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Medication Management Of Diabetes Mellitus Evidence And Practice: A Comprehensive Review

Swami Vaishnavi * (Pharm D second year student), Dr Vanita Wadewale (Assistant Professor), Suryawanshi Vishal (Pharma D second year student)

Pharmacy practice department, Shivlingeshwar College of Pharmacy,Almala, Dist. . Latur, 413512, Maharashtra, India

Abstract

The etiology, pathophysiology, and medication management of type 1 and type 2 diabetes mellitus are the main topics of this review. Insulin resistance and decreased insulin secretion brought on by genetic and lifestyle factors cause type 2 diabetes, whereas type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that kills pancreatic beta cells, resulting in insulin insufficiency. Insulin therapy is the mainstay of type 1 diabetes management, with the help of newer alternatives like islet transplantation, stem cell therapy, and gene-based therapies. Oral and injectable drugs like metformin, sulfonylureas, thiazolidinediones, alfa glucosidase inhibitors, DPP 4 inhibitors, SGLT 2 inhibitors and GLP 1 receptor agonists are used to treat type 2 diabetes. Effective glycemic control and the avoidance of complications from diabetes depend on combination therapy and lifestyle changes.

Keywords Diabetes mellitus, Medication management, Pathophysiology, Etiology, Classification, Innovative therapies.

Introduction

A chronic, progressive metabolic disease, diabetes mellitus (DM) is typified by persistent hyperglycemia brought on by deficiencies in either insulin action or secretion, or both. While glucagon, which is secreted by α-cells, raises blood glucose levels by inducing the breakdown of glycogen, insulin, which is produced by pancreatic β-cells, lowers blood glucose by encouraging its uptake and storage. Insulin resistance or insufficiency causes problems with the metabolism of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates.

Globally, diabetes mellitus is the most prevalent endocrine disorder, presenting significant health, social, and financial obstacles. It is predicted that by 2025, there will be 69.9 million cases in India, up from 40.9 million. 80–90% of all cases of diabetes are type 2, which is frequently associated with metabolic, cardiovascular, and obesity disorders. Sedentary lifestyle, genetic predisposition, and regional variations all play a part in its prevalence and complications.

Since the late 1970s, WHO and ADA have worked to standardize diabetes diagnostic criteria and classification systems, improving definitions and identifying related conditions such as metabolic syndrome. In order to combat the rising diabetes epidemic, these updates seek to enhance diagnosis, treatment, and international health initiatives.

Classification

There are four types of diabetes mellitus

Type 1 Diabetes

An autoimmune condition where the body's immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys the insulin producing beta cells in the pancreas, leading to insulin deficiency. This form of diabetes is most diagnosed in children, adolescents, and young adults, although it can occur at any age. Individuals with type 1 DM require lifelong insulin therapy to manage their condition.

Type 2 Diabetes

The most common type of diabetes, which accounts for about 90% of all cases of diabetes. T2DM is Insulin resistance is a condition in which the body's Insulin does not have an effective effect on cells. With time, Additionally, the pancreas may become incapable of producing enough insulin to fulfill the body's requirements. T2DM is usually connected to physical aging, obesity, and inactivity and elements of an unhealthy lifestyle, like unhealthy eating patterns.

Gestational Diabetes mellitus

A type of diabetes that appears in pregnant women and usually goes away after giving birth. Women who has history of GDM are more susceptible to acquiring type 2 diabetes in later years. GDM is linked to a higher chance of complications for the growing fetus and the mother.

Other specific types

Additional Particular Types these consist of genetic flaws in the function of beta cells. Genetic flaws in the way insulin functions, illnesses of the exocrine pancreas (like cystic fibrosis), as well as medication or chemically caused diabetes (steroid-induced, for example) diabetes mellitus. There are different levels of severity for diabetes, and requirements for treatment.

Etiology

The study of the causes and origins of disease is known as etiology, which comes from the Greek word aetiologia. A complex interplay of genetic, immunologic, viral, and metabolic factors that affect insulin secretion or action is the etiology of diabetes mellitus (DM). The primary cause of juvenile-onset (Type 1) diabetes is autoimmune, wherein the death of pancreatic β-cells leads to complete insulin insufficiency. By causing morphological damage to islet cells, viral infections like Coxsackie B, mumps, and rubella may be a contributing factor. Additionally, there is a clear genetic predisposition that makes some people more vulnerable to these viral or immune insults.

In Type 2 diabetes, aberrant β-cell glucose receptors or reduced insulin sensitivity in peripheral tissues impair insulin secretion and action. Important mechanisms include down-regulation of insulin receptors, hyperinsulinemia, and insulin resistance, particularly in adipose, muscle, and liver tissue. Obesity and excess glucagon make relative insulin insufficiency worse. Other rare causes include specific genetic defects (MODY), gestational diabetes, endocrine disorders, and pancreatectomy. Among the enzymes and receptors that are out of balance are GLP-1, PPARγ, β_3-adrenergic receptors, α-glucosidase, and DPP-IV. According to recent research, oxidative stress, advanced glycation end products, the polyol pathway, and protein kinase C activation all play a role in diabetic neuropathy and other complications.

Table 1. Some causes of insulin resistance.

S/No.	Causes
1	Obesity/overweight (especially excess visceral adiposity)
2	Excess glucorticoids (cushing's syndrome or steroid therapy)
3	Excess growth hormone (acromegaly)
4	Pregnancy, gestational diabetes
5	Polycystic ovary disease
6	Lipodystrophy (acquired or genetic, associated with lipid accumulation in liver)
7	Autoantibodies to the insulin receptor
8	Mutations of insulin receptor
9	Mutations of the peroxisome proliferators' activator receptor γ (PPAR γ)
10	Mutations that cause genetic obesity (e.g., melanocortin receptor mutations)
11	Hemochromatosis (a hereditary disease that causes tissue iron accumulation).

Source: Guyton and Hall (2006).

Pathogenesis

Type 1 diabetes mellitus

T-cell-mediated immune responses cause the death of pancreatic β-cells in type 1 diabetes mellitus, an autoimmune disease. β-cell damage is caused by cytokines like IL-1, TNF-α, and IFN-γ released by CD4+ and CD8+ T cells and macrophages. Additionally, autoantibodies and HLA class II genes are genetic factors. Nitric oxide-induced cytotoxicity, immunological dysregulation, and inflammation all contribute to the process, which gradually reduces the production of insulin.

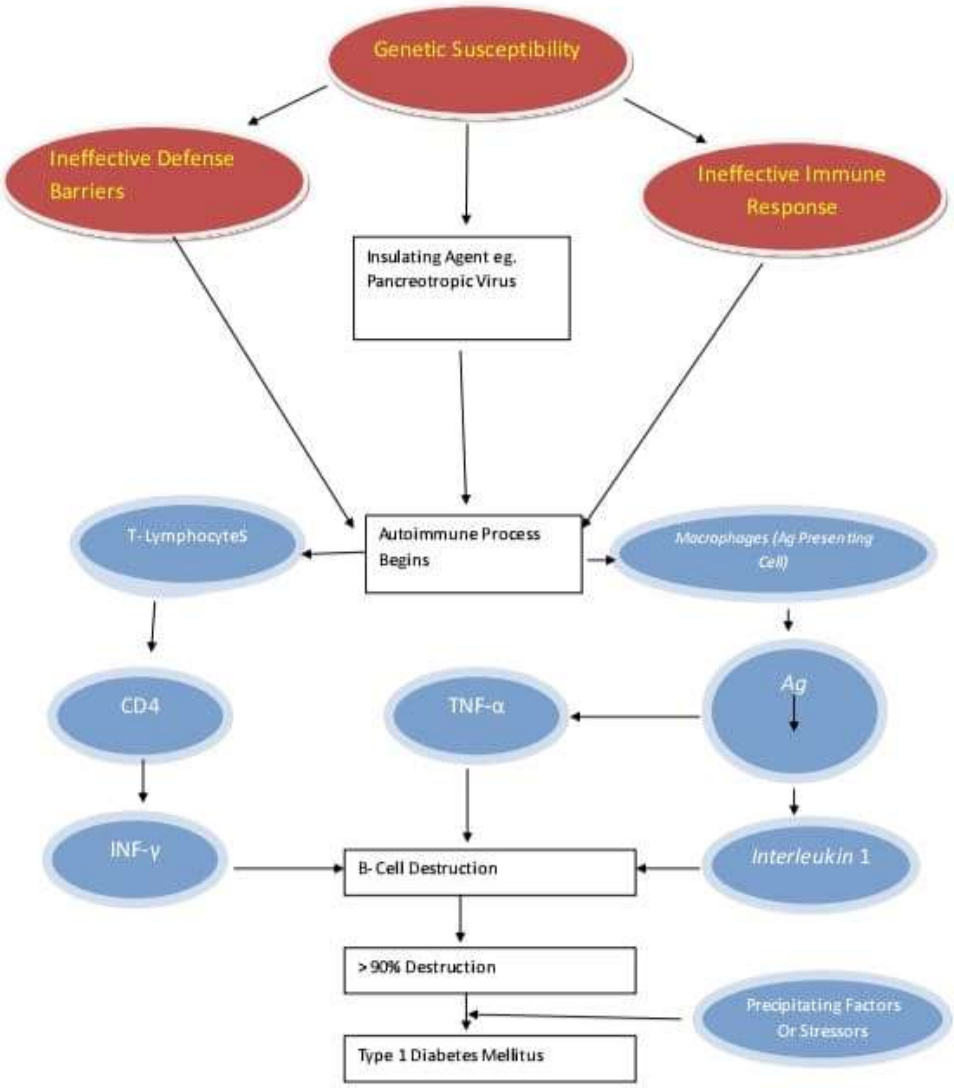


Figure 1. Pathogenesis of type 1 diabetes mellitus.

Type 2 diabetes mellitus

Type 2 diabetes mellitus, which is characterized by consistently elevated blood sugar levels, is brought on by insulin resistance and compromised β-cell function. It is heavily impacted by environmental and genetic factors, with obesity, a high-fat diet, and inactivity playing a significant role. Mutations in the glucokinase gene result in a genetic subtype known as MODY. The pancreatic changes that cause hyperglucagonemia include amyloid deposition, β-cell loss, and α-cell proliferation. Lifestyle factors, defects in the glucose transporter, and mutations in the genes encoding insulin or its receptors further impair insulin action. Type 2 diabetes is typically brought on by a combination of genetic abnormalities, metabolic stress, and insulin resistance.

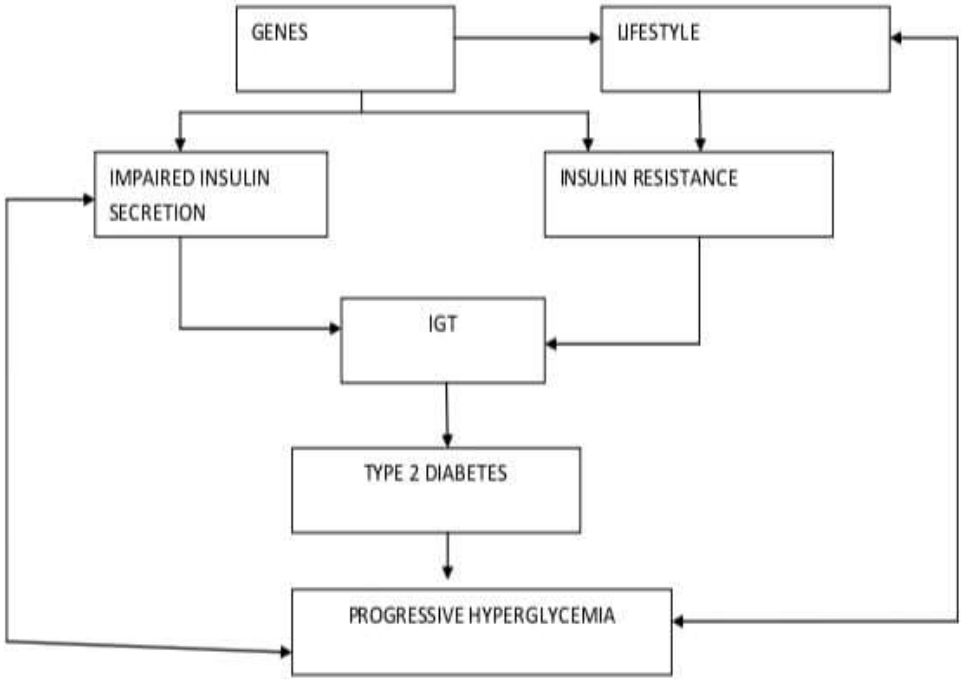


Figure 2. Pathogenesis of type 2 diabetes characterized by impaired insulin secretion and insulin resistance

Treatment

The pharmacological treatment of diabetes mellitus includes several drug classes

1. Insulin preparations
2. Biguanides
3. Sulfonylureas
4. Meglitinides
5. Thiazolidinediones
6. DPP-4 inhibitors
7. SGLT2 inhibitors
8. Alpha glucosidase inhibitors
9. GLP-1 receptor agonists

1. Insulin preparations

Persistent hyperglycemia brought on by deficiencies in insulin secretion, action, or both characterizes diabetes mellitus, a chronic metabolic disease that impairs the metabolism of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. It affects about 246 million people worldwide and is expected to reach 380 million cases by 2025, making it a serious health concern.

There are primarily two kinds:

The autoimmune destruction of pancreatic β-cells causes Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM), which results in little to no insulin production. Children and young adults are primarily affected, and insulin therapy is necessary for the rest of one's life. Its onset is caused by a combination of environmental and genetic factors, including diet, obesity, and viral infections.

Insulin resistance and relative insulin deficiency are the hallmarks of type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), which is typically identified in adults over 40. It is associated with aging, obesity, and inactivity. Medication, lifestyle changes, and occasionally insulin therapy are all part of the treatment.

2. Biguanides

For patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), metformin is the first-line treatment, either alone or in combination, according to the most recent ADA/EASD and AACE/ACE guidelines. Metformin's potent glucose-lowering action, affordability, lack of adverse effects, and neutral or advantageous impact on body weight all lend credence to this recommendation. Metformin's advantages are further supported by data from the UK Perspective Diabetes Study (UKPDS), which demonstrates notable decreases in all-cause mortality (36%), diabetes-related deaths (42%), and diabetes-related endpoints (32%). Patients with type 2 diabetes who are normal weight or obese can benefit from metformin.

3. Sulfonylureas

The perfect anti-diabetic should provide glycemic control, a low risk of adverse effects, and affordability and ease of use. SUs are proven glucose-lowering medications that act on pancreatic β-cells in an insulinotropic manner. Newer SUs have been created since tolbutamide was first introduced in 1956, and they are generally categorized according to how well they bind to sulfonylurea receptor (SUR) proteins. Their popularity has been aided by the availability of contemporary SUs (glimepiride, glipizide, gliclazide MR, and gliclazide modified release [MR]) that are more effective and have fewer side effects. While SUs' mode of action is widely known, there has been discussion regarding their safety. According to recent reviews and retrospective analyses, SUs may result in weight gain and hypoglycemia. Additionally, some SUs are thought to contribute to non-fatal cardiovascular (CV) outcomes and all-cause mortality, raise the risk of ischemic complications, and speed up β-cell apoptosis. The current consensus aims to resolve their safety concerns.

4. Meglitinides

Meglitinides are helpful for people with type 2 diabetes who have irregular mealtime schedules and experience hypoglycemia when taking sulfonylureas because of their short half-life. Meglitinides can also be used to prevent hypoglycemia in older adults who are unable to take insulin and in people who are allergic to sulfonylureas. Another advantage of meglitinides is their flexibility compared with sulfonylureas because of their faster onset and shorter duration of action. Additionally, meglitinides don't seem to be linked to a rise in adverse events or cardiovascular mortality.

While weight gain is comparable to that of sulfonylureas, meglitinides may cause hypoglycemia less frequently because, in contrast to sulfonylureas, meglitinides do not cause chronic hyperinsulinemia. In addition to causing more weight gain than nateglinide, repaglinide is more frequently linked to hypoglycemia. However, when nateglinide and metformin were compared with a placebo, results from a recent meta-analysis of clinical trials indicated a higher risk of hypoglycemia.

5. Thiazolidinediones

Insulin resistance and β cell failure are hallmarks of type 2 diabetes (T2DM), and the only antidiabetic medications currently available that primarily work by improving insulin sensitivity are thiazolidinedione drugs (TZDs). However, because of worries about adverse events and side effects, this class of medications has recently become less popular. Their use in ambulatory diabetes visits shows the rise and fall of TZDs, which went from 6% in 1997 to 41% in 2005 and then to 16% in 2012. Given the abundance of alternative treatment options, anecdotal evidence points to an even steeper decline since then, with even diabetes specialists now using TZDs sparingly.

6. DPP-4 inhibitors

New targets for type 2 diabetes management have been identified by research on gut hormones, specifically the incretin effect. When food is consumed, the release of insulin from pancreatic β-cells is stimulated by gut hormones, primarily glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) and glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP). In the distal small intestine, L cells secrete GLP-1, whereas K cells in the proximal small intestine secrete GIP.

Due to the action of gut hormones, the incretin effect is the term used to describe increased insulin secretion following oral glucose intake as opposed to IV glucose. This effect is diminished in type 2 diabetes, primarily due to a decrease in GIP activity, while GLP-1 function is partially maintained. GLP-1 reduces blood sugar in several ways:

Increasing the secretion of insulin

lowering the release of glucagon

Delaying the emptying of the stomach

Encouraging fullness

promoting β-cell proliferation and decreasing apoptosis

However, the enzyme DPP-4 breaks down GLP-1 quickly (half-life <2 minutes). To improve glucose control in patients with type 2 diabetes, GLP-1 action is prolonged by DPP-4 inhibitors like saxagliptin and sitagliptin.

7. SGLT2 inhibitors

SGLT2 inhibitors were first created to treat people with type 2 diabetes mellitus, but they have lately shown promise as treatments for other illnesses. Currently, this class of medications is being studied in patients with heart failure, chronic kidney disease, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) who are also diabetic. In order to achieve appropriate and truly individualized patient care, the phenotype of the individual as well as the heterogeneous response to treatments should be taken into consideration when selecting a drug therapy for metabolic disorders and cardiovascular disease.a

8. Alfa glucosidase inhibitors

Acarbose (Glucobay®), miglitol (Glyset®), and voglibose (Volix®, Basen®) are examples of alpha-glucosidase inhibitors (AGIs) that work by reversibly blocking intestinal alpha-glucosidase enzymes like maltase. Because of this, complex carbs take longer to digest and absorb, which causes blood glucose levels to rise more slowly after meals. Additionally, recent research indicates that AGIs improve glucose regulation by promoting colonic starch fermentation, which has additional metabolic effects. Postprandial hyperglycemia, a significant risk factor for cardiovascular complications in type 2 diabetes, is especially well-managed by these medications. Therefore, in certain patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus, AGIs may be regarded as first-line treatment. Only a few instances of hepatic damage have been documented, and they are usually well tolerated with no risk of weight gain or hypoglycemia.

9. GLP-1 receptor agonists

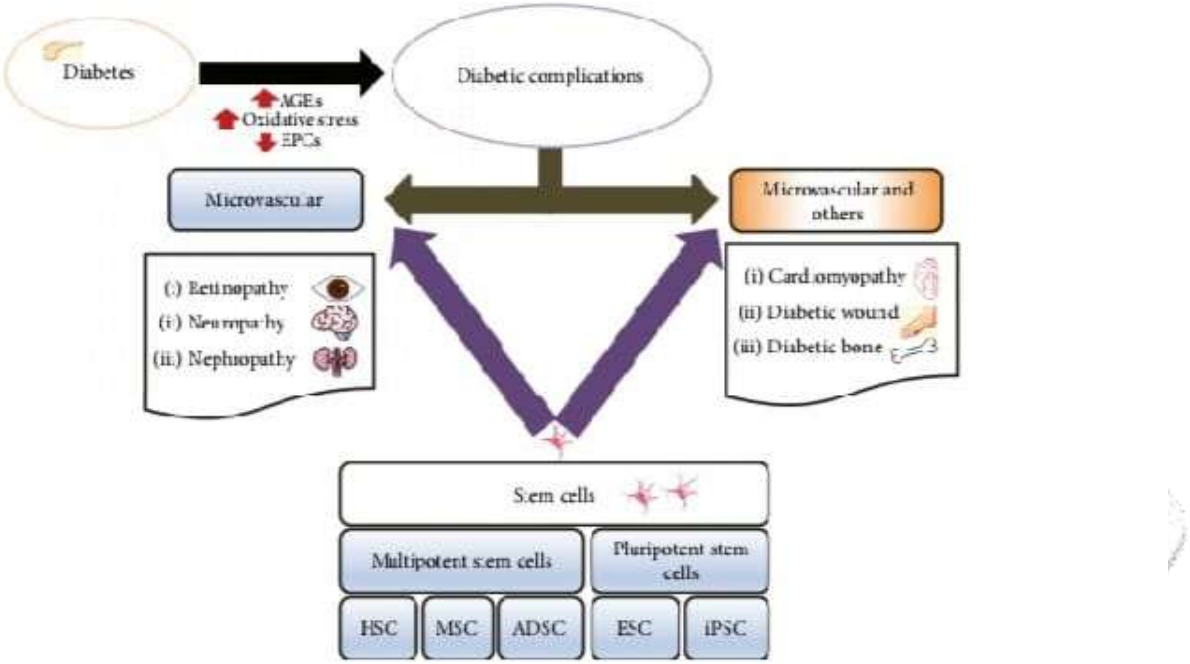
By activating the GLP-1 receptor, a G-protein-coupled receptor expressed in the brain, heart, kidney, and pancreatic β-cells, glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists produce a variety of effects. These substances improve glycemic control and aid in weight loss by increasing glucose-dependent insulin secretion, inhibiting glucagon release, delaying stomach emptying, and encouraging satiety. In addition to its glycemic effects, GLP-1 receptor signaling protects the kidneys and heart, reduces inflammation, and affects the central regulation of appetite. In patients with type 2 diabetes, long-acting GLP-1 receptor agonists maintain therapeutic benefits and lower significant adverse cardiovascular events. Drucker's review emphasizes the tissue-specific actions and intracellular signaling pathways that underpin these benefits, highlighting their expanding role in metabolic disease management.

Islet transplantation

In order to restore insulin production in individuals with type 1 diabetes, isolated pancreatic islets are infused into the liver through the portal vein. It lowers the risk of hypoglycemia and improves glycemic control. However, the need for lifelong immunosuppression, variable graft longevity, and donor islet scarcity limit its widespread use. Developments include the investigation of alternative sources, such as islets derived from stem cells, and encapsulation technologies to shield islets from immune attack. Islet transplantation is a major step toward functional β-cell replacement and an improved quality of life for some patients, even though it is not yet a cure.

Stem cell therapy

By regenerating insulin-producing β-cells, stem cell therapy aims to restore endogenous insulin secretion in diabetics. Embryonic stem cells and induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) are a renewable source for transplantation because of their capacity to differentiate into β-like cells. The immune modulatory potential of mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) is also encouraging. However, there are challenges in achieving full maturation and glucose responsiveness as well as avoiding tumor formation or immunological rejection. Current research focuses on safety and differentiation protocol optimization. This approach may be able to achieve long-term glycemic control, especially in people with type 1 diabetes who have autoimmune β-cell destruction.



Gene therapy

Gene therapy in diabetes aims to correct or compensate for genetic or functional β-cell defects. Strategies include transferring insulin or glucose-sensing genes into non-β cells like hepatocytes or muscle cells and enhancing β-cell survival using gene editing tools such as CRISPR/Cas9. Viral vectors are commonly used for gene delivery, though safety concerns like insertional mutagenesis and immune responses remain. Research also explores combining gene therapy with stem cell approaches for durable outcomes. Although still experimental, gene therapy offers a personalized, potentially curative approach to diabetes by restoring or mimicking physiological insulin regulation.

Conclusion

Diabetes mellitus is still a complex disease with many etiologies and intricate pathophysiological processes that necessitate individualized treatment and sophisticated knowledge. Although they have greatly improved glycemic control and decreased complications, conventional therapies are unable to stop the progression of the disease. Targeting the underlying causes of β-cell dysfunction and insulin deficiency, advances in regenerative medicine and molecular biology, especially stem cell therapy, islet transplantation, and gene therapy, offer

transformative potential. By incorporating these cutting-edge modalities with current treatment paradigms, diabetes management may be redefined, opening the door to long-lasting remission and better patient outcomes.

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