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Short Communication

Familial Adenomatous Polyposis (FAP): Understanding a Hereditary Cancer Syndrome

Akitsu Hotta*

Department of Biological Sciences, University of Florida, USA

**Address Correspondence to Akitsu Hotta, Email: akituhotts@gmail.com*

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Introduction

Familial Adenomatous Polyposis (FAP) is a rare but impactful hereditary cancer syndrome characterized by the development of numerous precancerous polyps in the colon and rectum. This condition, caused by a genetic mutation, significantly increases the risk of colorectal cancer if left untreated. In this article, we delve into the complexities of FAP, its genetic basis, clinical manifestations, management strategies, and the profound implications it holds for affected individuals and their families.

Description

Familial Adenomatous Polyposis is primarily caused by mutations in the Adenomatous Polyposis Coli (APC) gene, located on chromosome 5q21-22. APC is a tumor suppressor gene involved in regulating cell growth and division. In individuals with FAP, a mutation in one copy of the APC gene is inherited from a parent, leading to a predisposition to develop hundreds to thousands of adenomatous polyps in the colon and rectum starting in adolescence or early adulthood. The inheritance pattern of FAP is autosomal dominant, meaning that each child of an affected parent has a 50% chance of inheriting the mutated APC gene and developing the condition. Spontaneous mutations in the APC gene can also occur in individuals with no family history of FAP, though this is less common. The hallmark feature of FAP is the development of adenomatous polyps throughout the colon and rectum. These polyps have the potential to become cancerous if not treated. By adolescence or early adulthood, affected individuals may begin to develop symptoms such as rectal bleeding, changes in bowel habits, abdominal pain, or anemia due to chronic blood loss. Diagnosis of FAP typically involves a combination of clinical evaluation, genetic testing to identify APC gene mutations, and imaging studies such as colonoscopy to visualize and count the number of polyps present in the colon and rectum. Screening protocols for at-risk individuals often begin in childhood to facilitate early detection and intervention. Management of FAP focuses on reducing the risk of colorectal cancer while preserving quality of life. Treatment options include: Close monitoring with annual or biennial colonoscopies to detect and remove adenomatous polyps before they become cancerous. This surveillance aims to reduce the overall polyp burden and lower the risk of developing colorectal cancer. Given the high risk of colorectal cancer, most individuals with FAP ultimately require prophylactic (preventive) surgery to remove the colon and rectum. This procedure, known as a colectomy with ileorectal anastomosis or total proctocolectomy with ileal pouch-anal anastomosis, aims to prevent cancer while preserving bowel function and quality of life. Some medications, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or specific COX-2 inhibitors, may be used as adjunctive therapies to reduce polyp formation or delay disease progression in certain cases of FAP. Supportive care, including psychological counseling and participation in patient support groups, can help individuals and families cope with the emotional and practical aspects of living with a hereditary cancer syndrome. Ongoing research in cancer genetics continues to advance our understanding of FAP, including the identification of modifier genes and environmental factors that influence disease progression. Emerging technologies, such as targeted therapies and precision medicine approaches, hold promise for improving

outcomes and quality of life for individuals affected by FAP and other hereditary cancer syndromes [1-4].

Conclusion

In conclusion, Familial Adenomatous Polyposis exemplifies the intricate interplay between genetics, disease pathogenesis, and clinical management. Through early detection, proactive surveillance, and informed decision-making, individuals with FAP and their healthcare providers can mitigate cancer risks and optimize long-term health outcomes in this challenging yet manageable condition.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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