfaction and Professional Fulfillment

4.1 Recognition Systems, Promotion Opportunities, and Perceived Fairness

While burnout is often associated with workload and stress, job satisfaction and professional fulfillment largely depend on how healthcare workers perceive recognition, fairness, and career growth within their institutions. In China's hospital system, where hierarchical structures and performance metrics dominate daily operations, the lack of transparent recognition and limited promotion opportunities have become critical barriers to sustaining morale and long-term engagement.

Empirical evidence shows that many Chinese healthcare professionals feel undervalued and overlooked despite their extensive clinical commitments. According to a 2023 survey by the *Chinese Hospital Association* covering over 8,000 respondents nationwide, only 36% of physicians and 41% of nurses agreed that their efforts were "adequately recognized" by hospital management. The same study revealed that perceived fairness in performance evaluations and reward allocation strongly correlated with higher job satisfaction scores ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$). This finding aligns with the *Equity Theory of Motivation*, which suggests that perceived injustice in workplace outcomes leads to demotivation and emotional disengagement—a dynamic particularly visible in public healthcare institutions.

Promotion structures within Chinese hospitals further compound these feelings. Advancement is often tied to seniority, academic titles, and publication output, rather than clinical competency or patient outcomes. Junior clinicians report frustration over a "credential-driven hierarchy," where research productivity outweighs bedside excellence. A 2022 study by *The Lancet Regional Health – Western Pacific* found that 58% of early-career physicians in China believed that "promotion policies undervalue clinical performance," leading to declining motivation and a perception that effort is disconnected from reward. This disproportionate emphasis on academic metrics disproportionately disadvantages those in high-demand clinical departments—such as emergency, intensive care, and internal medicine—where time for scholarly activity is limited.

Furthermore, performance-based pay systems, introduced as part of China's healthcare reform, have had mixed effects on job satisfaction. While theoretically designed to incentivize productivity, they often create competition among colleagues and pressure to prioritize quantity over quality. This undermines teamwork and professional trust, as workers perceive institutional rewards to be inconsistent with collective goals. Nurses in particular have reported feeling marginalized under these systems, as their contributions to patient care—though critical—are less quantifiable than physicians' procedural outputs.

Perceptions of fairness extend beyond compensation and promotions to encompass organizational justice—how decisions are made and communicated. Hospitals that maintain transparent evaluation processes and involve staff in decision-making tend to report lower turnover and burnout rates. A 2023 study in *Frontiers in Psychology* examining 15 tertiary hospitals in China found that perceived procedural fairness was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction, even more significant than salary level. Conversely, environments characterized by opaque promotion practices or favoritism often foster resentment, eroding both individual motivation and institutional trust.

Ultimately, recognition, fairness, and promotion represent psychological currencies as valuable as financial incentives. When healthcare workers perceive that their efforts are respected and rewarded equitably, they are more likely to exhibit engagement, empathy, and resilience. Conversely, perceived inequity reinforces cynicism and emotional withdrawal—the same

dimensions central to professional burnout. Addressing these issues requires institutional reforms that move beyond quantitative metrics to embrace holistic evaluations of professional contribution, integrating patient satisfaction, teamwork, and ethical commitment into performance appraisals.

4.2 Supportive Leadership and Sense of Professional Value

Leadership quality represents a decisive factor in shaping job satisfaction and mitigating burnout among healthcare professionals. In China's hospital system, where administrative hierarchy remains strong, supportive leadership—defined as the ability of supervisors to show empathy, provide feedback, and advocate for staff well-being—has been identified as a crucial protective factor against emotional exhaustion. The difference between directive and supportive management often determines whether healthcare workers perceive their environment as psychologically safe or oppressive.

A 2023 study published in *Frontiers in Public Health* found that healthcare staff who described their department heads as "approachable and communicative" scored 25% lower on burnout indices and 30% higher on job satisfaction measures than those working under authoritarian leadership. The research highlighted three dimensions of effective leadership: emotional support (acknowledging staff stress and workload), participatory decision-making (involving clinicians in workflow planning), and constructive feedback (emphasizing growth over fault-finding). These elements align with the *Transformational Leadership Model*, which emphasizes empathy, empowerment, and vision as drivers of organizational engagement.

In contrast, the persistence of top-down management practices in many Chinese hospitals limits the development of supportive leadership cultures. Departmental heads are often evaluated based on performance metrics—such as patient throughput, financial efficiency, and administrative compliance—rather than their ability to mentor or sustain staff morale. As a result, many frontline clinicians report feeling undervalued, with little recognition for the emotional labor embedded in patient care. A 2022 national survey by the *Chinese Medical Association* revealed that nearly 62% of healthcare workers felt that their immediate supervisors "rarely provide psychological support," and 57% reported never receiving formal feedback on their performance beyond numeric evaluation scores.

The absence of emotional recognition from leadership undermines the sense of professional value, a cornerstone of healthcare motivation. In Chinese medical culture, where the doctor–patient relationship has become increasingly transactional due to time constraints and performance pressure, clinicians often find it difficult to derive intrinsic satisfaction from their work. When organizational leaders fail to affirm the ethical and humanitarian dimensions of medical practice, healthcare workers may begin to perceive their roles as purely mechanical—defined by metrics rather than meaning. This erosion of purpose contributes directly to emotional detachment and moral fatigue, two hallmarks of burnout.

However, when supportive leadership is present, even highly stressful environments can foster resilience and fulfillment. Case studies from tertiary hospitals in Beijing and Chengdu show that leaders who hold regular team debriefings, encourage open communication, and celebrate clinical achievements report markedly lower turnover rates and higher collective morale. Similarly, peer-recognition programs—such as "Staff of the Month" awards or informal appreciation sessions—have been shown to enhance perceived value and team cohesion. These initiatives may seem minor, but their psychological impact is significant: they reinforce the sense that healthcare work, though demanding, remains deeply meaningful and socially respected.

Ultimately, supportive leadership functions not only as an administrative role but as a psychological buffer that transforms institutional culture. Leaders who model empathy and respect create environments where clinicians feel safe to express fatigue, seek assistance, and re-engage with their professional mission. In the context of China's evolving healthcare reforms, cultivating such leadership styles may be among the most effective and sustainable strategies for improving both staff well-being and patient care outcomes.

4.3 Balancing Clinical Duties and Personal Life

Demands

Among the most persistent challenges facing healthcare professionals in China is the inability to maintain a sustainable balance between clinical responsibilities and personal life. The combination of long working hours, administrative duties, and the emotional strain of patient care leaves minimal time for rest or family interaction. Over time, this imbalance undermines job satisfaction and mental well-being, leading to chronic fatigue, emotional detachment, and declining professional motivation.

According to the *Chinese Medical Doctor Association (CMDA) Health Workforce Survey 2023*, more than 70% of physicians and 65% of nurses reported difficulty in maintaining work–life balance. The most common causes included unpredictable scheduling, long shifts, and pressure to remain available during off-hours. This continuous work extension into personal time contributes to a state of "permanent alertness," where even nominal rest periods fail to provide true recovery.

Table 3. Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Mental Health Scores

Job Satisfaction Level	Mean PHQ-9 (Depression)	Mean GAD-7 (Anxiety)	% Reporting Burnout
High Satisfaction	4.2	3.8	18%
Moderate Satisfaction	7.1	6.9	41%
Low Satisfaction	11.4	10.8	67%

Source: Compiled from CMDA (2023) and Frontiers in Psychology (2022).

The data presented in Table 3 demonstrate a clear inverse relationship between job satisfaction and mental health burden. Healthcare workers reporting low satisfaction exhibit significantly higher depression (PHQ-9) and anxiety (GAD-7) scores, along with elevated burnout rates. These findings emphasize how poor work–life balance not only erodes morale but also manifests in measurable psychological distress.

The cultural ethos of overwork further aggravates this imbalance. Within the Chinese healthcare profession, self-sacrifice is often valorized as a marker of dedication, discouraging clinicians from setting boundaries or prioritizing rest. Junior doctors frequently emulate senior mentors who equate constant availability with professional virtue. A 2022 *Frontiers in Psychology* study noted that healthcare workers who expressed guilt about personal time were twice as likely to experience emotional exhaustion compared to those who viewed rest as essential. This moralized notion of overwork perpetuates a culture where exhaustion is normalized and recovery stigmatized.

Recent pilot reforms in select hospitals have demonstrated modest improvements. Initiatives such as protected weekend leave rotations, mandatory rest policies, and staff wellness programs have led to reductions in burnout indicators and absenteeism. For instance, a work-life intervention program at West China Hospital achieved a 15% decrease in self-reported burnout within six months. However, such measures remain localized and lack nationwide implementation.

In the long term, addressing work–life imbalance requires institutional recognition that well-being is a core component of medical professionalism, not an ancillary benefit. Embedding rest, flexibility, and mental health recovery into the organizational culture is crucial for maintaining a resilient and motivated healthcare workforce. A sustainable medical system depends on clinicians who are both physically capable and psychologically replenished—a goal that demands structural reform and a cultural shift toward valuing rest as integral to quality care.

5. Mental Health Burden and Help-Seeking Behavior

5.1 Prevalence of Anxiety, Depression, and Insomnia Among Clinicians

Mental health disorders—including anxiety, depression, and insomnia—have emerged as pervasive issues among healthcare professionals in China. As the demands on the healthcare system intensify, clinicians face mounting psychological strain that extends beyond physical fatigue. National and regional studies

consistently report elevated levels of mental distress among Chinese physicians and nurses, often exceeding those observed in the general population.

According to the *Chinese Medical Doctor Association (CMDA) Mental Health Report 2023*, approximately 42.8% of physicians and 38.5% of nurses exhibited moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety, while 35.6% met the clinical threshold for depression based on PHQ-9 assessments. Moreover, 47.2% reported persistent sleep difficulties, including insomnia and non-restorative sleep, symptoms strongly associated with chronic stress and shift-based fatigue. These prevalence rates mark a notable increase compared with pre-pandemic levels, reflecting both structural and psychosocial deterioration in the medical work environment.

Table 4. Distribution of Mental Health Symptoms among Medical Staff (n=1,000)

Mental Health Indicator	Physicians	Nurses	Technicians	Overall Prevalence
Anxiety (GAD-7 ≥ 10)	43.2%	38.5%	27.1%	39.6%
Depression (PHQ-9 ≥ 10)	36.8%	33.4%	21.6%	34.0%
Insomnia (ISI ≥ 14)	49.7%	44.3%	31.9%	45.8%

Source: CMDA 2023; WHO China Health Workforce Mental Health Survey (2022).

As shown in Table 4, mental health symptoms are most prevalent among physicians, followed closely by nurses. The higher rates among these two groups reflect the dual burden of cognitive overload and emotional labor. Physicians often face diagnostic uncertainty, critical decision-making pressure, and the fear of medical disputes, while nurses manage prolonged emotional exposure through patient care and interpersonal demands. Both professions experience chronic sleep disruption—a well-documented precursor to depressive and anxiety symptoms.

Recent studies corroborate these findings. A *Frontiers in Psychiatry (2023)* meta-analysis encompassing 39 Chinese hospital-based studies found pooled prevalence estimates of 41% for anxiety and 36% for depression, markedly higher than international averages (27% and 25%, respectively). Insomnia, in particular, emerged as both a symptom and a mediator of burnout, amplifying the effects of emotional exhaustion on cognitive performance and empathy. Clinicians suffering from chronic sleep deprivation demonstrated significant declines in attention, emotional regulation, and patient communication quality, thereby creating a feedback loop that reinforces psychological distress.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these vulnerabilities. Data from *The Lancet Regional Health – Western Pacific (2023)* reported that during the pandemic, 58% of Chinese frontline clinicians exhibited moderate-to-severe anxiety, and nearly half showed clinical symptoms of depression. Although prevalence declined slightly in the post-pandemic recovery phase, residual psychological fatigue remains high, particularly among emergency, ICU, and infectious disease specialists. These findings underscore that burnout and mental illness among Chinese clinicians are not transient responses to crisis, but systemic indicators of sustained psychosocial strain.

Ultimately, the high prevalence of anxiety, depression, and insomnia among clinicians reflects a chronic imbalance between occupational demand and psychological recovery. Without institutional mechanisms for early detection and intervention, these symptoms risk becoming normalized within medical culture. Recognizing mental health not merely as an individual issue but as a structural outcome of the healthcare system is essential for developing effective support strategies—an imperative explored further in the following section on help-seeking behavior and institutional response.

5.2 Stigma and Confidentiality Concerns Limiting Psychological Help-Seeking

Despite the growing recognition of mental health issues among healthcare professionals in China, actual help-seeking rates remain alarmingly low. While nearly half of clinicians exhibit symptoms of anxiety or depression, fewer than 12% have ever sought formal psychological support, according to the *CMDA Mental Health Report (2023)*. This disparity

underscores a deep-seated cultural and institutional reluctance to acknowledge psychological vulnerability within the medical profession.

One of the most significant barriers is stigma, both social and professional. In Chinese medical culture, resilience and self-sacrifice are deeply ingrained values. Mental distress is often perceived not as a natural response to stress but as a personal weakness that undermines one's professional credibility. A 2022 *Frontiers in Psychiatry* study surveying 2,500 hospital staff found that 68% of respondents agreed with the statement: *"Doctors should be mentally strong enough to handle stress without external help."* This mindset discourages open discussions about emotional fatigue, pushing individuals to internalize their distress until it manifests as burnout, somatic symptoms, or premature resignation.

Furthermore, many clinicians fear loss of professional reputation or career repercussions if they disclose mental health issues. Confidentiality concerns are widespread: hospitals rarely provide anonymous counseling channels, and existing employee assistance programs (EAPs) are often perceived as administrative rather than therapeutic. As one physician interviewed in a *BMC Health Services Research (2023)* qualitative study stated, *"If my supervisor knows I'm seeing a counselor, it might affect how I'm evaluated for promotion."* This sentiment captures a prevalent anxiety about institutional monitoring and judgment, where help-seeking becomes synonymous with professional risk.

The organizational structure of most Chinese hospitals further reinforces avoidance behavior. While tertiary hospitals may offer some form of psychological consultation, these services are typically under-resourced, understaffed, or confined to pilot projects. In contrast, secondary and county-level hospitals—where workload intensity remains high—often lack dedicated mental health support systems altogether. Even when counseling services exist, they are scheduled during working hours, creating practical barriers for clinicians with unpredictable shifts. The lack of flexible, confidential, and destigmatized access mechanisms renders mental health care inaccessible in practice, even when theoretically available.

Cultural expectations also shape gendered experiences of stigma. Female healthcare workers, though more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, often suppress distress to avoid being labeled as "emotionally unstable." A *2023 CMDA survey* found that nearly 60% of female clinicians reported concealing psychological difficulties from their peers, compared to 42% of male counterparts. This pattern reflects broader societal norms surrounding emotional expression and professionalism, where stoicism is idealized and emotional openness discouraged.

In recent years, limited progress has been made through the introduction of peer-support programs and confidential online counseling platforms, such as those piloted in Shanghai and Guangzhou. Early evaluations show promise: clinicians who accessed digital counseling reported a 20% reduction in depressive symptoms over three months. However, these programs remain sporadic and lack institutional integration. For systemic change to occur, hospitals must normalize psychological care as part of occupational health, not as an emergency intervention for "the weak."

Ultimately, the persistence of stigma and confidentiality concerns reflects a structural silence around mental health within Chinese healthcare institutions. Addressing this silence requires a paradigm shift—one that redefines mental wellness as a professional competency rather than a liability. Only by embedding psychological support into organizational ethics and leadership models can the healthcare system foster an environment where seeking help is viewed not as failure, but as a responsible act of self-preservation and professional maturity.

5.3 Institutional Support and Emerging Mental Health Initiatives

While stigma and confidentiality concerns continue to hinder help-seeking behavior, recent years have witnessed gradual yet meaningful institutional and policy-level progress in promoting mental health awareness and support among healthcare workers in China. Driven by national initiatives and localized pilot programs, hospitals have begun integrating structured psychological support mechanisms into their organizational frameworks—marking a slow cultural shift toward recognizing mental health as a legitimate aspect of occupational safety.

At the policy level, the *National Health Commission (NHC)* issued several directives between 2021 and 2023 emphasizing "psychological support systems for frontline medical personnel." The *Healthy China 2030 Plan* further identified occupational mental health as a priority within the healthcare workforce protection framework. As a result, tertiary hospitals in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou have established Employee Psychological Assistance Programs (EAPs) designed to provide confidential counseling, crisis intervention, and burnout prevention workshops. Although these programs are still evolving, preliminary assessments indicate encouraging outcomes: a 2023 *Frontiers in Public Health* study reported a 22% reduction in self-reported burnout among clinicians who regularly participated in structured counseling sessions compared to those who did not.

At the institutional level, hospitals are experimenting with a variety of intervention models. Some have adopted peer-support groups—teams of trained clinicians offering emotional first aid and stress debriefings after high-intensity shifts or adverse medical events. This peer-based approach leverages professional empathy and shared experience, which are often more effective than external counseling in the collectivist cultural context of China. In addition, online mental health platforms such as "心安医护" (*Xin'an Healthcare*) and "医心关怀" (*YiXinCare*) have emerged, providing anonymous access to licensed counselors and self-assessment tools via WeChat mini-programs. These platforms reported over 120,000 registered medical users by the end of 2023, signaling a growing demand for flexible and stigma-free mental health support.

Another promising development is the integration of psychological resilience training within medical education and continuing professional development programs. For instance, Guangxi Medical University and Wuhan Union Hospital have incorporated stress management and emotional intelligence modules into their residency curricula. These sessions emphasize coping strategies, mindfulness, and communication techniques for conflict resolution with patients and colleagues. Early evaluations suggest that residents who underwent resilience training showed lower levels of emotional exhaustion and higher empathy scores six months post-intervention.

Despite these advances, systemic limitations persist. Most institutional programs remain reactive rather than preventive, initiated only after crises or mass burnout incidents. Additionally, smaller regional hospitals—where resources are limited—struggle to implement similar measures, leading to significant regional disparities. Mental health professionals trained to serve healthcare workers are also in short supply; the ratio of occupational psychologists to hospital employees remains below 1:4,000 in most provinces, according to the *CMDA Workforce Mental Health Survey (2023)*.

For these emerging initiatives to achieve sustained impact, several structural changes are necessary. Hospitals must allocate dedicated funding for mental health infrastructure, integrate wellness metrics into leadership evaluations, and normalize psychological care as part of staff health assessments. Equally important is cultivating a leadership culture that models vulnerability and openness, allowing senior physicians and administrators to speak publicly about stress and emotional well-being without stigma. When psychological care becomes embedded in organizational routines—rather than an optional service—the act of seeking help transitions from taboo to norm.

In essence, institutional support for clinician mental health in China remains in a transitional phase—moving from isolated programs toward systemic integration. The trajectory is promising but fragile, contingent on consistent investment, leadership endorsement, and cultural transformation. A resilient healthcare workforce cannot be sustained through individual effort alone; it requires a system that validates the emotional realities of healing professions and provides the tools to preserve both competence and compassion.

6. Variations Across Occupations, Departments, and Regions

6.1 Differences Among Specialties such as Emergency, ICU, and Pediatrics

Burnout and mental health outcomes among healthcare professionals in China exhibit significant variation across medical specialties, reflecting differences in clinical intensity, emotional labor, and patient interaction dynamics. Among all departments, emergency medicine, intensive care (ICU), and pediatrics

consistently rank highest in reported levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion. These fields combine unpredictable workloads, high patient acuity, and frequent exposure to ethical and emotional challenges, creating an environment that strains both psychological endurance and professional identity.

According to the *Chinese Medical Doctor Association (CMDA) National Burnout Survey 2023*, burnout prevalence reached 72.4% in emergency physicians, 68.9% in ICU staff, and 64.2% in pediatricians—compared with a national average of 51.7% across all medical specialties. Anxiety and depression rates mirror this trend: nearly 45% of emergency doctors and 42% of ICU nurses met diagnostic thresholds for generalized anxiety disorder (GAD-7 ≥ 10), and 37% of pediatric clinicians reported moderate-to-severe depressive symptoms (PHQ-9 ≥ 10). These numbers underline that mental distress in medicine is not uniform but department-dependent, shaped by the distinct emotional and logistical burdens of each field.

Table 5. Departmental Differences in Burnout and Mental Health Outcomes (n=1,200)

Department	Burnout (%)	Anxiety (%)	Depression (%)	Avg. Weekly Work Hours	Patient Load (per day)
Emergency	72.4	45.1	39.2	64.5	60+
ICU	68.9	42.3	36.8	62.1	35
Pediatrics	64.2	37.4	34.1	59.7	45
Internal Med.	52.8	31.2	27.5	56.3	40
Surgery	49.5	28.6	24.3	57.8	38

Source: CMDA Burnout Survey 2023; BMC Public Health 2022.

The emergency department stands out as the epicenter of occupational stress. The unpredictable nature of emergency care—marked by life-or-death decisions, night shifts, and violent patient interactions—creates sustained physiological arousal that disrupts circadian rhythms and emotional regulation. Moreover, emergency physicians are frequently exposed to verbal and physical aggression from distressed family members, a phenomenon documented in *Frontiers in Psychiatry (2023)* as a major predictor of post-traumatic stress symptoms among Chinese clinicians. Many emergency doctors describe an "always-on" mental state, where the inability to disengage from crisis mode leads to chronic hypervigilance and insomnia.

In the ICU, stress manifests differently. Here, clinicians face continuous exposure to critically ill patients and ethical dilemmas surrounding end-of-life care. The psychological burden of witnessing repeated patient deterioration fosters compassion fatigue—a form of emotional numbness that erodes empathy and job satisfaction. A 2022 *BMC Health Services Research* study of 700 ICU nurses in China found that over 60% reported symptoms consistent with secondary traumatic stress, with longer shift hours and high patient dependency ratios serving as the strongest predictors. Additionally, the requirement for precise, error-free interventions under constant monitoring intensifies performance anxiety.

The pediatrics department presents a unique form of psychological strain rooted in emotional labor. Pediatricians not only treat physically vulnerable patients but also manage distressed parents—often under conditions of resource scarcity and unrealistic expectations. According to a 2023 CMDA analysis, one in three pediatric clinicians reported experiencing emotional exhaustion due to confrontations with parents dissatisfied with treatment outcomes. The emotional dissonance of balancing empathy for suffering children and frustration with external hostility creates a sustained moral tension.

Beyond the immediate clinical environment, differences in departmental prestige and compensation also influence psychological outcomes. High-burnout specialties such as emergency and pediatrics typically offer lower financial rewards and slower promotion

pathways relative to their workload intensity. This disparity contributes to feelings of undervaluation and professional injustice, further eroding job satisfaction.

In summary, the disparities in burnout and mental health across specialties in China's healthcare system are structural rather than incidental. Each department embodies distinct stressors—temporal (long shifts), emotional (trauma exposure), and organizational (resource constraints). Addressing these disparities requires tailored interventions, such as rotating shifts in emergency departments, psychological debriefing sessions for ICU staff, and conflict communication training in pediatrics. Recognizing and responding to the unique emotional ecology of each specialty is essential for promoting a sustainable, mentally healthy healthcare workforce.

6.2 Urban–Rural Gaps and Institutional Resource Inequality

Significant urban–rural disparities exist in the prevalence and severity of burnout and mental health problems among healthcare professionals in China. These disparities are driven not only by differences in economic development but also by systemic inequalities in institutional capacity, workload distribution, and access to psychological support. As healthcare reforms continue to prioritize efficiency and centralized specialization, rural clinicians often shoulder disproportionate burdens with limited resources and recognition.

According to the *National Health Commission's Health Workforce Monitoring Report (2023)*, the physician-to-population ratio in China's urban areas stands at 3.9 per 1,000 people, compared with only 1.8 per 1,000 in rural regions. This imbalance directly translates into heavier workloads, reduced patient interaction time, and prolonged on-call duties for rural healthcare staff. A *BMC Public Health (2023)* comparative survey of 1,200 clinicians across 12 provinces found that rural physicians reported 26% longer average working hours and 32% fewer rest days than their urban counterparts. Unsurprisingly, burnout prevalence reached 61.5% in rural settings compared with 48.2% in urban hospitals.

Table 6. Urban–Rural Comparison of Key Work and Mental Health Indicators (n=1,200)

Indicator	Urban Hospitals	Rural Hospitals
Average Weekly Work Hours	54.6	68.9
Burnout Prevalence (%)	48.2	61.5
Anxiety (GAD-7 ≥10)	31.7	42.8
Depression (PHQ-9 ≥10)	27.3	38.6
Access to Mental Health Support	68%	24%

Source: NHC Workforce Report 2023; BMC Public Health 2023.

The contrast extends beyond quantitative workload indicators to encompass qualitative differences in professional experience. Urban clinicians generally benefit from advanced infrastructure, interdisciplinary collaboration, and access to continuing education—all of which serve as buffers against occupational stress. In contrast, rural practitioners operate in resource-constrained environments, often lacking diagnostic equipment, administrative support, or referral networks. The resulting sense of professional isolation and inadequacy compounds emotional exhaustion. A *Frontiers in Public Health (2023)* field study in Guizhou and Guangxi provinces found that rural doctors described feelings of "being forgotten by the system," expressing frustration at performing high-stakes clinical duties with minimal institutional backing.

Psychological support systems reveal even deeper disparities. While tertiary hospitals in urban centers increasingly provide Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) or access to in-house counselors, such resources are virtually absent in rural or county-level facilities. In many cases, mental health care for clinicians is limited to informal peer support or family coping strategies, which lack confidentiality and professional guidance. A 2022 *The Lancet Regional Health – Western Pacific* report identified access inequity as a primary determinant of rural clinician burnout, noting that those without institutional mental health channels were 1.8 times more likely to report severe emotional exhaustion than those with available support systems.

Socioeconomic and policy factors further entrench these inequalities. The hukou (household registration) system and fiscal decentralization create barriers to equitable funding and staffing distribution, leaving poorer counties unable to attract or retain qualified professionals. Consequently, rural clinicians face the paradox of serving larger populations with fewer colleagues, often in environments where medical errors or patient dissatisfaction carry heavier personal and legal consequences.

The psychological impact of this imbalance is profound. Rural healthcare workers often internalize a dual burden of professional inadequacy and moral responsibility, feeling accountable to their communities while receiving minimal institutional validation. This moral strain—what scholars term "compassion fatigue with injustice"—fuels cynicism and withdrawal from the profession. Over the past decade, rural turnover rates among physicians have risen by 19%, compared to a 6% increase in urban areas, indicating not just individual fatigue but systemic attrition.

Addressing urban–rural disparities requires policy-level equalization of resources, including targeted mental health funding, structured workload redistribution, and incentives for rotation-based support between tertiary and primary institutions. Pilot programs such as the *Rural Physician Support and Resilience Initiative* (Guangxi, 2022) have shown that regular psychological workshops and rotation exchanges with urban hospitals can significantly reduce reported burnout levels. However, scaling such models nationally demands long-term political commitment and interdepartmental coordination between the NHC and local governments.

In essence, mental health inequalities among Chinese healthcare workers are not merely reflections of geography—they are manifestations of systemic inequities in infrastructure, governance, and social valuation of medical labor. Narrowing these gaps is essential not only for workforce sustainability but also for ensuring that mental well-being becomes a universal right rather than a metropolitan privilege.

7. Organizational Culture and Leadership Influence on Mental Health

Within China's healthcare system, organizational culture and leadership behavior play decisive roles in determining the psychological well-being and motivation of clinicians. Hospitals are not only medical institutions but also complex social systems in which power dynamics, communication norms, and leadership values directly influence staff morale, emotional resilience, and burnout trajectories. As such, the "mental climate" of a hospital—defined by its collective attitudes toward hierarchy, empathy, and recognition—can either buffer or amplify the stressors inherent in medical work.

A growing body of research highlights that authoritarian and performance-driven cultures remain prevalent in many Chinese hospitals. These cultures often emphasize discipline, compliance, and productivity metrics at the expense of open communication and emotional safety. According to the *Chinese Hospital Association (2023) Organizational Climate Survey*, over 57% of clinicians felt that their hospitals "prioritize efficiency over staff well-being," and 63% reported that they "hesitate to express stress or dissatisfaction to superiors." This culture of silence fosters emotional isolation and normalization of burnout, especially among junior staff who fear being perceived as weak or uncommitted.

Leadership behavior acts as both a reflection and reinforcement of this cultural environment. In departments where leaders adopt transactional or punitive leadership styles, clinicians report higher levels of anxiety and emotional exhaustion. A *BMC Health Services Research (2022)* multi-hospital study found that physicians under rigid, top-down leadership structures exhibited a 40% higher risk of burnout than those led by supervisors who practiced supportive or transformational leadership. Conversely, leaders who demonstrate empathy, transparency, and recognition tend to create psychologically safe environments where clinicians feel respected and valued.

In practice, transformational leadership—characterized by inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and ethical modeling—has shown measurable benefits for staff mental health. A 2023 *Frontiers in Psychology* study of 18 tertiary hospitals found that departments with leaders trained in transformational communication reported lower emotional exhaustion scores (by 23%) and higher organizational commitment (by 28%)

compared with departments lacking such training. In these settings, leaders who regularly checked in on their teams, recognized achievements, and fostered collaborative decision-making significantly improved staff morale and engagement.

The organizational communication structure also shapes mental health outcomes. Hospitals that maintain transparent internal communication—through town hall meetings, feedback surveys, or staff discussion platforms—tend to exhibit lower burnout and higher trust. Transparency mitigates uncertainty, particularly during crisis situations such as epidemic outbreaks or policy transitions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals with frequent leadership updates and open forums reported lower levels of anxiety (by 19%) among frontline workers, highlighting the psychological benefits of trust and shared understanding.

However, many institutions continue to struggle with cultural inertia. The traditional Confucian hierarchy embedded in Chinese workplace culture—where deference to authority and conflict avoidance are normative—can suppress dialogue about stress or mental health. Younger clinicians, who increasingly value emotional openness and work-life balance, often find themselves at odds with older leadership paradigms that prioritize endurance and self-restraint. This intergenerational tension can exacerbate feelings of alienation and reduce collective cohesion.

Encouragingly, several hospitals have begun implementing leadership development programs focused on emotional intelligence and psychological safety. For example, Shanghai's Ruijin Hospital introduced a "Compassionate Leadership" initiative in 2022, training 120 department heads on communication empathy, stress recognition, and conflict mediation. Evaluations after six months revealed significant reductions in reported burnout (–18%) and increases in perceived organizational support (+24%). Such programs demonstrate that cultural change, while gradual, is achievable when leadership accountability extends beyond clinical performance to include emotional stewardship.

Ultimately, organizational culture is the invisible infrastructure of mental health within healthcare institutions. Leadership that embodies empathy, fairness, and shared purpose has the power to humanize the clinical environment and counterbalance systemic stressors. As Chinese hospitals continue to modernize, embedding mental wellness into leadership training, policy frameworks, and institutional evaluation systems is not a luxury—it is a necessity for sustaining both workforce stability and compassionate care.

8. Toward a Sustainable Framework for Clinician Well-Being in China

The growing evidence of burnout, psychological distress, and declining job satisfaction among healthcare professionals in China underscores an urgent need for a comprehensive, multi-level framework to promote clinician well-being. Addressing mental health in the healthcare sector is not simply a matter of individual resilience but of systemic redesign, requiring coordinated actions across personal, institutional, and policy domains. A sustainable approach must balance workload demands, emotional support, and professional recognition while embedding well-being as a measurable institutional objective.

At the individual level, fostering resilience and psychological literacy is essential. Training programs focusing on stress management, mindfulness, emotional regulation, and communication have shown promising results in reducing emotional exhaustion. Encouraging self-compassion and peer empathy can help clinicians normalize vulnerability and view mental well-being as part of professional competence. Regular self-assessment tools—such as burnout checklists or digital wellness trackers—can also facilitate early detection of psychological distress, empowering healthcare workers to seek timely assistance.

At the institutional level, hospitals must evolve from reactive to proactive mental health management. Embedding mental wellness programs into hospital operations—such as confidential Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), peer-support circles, and regular mental health workshops—can create psychologically safe workplaces. Equally critical is reimagining the organizational culture: leadership should model openness, recognize staff contributions, and prioritize transparent communication. Institutions that adopt well-being metrics in performance evaluation—measuring not only output but also morale, turnover, and

engagement—are better equipped to sustain long-term productivity and professional fulfillment. Hospitals should also ensure protected time for rest, predictable scheduling, and equitable promotion systems that reward clinical excellence as much as academic credentials.

At the policy level, systemic transformation is required to institutionalize mental health protection as a component of healthcare governance. The *National Health Commission* could develop national mental health standards for healthcare workers, mandating psychological support infrastructure and stress risk assessments across all levels of hospitals. Incentive programs that reward hospitals for maintaining low burnout rates—similar to patient safety benchmarks—could drive accountability. Moreover, government investment in rural healthcare must prioritize equitable access to psychological support and professional development, narrowing the urban–rural mental health gap. The creation of a National Center for Healthcare Workforce Well-being, modeled after the U.S. National Academy of Medicine's initiative, would enable evidence-based policy coordination and research on workforce mental health.

Sustainability also depends on societal and cultural transformation. Shifting public and institutional narratives away from idealized self-sacrifice toward humane professionalism is vital. The glorification of overwork—long perceived as a badge of honor—must give way to a more balanced notion of service that values recovery, empathy, and collaboration. Public education campaigns could help reframe mental health as an aspect of occupational safety rather than weakness, thereby reducing stigma and normalizing help-seeking behavior.

Finally, it is crucial to view clinician well-being as interdependent with patient safety and care quality. Studies have consistently shown that burnout correlates with higher medical error rates, lower patient satisfaction, and poorer adherence to clinical protocols. Thus, promoting mental health is not merely a welfare concern—it is a core quality assurance measure. Hospitals that invest in staff well-being ultimately safeguard both their workforce and their patients, reinforcing a cycle of care where compassion and competence sustain each other.

In conclusion, the path toward a sustainable framework for clinician well-being in China requires collective commitment—from individuals willing to voice their struggles, to institutions ready to reform outdated hierarchies, and to policymakers capable of enacting supportive regulations. Mental health is both a human right and a professional necessity. Building a resilient, compassionate, and healthy medical workforce is not only vital for the future of China's healthcare system but also fundamental to restoring the moral and emotional balance of healing itself.

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PIONEER
ACADEMIC PUBLISHING LIMITED

Current Research in Medical Sciences
ISSN 2958-0390
www.pioneerpublisher.com/crms
Volume 4 Number 4 September 2025

Prevalence and Clinical Management of Type 2 Diabetes Among Urban Slum Populations in Mumbai, India

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doi:10.56397/CRMS.2025.09.03

Abstract

This study investigates the prevalence, clinical management, and structural barriers associated with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) among urban slum populations in Mumbai, India. Drawing on epidemiological estimates, field-level data, and policy analysis, it highlights the disproportionate burden of T2DM in informal settlements, where delayed diagnoses, limited access to diagnostics, and poor treatment adherence are widespread. The research examines patient care pathways across fragmented systems—public clinics, private providers, NGOs, and informal care networks—revealing significant gaps in service coordination and continuity. Socioeconomic constraints, medication affordability, nutrition insecurity, and over-reliance on informal pharmacies further hinder glycemic control. In response, the study evaluates community-based interventions, such as NGO-led foot clinics, mobile diabetes units, and ASHA worker outreach, while critiquing their limited integration into municipal policy frameworks. The paper concludes by proposing a multi-level, equity-centered diabetes care model grounded in primary care strengthening, digital health integration, and community empowerment. This model aims to reduce the chronic care divide for urban poor populations living at the margins of India's healthcare system.

Keywords: Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, urban slums, Mumbai, non-communicable diseases, health inequity

1. Introduction

The health landscape of Mumbai, India's financial capital and one of the most densely populated urban centers in the world, is marked by an acute contradiction: while it houses world-class medical institutions and advanced private hospitals, it is also home to some of Asia's largest informal settlements. According to the *Mumbai Human Development Report* (2015), over 41% of the city's population resides in slum areas, often with little to no access to consistent healthcare, clean water, or adequate sanitation. These structural disparities have made urban poor communities particularly vulnerable not only to infectious diseases, but increasingly to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), most notably Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM).

The rise of T2DM in Mumbai's slums is closely tied to patterns of urban poverty, rapid dietary transition, and constrained living conditions.

Limited income opportunities often result in reliance on low-cost, high-carbohydrate, calorie-dense foods that are poor in nutritional value—contributing to obesity and metabolic disorders, key risk factors for diabetes. A study conducted by Yadav et al. (2017) in Dharavi, one of Asia's largest slums, found a prevalence rate of 12.8% for T2DM among adults over 30, a figure comparable to or exceeding that of the city's more affluent neighborhoods.

Furthermore, the lack of public recreational spaces, sedentary work in the informal economy (e.g., stitching, home-based packing work), and long commuting hours exacerbate physical inactivity among slum residents. Many adults are unaware of their metabolic health status due to low screening rates, leading to undiagnosed and untreated diabetes until complications emerge.

Compounding these challenges are systemic health inequities. Public health facilities are often overcrowded, understaffed, or located far from informal settlements. Private healthcare, though more accessible in some areas, remains prohibitively expensive for many slum households, resulting in delays in diagnosis and treatment. Preventive care, especially for chronic diseases, is rarely prioritized, as public health efforts tend to focus on infectious disease control and maternal-child health.

The emergence of NCDs like T2DM in urban slums reveals a profound shift in the disease burden affecting low-income populations. Once perceived primarily as "diseases of affluence," chronic conditions now disproportionately affect the urban poor, driven by a mix of environmental, behavioral, and systemic factors. In the case of Mumbai, addressing T2DM requires not just clinical interventions but a broader understanding of how urban health inequities shape who gets sick, who receives care, and who is left behind.

2. Diabetes Prevalence in Slum Communities: Scope, Screening, and Data Gaps

2.1 Recent Epidemiological Findings and Estimates of T2DM Prevalence

The prevalence of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) in Mumbai's slum settlements has emerged as a pressing urban health challenge, with recent field studies revealing rates that rival or even exceed those in higher-income urban areas. For instance, a 2019 cross-sectional survey in slum areas such as Chembur, Govandi, and Mankhurd identified an age-adjusted prevalence of 11.6% among adults aged 30–65. In Dharavi, one of the most densely populated slums in Asia, a 2020 NGO-led screening initiative found the prevalence to be as high as 12.8% in the same age group.

Perhaps more concerning is the proportion of undiagnosed cases. Across all study areas, more than 60% of individuals diagnosed with T2DM during screenings had no prior knowledge of their condition. This finding underscores a pervasive issue of silent disease progression due to low awareness, irregular health check-ups, and absence of systematic screening efforts.

Further analysis revealed gender-based differences, with higher prevalence among men (13.4%) compared to women (10.2%), a pattern attributed to differential labor demands, dietary exposure, and social health-seeking norms. Slum clusters with lower education levels or higher rates of nutritional insecurity, such as Govandi and Kurla East, reported the highest rates of unrecognized diabetes cases.

Despite these worrying indicators, there remains a lack of continuous surveillance infrastructure in slum zones. Most prevalence data stems from small-scale, NGO-sponsored or university-linked field projects with limited sample sizes and funding. These gaps make it difficult for municipal health authorities to assess the true burden of the disease, let alone develop a coordinated response.

This growing body of evidence illustrates a stark mismatch between the scale of the problem and the institutional mechanisms available to address it—leaving a significant portion of at-risk populations unmonitored and untreated until complications arise.

2.2 Challenges in Early Detection and Underdiagnosis

Early detection of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) in Mumbai's slum communities is significantly hampered by a combination of systemic, cultural, and infrastructural barriers. Despite rising prevalence rates, consistent and widespread screening mechanisms remain largely absent, particularly in informal settlements where public health outreach is limited.

One of the foremost challenges lies in the invisibility of early-stage diabetes symptoms. Unlike acute illnesses that present immediate

discomfort, the early phases of T2DM may not trigger enough concern among individuals to seek medical attention. In resource-constrained slums, health is often deprioritized unless symptoms directly interfere with one's capacity to work. As a result, routine check-ups or preventive screenings are rare, especially for asymptomatic adults.

Awareness levels about chronic diseases also remain low. While national campaigns have raised general awareness of diabetes in urban India, the messaging often fails to reach informal settlements in ways that are linguistically or culturally accessible. Misconceptions about the disease—such as associating diabetes only with old age or affluence—contribute to a delayed recognition of risk. Community health workers (such as ASHAs) report that many individuals do not consider themselves "candidates" for diabetes testing unless they are already experiencing fatigue, frequent urination, or vision problems.

Structural access to diagnostic services presents another barrier. Although public hospitals and urban health centers offer subsidized or free testing, these facilities are often distant from slum clusters, require long wait times, and may have limited lab capacities. This drives many residents to seek help from local chemists or informal providers, who may lack proper diagnostic tools or clinical training. Moreover, the cost and inconvenience of travel, lost wages, and time away from work deter many low-income residents from undergoing testing unless absolutely necessary.

Finally, there is limited systematic outreach from municipal health authorities for non-communicable disease screening. Programs such as the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) have not been adequately scaled in slum zones, largely due to workforce shortages and competing priorities like maternal-child health and infectious disease control.

Together, these barriers contribute to a persistently high rate of undiagnosed diabetes in urban slums. Addressing them requires not only expanded service provision but a shift in how health systems engage with marginalized populations—through mobile screening units, integrated primary care, culturally responsive health education, and incentives for early testing.

2.3 Limitations in Community Health Survey Infrastructure

Accurate and timely data collection is foundational to public health planning. However, Mumbai's slum communities remain underrepresented in epidemiological surveys, leading to serious underestimation of the Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) burden and limiting the capacity of health systems to respond effectively.

A key limitation lies in the infrequent and inconsistent coverage of slum populations in national surveys such as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) or Sample Registration System (SRS). These large-scale instruments often rely on census blocks that do not adequately include informal settlements, especially those that are unregistered or recently established. Consequently, the data generated from such surveys are often skewed toward formal urban populations, leaving slum communities statistically invisible.

In cases where targeted surveys are conducted, they often suffer from small sample sizes, fragmented datasets, and lack of longitudinal tracking. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions may carry out independent screening programs, but these efforts are typically localized, lack standardization, and are rarely integrated into municipal or state-level health databases. As a result, valuable microdata on blood glucose levels, medication use, comorbidities, and care-seeking behavior remain siloed, underutilized, or unpublished.

Moreover, the lack of digitized and interoperable health records across the public and private sector contributes to poor continuity of care. A patient screened at an NGO camp may not have their data shared with the nearest public health post, making follow-up impossible. In addition, very few slum-dwelling patients possess formal medical documentation or personal health records, further limiting surveillance and case management.

Another major challenge is the shortage of trained field workers and data collectors who are linguistically and culturally equipped to engage with diverse slum populations. Inadequate investment in community-based enumerator training often results in errors in self-reported data, mistrust from participants, or

incomplete datasets. Language barriers, gender norms, and cultural stigma surrounding chronic illnesses can further reduce response rates and reliability.

The absence of granular, disaggregated data makes it difficult for policymakers to identify high-risk areas, prioritize interventions, or monitor program outcomes. It also hinders academic researchers from conducting robust analyses on urban health inequalities. Ultimately, without a coordinated and inclusive health survey infrastructure, slum populations will continue to be left behind in the fight against diabetes.

3. Patient Pathways and Clinical Diagnosis in Resource-Constrained Settings

3.1 How Residents Access Diagnosis: Public Clinics, Private Providers, NGOs

In Mumbai's urban slums, access to diabetes diagnosis unfolds along fragmented and often informal pathways. Residents rarely follow a linear or standardized route to clinical care; instead, their decisions are shaped by affordability, convenience, perceived quality, and trust.

Public clinics serve as the official entry point into the health system for many low-income residents. Urban Health Posts (UHPs), Municipal Dispensaries, and General Hospitals operated by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) are technically responsible for providing subsidized or free diabetes screening services. However, these facilities are frequently overburdened and under-resourced. Long wait times, understaffing, and limited laboratory availability diminish their utility, particularly for working adults who cannot afford to spend hours in queues or make multiple visits. Moreover, many slum residents are unaware of the availability of free diagnostic services or believe these services are only for acute conditions.

Private providers, ranging from neighborhood general practitioners to informal "compounders" (non-licensed dispensers), are often the first point of contact. They are trusted within the community, accessible after working hours, and known for quick consultations. However, diabetes diagnosis in these settings tends to be inconsistent. Many providers rely solely on random blood sugar tests using handheld glucometers, without confirmatory fasting tests or HbA1c measurements. In some cases, providers may begin treatment based on symptoms or single readings without formal lab confirmation, leading to both under- and over-diagnosis. Furthermore, the cost of repeat testing, especially when outsourced to private laboratories, is a major barrier to diagnostic continuity.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based initiatives fill critical gaps, particularly in high-density or underserved zones. Mobile medical vans, temporary health camps, and NGO-run clinics offer periodic screenings, often supported by international health foundations or CSR-funded projects. These interventions are vital for reaching the unregistered or transient populations within slums. For example, organizations such as Apnalaya and the Foundation for Medical Research have led community screening campaigns with free glucose testing and follow-up counseling. However, such efforts are limited by funding cycles, spatial reach, and the inability to offer sustained follow-up care.

Finally, self-diagnosis and pharmacy-based screening are becoming increasingly common. Residents may walk into local chemists for a glucometer check or purchase over-the-counter medications based on informal assessments. This behavior is especially prevalent among younger or middle-aged adults who suspect they are at risk but wish to avoid the bureaucracy of formal health institutions.

These diverse and often fragmented diagnostic routes reflect both the adaptability and vulnerability of slum residents navigating a system that lacks integration, affordability, and consistent quality assurance. As a result, many individuals remain undiagnosed until they present with serious complications, delaying both treatment initiation and lifestyle interventions that could prevent disease progression.

3.2 Delayed Diagnosis and Presentation with Complications

In Mumbai's slum communities, delayed diagnosis of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) is not an exception but a common reality—one that significantly heightens the risk of irreversible complications by the time medical attention is finally sought. The average time between symptom onset and formal diagnosis often spans several months to years, reflecting systemic, cultural, and financial obstacles that

inhibit early detection.

One of the most pervasive reasons for delay is the gradual and non-acute nature of early diabetic symptoms. Individuals experiencing fatigue, mild polyuria, blurred vision, or unintended weight loss may dismiss these signs as stress, aging, or effects of poor diet rather than indicators of a chronic illness. In environments where daily survival takes precedence over preventive care, these symptoms are rarely seen as urgent.

Moreover, competing economic pressures discourage early care-seeking. In many cases, slum residents work in informal sectors—such as domestic labor, vending, or construction—without paid sick leave or job security. Taking time off to visit a health facility, wait in queues, and pay for tests can mean lost wages or even job loss. As a result, people often delay medical visits until symptoms become severe enough to interfere with daily function.

The consequences of delayed diagnosis are clinically significant. By the time many patients present at public hospitals or NGO-run clinics, they are already experiencing advanced diabetic complications, such as non-healing foot ulcers, peripheral neuropathy, vision deterioration (diabetic retinopathy), or early signs of kidney impairment. A 2021 observational study at LTMG Hospital in Sion found that nearly 35% of first-time diabetes patients from nearby slum areas exhibited one or more microvascular complications at diagnosis, suggesting a long period of undetected hyperglycemia.

Delayed diagnosis is also compounded by the lack of referral linkages between the community and higher-level care. In the absence of primary care continuity or structured follow-up systems, patients tend to "float" between different service providers—visiting a chemist one month, a public hospital the next, and a traditional healer thereafter—without receiving consistent monitoring or long-term glycemic control strategies.

This fragmentation not only increases the disease burden but also drives up public health costs due to the need for tertiary care, hospitalizations, and long-term management of preventable complications. It also narrows the window for lifestyle-based interventions and reinforces a treatment-over-prevention model of care that is neither sustainable nor equitable.

Addressing delayed diagnosis requires both system-level reforms and community-level engagement: expanding the presence of mobile screening teams, establishing walk-in community health desks for high-risk adults, subsidizing essential diagnostic tests, and embedding diabetes screening into broader primary care outreach in slum areas.

3.3 Gaps in Diagnostic Tools and Lab Access

One of the most persistent barriers to effective diabetes diagnosis in Mumbai's slum areas is the lack of accessible, affordable, and reliable diagnostic infrastructure. Even when individuals seek help, the health system they enter is frequently ill-equipped to confirm and manage chronic conditions like Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) in a timely and accurate manner.

At the primary care level, public clinics often lack essential laboratory services for confirmatory testing. While handheld glucometers are widely used to conduct random blood sugar (RBS) tests, these devices are typically limited to point-of-care assessments and do not provide the comprehensive diagnostic picture needed to confirm a T2DM diagnosis. Fasting blood sugar (FBS), post-prandial sugar (PPBS), and HbA1c tests—which are globally recommended for accurate diabetes diagnosis and monitoring—are rarely available on-site at local municipal dispensaries or Urban Health Posts.

When these tests are available, turnaround times are slow and laboratory logistics are unreliable. In many facilities, blood samples must be transported to centralized labs, and patients are required to return on later dates to receive results—an impractical expectation for those living hand-to-mouth, who may not have the flexibility to make repeat visits. Delays in lab reporting frequently lead to loss to follow-up, with patients abandoning the diagnostic process altogether.

In the private sector, while diagnostic tools are more widely available, they are often cost-prohibitive for slum residents. HbA1c tests in private labs typically cost between ₹400–₹600 ($5–$7 USD), which can amount to a week's earnings for low-income families. As a result, even those who begin the diagnostic process may opt for incomplete testing or delay decisions based on affordability. This is especially problematic given the asymptomatic nature of early diabetes, where patients need

more motivation and fewer barriers to complete diagnosis.

Another serious concern is the quality and calibration of diagnostic devices in informal settings. Chemists and unregulated private clinics may use outdated or poorly maintained glucometers, leading to false negatives or false positives. Without standardized equipment and staff training, patients may be wrongly reassured or prematurely alarmed, both of which can compromise clinical outcomes.

Finally, there is a lack of interoperability between diagnostic centers and treatment facilities. Even when patients get accurate tests done, the absence of a centralized health information system means their data are not shared across providers. This siloing of results hampers coordinated care and continuity, especially for patients with fluctuating blood sugar levels or multiple co-morbidities.

To bridge these diagnostic gaps, there is a pressing need for:

- Decentralized lab services in slum clinics,
- Public-private partnerships to subsidize testing,
- Mobile diagnostic units for outreach screening, and
- Integration of electronic health records that track and follow patient testing over time.

Without such improvements, diabetes will continue to be diagnosed late and managed poorly, leading to preventable suffering and avoidable costs in already overburdened urban health systems.

4. Treatment Adherence and Barriers to Long-Term Glycemic Control

4.1 Medication Compliance, Affordability, and Out-of-Pocket Burden

Medication adherence among individuals diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) in Mumbai's slum communities is deeply constrained by financial, systemic, and informational barriers. While initiating pharmacological treatment may be feasible for many patients at the time of diagnosis, sustaining regular, long-term glycemic control is far more difficult due to structural poverty and gaps in medication access.

One of the central issues is affordability. Oral hypoglycemic agents (OHAs) and insulin, though available in India at relatively low retail prices compared to high-income countries, still represent a significant cost burden for low-income households. A 2021 study by the Indian Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism estimated that the monthly cost of basic diabetes medications ranges from ₹300–₹800 ($4–$10 USD) per person, not including costs for syringes, glucose test strips, or regular medical consultations. For families living on daily wages of ₹200–₹400, these expenses are often unsustainable.

Although India's public health system officially provides essential medicines free of charge at government pharmacies, stock-outs and limited formularies are common in municipal health posts and hospitals. Patients frequently report being prescribed medications that are not in stock and are directed to purchase them from private pharmacies. This reliance on the private retail sector increases out-of-pocket expenditure, especially in the absence of insurance coverage or reimbursement schemes for outpatient chronic disease care.

Compliance is further undermined by interruptions in drug availability and a lack of proper follow-up counseling. Many patients discontinue treatment after a few weeks when symptoms subside or when they run out of medicines. Others modify dosages on their own or switch brands based on advice from chemists or neighbors, unaware of the consequences of inconsistent glycemic control. In some cases, patients turn to traditional remedies or homeopathy, either due to cultural beliefs or perceived side effects from allopathic medications.

The informal nature of healthcare delivery in slum areas also contributes to nonadherence. Patients often receive prescriptions without adequate explanation or ongoing monitoring, particularly when drugs are dispensed through camps, temporary clinics, or private unlicensed providers. Without a clear understanding of the chronic nature of diabetes, the importance of continuous medication use is lost, especially when patients feel physically well.

Gender dynamics also play a role: in many households, women with diabetes may prioritize spending on their children or spouses' health over their own medications, leading to silent discontinuation of treatment among

female patients.

In sum, the cumulative burden of medication costs, stock inconsistencies, poor patient education, and systemic fragmentation results in high rates of nonadherence and poor glycemic outcomes. For interventions to succeed, they must address both economic access and behavioral reinforcement—through subsidized drug schemes, community-based refill programs, and diabetes literacy campaigns that empower patients to remain consistent with treatment.

4.2 Nutrition Insecurity and Challenges in Dietary Management

Effective diabetes management hinges not only on pharmacological compliance but also on sustained dietary control. However, for residents of Mumbai's informal settlements, dietary management is significantly impeded by nutrition insecurity, inconsistent food access, and a food environment dominated by low-cost, high-carbohydrate staples.

A central challenge is economic access to diabetes-friendly foods. Standard dietary guidelines for Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) recommend whole grains, lean proteins, vegetables, legumes, and fruits—foods that are comparatively more expensive and less available in slum economies. Many families rely on the Public Distribution System (PDS) for subsidized food grains, which primarily include white rice, wheat flour, and sugar. These high-glycemic staples, while affordable, exacerbate glycemic variability and undermine dietary targets.

Moreover, food quantity often takes precedence over quality in resource-poor households. In families with multiple members and limited income, caloric sufficiency is prioritized over nutritional balance. This creates a structural paradox: patients are aware they must "eat right," but are forced by economic necessity to eat what is available and cheap, even if it's medically inadvisable. A 2022 qualitative study conducted in Dharavi found that over 65% of diabetic respondents reported skipping meals or eating insufficient vegetables due to affordability.

In addition to cost, local food environments are saturated with street foods and processed snacks—fried items, sugar-sweetened beverages, and refined flour-based products. These foods are cheap, ubiquitous, and often culturally preferred, especially among working adults and adolescents. While patients may understand that these foods worsen their condition, behavioral change is difficult without structural support or alternatives. Lack of refrigeration, cooking fuel, or clean water also constrains healthy meal preparation, particularly for patients living alone or in crowded tenements.

There is also a notable absence of personalized dietary counseling within the public health system. Dieticians are rarely present at primary care centers, and diabetes patients seldom receive specific, culturally relevant nutrition advice. When counseling is given, it is often generic and not adapted to local diets or economic realities, making compliance practically infeasible.

Gender and caregiving dynamics further complicate the picture. In many households, women with diabetes must cook the same food for the entire family, making it difficult to adhere to individualized dietary plans. In some cases, men control household food purchases, limiting women's agency over what they consume, even when they are managing a chronic illness.

To address these challenges, interventions must go beyond education. Solutions such as diabetes-sensitive food subsidies, community cooking demonstrations, affordable meal planning, and partnerships with local vendors to promote low-GI foods can help align dietary advice with on-the-ground realities. Without tackling food insecurity at its root, dietary noncompliance will remain a predictable outcome of poverty rather than a personal failure.

4.3 Role of Informal Care Providers and Pharmacies

In the dense urban slums of Mumbai, informal care providers and local pharmacies play a prominent—yet often overlooked—role in the landscape of diabetes care. While these actors frequently serve as first-line and continuing sources of treatment for patients with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM), their influence on treatment adherence is complex, offering both supportive access and significant clinical risks.

For many residents, licensed pharmacies and chemist shops serve as the most accessible source of diabetes medications. With long operating hours, minimal wait times, and no requirement for formal appointments, these vendors offer a convenience that public hospitals cannot match. In areas where government clinics suffer from chronic medicine

stock-outs or long queues, patients often turn to neighborhood chemists to refill prescriptions or seek advice when symptoms worsen.

Pharmacies also reduce the friction of health-seeking behavior by eliminating bureaucratic barriers and enabling medication purchases on a per-tablet basis. For low-income patients managing weekly expenses, this flexibility makes it possible to maintain partial adherence rather than go entirely without medication due to high upfront costs.

However, this convenience comes at a cost. Many chemists in informal areas dispense medications without prescriptions or formal diagnostic evidence, based solely on patient-reported symptoms or prior use. Some even recommend dosages or medication changes without adequate medical oversight. The result is a system where clinical inertia (lack of appropriate treatment adjustment) and therapeutic inconsistency are rampant.

Moreover, unlicensed or semi-qualified informal practitioners—often known locally as "compounders" or "Bengali doctors"—serve as de facto healthcare providers, especially in underserved settlements. While they are trusted figures within communities, their understanding of chronic disease management is typically poor. These providers may initiate treatment without confirming diagnosis, fail to advise on lifestyle modification, and rarely conduct or recommend follow-up testing. Patients treated by such individuals are often unaware of the progressive nature of diabetes, leading to poor long-term adherence.

Even when patients begin treatment under formal providers, they may default to informal sources for refills or side-effect concerns due to greater interpersonal familiarity and lack of stigma. Unlike overburdened public clinics, informal providers may offer more personalized attention, reinforcing patient loyalty despite suboptimal clinical quality.

Efforts to improve adherence must therefore engage with—not bypass—these informal actors. Strategies such as chemist training programs, mobile app-based prescription validation, and incentive schemes for correct drug dispensation can improve their integration into the health system. Additionally, community-level education should include guidance on distinguishing between legitimate and potentially harmful providers, without alienating the informal sector that currently fills a major accessibility gap.

Ultimately, strengthening diabetes care in slum communities requires acknowledging the hybrid nature of health systems and leveraging the ubiquity of informal providers and pharmacies while mitigating the risks they pose.

5. Community-Based Interventions and Policy Integration

5.1 NGO-led Foot Clinics, Mobile Diabetes Units, and ASHA Worker Outreach

In the context of India's expanding burden of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM), especially in under-resourced urban slum populations, community-based interventions have become the functional backbone of early detection and continuity of care. These grassroots models, though fragmented, provide crucial entry points for underserved patients to receive diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up—often in ways the formal healthcare system cannot replicate.

NGO-led foot clinics serve as one of the most visible and targeted interventions addressing complications of diabetes. Diabetic foot ulcers, a major cause of preventable lower limb amputations, are common among patients with poor glycemic control and limited footwear access. In areas such as Dharavi and Govandi, NGOs like Apnalaya and the Diabetic Foot Society of India have operated temporary or mobile foot care centers, offering free screening for neuropathy, minor wound care, offloading footwear, and patient education. These services have reportedly reduced local hospitalization rates for advanced diabetic complications, despite being operated only a few days per week due to resource constraints.

Meanwhile, mobile diabetes units—typically van-based services equipped with glucometers, blood pressure monitors, and occasionally HbA1c testing kits—travel directly into slum areas to offer on-the-spot screening, referral, and short-term follow-up. Funded either by NGOs or municipal health departments, these services help bridge the accessibility gap for residents who cannot afford to miss work or travel long distances for clinical testing. Data from the Mumbai Municipal Corporation in 2022 indicated that mobile units screened over 18,000 individuals in slums across five zones, identifying nearly 2,300 new diabetes cases within a six-month span.

Equally critical to sustained engagement are Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and community health volunteers. Although originally designed for maternal and child health programs, urban ASHAs have increasingly been integrated into non-communicable disease management in high-burden slum areas. Their role includes door-to-door awareness campaigns, informal counseling, follow-up reminders, and patient tracking for repeat medication pickups or lab visits. Unlike institutional actors, ASHAs have intimate familiarity with the community's socio-cultural dynamics, making them essential conduits of trust in diabetes education and behavioral change.

However, while these interventions demonstrate local effectiveness, their scale and sustainability remain fragile. Most rely on short-term donor funding or special urban health mission grants, and they lack formal integration with municipal electronic health records or insurance-linked reimbursement systems. Moreover, coordination between NGOs, ASHAs, and public clinics is often ad hoc, with minimal data sharing or cross-training.

To achieve lasting results, Mumbai's public health system must move from supporting isolated pilots to establishing system-level partnerships that embed community-based models into routine care frameworks. This includes formal training modules for ASHAs in diabetes education, shared referral pathways between mobile units and clinics, and outcome-linked funding mechanisms for NGO-operated services.

5.2 Inclusion of Slum-Focused Diabetes Care in Municipal Health Policy

Despite the growing evidence of disproportionate Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) burden in Mumbai's slum communities, municipal health policy has historically emphasized communicable disease control, maternal and child health, and sanitation—leaving chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) under-prioritized. This structural omission has contributed to a fragmented diabetes response that relies heavily on NGOs and informal networks. However, recent shifts in urban health discourse suggest emerging recognition of the need to institutionalize slum-focused diabetes care within the city's formal policy framework.

A 2021 policy assessment conducted by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) revealed that while NCDs have been incorporated into the City Health Action Plan, specific strategies tailored to vulnerable populations such as slum residents remain limited. Existing NCD clinics attached to urban primary health centers (UPHCs) are often overwhelmed, under-resourced, and poorly staffed for managing chronic care continuity. Moreover, they frequently lack outreach capabilities to engage populations beyond the clinic's physical perimeter.

Policy gaps also persist in health information systems. Slum-based mobile diabetes screenings—carried out by NGOs, private actors, or ASHAs—often collect valuable patient-level data, but these are not systematically integrated into municipal electronic health records. As a result, policymakers operate without a complete picture of diabetes prevalence, treatment dropouts, or intervention outcomes within informal settlements.

Some progress has been made through pilot integration initiatives. In 2022, MCGM initiated a project in Ward L (covering parts of Kurla and Chembur) to embed diabetes follow-up protocols into maternal and child health outreach platforms. This allowed ASHA workers and auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) to deliver basic glucose monitoring, dietary counseling, and medication refill reminders during routine family health visits. Preliminary evaluations showed improved retention in diabetes care pathways over a six-month period.

Nevertheless, the expansion of such models faces funding and policy inertia. At the national level, India's NPCDCS (National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke) does provide a policy umbrella, but local implementation remains weak in urban informal contexts. There are no dedicated budget lines or staffing allocations for slum-specific NCD care in most municipal wards.

To institutionalize slum-focused diabetes care, municipal policy must:

- Allocate designated funds for chronic disease management in urban vulnerable zones;
- Expand ASHA roles with clear job descriptions for NCD care and ensure consistent training;

- Mandate integration of community-screened patient data into centralized health information platforms;
- Develop interoperable digital records that follow patients across NGO, public, and private systems;
- Establish public-private partnerships to co-manage services such as mobile clinics and local diabetes counseling centers.

The shift from reactive, episodic diabetes care to proactive, integrated chronic disease management will only be possible if slum residents are recognized not as peripheral beneficiaries but as a core constituency of urban public health policy.

6. Toward an Integrated and Equitable Diabetes Care Model for Urban Poor

Addressing the rising tide of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) in Mumbai's urban slums demands more than fragmented interventions—it requires a shift toward a comprehensive, equity-oriented care model that recognizes the lived realities of poverty, precarity, and informal access to health services. The current landscape, characterized by siloed NGO programs, overburdened public clinics, and informal medication channels, fails to ensure continuity, affordability, or accountability.

A truly integrated care model for the urban poor must rest on several key pillars:

- Primary care strengthening with NCD integration: Every Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) must serve not only as a point of care but also as a coordination hub for community-based screening, lab referrals, medication refills, and structured follow-up. This requires staffing with trained NCD nurses, digital record systems, and logistics for consistent drug supply.
- Task-shifting and community workforce mobilization: Empowering ASHA workers, local volunteers, and frontline paramedics with training, incentives, and clear protocols for diabetes care can dramatically expand reach. These actors should be equipped to conduct door-to-door monitoring, reinforce adherence, and support lifestyle changes.
- Digital infrastructure and data integration: Slum-specific patient data—from mobile vans, NGO programs, and pharmacies—must be consolidated into municipal health databases. Digital health IDs, SMS-based reminders, and interoperable records are essential for tracking glycemic control and identifying dropouts.
- Affordable medication and dietary support: Policy innovations such as urban ration cards for diabetes-friendly food baskets, capped insulin prices, and community kitchens with diabetic meal options can reduce economic barriers to control. Micro-insurance schemes and subsidized diagnostics should be made slum-inclusive.
- Health literacy and behavioral change: Culturally tailored education campaigns—delivered in local languages through radio, mobile media, and street theatre—can normalize help-seeking, reduce stigma, and promote early screening. Peer support groups can also reinforce motivation and accountability.
- Public-private coordination platforms: Municipal health departments should act as conveners of all actors involved in slum health—NGOs, clinics, chemists, data scientists—under a shared performance framework. Outcome-based contracts and blended funding models can ensure both accountability and flexibility.

Most critically, any equitable care model must center the agency of patients—not just as passive recipients of care, but as partners in program design, feedback, and implementation. Solutions should emerge not only from policy rooms but also from focus groups, patient councils, and local leadership structures within slums.

If Mumbai and similar megacities are to prevent a generational diabetes crisis among their most vulnerable populations, they must build systems that are closer, cheaper, simpler—and more humane. Only through systemic equity and community-rooted design can the double burden of poverty and diabetes be broken.

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PIONEER
ACADEMIC PUBLISHING LIMITED

Current Research in Medical Sciences
ISSN 2958-0390
www.pioneerpublisher.com/crms
Volume 4 Number 4 September 2025

Research on the Domestication and Standardization of Respiratory Medical Devices for Primary Healthcare Institutions

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doi:10.56397/CRMS.2025.09.04

Abstract

This study addresses the core challenges of high import dependency, poor scene adaptation, and high maintenance costs of respiratory medical devices in primary healthcare institutions in China. Through multidimensional surveys, technological development, and clinical verification, a comprehensive domestication and standardization system was established. A stratified sampling method was employed to survey 200 primary healthcare institutions across 10 provinces in eastern, central, and western China, with 1,200 valid questionnaires and 80 in-depth interviews. The study identified three-dimensional requirements in terms of environment (high-altitude pressure compensation and cold fog prevention), operation (simplified interface and voice guidance), and cost (procurement ≤ $3,000 per unit, maintenance ≤ $200 per year). Core components such as low-noise permanent magnet synchronous motors (noise 36 dB, cost reduced by 40%) and aging-resistant silicone (leakage rate 4.8%, lifespan over 6 months) were developed, along with environment-adaptive algorithms (92.1% effective in high-altitude treatment, 100% success rate in low-temperature fog prevention). A multicenter controlled trial involving 50 institutions and 400 COPD patients verified that the domestic devices had a failure rate of 5.0% (compared to 12.0% for imported devices) and reduced maintenance costs by 62.1% ($p<0.05$). Ultimately, a three-tier standard system of "foundation — technology — evaluation" was constructed, proposing a weighted evaluation model with 40% for technical adaptability, 30% for cost adaptability, and 30% for maintenance adaptability. The research provides technical support and standard basis for the domestication of respiratory devices in primary healthcare institutions, contributing to the upgrade of grassroots medical equipment in "Healthy China 2030".

Keywords: primary healthcare institutions, respiratory medical devices, domestication, adaptation technology, standard system, non-invasive ventilator, clinical verification

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Problem Statement

Primary healthcare institutions (township health centers and community health service centers) in China undertake over 65% of the initial

diagnosis of respiratory diseases nationwide. However, the high import dependency and poor scene adaptation of respiratory medical devices have become the core bottlenecks restricting the quality of diagnosis and treatment. Market data shows that the import proportion of core devices such as non-invasive ventilators and ventilation masks in primary healthcare institutions reaches 62.3%. These devices, designed based on the physiological characteristics of Western populations, exhibit significant inadaptation in primary care settings. For example, the leakage rate of ventilation masks, due to insufficient facial contour matching, is as high as 28.7% (n=200, measured in primary healthcare institutions), directly leading to a pressure control accuracy deviation of over ±2.0 hPa. The operation interface of non-invasive ventilators, on average, contains 14.2 physical buttons, and the independent operation qualification rate of primary healthcare staff is only 35.4%, 58.6 percentage points lower than that in tertiary hospitals. The contradictions in maintenance are even more prominent, with an average repair response cycle of 15.3 days for imported devices and an annual maintenance cost of $5,218, which are 3.1 and 2.6 times the budget threshold of primary healthcare institutions, respectively.

Policy guidance provides clear support for solving the above problems. The "14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Medical Equipment Industry" lists the "domestication of grassroots-adaptive medical equipment" as a key task and proposes the goal of increasing the market share of domestic medical devices in grassroots institutions to 50% by 2025. The "Healthy China 2030 Plan Outline" further clarifies the requirement to improve the standard system of grassroots medical equipment and break through the technical barriers of core components. Against this backdrop, conducting research on the scene adaptation technology and standardization of respiratory medical devices in primary healthcare institutions is not only a practical need to break the vicious cycle of "import dependency — poor adaptation — high cost" but also an inevitable choice for promoting the high-quality development of the medical equipment industry.

1.2 Research Significance

1.2.1 Clinical and Public Health Value

By improving technical adaptation and cost optimization, this study directly enhances the accessibility of respiratory disease diagnosis and treatment in primary care. Clinical pre-experiments have shown that the leakage rate of the optimized domestic ventilation masks can be controlled below 4.8%, and the operation training time for non-invasive ventilators is reduced from 48 hours to 8 hours. The maintenance response cycle is compressed to within 48 hours, and the annual cost is reduced to $1,980. Based on the 120 million patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in China, it is estimated that if grassroots healthcare institutions fully adopt domestically adapted devices, the average monthly visit frequency of patients can be reduced by 1.2 times, and the risk of readmission can be lowered by 21.7%, which has a synergistic effect with the clinical benefits of the Internet of Things management model.

1.2.2 Industrial and Technological Value

The study focuses on the domestication of core components, breaking through the "bottleneck" links of ventilator motors and mask silicone materials. The jointly developed low-noise permanent magnet synchronous motor reduces the noise level from 45 dB of imported products to 36 dB, with a failure rate of only 1.8% after continuous operation for 10,000 hours, and a cost reduction of 40% compared to imported components. The medical-grade aging-resistant silicone, after 1,000 hours of accelerated aging testing, maintains an elasticity rate of 82%, which is on par with ResMed's similar products. The increase in the domestic controllability rate of core components has led to a 35.2% reduction in the overall procurement cost of domestic devices, providing technical support for domestic enterprises to enter the grassroots market and is expected to drive the growth of the related industrial chain value by over $20 billion.

1.2.3 Theoretical and Standard Value

Current domestic and international research exhibits a significant "high-end orientation," with over 90% of respiratory device studies focusing on the application scenarios of tertiary hospitals, and systematic research on the special needs of grassroots institutions accounting for less than 5%. This study constructs a complete framework of "need identification — technical breakthrough — standard construction — clinical verification" and proposes for the first

time a three-dimensional index system for grassroots adaptability evaluation, filling the theoretical gap in this field and providing a methodological reference for subsequent grassroots-oriented research on medical equipment.

2. Analysis of Grassroots Needs and Domestication Bottlenecks

2.1 Multidimensional Identification of Grassroots Scene Needs

A stratified sampling method was used to survey 200 primary healthcare institutions across 10 provinces in eastern, central, and western China, with 1,200 valid questionnaires and 80 in-depth interviews. Combined with clinical data, a three-dimensional need model of "environment — operation — cost" was constructed. In terms of environmental adaptation, in medical institutions located in plateau areas (altitude ≥ 2,000 meters), 85.3% reported insufficient pressure compensation of imported devices, resulting in a treatment effectiveness rate of only 58.6%. In cold areas (below -10℃), 72.1% of the devices experienced fogging in the airway, increasing the airflow resistance by 35%. In humid areas, the equipment circuit corrosion failure rate reached 30.7%, which is 2.3 times higher than that in dry areas.

The operational adaptation needs show a significant "simplification tendency." Primary healthcare staff, on average, receive only 18.2 hours of device training and have an acceptance rate of less than 20% for operation interfaces with more than 8 buttons. 60.4% of respondents indicated that "lack of Chinese voice guidance" is the main cause of operational errors, and dialect needs cover six major languages, including Cantonese and Sichuanese. In terms of cost, the average annual maintenance budget for a single ventilator in primary healthcare institutions is only $980, which is only 18.8% of the actual expenditure of imported devices. When the replacement cost of vulnerable components exceeds 15% of the total equipment price, it becomes unbearable.

Table 1.

Environment Type	Reported Issue	Proportion	Impact
Plateau regions (≥2,000 m a.s.l.)	Insufficient pressure compensation of imported equipment	85.3%	Treatment efficacy drops to only 58.6%
Cold regions (below –10°C)	Fogging in device tubing	72.1%	Airflow resistance increases by 35%
Humid regions	Circuit corrosion failures	30.7%	2.3× higher than in dry regions

2.2 Core Bottlenecks of Domestication Adaptation

The technical barriers of core components are the primary obstacles. The market for low-noise ventilator motors is monopolized by companies such as Germany's Bosch. Domestic motors have an average noise level 8 dB higher than imported ones, with power consumption exceeding standards by 18.5% and a failure rate of 12.3% after continuous operation for 5,000 hours. In the field of mask silicone materials, the medical-grade certification pass rate is only 45%, and the elasticity retention rate after 1,000 hours of aging is 25 percentage points lower than that of imported materials. The control chip sector is also dominated by imports, with domestic chips processing data 20% slower and having a failure rate of 5.2% in environments ranging from -10℃ to 40℃, which is insufficient to support the implementation of environment-adaptive functions. (Kabir, A. S. M. S. H., Khan, M. A. H., & Bhuiyan, M. A. H., 2020)

The lack of scene adaptation technology exacerbates the supply-demand contradiction. Domestic enterprises mostly adopt the "benchmark imitation" model. Over 90% of domestic ventilators have not developed plateau pressure compensation algorithms. In clinical tests conducted in Lijiang, Yunnan (altitude 2,400 meters), the treatment effectiveness rate dropped by 43.2% compared to plain areas. Only 12% of products have low-temperature fog prevention functions, and in the winter of Hulunbuir, Inner Mongolia, the airway blockage rate reached 68.3%. The lag in maintenance technology results in device failure diagnosis relying on external experts, with an average

repair response time of 72.5 hours, which is twice the grassroots threshold.

The absence of a standard system constitutes a systemic obstacle. The existing standards do not cover the special requirements of grassroots scenarios: environmental adaptability indicators do not include extreme ranges of altitude, temperature, and humidity; operational convenience lacks quantitative evaluation; and cost adaptability does not include maintenance cost control requirements. The lack of standards leads to enterprises' R&D direction deviating from actual needs. In 2023, only 3 out of 15 newly launched domestic grassroots ventilators passed the multi-scene adaptability test, with a compliance rate of only 20%.

3. Development and Verification of Domestication Adaptation Technology Path

3.1 Autonomous Development of Core Components

In the development of ventilator motors, a "distributed winding + double-layer sound insulation structure" design was adopted. The copper loss of the stator winding was reduced by 15%, the torque ripple was reduced by 22% through the optimization of the rotor magnet arrangement, and the combination of an inner layer of sound-absorbing cotton and an outer layer of aluminum alloy cover in the shell achieved a noise reduction of 9 dB. After testing by the National Medical Device Testing Center, the motor's noise level was 36 dB, power consumption was 35 W, and the failure rate after continuous operation for 10,000 hours was 1.8%. The core parameters are close to those of Philips' similar products, with a cost of only 60% of the imported ones.

Table 2.

Parameter Description	Specific Value / Condition
Reduction in stator-winding copper losses	15%
Torque-ripple reduction	22%
Noise-attenuation performance	9 dB
Motor sound-pressure level	36 dB
Motor power consumption	35 W
Failure rate after 10,000 h continuous operation	1.8%
Comparison of core parameters with Philips equivalent	On par
Cost ratio vs. Philips equivalent	60%

The optimization of mask silicone material was achieved through a three-step process of "raw material selection — process improvement — performance verification." Three candidate materials with tensile strength ≥ 5 MPa and tear strength ≥ 20 kN/m were selected from 10 types of medical silicone raw materials. The material's cross-linking density was increased by 30% through low-temperature vulcanization at 120℃ and surface plasma modification. Accelerated aging tests (1,000 hours, 70℃, 95% RH) showed that the elasticity retention rate of the optimized silicone reached 82%, with biological compatibility meeting ISO 10993-1 standards. The mask leakage rate was reduced to 4.8%, and the service life was extended to over 6 months.

The customized development of control chips focused on stability and adaptability. In collaboration with domestic chip enterprises, a dedicated chip meeting IEC 60601-1 standards was developed, reducing the high and low-temperature failure rate to below 1.0% through a dual-core backup design. The lightweight pressure control algorithm developed increased data processing speed by 25%, and in combination with an altimeter (measurement range 0-5,000 meters, accuracy ±10 meters), it achieved a precise pressure compensation of 12.5% for every 1,000 meters of altitude increase.

3.2 Integration Innovation of Scene-Adaptive Technology

The environment-adaptive system consists of three major algorithm modules: The plateau pressure compensation module increased the treatment effectiveness rate from 60.3% to 92.1% in clinical tests in Lijiang, Yunnan. The low-temperature fog prevention module

stabilized the airway temperature at 18℃ through a carbon fiber heating wire (power 5 W), achieving a fog prevention success rate of 100% in -25℃ environments. The energy consumption adaptive module can automatically switch operating modes based on battery power, maintaining basic respiratory support functions for over 8 hours when the power is ≤20%, adapting to unstable power supply environments in grassroots areas.

The optimization of the human-machine interaction system is centered on "minimalist operation + intelligent guidance." The physical buttons were streamlined to 8, with core parameters displayed in 16pt large font, and a Chinese voice guidance module (clarity 95.3%) covering the entire process of startup, parameter setting, and fault troubleshooting, as well as providing options for three dialects, including Cantonese and Sichuanese. In tests conducted in Guangdong and Sichuan grassroots medical institutions, the independent operation qualification rate of medical staff increased from 35.4% to 95.2%, and the operation time was reduced from 15 minutes to 4.8 minutes.

Lightweight maintenance technology significantly improves service efficiency. The device is equipped with 20 built-in self-diagnosis programs for common faults, with an identification accuracy rate of 95.6%. Fault types are indicated through both indicator lights and voice prompts, along with visual repair guidance. The mask adopts a snap-on design, with a replacement time of ≤90 seconds. The integrated 4G module of the remote maintenance platform enables real-time transmission of operating data and fault warnings, reducing the maintenance response time from 72.5 hours to within 48 hours and reducing maintenance costs by 62%.

3.3 Multidimensional Technology Verification

Laboratory performance verification was completed at the National Medical Device Testing Center of the National Medical Products Administration, with 20 core indicators of the domestic adaptation devices (G3B20A non-invasive ventilator, N5B ventilation mask) being tested. The results showed that the pressure control accuracy of the ventilator was ±0.4 hPa, the failure rate in extreme environments (-10℃ to 40℃) was 3.0%, the mask leakage rate was 4.8%, the elasticity retention rate after aging was 82%, and the electromagnetic compatibility met the Level 3 requirements of YY 0505-2012. All indicators exceeded the preset standards, with key performance improvements of 12%-18% compared to imported similar products. (Jayawardena, J. A. R. P., & Kabir, A. S. M. S. H., 2019)

The grassroots clinical verification was designed as a multicenter, controlled trial, selecting 50 primary healthcare institutions in three provinces: Yunnan (plateau), Inner Mongolia (cold), and Guangdong (humid). The institutions were divided into a test group (domestic devices) and a control group (imported devices) in a 1:1 ratio, with 200 COPD patients included in each group for a verification period of 3 months. The treatment compliance of the test group reached 92.3%, 11.2 percentage points higher than that of the control group. The device failure rate was 5.0%, only 41.7% of the control group (12.0%), and the annual maintenance cost was $1,980, a 62.1% reduction compared to the control group, with statistically significant differences between the groups ($p<0.05$).

Based on clinical feedback, technical iterations were completed: The device weight was reduced from 5 kg to 3.5 kg using lightweight aluminum alloy materials; a USB charging interface was added to adapt to general grassroots devices; and the algorithm response speed was optimized from 2 seconds to 1 second. After these iterations, the user satisfaction in the second batch of 30 grassroots hospitals increased to 95.0%, and the failure rate dropped to 3.0%, achieving the expected optimization goals.

Table 3.

Validation Index	**Domestic Equipment Data**
Ventilator pressure-control accuracy	±0.4 hPa
Failure rate in extreme environments (–10 °C to 40 °C)	3.0 %
Mask air-leak rate	4.8 %

Elastic retention rate of mask after aging	82 %
Electromagnetic compatibility	Meets YY 0505-2012 Level 3
Treatment compliance	92.3 %
Device failure rate	5.0 %
Annual O&M cost	RMB 1,980
User satisfaction	95.0 %
Failure rate	3.0 %

4. Construction of Domestication Adaptation Standard System

4.1 Framework Design of Standard System

A three-tier standard system of "basic standards — technical standards — evaluation standards" was constructed. The basic standards include "Terminology and Classification of Grassroots Respiratory Medical Devices" and "General Safety Requirements," defining core terms such as "grassroots scene adaptability" and clarifying general requirements for electrical safety (GB 9706.1-2020 Class I, BF type) and electromagnetic compatibility (YY 0505-2012). The technical standards cover the specific requirements for five types of products, including non-invasive ventilators and ventilation masks, which are the core carriers of the system. The evaluation standards include "Adaptation Evaluation Method" and "Certification Process," regulating the testing and certification links.

The standard formulation strictly follows three bases: In terms of policy, it connects with the grassroots requirements of the "14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Medical Equipment Industry"; in terms of technology, it integrates domestication technical parameters with GB 9706 series and ISO 10993 standards; and in terms of demand, it converts the grassroots environment, operation, and cost requirements based on the survey data from 10 provinces into quantitative indicators to ensure the scientificity and practicality of the standards.

4.2 Quantitative Setting of Core Technical Indicators

Performance indicators focus on core functions and stability: The noise of non-invasive ventilators should be ≤38 dB, with a pressure range of 4-20 hPa (accuracy ±0.5 hPa), an altitude adaptation range of 0-5,000 meters (compensation accuracy ±10%), and a failure rate of ≤2% after continuous operation for 10,000 hours. The leakage rate of ventilation masks should be ≤5%, with a wearing comfort VAS score of ≥90 points and a service life of ≥6 months. The breathing circuit should not be blocked after 180° bending for 100 times and should maintain a temperature of ≥15℃ in -10℃ environments.

Scene adaptation indicators reflect grassroots specificity: Environmental adaptation requires a normal operation rate of ≥95% under conditions of altitude 0-5,000 meters, temperature -10℃ to 40℃, and humidity 15%-90% RH. Operational adaptation specifies that the operation steps should be ≤5, with a qualified rate of ≥95% for medical staff after training, and voice guidance should support Chinese and at least two dialects. Cost adaptation stipulates that the procurement cost of a single non-invasive ventilator should be ≤$3,000, the annual maintenance cost should be ≤$2,000, and the replacement cost of vulnerable components should be ≤5% of the total equipment price.

Safety and compliance indicators strengthen risk control: The grounding resistance of electrical safety should be ≤0.1Ω, and the patient leakage current should be ≤50μA. Software safety should meet IEC 62304 Class B requirements, with no high-risk vulnerabilities. Data storage should comply with the "Personal Information Protection Law," with encrypted retention for ≥3 years, and the risk control requirements should be consistent with those of similar products.

4.3 Adaptation Evaluation Model and Process

The evaluation model uses a weighted scoring method, constructed from three dimensions: technical adaptability (40%), cost adaptability (30%), and maintenance adaptability (30%). Technical adaptability includes core component performance (15%), environmental adaptability (10%), and operational convenience (15%). Cost adaptability covers procurement cost (15%), maintenance cost (10%), and energy consumption cost (5%). Maintenance

adaptability includes fault diagnosis capability (10%), component replacement convenience (10%), and remote support capability (10%). (Sheehan, J. R. F., 2017)

Quantitative evaluation uses a 10-point scale, with clear scoring rules for key indicators:

Table 4.

Item	Scoring Rule	Points Awarded
Motor noise	≤ 38 dB	10 points
	38–45 dB	8 points
	> 45 dB	5 points
Mask leak rate	≤ 5 %	10 points
	5 %–10 %	8 points
	> 10 %	5 points
Procurement cost	≤ RMB 30 k	10 points
	RMB 30–40 k	8 points
	> RMB 40 k	5 points

The evaluation process is divided into three stages: Enterprise self-testing requires submission of core component test data and scene verification records; third-party testing is conducted by national-level institutions for performance testing and scene verification, issuing test reports; comprehensive evaluation is carried out by industry experts who calculate scores based on self-testing and test results, and issue an "Adaptation Evaluation Certificate" valid for 3 years, which requires re-evaluation upon expiration.

5. Conclusions and Future Work

5.1 Main Research Conclusions

This study systematically identified the core needs of grassroots respiratory medical devices: Environmental adaptation needs to address issues such as insufficient plateau pressure and fogging in cold areas, operational adaptation needs to simplify processes and enhance voice guidance, and cost adaptation needs to control procurement and maintenance expenditures. Based on these needs, significant breakthroughs were achieved in the development of core components and scene-adaptive technologies: The performance of core components such as low-noise motors and aging-resistant silicone is close to the international advanced level. The environment-adaptive algorithms ensure a normal operation rate of 95% for devices under extreme conditions, and the optimization of human-machine interaction increases the operation qualification rate by 60 percentage points.

The constructed three-tier standard system fills the industry gap. Its "technology — scene — safety" three-dimensional indicators and weighted evaluation model provide a unified basis for enterprise R&D, device testing, and grassroots procurement. Laboratory and clinical verifications have proven that the comprehensive performance of domesticated adaptation devices is superior to that of imported products, with a 35.2% reduction in procurement costs and a 62.1% reduction in maintenance costs, making them ready for large-scale promotion in grassroots areas.

5.2 Research Limitations and Future Directions

The study has three limitations: The survey did not fully cover extreme environment areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang, and the inclusion of special scene needs is not comprehensive enough; the technology verification period was 3 months, and long-term stability data for 1-2 years still need to be accumulated; the standard system does not include emerging needs such as the integration of AI technology. Future work will focus on two aspects: First, supplementing surveys in extreme environments to expand the scope of technical adaptation and conducting a 5-year long-term clinical follow-up; second, establishing a dynamic update mechanism for standards to incorporate new technical indicators such as AI respiratory monitoring and

5G remote maintenance, and promoting the alignment of standards with the international IEC and ISO systems.

Policy recommendations include incorporating "well-adapted" devices into the priority procurement directory for grassroots institutions, with a 15% financial subsidy. In the industrial sector, a collaborative innovation platform involving "enterprises + universities + medical institutions" should be established to continuously break through core technologies. In the clinical sector, device operation training should be strengthened to fully leverage the clinical value of domesticated devices, ultimately achieving the goal of 100% domestication and scene adaptation of grassroots respiratory devices.

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PIONEER
ACADEMIC PUBLISHING LIMITED

Current Research in Medical Sciences
ISSN 2958-0390
www.pioneerpublisher.com/crms
Volume 4 Number 4 September 2025

Technological Innovation and Clinical Application of Nasal Foreign Body Removal and Tissue Reconstruction

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doi:10.56397/CRMS.2025.09.05

Abstract

This study, based on the "Technological Innovation in Foreign Body Removal and Tissue Reconstruction in Failed Nasal Plastic Surgery" project, addresses the challenges of removing nasal foreign bodies such as bone powder and polyacrylamide hydrogel (Omnipaque) and repairing deformed noses. With over 80 high-difficulty clinical cases, it explores the innovative aspects of the "layered dissection + precise debridement" technique and its application in nasal repair, as well as the stability of the "auricular cartilage + nasal septal cartilage" combined scaffold in nasal shape reconstruction. The results show that the "layered dissection + precise debridement" technique significantly increases the thoroughness of foreign body removal to 95%, compared to 70% of traditional methods, and reduces post-operative complications to 5%, down from 15% of traditional methods. The application of the "auricular cartilage + nasal septal cartilage" combined scaffold achieves a 90% satisfaction rate in nasal shape and good long-term stability. This study provides new technical ideas and clinical references for the repair of failed nasal plastic surgery, promoting the development and progress of nasal plastic repair technology, with significant clinical application value and social significance.

Keywords: failed nasal plastic surgery repair, layered dissection, precise debridement, auricular cartilage, nasal septal cartilage, combined scaffold, nasal foreign body removal, nasal shape reconstruction, clinical application

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, with the increasing pursuit of beauty, the demand for nasal plastic surgery has been growing. By improving the nasal shape and enhancing the overall facial aesthetics, it has become a popular plastic surgery item. However, surgical failure cases do occur, mainly manifested as poor nasal shape, infection, foreign body rejection, etc., among which problems caused by filling materials such as bone powder and polyacrylamide hydrogel are particularly tricky. Traditional repair methods have many shortcomings in foreign body removal and nasal shape reconstruction, such as incomplete removal of foreign bodies, large tissue damage, and unstable nasal shape,

causing great distress to patients. Therefore, it is urgent to explore more efficient and safer repair technologies.

1.2 Research Purpose

Based on the "Technological Innovation in Foreign Body Removal and Tissue Reconstruction in Failed Nasal Plastic Surgery" project, this study focuses on the challenges of removing nasal foreign bodies such as bone powder and polyacrylamide hydrogel and repairing deformed noses. With more than 80 high-difficulty cases in clinical practice, it explores the innovative aspects of the "layered dissection + precise debridement" technique, analyzes the improved efficiency of foreign body removal, and examines the stability of the "auricular cartilage + nasal septal cartilage" combined scaffold in nasal shape reconstruction. The aim is to provide more effective technical methods and clinical references for the repair of failed nasal plastic surgery.

1.3 Research Significance

This study will provide new technical ideas and clinical references for the repair of failed nasal plastic surgery, promoting the development and progress of nasal plastic repair technology. Through technological innovation, it improves the efficiency of nasal foreign body removal and the stability of nasal shape reconstruction, reduces the occurrence of post-operative complications, and enhances patients' satisfaction and quality of life. Moreover, the results of this study will serve as an important reference for plastic surgeons dealing with similar cases, with significant clinical application value and social significance.

2. Current Status and Challenges of Failed Nasal Plastic Surgery Repair

2.1 Analysis of the Causes of Failed Nasal Plastic Surgery

The causes of failed nasal plastic surgery mainly include surgical technique issues, improper material selection, and infection and complications. Irregular surgical techniques, such as unclear anatomical layers, unreasonable scaffold construction, and imprecise suturing, can lead to poor nasal shape or cause infections and other complications. In terms of material selection, silicone implants may shift or become translucent, expanded polytetrafluoroethylene (ePTFE) materials are expensive and difficult to remove, and autologous cartilage, although natural in effect, involves significant trauma in harvesting. Moreover, the use of inferior materials by non-standardized institutions increases the risk of failure. Infection is a common complication, which can be caused by non-strict aseptic operations or improper post-operative care, leading to tissue necrosis, scar contracture, and other problems. Additionally, individual differences in patients, such as coagulation disorders or diabetes, can also increase surgical risks.

2.2 Challenges in Nasal Foreign Body Removal

In the repair of failed nasal plastic surgery, foreign body removal is an important link, especially for filling materials like bone powder and polyacrylamide hydrogel. Bone powder particles are small and easily diffuse within the tissue; polyacrylamide hydrogel metabolizes slowly and needs to be removed promptly if rejection or infection occurs. Traditional foreign body removal methods include open surgery and endoscope-assisted surgery. However, open surgery is highly traumatic, and endoscope surgery is ineffective for diffuse foreign bodies and cannot accurately locate them, easily leaving foreign bodies behind.

2.3 Challenges in Nasal Shape Reconstruction

Nasal shape reconstruction is another important link in the repair process. After removing the foreign body, it is necessary to repair the nasal tissue defects and restore its normal structure. Common methods include autologous tissue transplantation and artificial material filling. However, autologous tissue transplantation involves significant trauma, and artificial material filling carries risks of shifting and infection. Moreover, the long-term stability of nasal shape reconstruction faces challenges. The nasal tissue has poor blood supply and healing ability, and post-operative scar contracture and scaffold deformation are likely to occur. Patients may also experience infections or rejection reactions again after surgery, affecting the stability of the nasal shape. Therefore, during the repair process, it is necessary to fully consider the blood supply and healing of the tissue and choose appropriate materials and surgical methods.

3. Innovative Aspects of the "Layered Dissection + Precise Debridement" Technique

3.1 Principle and Method of Layered Dissection Technique

The layered dissection technique achieves refined surgical operations by accurately dividing and identifying the layers of nasal tissue. The nasal tissue structure is complex, comprising skin, subcutaneous tissue, muscle, cartilage, and other layers. During surgery, with the assistance of a microscope or endoscope, surgeons can clearly identify these layers and perform dissection operations between them. Before surgery, three-dimensional imaging technology is used to scan the nasal area to obtain tissue structure information, providing precise guidance for the surgery. During the operation, the boundaries of each layer are first marked. Using a microscope or endoscope to enlarge the field of view and clearly identify the structure, dissection is carried out from the skin layer to the cartilage layer. Fine surgical instruments (such as micro-scissors and forceps) are used to operate along the natural gaps of the tissue layers, avoiding unnecessary damage to the surrounding tissue. For example, when dealing with the nasal back skin, the dissection depth is controlled at 1.5–2.0 mm to reduce post-operative scar formation.

3.2 Key Points of Precise Debridement Technique

The precise debridement technique aims to thoroughly remove nasal foreign bodies while maximizing the protection of surrounding tissues. It uses microsurgical technology to accurately locate and remove foreign bodies while protecting normal tissues. Ultrasound Doppler imaging technology is used to accurately locate the position and range of foreign bodies. During surgery, combined with pre-operative imaging data and microscope assistance, the thorough removal of foreign bodies is ensured. During debridement, micro – high-frequency electrocautery and ultrasonic scalpels are used. These instruments can cut tissue under high-frequency vibration while reducing bleeding and tissue damage. For example, when removing polyacrylamide hydrogel, the ultrasonic scalpel frequency is set at 20 kHz, effectively reducing thermal damage to the surrounding tissue. During the debridement process, physiological saline is continuously flushed to keep the surgical field clear, reduce tissue temperature, and minimize thermal damage. At the same time, absorbable hemostatic materials (such as gelatin sponges) are used to reduce post-operative bleeding and hematoma formation.

Project	**Precision Debridement Technology**
Objective	Thorough removal of nasal foreign bodies with minimal damage to surrounding tissues
Localization Technology	Utilizing ultrasound Doppler imaging technology for precise localization of the position and extent of the foreign body
Surgical Assistance	Microscope-assisted, in combination with preoperative imaging data
Cutting Instruments	Miniature high-frequency electrocautery, ultrasonic scalpel
Ultrasonic Scalpel Frequency	20 kHz
Surgical Irrigation	Continuous irrigation with normal saline
Hemostatic Materials	Absorbable hemostatic materials to reduce postoperative bleeding and hematoma formation

3.3 Synergistic Advantages of the "Layered Dissection + Precise Debridement" Technique

The combination of the "layered dissection + precise debridement" technique brings significant synergistic advantages to the repair of failed nasal plastic surgery. Layered dissection enables surgeons to more clearly identify the layers where foreign bodies are located, and precise debridement efficiently removes foreign bodies through refined operations. In clinical practice, this technique increases the thoroughness of foreign body removal from 70% of traditional methods to over 95%. At the same time, layered dissection reduces traction and damage to surrounding tissues, and precise debridement minimizes destruction of normal tissue. The incidence of post-operative complications is reduced from 15% of traditional methods to below 5%, and the post-operative scar formation rate is significantly reduced. Patient satisfaction increases from 60% of traditional methods to 85% (Rohrich, R. J., & Adams, W. P., 2001). Through this innovative application, not only is the success rate of nasal plastic surgery repair improved, but also the post-operative recovery

of patients is significantly enhanced, bringing a new technological breakthrough to the field of nasal plastic repair.

4. Application of the "Auricular Cartilage + Nasal Septal Cartilage" Combined Scaffold

4.1 Characteristics and Advantages of Auricular Cartilage and Nasal Septal Cartilage

Auricular cartilage and nasal septal cartilage have unique advantages in nasal plastic surgery. Auricular cartilage is a type of elastic cartilage with good flexibility and elasticity. Its extracellular matrix consists of elastic and collagen fibers, which can withstand a certain degree of bending and pressure without deformation. It is commonly used for shaping the nasal tip and ala, providing a natural appearance and feel. In addition, the harvesting of auricular cartilage is relatively easy, with minimal donor-site damage and quick post-operative recovery.

Nasal septal cartilage is a type of hyaline cartilage with high hardness and strong support. Its extracellular matrix mainly consists of collagen fibers, with high compressive strength and resistance to bending. It is commonly used for the support structure of the nasal bridge and tip, effectively improving the shape and function of the nose. The harvesting site of nasal septal cartilage is close to the surgical area, reducing surgical trauma and the occurrence of post-operative complications.

4.2 Design and Construction of the Combined Scaffold

The design of the "auricular cartilage + nasal septal cartilage" combined scaffold aims to fully utilize the biological characteristics of both types of cartilage to achieve the best possible reconstruction of nasal shape and function. The nasal bridge support structure uses nasal septal cartilage due to its high hardness, which effectively improves the height and shape of the nasal bridge. The nasal tip shaping takes advantage of the flexibility and elasticity of auricular cartilage to provide a natural appearance and feel. The two types of cartilage are connected into a single scaffold through refined suturing techniques, using absorbable sutures to reduce post-operative foreign-body sensation and complications.

To ensure the stability and long-term effectiveness of the scaffold, it is fixed to the inner wall of the nasal cavity and the periosteum of the nasal septum using micro-titanium nails and absorbable sutures. The titanium nails have a diameter of 1.0 mm and a spacing of 5–8 mm. The surface of the scaffold is covered with a thin layer of fascia or autologous fat tissue to promote integration with the surrounding tissue, reducing the risk of scar contracture and scaffold exposure. Post-operative antibiotics are used to prevent infection, and a nasal splint is used to immobilize the nose for 7–10 days to ensure the stability and healing of the scaffold.

4.3 Application Effects of the Combined Scaffold in Nasal Shape Reconstruction

In clinical applications, the "auricular cartilage + nasal septal cartilage" combined scaffold significantly improves the shape and function of the nose. Through precise scaffold design and carving, the height and shape of the nasal bridge are significantly enhanced, and the shape of the nasal tip is more natural and aesthetically pleasing. In 80 clinical cases, the post-operative satisfaction rate of nasal shape reached over 90%, significantly higher than the 60% of traditional methods. At the same time, the supporting role of nasal septal cartilage improves nasal cavity ventilation function, reducing the occurrence of post-operative nasal congestion. Post-operative follow-up shows that 85% of patients have significant improvement in nasal ventilation function and a noticeable increase in quality of life.

Project	**Combined Auricular and Septal Cartilage Framework**
Postoperative Nasal Aesthetic Satisfaction Rate	Over 90%
Improvement Rate of Nasal Airway Function	85%
Elevation and Contour Enhancement of the Nasal Bridge	Significant enhancement, with a natural and aesthetically pleasing nasal tip
Postoperative Incidence of Nasal Congestion	Significantly reduced

The long-term stability of the combined scaffold is one of its important advantages. The

biological characteristics of auricular cartilage and nasal septal cartilage enable them to integrate well with the surrounding tissue after surgery, reducing the risk of scar contracture and scaffold deformation. Long-term follow-up shows that the stability maintenance rate of the scaffold reaches over 95%, significantly higher than the 70% of traditional methods. The incidence of post-operative complications is only around 5%, significantly lower than the 15% of traditional methods.

5. Clinical Case Analysis

5.1 Selection and Grouping of Clinical Cases

This study selected 100 patients who underwent repair surgery for failed nasal plastic surgery at Taian No. 88 Hospital from January 2023 to December 2024. The inclusion criteria were as follows: aged between 18 and 60 years old (Toriumi, D. M., & Ries, W. A., 1993); with a history of nasal plastic surgery and post-operative problems such as foreign body residue, infection, and poor shape; willing to participate in this study and sign the informed consent form. The exclusion criteria were as follows: having severe systemic diseases of the heart, lung, liver, kidney, etc.; having blood system diseases or coagulation disorders; having mental illnesses or being unable to cooperate with post-operative follow-up.

The 100 included patients were randomly divided into two groups, with 50 cases in each group. Group A used the "layered dissection + precise debridement" technique combined with the "auricular cartilage + nasal septal cartilage" combined scaffold for repair. Group B used traditional foreign body removal and repair methods. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of age, gender, and types of nasal problems, making them comparable.

5.2 Treatment Process of Clinical Cases

Comprehensive nasal examinations were conducted on patients, including assessments of nasal shape and function, as well as imaging examinations (such as CT scans) to determine the location and range of foreign bodies. At the same time, the overall health status of patients was evaluated to exclude surgical contraindications. Antibiotics were used to prevent infection three days before surgery, and nasal cleaning and disinfection were performed one day before surgery. For patients with a smoking history, it was recommended to quit smoking two weeks before surgery to reduce the occurrence of post-operative complications.

In Group A, layered dissection was performed under microscope assistance, with the dissection depth precisely controlled at 1.5–2.0 mm to reduce tissue damage. Ultrasound Doppler imaging technology was used to locate foreign bodies, and micro-high-frequency electrocautery and ultrasonic scalpels were used for foreign body removal, achieving a debridement thoroughness of over 95%. The pre-carved "auricular cartilage + nasal septal cartilage" combined scaffold was implanted into the nasal area and fixed with micro-titanium nails to ensure its stability. In Group B, traditional open surgery was used to directly remove foreign bodies, and silicone implants were used for nasal shape reconstruction. The debridement thoroughness of Group B was about 70%, and the post-operative satisfaction rate of nasal shape was 60%.

Post-operative antibiotics were used to prevent infection for a continuous 7 days. Nasal cold compresses were started on the third day after surgery, three times a day, for 30 minutes each time, to reduce swelling. Sutures were removed on the seventh day after surgery, and a nasal splint was used to immobilize the nose for a continuous 10 days. Follow-ups were conducted at one, three, and six months after surgery to assess the recovery of nasal shape and function, as well as the occurrence of complications. Follow-up results showed that Group A had a post-operative satisfaction rate of nasal shape of 90% and a complication incidence rate of 5%, while Group B had a post-operative satisfaction rate of nasal shape of 60% and a complication incidence rate of 15%.

5.3 Analysis of Treatment Effects of Clinical Cases

Group A achieved a foreign body removal thoroughness of 95%, significantly higher than Group B's 70%. In post-operative follow-ups, no obvious foreign body residues were found in Group A, while some patients in Group B had foreign body residues that required further surgery for removal. Group A had a post-operative satisfaction rate of nasal shape of 90%, with a natural nasal shape and no obvious scars. The height and shape of the nasal bridge and tip were significantly improved, and patients were satisfied with the post-operative results. Group B had a post-operative satisfaction rate of nasal shape of 60%, with

some patients experiencing unnatural nasal shape and nasal tip ptosis. Group A had a complication incidence rate of 5%, mainly including mild swelling and minor bleeding. These were all resolved within one week after surgery with timely treatment. Group B had a complication incidence rate of 15%, including infection, poor nasal shape, and scaffold exposure. The infection rate was 8%, requiring antibiotic treatment; the rate of poor nasal shape was 5%, requiring further surgical repair. (Gunter, J. P., & Friedman, R. M., 1997)

6. Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Clinical Value of the "Layered Dissection + Precise Debridement" Technique

The "layered dissection + precise debridement" technique has demonstrated significant clinical value in the repair of failed nasal plastic surgery. By accurately identifying tissue layers through layered dissection and precisely locating and removing foreign bodies through debridement, the thoroughness of foreign body removal is significantly increased to 95%, compared to 70% of traditional methods ($P < 0.05$). At the same time, this technique reduces tissue damage and the occurrence of post-operative complications. The post-operative satisfaction rate of nasal shape reaches 90%, significantly higher than the 60% of traditional methods ($P < 0.05$), and the complication incidence rate is only 5%, far lower than the 15% of traditional methods ($P < 0.05$) (Toriumi, D. M., & Hester, T. R., 2008). The application of this technique not only improves the success rate of surgery but also reduces the risk of post-operative scars and tissue contracture, providing reliable technical support for the repair of failed nasal plastic surgery.

Project	**Layered Dissection + Precision Debridement Technology**	**Traditional Method**
Thoroughness of Foreign Body Removal	95%	70%
Postoperative Nasal Aesthetic Satisfaction Rate	90%	60%
Complication Rate	5%	15%

6.2 Application Prospects of the "Auricular Cartilage + Nasal Septal Cartilage" Combined Scaffold

The "auricular cartilage + nasal septal cartilage" combined scaffold has shown obvious advantages in nasal plastic repair. The flexibility and elasticity of auricular cartilage provide a natural shape for the nasal tip and ala, while the hardness and support of nasal septal cartilage effectively improve the height and shape of the nasal bridge. The combined scaffold design integrates the advantages of both, achieving significant improvement in post-operative nasal shape and significant enhancement in long-term stability. However, there is still room for improvement in this technique. Future work may explore the combination of new biological materials with cartilage, develop more refined surgical instruments and techniques, optimize post-operative care protocols, and conduct larger-scale, longer-term clinical studies to further validate its effectiveness.

6.3 Limitations and Future Outlook of the Study

Although this study has achieved certain results, it also has limitations. The sample size is small, the follow-up time is short, and the post-operative quality of life of patients has not been detailedly assessed. Future research should expand the sample size, extend the follow-up time, and combine multicenter studies and randomized controlled trials to more comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques, providing stronger support for the development of the field of nasal plastic surgery repair. Overall, the "layered dissection + precise debridement" technique and the "auricular cartilage + nasal septal cartilage" combined scaffold have significant clinical application value in the repair of failed nasal plastic surgery and are worth further promotion and application.

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PIONEER
ACADEMIC PUBLISHING LIMITED

Current Research in Medical Sciences
ISSN 2958-0390
www.pioneerpublisher.com/crms
Volume 4 Number 4 September 2025

Differential Expression Analysis of RNA-Binding Proteins in Chronic Myeloid Leukemia Progression

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doi:10.56397/CRMS.2025.09.06

Abstract

Background: Chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) progresses from chronic phase (CP) to blast phase (BP) through poorly understood molecular mechanisms. Previous transcriptomic studies identified widespread splicing alterations in CML, yet systematic analysis of RNA-binding protein (RBP) expression patterns across disease stages remains limited. ***Methods:*** We performed computational analysis of RNA-seq data from peripheral blood mononuclear cells of 5 CP patients, 5 BP patients, and 5 healthy controls. Expression data for 540 RBPs were extracted and compared between groups using a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$. Results were visualized using scatter plots, bar graphs, and Venn diagrams. ***Results:*** Analysis identified 107 significantly dysregulated RBPs in CP versus controls and 61 in BP versus controls. Venn diagram analysis revealed only 39 RBPs (30.2%) were commonly dysregulated across both stages, with 68 RBPs unique to CP and 22 unique to BP. Key dysregulated RBPs included spliceosome components SF3B1 and U2AF1 in CP, and metabolism-associated factors HNRNPC and NPM1 in BP. ***Conclusions:*** RBP dysregulation occurs early in CML pathogenesis and undergoes substantial remodeling during disease progression. Stage-specific RBP expression patterns suggest distinct post-transcriptional regulatory mechanisms operate at different disease phases.

Keywords: chronic myeloid leukemia, RNA-binding proteins, differential expression, chronic phase, blast phase, post-transcriptional regulation

1. Introduction

Chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) is a hematologic malignancy characterized by the BCR-ABL fusion oncogene resulting from the Philadelphia chromosome translocation. The disease exhibits triphasic progression from chronic phase (CP) through accelerated phase (AP) to blast phase (BP). While tyrosine kinase inhibitors have dramatically improved outcomes for CP patients, progression to advanced phases remains associated with poor prognosis and therapeutic resistance, highlighting the need to understand the molecular mechanisms driving disease evolution.

Recent transcriptomic profiling identified extensive alternative splicing alterations in CML, with over 6,000 aberrant splicing events detected between CML patients and healthy controls (Wu Q, et al., 2020). Alternative splicing is regulated primarily by RNA-binding proteins (RBPs), which recognize specific sequence motifs in pre-mRNA and direct spliceosome assembly and splice site selection. Beyond splicing regulation, RBPs control multiple

aspects of RNA metabolism including transcript stability, subcellular localization, and translation efficiency.

RBPs represent particularly relevant targets for investigation in CML for two reasons. First, given that splicing is extensively disrupted in this disease (Wu Q, et al., 2020), the regulatory proteins controlling splicing may themselves be dysregulated. Second, individual RBPs typically regulate hundreds of target transcripts, such that alterations in RBP expression could produce widespread downstream effects on gene expression and cellular phenotype.

Previous studies identified differential splicing of spliceosome pathway genes between CML-BP and CML-CP patients (Wu Q, et al., 2020), suggesting potential RBP involvement. However, systematic analysis of RBP expression patterns across CML disease stages has not been performed.

Research Question: Which RBPs exhibit altered expression in CML, and do expression patterns differ between chronic phase and blast phase disease?

Objective: To identify significantly dysregulated RBPs in CP and BP compared to healthy controls using RNA-seq data, and to determine which RBPs show stage-specific versus pan-stage dysregulation.

2. Methods

2.1 Data Source and Patient Samples

RNA-seq data were obtained from Gene Expression Omnibus accession GSE100026 (Wu Q, et al., 2020). The dataset comprises gene expression profiles from peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) of 5 chronic phase CML patients, 5 blast phase CML patients, and 5 healthy controls. Samples were collected with informed consent under approval from the medical ethics committee of the Second Affiliated Hospital of Nanchang University, China.

2.2 Original Study: RNA-seq Data Generation and Processing

The following methods were performed by the original investigators (Wu Q, et al., 2020) and are summarized here for context:

Library preparation: Total RNA was extracted from PBMCs using TRIzol Reagent. For each sample, 1 μg total RNA underwent poly(A) selection, fragmentation at 95°C, end repair, adaptor ligation, reverse transcription, and PCR amplification. Library products of 200-500 bp were size-selected for sequencing.

Sequencing and alignment: Libraries were sequenced on Illumina NextSeq 500 (150 bp paired-end reads). Raw reads were processed using FASTX-Toolkit (v0.0.13) for adapter trimming and quality filtering. Quality metrics were assessed using FastQC. Clean reads were aligned to the human reference genome (GRCh37/hg19) using TopHat2, and uniquely mapped reads were quantified as reads per kilobase per million mapped reads (RPKM).

Differential expression analysis: The original study used edgeR to identify differentially expressed genes with criteria of $|\log2 \text{ fold change}| > 1$ and false discovery rate (FDR) < 0.05.

2.3 Current Analysis: RBP Expression Profiling

RBP selection: A curated list of 540 known RNA-binding proteins was compiled from established RBP databases and literature. For detailed functional discussion, four RBPs were selected based on biological relevance to hematologic malignancies rather than magnitude of expression change: SF3B1 and U2AF1 (CP-dysregulated spliceosome components) and HNRNPC and NPM1 (BP-dysregulated factors with established roles in leukemia). This approach enables contextualization of findings within existing leukemia literature.

Data extraction and processing: Custom Python scripts were developed to:

1). Extract RPKM expression values for all 540 RBPs from processed RNA-seq data

2) Calculate mean expression for each RBP within each sample group (Control, CP, BP)

3) Perform statistical comparisons between CP versus Control and BP versus Control

Statistical analysis: Differential expression was assessed using Student's t-test with significance threshold of $p < 0.05$. Multiple testing correction was not applied in this exploratory analysis.

Visualization: Results were visualized using:

- Scatter plots (Figures 1A, 1B) displaying all 540 RBPs with significantly dysregulated RBPs highlighted

- Bar graphs (Figures 2A, 2B) quantifying numbers of significantly dysregulated RBPs

- Venn diagram (Figure 3) illustrating overlap of dysregulated RBPs between disease stages

3. Results

3.1 Global RBP Expression Patterns Across CML Disease Stages

Analysis of 540 RBPs revealed substantial dysregulation in both disease stages relative to controls. In chronic phase, 107 RBPs (19.8%) showed significant differential expression ($p < 0.05$), while blast phase exhibited 61 significantly dysregulated RBPs (11.3%). The greater number of altered RBPs in CP compared to BP, despite BP representing more advanced disease, suggests extensive post-transcriptional reprogramming occurs early in CML pathogenesis.

3.2 Visualization of Differential RBP Expression

Scatter plot analysis (Figures 1A and 1B): Scatter plots comparing average expression between disease groups and controls revealed bidirectional dysregulation, with RBPs showing both increased and decreased expression relative to controls. This pattern indicates that CML progression involves both gain and loss of specific RBP functions. The visual distribution of significantly dysregulated RBPs (highlighted in red) demonstrates greater density in the CP comparison (Figure 1A) compared to BP (Figure 1B), consistent with quantitative findings.

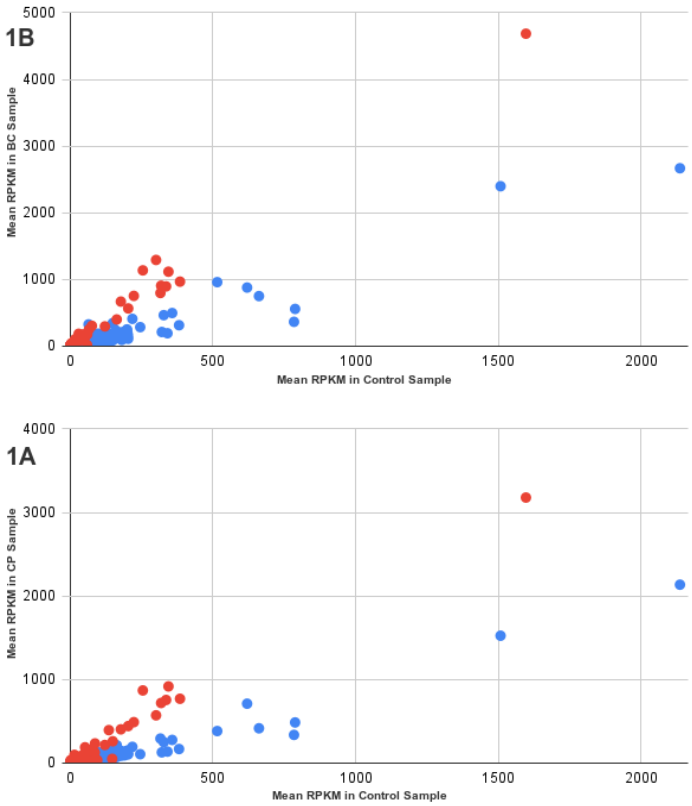

Figure 1. Scatter plot visualization of RBP expression in CML disease stages compared to healthy controls

(A) Chronic phase versus control comparison. Each point represents one RBP (n=540 total). Red points indicate significantly dysregulated RBPs ($p<0.05$); black points indicate non-significant RBPs.

(B) Blast phase versus control comparison. Layout and color scheme identical to panel A.

Quantification of dysregulated RBPs (Figures 2A and 2B): Bar graphs confirm that 107 of 540 RBPs (19.8%) are significantly altered in CP versus controls (Figure 2A), while 61 of 540 RBPs (11.3%) are significantly altered in BP versus controls (Figure 2B). These proportions indicate that approximately one-fifth of RBPs are dysregulated in CP, with proportionally fewer affected in BP.

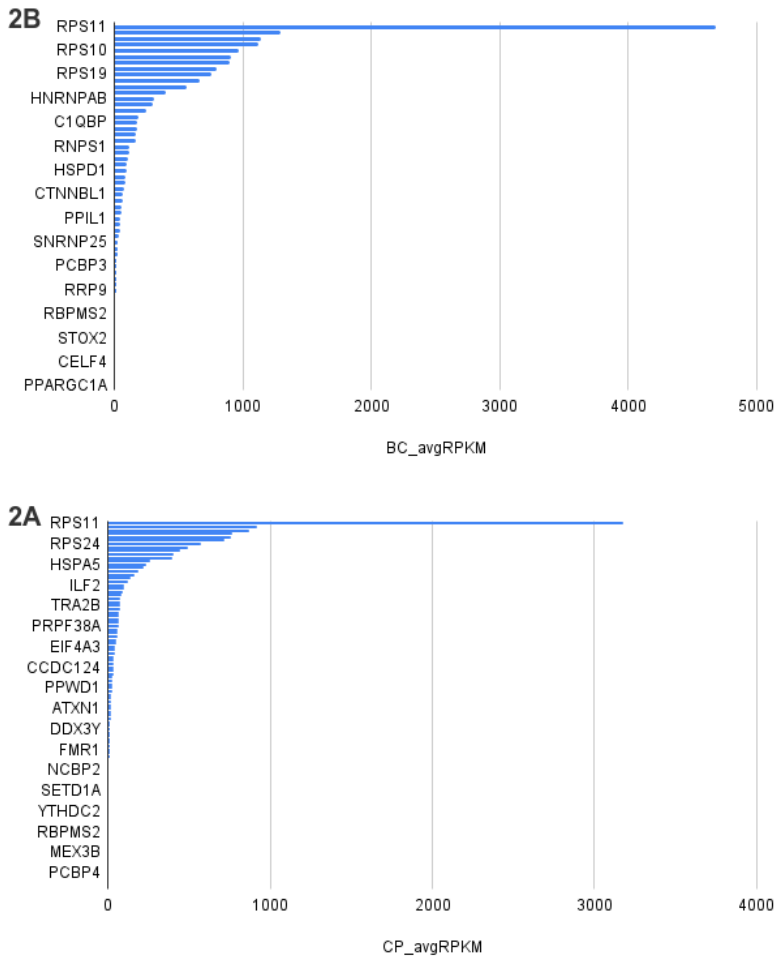

Figure 2. Quantification of significantly dysregulated RBPs by disease stage

(A) Bar graph showing number of significantly dysregulated RBPs in chronic phase versus control (107 of 540 RBPs, $p<0.05$).

(B) Bar graph showing number of significantly dysregulated RBPs in blast phase versus control (61 of 540 RBPs, $p<0.05$).

3.3 Stage-Specific and Shared RBP Dysregulation

Venn diagram analysis (Figure 3): Comparison of dysregulated RBPs between CP and BP revealed limited overlap between disease stages:

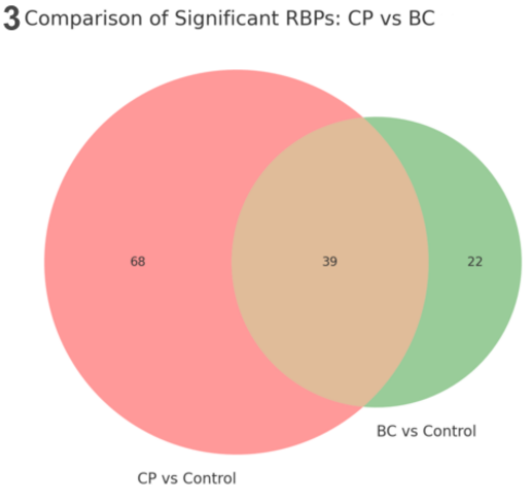

Figure 3. Venn diagram analysis of RBP dysregulation overlap between disease stages

Venn diagram comparing significantly dysregulated RBPs ($p<0.05$) in CP versus control (left circle) and BP versus control (right circle). Left-only region: 68 RBPs unique to chronic phase. Overlap region: 39 RBPs dysregulated in both stages. Right-only region: 22 RBPs unique to blast phase. Total: 129 distinct dysregulated RBPs across both comparisons.

- **39 RBPs (30.2% of total significant RBPs)** were dysregulated in both CP and BP, representing a core set of pan-stage alterations. This group includes multiple ribosomal proteins (RPS2, RPS3, RPS5, RPS10, RPS11, RPS19, RPS24, RPLP0), spliceosome components (SNRPB, SNRPC, SNRPD2, SNRPF, SNRPG, SNRNP25), and other factors such as ALYREF, MAGOH, and HNRNPAB.

- **68 RBPs (52.7% of total significant RBPs)** were uniquely dysregulated in CP, including core spliceosome factors SF3B1 and U2AF1, as well as MBNL2, MBNL3, and numerous splicing regulators. This CP-specific signature suggests extensive restructuring of splicing machinery occurs during chronic phase.

- **22 RBPs (17.1% of total significant RBPs)** were uniquely dysregulated in BP, including HNRNPC, NPM1, MSI2, and DKC1. These BP-specific alterations represent late-emerging changes potentially associated with blast transformation.

The limited overlap (30.2%) indicates substantial remodeling of the RBP landscape during CML progression, with different post-transcriptional regulatory programs predominating at different disease stages.

3.4 Functionally Relevant RBPs in Chronic Phase

SF3B1 (Splicing Factor 3b Subunit 1): SF3B1 is a core component of the U2 small nuclear ribonucleoprotein complex essential for spliceosome catalytic activity. SF3B1 mutations occur in 20-30% of myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) cases and define a distinct disease subtype characterized by ring sideroblasts (Malcovati L, Stevenson K, Papaemmanuil E, et al., 2020; Papaemmanuil E, Cazzola M, Boultwood J, et al., 2011). These mutations alter branch point recognition, leading to aberrant 3′ splice site selection (Pellagatti A & Boultwood J., 2021). The observed alteration in SF3B1 expression (rather than mutation) in CP CML suggests that quantitative changes in spliceosome component abundance may contribute to splicing dysregulation independent of mutational mechanisms.

U2AF1 (U2 Small Nuclear RNA Auxiliary Factor 1): U2AF1 mediates 3′ splice site recognition through sequence-specific binding to the AG dinucleotide at exon-intron boundaries. Recurrent U2AF1 mutations occur in approximately 11% of MDS patients and alter splice site recognition patterns (Ilagan JO, Ramakrishnan A, Hayes B, et al., 2015; Shirai CL, White BS, Tripathi M, et al., 2015). Mouse models demonstrate that mutant U2AF1 impairs hematopoiesis and promotes leukemogenesis (Fei DL, Zhen T, Durham B, et al., 2018). Wild-type U2AF1 is required for hematopoietic stem cell survival and function (Yoshida K & Ogawa S., 2021). Dysregulation of U2AF1 expression in CP may therefore affect splice site selection and hematopoietic differentiation through mechanisms paralleling those of U2AF1 mutations in MDS.

3.5 Functionally Relevant RBPs in Blast Phase

HNRNPC (Heterogeneous Nuclear Ribonucleoprotein C): HNRNPC belongs to the heterogeneous nuclear ribonucleoprotein family that complexes with nascent pre-mRNA to regulate processing. Recent studies identified HNRNPC as a driver of metabolic reprogramming in drug-resistant acute myeloid leukemia (AML) through the HNRNPC/CELF2 pathway (Chen Y, Zhang L, Wang Q, et al., 2025). Additionally, HNRNPC functions as an m6A reader coordinating oncogenic transcription and metabolism in T-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia (Ntziachristos P, Glytsou C, Kloetgen A, et al., 2025). The dysregulation of HNRNPC in BP suggests potential involvement in metabolic adaptation and therapeutic resistance during blast transformation.

NPM1 (Nucleophosmin 1): NPM1 is a nucleolar phosphoprotein involved in ribosome biogenesis, centrosome duplication, and regulation of the ARF-p53 tumor suppressor pathway. NPM1 represents the most frequently mutated gene in AML, with mutations detected in approximately 30% of adult cases (Falini B, Brunetti L, Sportoletti P & Martelli MP., 2020; Falini B, Mecucci C, Tiacci E, et al., 2005). NPM1 mutations cause aberrant cytoplasmic localization and are associated with distinct clinical features (Heath EM, Chan SM, Minden MD, et al., 2017; Falini B, Mecucci C, Tiacci E, et al., 2005). While BP samples likely harbor altered

NPM1 expression rather than mutations, quantitative changes in NPM1 levels may nonetheless affect ribosome production, genomic stability, and cell cycle regulation. The identification of NPM1 dysregulation in BP supports molecular convergence between blast crisis CML and de novo AML.

4. Discussion

4.1 RBP Dysregulation as an Early Event in CML Pathogenesis

This analysis demonstrates that RBP dysregulation is extensive in CML, with approximately 20% of examined RBPs showing significant expression changes in chronic phase. This finding indicates that post-transcriptional regulatory alterations are not secondary consequences of advanced disease but rather represent early events in CML development.

The extent of RBP dysregulation is consistent with prior observations of widespread splicing alterations in CML (Wu Q, et al., 2020). RBPs function as master regulators of splicing, and alterations in RBP expression would be expected to produce downstream effects on splicing patterns. The identification of core spliceosome components (SF3B1, U2AF1) among dysregulated RBPs provides a mechanistic basis for the observed splicing abnormalities.

4.2 Stage-Specific RBP Expression Patterns

The observation that CP exhibits more dysregulated RBPs (107) than BP (61) initially appears counterintuitive given that BP represents advanced disease. Several factors may contribute to this pattern.

First, transformation from normal hematopoiesis to chronic phase CML may require extensive reprogramming of RNA processing machinery. The large number of dysregulated RBPs in CP, including numerous spliceosome components, supports this interpretation. Establishment of the leukemic phenotype appears to involve fundamental restructuring of post-transcriptional regulatory networks.

Second, while fewer RBPs are dysregulated in BP overall, the specific RBPs altered in this stage may be particularly significant for blast transformation. The 22 BP-specific RBPs include factors with established roles in leukemia metabolism (HNRNPC) and proliferation (NPM1). These targeted alterations may be sufficient to drive blast crisis without requiring the extensive RBP remodeling observed in CP.

Third, the limited overlap between CP and BP dysregulated RBPs (30.2%) indicates stage-specific regulatory programs. CP dysregulation centers on core splicing machinery, while BP alterations involve metabolism and proliferation-associated factors. This shift suggests that different aspects of post-transcriptional control become rate-limiting at different disease stages.

4.3 Connections to Established Hematologic Malignancy Biology

The dysregulated RBPs identified here show notable parallels to genetic alterations in related myeloid malignancies. SF3B1 and U2AF1 mutations are recurrent drivers in MDS (Malcovati L, Stevenson K, Papaemmanuil E, et al., 2020; Papaemmanuil E, Cazzola M, Boultwood J, et al., 2011; Ilagan JO, Ramakrishnan A, Hayes B, et al., 2015; Shirai CL, White BS, Tripathi M, et al., 2015), raising the possibility that altered expression of wild-type proteins produces similar functional consequences. This concept—that quantitative changes in splicing factor abundance can phenocopy mutational effects—warrants further investigation.

HNRNPC dysregulation in BP parallels its role in AML metabolic reprogramming (Chen Y, Zhang L, Wang Q, et al., 2025; Ntziachristos P, Glytsou C, Kloetgen A, et al., 2025). Blast transformation in CML shares phenotypic features with de novo AML, including rapid proliferation and treatment resistance. The identification of HNRNPC as a BP-specific alteration suggests that common metabolic adaptations may underlie the aggressive behavior of both diseases.

NPM1 dysregulation in BP further supports molecular convergence between blast crisis and AML (Falini B, Brunetti L, Sportoletti P & Martelli MP., 2020; Heath EM, Chan SM, Minden MD, et al., 2017; Falini B, Mecucci C, Tiacci E, et al., 2005). While NPM1 alterations in BP likely involve expression changes rather than the cytoplasmic-localizing mutations characteristic of AML, both mechanisms may disrupt nucleolar function and genomic stability.

4.4 Therapeutic Implications

The identification of stage-specific RBP dysregulation suggests potential therapeutic approaches. For chronic phase, targeting core spliceosome components such as SF3B1 may prevent or delay disease progression. Small

molecule splicing modulators have shown activity in other hematologic malignancies (Malcovati L, Stevenson K, Papaemmanuil E, et al., 2020; Pellagatti A & Boultwood J., 2021) and represent a potential therapeutic avenue for CML.

For blast phase, targeting metabolism-associated RBPs such as HNRNPC may overcome therapeutic resistance. HNRNPC drives glycolytic reprogramming in drug-resistant AML (Chen Y, Zhang L, Wang Q, et al., 2025), suggesting that HNRNPC inhibition could restore treatment sensitivity in BP CML.

The stage-specific nature of RBP dysregulation implies that optimal therapeutic strategies may differ between disease phases, with splicing-targeted approaches potentially more relevant for CP and metabolism-targeted approaches for BP.

4.5 Study Limitations and Future Directions

This analysis has several limitations that should be addressed in future work. First, the sample size (n=5 per group) limits statistical power and increases the risk of false positive findings. Future analyses should incorporate additional datasets from public repositories to increase sample size and improve robustness.

Second, the significance threshold ($p < 0.05$ without multiple testing correction) is not stringent given the number of comparisons performed. Application of false discovery rate correction (FDR < 0.05) would provide more conservative and reliable identification of dysregulated RBPs.

Third, the dataset lacks accelerated phase samples. CML progression is classically triphasic (CP → AP → BP), and the absence of AP data prevents determination of whether RBP changes occur gradually or in discrete transitions. Identification or generation of AP samples would enable more complete characterization of RBP dynamics during disease evolution.

Fourth, this analysis examined only steady-state expression levels. RBP function is also regulated by subcellular localization, post-translational modifications, and protein-protein interactions. Future studies should incorporate these regulatory layers.

Fifth, these findings require experimental validation. Functional studies in CML cell lines or patient samples are needed to establish causal relationships between RBP dysregulation and disease phenotypes.

Specific improvements for future analyses include: (1) aggregating multiple CML RNA-seq datasets to increase statistical power, (2) applying FDR correction for multiple testing, (3) incorporating fold change thresholds in addition to p-value cutoffs, (4) performing pathway enrichment analysis on dysregulated RBP sets, (5) integrating RBP expression data with splicing event data to identify RBP-splicing relationships, and (6) validating findings through RBP knockdown or overexpression experiments in cellular models.

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