



Review Article

Optimizing asthma care in the elderly: A guidelines-based therapeutic approach for enhanced diagnosis and management

Shivshankar M. Nagrik^{1*}, Shatrughna U. Nagrik², Durgesh B. Thakur², Sanjana R. Bali¹, Mayuri G. Zore², Satish Shelke³

¹Dept. of Pharmaceutics, Rajarshi Shahu College of Pharmacy, Buldhana, Maharashtra, India

²Dept. of Pharmacology, Rajarshi Shahu College of Pharmacy, Buldhana, Maharashtra, India

³Dept. of Quality Assurances, Rajarshi Shahu College of Pharmacy, Buldhana, Maharashtra, India



ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22-10-2024

Accepted 26-11-2024

Available online 09-01-2025

Keywords:

Asthma in elderly patients

Airway remodeling

Bronchodilator therapy

Polypharmacy

Vaccination in asthma

Patient education

ABSTRACT

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease predominantly affecting the airways, leading to symptoms that include wheezing, breathlessness, and chest tightness. However, in the elderly-patient population, which forms about 7-10% of asthma cases, the condition presents quite differently because of physiological changes with age, additional comorbidities, and pharmacological sensitivities. Symptoms overlap with other conditions such as COPD, compounded by smoking history and cognitive decline, add to the complexity when it comes to diagnosing asthma in this age group. Spirometry and the bronchodilator reversibility test are very essential pulmonary function tests whose underutilization in this age group culminates in under-diagnosis and suboptimal management. Management of asthma in the elderly should be carefully planned in accordance with well-established protocols like those proposed by the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) and the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP). Those guidelines recommend the use of ICS and LABAs as core therapy with adjustments made for physiological and pharmacokinetic changes in older adults. While the pharmacological interventions will need more attention, prevention of exacerbations will be linked with non-pharmacological interventions that include lifestyle modification and vaccination. Polypharmacy and increased risk of adverse drug reactions further complicate treatment, but in most cases, require individualized care plans to reduce risks and increase results. This review puts emphasis on adherence to guideline-based therapeutic strategies and calls for future research efforts to be focused on age-specific clinical trials and biologic therapies directed to the elderly. By addressing the complexities of asthma in elderly patients, healthcare providers can enhance disease management and improve the quality of life for this vulnerable population.

This is an Open Access (OA) journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

For reprints contact: reprint@ipinnovative.com

1. Introduction

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways, which causes recurrent symptoms such as wheezing, breathlessness and cough (especially at night or in the early morning). This leads to bronchial hyperresponsiveness and reversible airflow obstruction that can be either

partial or complete. Airway remodeling leads to persistent symptoms over time, with airways that potentially present increasingly greater causal of lung cancer development and progression through genetic-environment interactions.¹ The burden of asthma in seniors is substantial, as studies have shown that 7–10% of people ≥65 years for age may be affected by the condition.² However, this population presents a unique challenge as age-related physiological changes in the respiratory system result in

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: Shivshankarnagrik11@gmail.com (S. M. Nagrik).

reduced lung elasticity and decreased immune response; both of which complicate diagnosis and management.³ Many aged individuals with asthma also have coexisting diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cardiovascular morbidity, and metabolic syndrome contributing to even more problematic therapeutic strategy and usual side effects of the drugs.⁴ Additionally, aging is associated with alterations in pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics which can predispose older individuals to medication side effects especially from corticosteroids—a cornerstone of asthma management.⁵ Due to these complexities, the purpose of this review is to underscore that treatment in elderly asthma patients must be individualized within guidelines. The available guidelines of management according to GINA on the functional aspects may provide disease control by simply including age-dependent recommendations tuning with physiological, pharmacological and psychosocial factors specific to this population.⁶ Placing emphasis on patient-centered care in professional guidelines relates to greater capacity through which healthcare professionals could navigate through these challenges when managing asthma among older people and help them optimize their outcomes as well as quality of life.

2. Discussion

Asthma in elderly patients presents a unique challenge due to the interplay of age-related physiological changes, comorbidities, and overlapping symptoms with other respiratory conditions like COPD. The underutilization of essential diagnostic tools such as spirometry and bronchodilator reversibility testing often leads to underdiagnosis and suboptimal management in this population. This highlights the need for a more proactive approach in clinical practice to ensure accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

Adherence to established guidelines, such as those from GINA and NAEPP, provides a strong foundation for effective management. However, elderly patients require tailored therapeutic strategies to account for altered pharmacokinetics, polypharmacy, and the risk of adverse drug reactions. Core treatments like inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) and long-acting beta-agonists (LABAs) remain effective, but their use must be carefully adjusted to the individual's health status. Beyond pharmacological interventions, non-pharmacological strategies, such as lifestyle modifications and vaccination, play a critical role in preventing exacerbations and maintaining overall health. These approaches, combined with personalized care plans, can improve adherence and enhance outcomes. Despite advancements, there is a pressing need for age-specific clinical trials and the exploration of biologic therapies tailored to elderly asthma patients. Addressing these gaps will enable healthcare providers to manage the complexities of asthma in the elderly more effectively, ultimately

improving their quality of life.

2.1. Pathophysiology and management considerations

There are wide set of complications that could arise in asthma management for elderly patients such as the age-associated physiological changes, immune system alterations may occur along with the presence of other comorbid conditions. A natural decline of lung function due to aging has a profound effect on the pathophysiology in older individuals. Impaired ventilation and gas exchange due to a reduction in lung tissue elasticity, chest wall stiffening, or loss of respiratory muscle strength lead to an increase in symptoms among elderly asthmatics.⁷ One of the other age-related changes is reduced β -adrenergic receptor responsiveness that leads to decreased bronchodilator responses to asthma medications.⁸

This has been described as "inflamm-aging" in elderly patients, who are typically characterized by the prevalence of a pro-inflammatory state. Chronic low-grade inflammation leads to dysregulated immune responses, thereby accentuating the level of airway inflammation and exacerbating asthma severity.⁹ Additionally, elderly patients have decreased innate and adaptive immunity, such as reduced T-cell function and impaired pathogen recognition, so they are more prone to respiratory infections that could worsen asthma control.¹⁰ Overlapping of symptoms and complicating the treatment regimen occur especially with comorbid conditions, mainly cardiovascular diseases, COPD, and other chronic diseases. For instance, the coexistence of COPD among elderly asthma patients is commonly described as asthma-COPD overlap (ACO), a condition requiring differentiation and specific treatment strategies because their pathophysiological mechanisms are quite different.¹¹ Heart problems, such as hypertension and heart failure, can sometimes make it difficult to use certain asthma treatments, like β -agonists. These drugs could increase heart rate or alter blood pressure, and therefore are detrimental to certain patients. That means managing asthma in the elderly would need to be taken into consideration in each individual case. We may want to look at medical as well as non-medical approaches and see how their body reacts when they age and what other diseases they may also have.¹²

3. Clinical Diagnosis of Asthma in the Elderly

3.1. Diagnostic challenges: Similarities between asthma and other respiratory conditions like COPD

Doctors face big hurdles when trying to spot asthma in older folks. This is because its signs look a lot like other breathing problems Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Both COPD and asthma cause long-lasting cough, wheezing, and trouble breathing, which makes it hard to tell them apart. Doctors often get it wrong especially with older

people who've smoked thinking they have COPD when it's asthma.¹³ On top of that, having other health issues and getting older, which can affect thinking and moving, means asthma often goes unnoticed.¹⁴

4. Pulmonary Function Testing (PFT): Role of spirometry, peak flow, and bronchodilator reversibility

Pulmonary function tests such as spirometry peak expiratory flow, and bronchodilator reversibility, play a crucial role to diagnose asthma in older patients. Doctors can use spirometry to tell the difference between asthma and COPD by checking how much the airway blockage can be reversed. A diagnosis of asthma becomes more likely when the Forced Expiratory Volume (FEV1) gets better by 15% after giving a bronchodilator.¹⁵ Even though these tests are essential many older patients don't get PFTs, which leads to missed diagnoses and poor treatment.¹⁶

5. Differential Diagnosis

5.1. Identifying asthma from other respiratory disorders

Telling asthma and COPD apart matters because each needs different treatment and has a different outlook. COPD shows airway blockage that won't go away, while asthma causes blockage that can be reversed. To tell them apart, doctors rely on breathing tests and response to inhaled medicines. More advanced ways to check include tests for sensitive airways and detailed lung scans.¹⁷ Looking for key signs like allergies and a big improvement with inhaled medicine also points to asthma.¹⁸

5.2. Guidelines for asthma management in elderly patients

Treating asthma in older adults needs a special approach because of how the body changes with age. This affects how medicines work and how the body functions. The Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) and the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) provide important rules to address these specific needs.

6. Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) Guidelines: Recommendations for Elderly Populations

The GINA guidelines have impacted asthma treatment worldwide. The guidelines emphasize controlling asthma rather than its severity to guide treatment decisions. These guidelines stress the need to assess and adjust therapy for the elderly. This is because old people respond to drugs and often have other illnesses. Studies indicate that GINA employs a step-by-step approach in its guidelines. This encompasses the use of inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) with long-acting beta agonists (LABAs) in keeping symptoms under control.^{19,20}

7. National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP): Strategies and Updated Guidelines

The NAEPP guidelines provide specific recommendations for the older patient, who is recognized to have more severe asthma. These guidelines categorize drug treatments by age and emphasize the central role of ICS as the main treatment, with additional ideas for more serious cases. The NAEPP guidelines also promote judicious use of short-acting beta-agonists and emphasize the need to individualize care based on how well someone's asthma is controlled.^{21,22}

8. Tailoring Treatment to Age: Adjustments in Therapy Based on Physiological and Pharmacokinetic Changes

Dealing with asthma in the elderly becomes complex because of changes in aging as such, drugs are eliminated by the body. At an advanced age, the body is less capable of clearing out and eliminating medications and the doctors therefore must alter their dosages when taking the asthma medications. In addition, the heart and blood vessels will always become less sensitive to medicines like beta-agonists and are likely to experience side effects like sudden low blood pressure. As a result, there is a need to adjust treatments for each individual for optimal results, while carefully monitoring to prevent complications.²³

9. Pharmacological Therapy in Elderly Asthma Patients

9.1. Inhaled corticosteroids (ICS): First-line therapy and dosing considerations in elderly patients

Inhaled corticosteroids are considered the mainstay of asthma therapy and are recommended as first-line therapy for elderly patients due to their anti-inflammatory effects, that enhances lung function and reduces exacerbations.²⁴ However, ICS dosing in elderly patients requires careful monitoring to minimize systemic side effects such as osteoporosis and adrenal suppression, particularly at high doses.²⁵ Studies indicate that even low doses are effective in this population, but patient adherence may be compromised due to difficulties with inhaler techniques or cognitive decline.²⁶

10. Long-acting Beta-agonists (LABAs): Efficacy and Safety Profile in Older Adults

Long-acting beta-agonists (LABAs) are commonly used as add-on therapy when ICS alone does not provide adequate control. LABAs improve lung function and reduce symptoms, but they should always be prescribed in combination with ICS due to the risk of severe exacerbations when used as monotherapy.²⁷ In elderly patients, LABAs are generally well-tolerated, but side effects like tremors

and cardiovascular risks, such as arrhythmias, should be monitored carefully.²⁸

11. Combination Therapies (ICS/LABA): Benefits and Risks in Elderly Patients

Combining ICS with LABAs is an effective strategy for elderly asthma patients, as it offers enhanced control of symptoms and reduction of exacerbations compared to ICS alone.²⁹ However, the combination can increase the risk of systemic side effects, particularly at higher ICS doses, including adrenal suppression and osteoporosis.³⁰ Thus, it is crucial to optimize dosing and monitor elderly patients for comorbidities that may interact with these therapies.³¹

12. Leukotriene Receptor Antagonists (LTRAs): Role in Managing Asthma and Minimizing Side Effects

Leukotriene receptor antagonists (LTRAs) such as montelukast are considered as an alternative add-on to ICS for elderly patients who may experience side effects from LABAs or who struggle with proper inhaler use. LTRAs have anti-inflammatory properties and can reduce both symptoms and exacerbation rates in elderly asthma patients.³² They are particularly useful for patients with concurrent comorbidities like cardiovascular disease due to their relatively safer profile compared to LABAs.³³

13. Short-Acting Beta-Agonists (SABAs): Rescue Medications and Usage Frequency in the Elderly

Short-acting beta-agonists (SABAs) remain essential as rescue medications for acute asthma symptoms. However, frequent reliance on SABAs in elderly patients is an indicator of poor asthma control, signaling the need to adjust the primary controller therapy.³⁴ Due to potential side effects like tachycardia and hypokalemia, their use should be carefully managed, particularly in elderly individuals with cardiac comorbidities.³⁵

14. Systemic Corticosteroids: Limited Use due to Side Effects and Comorbidities

Systemic corticosteroids are typically reserved for severe exacerbations due to their well-documented side effects, including bone loss, adrenal suppression, and immunosuppression, which are especially concerning in the elderly.³⁵ Long-term use should be avoided, and when necessary, the lowest effective dose should be used for the shortest duration possible.³⁶

15. Non-pharmacological Interventions: Effective Strategies in Chronic Disease Management

Non-pharmacological interventions play a crucial role in managing chronic diseases, reducing complications,

and improving patient outcomes. This review focuses on three key areas: lifestyle modifications, environmental control, and vaccinations. In (Table 1) we discussed and Summarizing the data provided about Non-Pharmacological Interventions in Chronic Disease Management

- 1. Lifestyle Modifications:** Lifestyle changes, such as smoking cessation, weight loss and increased activity are the cornerstone treatments for managing common chronic diseases like COPD or CVD.
- 2. Smoking Cessation:** Quitting smoking remains the number-one intervention to stop COPD (and other chronic diseases) in its tracks. Both NRT and the newer pharmacologic agent varenicline when administered in a combination with behavioral therapy significantly increase long-term abstinence rates.^{37,38}
- 3. Weight Management:** Many people are concerned about smoking cessation because they think it can cause weight gain. Research has also shown that including weight management components such as exercise and dietary counseling in smoking cessation programs can effectively prevent post-cessation weight gain while maintaining abstinence.³⁹
- 4. Physical Activity:** One of the most important things you can do in copd treatment and obesity management is exercise regularly. Although not always designed specifically for smoking cessation, exercise interventions contribute to reductions in chronic-disease symptoms and better overall health.⁴⁰
- 5. Environmental Control:** It is important when you have conditions that are exacerbated by things like allergens, where poor air quality will directly impact those allergies or lung disease (like COPD and asthma).
- 6. Allergen Avoidance:** Both asthma and allergic rhinitis are two of several atopic conditions that respond well to allergy management, because the symptoms can be triggered by allergen exposure .Allergy avoidance being one of most important strategies in managing respiratory diseases such as but not limited to those related with clinical course.⁴¹
- 7. Air Quality Management:** By mitigating pollutants such as dust and smoke indoor, the exacerbations in respiratory diseases is renovated which again reduces morbidity.⁴²
- 8. Vaccinations:** Vaccination for influenza and pneumococcus, common respiratory pathogens is also important since these may contribute to a higher rate of ADI complications in patients with chronic diseases.

16. Influenza and Pneumococcal Vaccination

Vaccination significantly reduces the risk of severe respiratory infections, which can cause exacerbations in conditions like COPD. Studies highlight the importance

Table 1: Summarizing the data provided about Non-Pharmacological Interventions in Chronic Disease Management

Category	Intervention	Description	References
Lifestyle Modifications	Smoking Cessation	Quitting smoking halts COPD progression. NRT and varenicline combined with behavioral therapy increase long-term abstinence rates.	37,38
	Weight Management	Including exercise and dietary counseling in smoking cessation programs helps prevent weight gain and maintain abstinence post-cessation.	39
	Physical Activity	Regular exercise improves COPD and obesity outcomes, reducing symptoms and enhancing overall health.	40
Environmental Control	Allergen Avoidance	Managing allergens (e.g., dust, pollen) reduces symptoms in asthma and allergic rhinitis, critical for respiratory disease management.	41
	Air Quality Management	Mitigating indoor pollutants like smoke and dust reduces respiratory disease exacerbations, improving morbidity outcomes.	42
Vaccinations	Influenza and Pneumococcal Vaccination	Vaccines prevent severe respiratory infections and reduce exacerbations in conditions like COPD, lowering hospitalizations and disease progression risks.	38

of routine vaccination for these patients to prevent disease progression and hospitalizations.³⁸

16.1. Adverse drug reactions and polypharmacy

Polypharmacy poses serious risks to the elderly, as multiple medications can interact in problematic ways or cause unintended side effects. Older adults face special vulnerabilities because bodily processes change with age, multiple health conditions often arise simultaneously, and daily dosing plans become intricate. This analysis aims to disentangle such a knotty problem. It explores how drugs may conflict or combine for better or worse inside seniors' systems. Close monitoring of prescription patterns and pruning back unnecessary pills also factor significantly into minimizing perils, as does physician awareness of each patient's full pharmacological portfolio. For those coping with life's advancing years, comprehensive yet careful pharmaceutical management remains crucial to maximizing quality days ahead.

17. Drug Interactions in the Elderly

Polypharmacy significantly increases the risk of drug-drug interactions, particularly in older adults who often have multiple chronic conditions. Cardiovascular drugs, central nervous system depressants, and diuretics frequently interact with other medications, raising the risk of severe ADRs. In patients with cardiovascular diseases, beta-blockers can interact with bronchodilators, leading to

diminished therapeutic effects, while anticholinergics used in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) may exacerbate cognitive decline in older adults.⁴³

18. Adverse Effects of Specific Medications

- Corticosteroids:** Long-term corticosteroid use in elderly patients can lead to osteoporosis, cataracts, skin thinning, and increased cardiovascular risk. Oral corticosteroids, particularly at high doses, are linked to significant systemic adverse effects such as bone loss and adrenal suppression.⁴⁴ Inhaled corticosteroids, when used at higher doses, also increase the risk of osteoporosis.⁴⁵
- Bronchodilators:** Beta-agonists, often prescribed for asthma and COPD, are associated with cardiovascular complications, including arrhythmias and myocardial ischemia in elderly patients. They may also exacerbate existing heart conditions, increase the risk of tremors, and impact electrolyte balance, contributing to osteoporosis.⁴⁶
- Monitoring and Deprescribing:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of drug regimens are critical in minimizing the risks associated with polypharmacy. A careful review of medications to identify unnecessary or harmful drugs can reduce ADRs and improve patient outcomes. Deprescribing, the process of tapering or discontinuing unnecessary medications, is particularly beneficial for the elderly, as it reduces polypharmacy-related risks.⁴⁷

18.1. Comorbidities in elderly asthma patients

Elderly asthma patients often present with multiple comorbidities that complicate the Management and treatment of asthma. Common comorbidities are such as hypertension, diabetes, their comorbidity with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) impacts asthma outcomes significantly and therefore require integrated management strategies.

19. Impact of Comorbidities on Asthma Treatment

19.1. Hypertension and diabetes

Hypertension is the most common comorbidity in the elderly patients with asthma. Studies. This means that close to 38.4% of such patients suffer from the condition as well. Diabetes afflicts approximately 17.2% of elderly asthmatic patients, further complicates asthma management. This is due to its association with poor lung function and the increased rate of hospitalization.⁴⁸ The presence of both conditions can worsen asthma control and lead to more frequent exacerbations.⁴⁹

19.2. COPD

COPD is frequently misdiagnosed as asthma in elderly patients, leading to suboptimal treatment. Approximately 19% of elderly asthma patients also suffer from COPD, exacerbating breathing difficulties and increasing asthma mortality rates. Misdiagnosis and mismanagement of these conditions can result in ineffective asthma treatment.⁵⁰ Additionally, asthma and COPD overlap syndrome (ACOS) further complicates treatment due to overlapping symptoms and exacerbation patterns.⁵¹ COPD is commonly misdiagnosed as asthma in elderly patients and therefore achieved suboptimal. A coincident COPD exists in about 19% of elderly asthma patients, worsening breathing complications and a rise in deaths from asthma. Misdiagnosis and mismanagement of these, one may lead to poor asthma management.⁵⁰ Lastly, there's asthma and COPD-overlap syndrome (ACOS) makes treatment most complicated due to the overlap of symptoms and exacerbation patterns.⁵¹

20. Management Strategies

20.1. Integrated therapy for hypertension and diabetes

Treating asthma in elderly patients with comorbid hypertension and diabetes requires careful. In general, asthma medication adjustments, such as corticosteroids, may exacerbate the aforementioned conditions.⁵² Beta-blockers, which are prescribed for antihypertension, can also provoke asthma necessitating careful medication management to prevent adverse interactions.

21. Managing COPD comorbidities

Asthma treatment in elderly patients with COPD requires a combined approach, including the use of bronchodilators and corticosteroids. However, it brings with it a complication like osteoporosis and arrhythmias. Proper use of inhaler techniques and adherence to such medication regimens are therefore important for better outcomes in such patients.⁵³

22. Adherence to Therapy in Elderly Patients

22.1. Barriers to adherence

Cognitive decline, physical limitations, and social factors are obstacles to adherence among elderly patients. In general, cognitive impairments pose the greatest challenge in that such impairments limit a patient's ability to understand treatment regimens. Research has found memory problems, problems dealing with multiple medications, and a sense of lack of awareness about the illness to be complicating factors in adherence behaviors. Social factors, such as living alone and having no family support, exacerbate the problems.⁵⁴ In asthmatics and COPD patients, barriers like poor inhaler technique and physical limitations, such as arthritis, also limit medication adherence. Even economic factors and low health literacy add to the problem, as many elderly patients cannot afford or understand their treatments.⁵⁵

22.2. Improving compliance

An improvement in adherence would require lessening the complexity of the treatment regimen and utilizing medication aids, such as inhalers with spacers. Successful medication regimens have been simplified through reducing the number of daily doses or use of combination drugs; these can help enhance compliance.⁵⁶ Utilization of an inhaler with a spacer not only optimizes drug delivery but also increases the possibility of successful management among elderly patients, who are functionally incapacitated, in managing their own condition.⁵⁷ Patient education also plays a significant role since an informed patient is more likely to adhere to the administered therapies. Programs offering education on the importance of using medications regularly, as well as proper use of inhalers, have been documented to enhance compliance rates.⁵⁸

23. Role of Patient Education and Self-Management

23.1. Asthma action plans

Personalized asthma action plans are very important for elderly patients to handle the exacerbations and maintain control over asthma. Written action plans have been proven to enhance asthma management, since they enable patients to diagnose symptoms and adjust the treatment

plan accordingly.⁵⁹ A personalized action plan enables elderly patients to optimize self-care based on symptom management and appropriate use of medications.⁶⁰

23.2. Caregiver involvement

For elderly patients, family members and caregivers are also important in asthma management. They can help in monitoring the symptoms, managing medications, and recognizing the early signs of asthma exacerbations. Many studies have demonstrated that caregiver involvement leads to better asthma outcomes, as action plans are followed and flare-ups intervened with promptly.⁶¹ The confidence and understanding of the caregiver are very important for elderly patients to maintain control over asthma and avoid severe exacerbation.⁶²

24. Self-Monitoring Techniques

Using self-monitoring tools such as peak flow meters helps elderly patients detect early signs of asthma exacerbations and manage their condition more effectively. Although peak flow monitoring is beneficial for detecting variability in airway function, some research suggests that symptom-based self-monitoring may be equally effective in preventing severe outcomes.⁶³ Educating elderly patients on using such tools, combined with regular caregiver support, enhances overall asthma management and reduces hospital visits.⁶⁴

24.1. Future directions and research

- 1. Need for Age-Specific Clinical Trials:** Elderly patients are frequently underrepresented in clinical trials, despite their higher disease burden and different responses to therapies compared to younger populations. Currently, only a small proportion of oncology trials are specifically designed for the elderly, even though more than 60% of new cancer cases occur in individuals over the age of 65.⁶⁵ Furthermore, age-based exclusions in clinical trials, including those for cardiovascular and oncologic conditions, limit the generalizability of trial results to older adults.⁶⁶ This age-related gap in clinical trials has hindered the development of evidence-based therapies tailored for the elderly. Specific clinical trials for older populations should focus on comorbidities, treatment tolerability, and functional outcomes, to create better, more personalized therapeutic strategies.⁶⁷
- 2. Biological Therapies and Innovations:** Recent advancements in cancer treatment, particularly in the areas of targeted therapies and immunotherapies, hold promise for elderly patients, although their effectiveness and safety remain less well-documented in this population. Biological therapies, such as

immune checkpoint inhibitors, have shown efficacy in elderly populations but still require further investigation regarding long-term outcomes and management of age-related comorbidities.⁶⁸ However, specific challenges such as immunosenescence (the gradual decline of the immune system with age) may influence the response to these treatments, necessitating further studies on the optimal use of biological therapies in elderly patients.⁶⁹ Further research is essential to explore the potential of biomarkers to predict therapeutic response and to develop personalized treatment regimens for the elderly based on these biological innovations.

25. Conclusion

The challenges from asthma in elderly patients lie in a variety of age-related physiological changes, the presence of concomitant conditions, and the complexity of pharmacotherapy. Management of such patients with asthma, thus, calls for a personalized approach in line with guidelines on strategies, such as those offered by the Global Initiative for Asthma and the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program. These approaches involve individualized care and close monitoring, along with appropriate pharmacotherapy changes, to help minimize the risks of adverse drug reactions and polypharmacy, which prevail in older patients. Lifestyle adaptations, environmental control, and vaccination also represent important non-pharmacological interventions that improve asthma-related health outcomes and reduce the frequency of exacerbations. Equally important is the integration of patient education through personalized asthma action plans, which empower elderly patients to manage their condition proactively. Future research must focus on age-specific clinical trials and innovative therapies, ensuring that treatments are both effective and safe for elderly populations. Adoption of a multi-dimensional approach including clinical guidelines, pharmacological adjustment, and patient education can lead to much better management of asthma in the elderly by healthcare providers and significantly enhance their quality of life and reduce morbidity.

26. Source of Funding

None.

27. Conflict of Interest

None.

References

1. Global Initiative for Asthma. Global strategy for asthma management and prevention; 2021. Available from: <https://ginasthma.org/gina-reports/>.

2. Yáñez A, Cho SH, Soriano JB, Peters S, Niimi A, Ledford DK. Asthma in the elderly: what we know and what we have yet to know. *Eur Respir J*. 2018;7(1):8.
3. Gibson PG, McDonald VM, Marks GB. Asthma in older adults. *Lancet*. 2010;376(9743):803–16.
4. Tzortzaki EG, Prokopiou A, Siafakas NM. Asthma in the elderly: can we distinguish it from COPD? *J Allergy (Cairo)*. 2011;2011(843543):1–7.
5. Bellia V, Battaglia S, Scichilone N. Asthma in the elderly: unmet needs and therapeutic approaches. *Drugs Aging*. 2013;30(12):871–88.
6. Reddel HK, Taylor DR, Bateman ED. An official American Thoracic Society/European Respiratory Society statement: asthma control and exacerbations. *Eur Respir J*. 2009;34(2):287–94.
7. Jones J. Pathophysiology of Aging and Asthma. *J Resp Med*. 2019;34(2):100–8.
8. Brown M, Carter A. Immune Alterations in Elderly Asthma Patients. *Ann Allergy Immunol*. 2020;47(1):28–34.
9. Smith R, Lewis T. Immune Response in Asthma. *Int J Resp Immunol*. 2020;56(4):210–5.
10. Williams J, Zhao Q. Asthma-COPD Overlap in the Elderly. *Thorax*. 2021;78(5):320–6.
11. Brown M, Anderson D. Cardiovascular Implications in Asthma Therapy. *J Cardio Respir Dis*. 2022;59(3):112–8.
12. Mackenzie IS, Rogers A, Poulter NR, Williams B, Brown MJ, Webb DJ, et al. Cardiovascular outcomes in adults with hypertension with evening versus morning dosing of usual antihypertensives in the UK (TIME study): a prospective, randomised, open-label, blinded-endpoint clinical trial. *Lancet*. 2022;400(10361):1417–42.
13. Bellia V, Battaglia S, Catalano F, Scichilone N, Incalzi R, Imperiale C. Aging and disability affect misdiagnosis of COPD in elderly asthmatics: the SARA study. *Chest*. 2003;123(4):1066–72.
14. Lindner K, Panaszek B, Machaj Z. The diagnostic differences of asthma in the elderly. *Pneumonol Alergologia Polska*. 2008;76:246–52.
15. Hui-Hong W. Differential Diagnosis of Asthma from COPD in Elderly with Clinical Manifestation and Pulmonary Function Testing. *Acad J Guangzhou Med Coll*. 2004;207(9):1134–44.
16. Gershon A, Victor J, Guan J, Aaron S, To T. Pulmonary function testing in the diagnosis of asthma: a population study. *Chest*. 2012;141(5):1190–6.
17. Ulrik C. Late-Onset Asthma: A Diagnostic and Management Challenge. *Drugs Aging*. 2017;34(3):157–62.
18. Tzortzaki E, Proklou A, Siafakas N. Asthma in the Elderly: Can We Distinguish It from COPD? *J Allergy*. 2011;843543:1–7.
19. Yoon H. Updated drug therapy guideline of asthma. *Korean J Int Med*. 2009;76:260–7.
20. Reddel H, Bateman E, Becker A, Boulet L, Cruz A, Drazen J, et al. A summary of the new GINA strategy: a roadmap to asthma control. *Eur Respir J*. 2015;46(3):622–39.
21. Schatz M. Pharmacotherapy of asthma: what do the 2007 NAEPP guidelines say. *Allergy and asthma proceedings*. 2007;28:628–661.
22. Bailey W, Wilson S, Weiss K, Windsor R, Wolle J. Measures for use in asthma clinical research. Overview of the NIH workshop. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 1994;149(2):1–8.
23. Turnheim K. Drug Dosage in the Elderly. *Drugs Aging*. 1998;13(11-12):357–79.
24. Elward K, Pollart S. Medical Therapy for Asthma: Updates from the NAEPP Guidelines. *Am Fam Physician*. 2010;82(10):1242–51.
25. Newnham D. Asthma medications and their potential adverse effects in the elderly: recommendations for prescribing. *Drug safety*. 2001;24(14):1065–80.
26. Albertson T, Pugashetti J, Etchepare FC, Chenoweth J, Murin S. Pharmacotherapeutic management of asthma in the elderly patient. *Expert Opin Pharmacother*. 2020;21(16):1991–2010.
27. Currie G, Lee D, Srivastava P. Long-acting bronchodilator or leukotriene modifier as add-on therapy to inhaled corticosteroids in persistent asthma? *Chest*. 2005;128(4):52720–7.
28. Deykin A, Wechsler M, Boushey H, Chinchilli V, Kunselman S, Craig T, et al. Combination therapy with a long-acting beta-agonist and a leukotriene antagonist in moderate asthma. *Am J Respirat Crit Care Med*. 2007;175(3):228–62.
29. Fireman P. Combination of inhaled corticosteroids plus other medications in the management of moderate to severe persistent asthma. 2000;21(5):315–337.
30. Altawalbeh S, Thorpe C, Zgibor J, Gill SK, Kang Y, Thorpe J. Economic Burden Associated with Receiving Inhaled Corticosteroids with Leukotriene Receptor Antagonists or Long-Acting Beta Agonists as Combination Therapy in Older Adults. *J Manag Care Specialty Pharm*. 2018;24(5):478–86.
31. Trinh H, Ban G, Lee J, Park H. Leukotriene Receptor Antagonists for the Treatment of Asthma in Elderly Patients. *Drugs Aging*. 2016;33:699–710.
32. Wilson E, Price D, Musgrave S, Sims E, Shepstone L, Murdoch J, et al. Cost effectiveness of leukotriene receptor antagonists versus long-acting beta-2 agonists as add-on therapy to inhaled corticosteroids for asthma: a pragmatic trial. *Pharmacoecon*. 2010;28(7):597–608.
33. Elward K, Pollart S. Medical Therapy for Asthma: Updates from the NAEPP Guidelines. *Am Fam Physician*. 2010;82(10):1242–51.
34. Newnham D. Asthma medications and their potential adverse effects in the elderly: recommendations for prescribing. *Drug Safety*. 2001;24(14):1065–80.
35. Newnham D. Asthma medications and their potential adverse effects in the elderly: recommendations for prescribing. *Drug Safety*. 2001;24:1065–80.
36. Dreher M, Müller T. Add-on Therapy for Symptomatic Asthma despite Long-Acting Beta-Agonists/Inhaled Corticosteroid. *Tuberculosis Respir Dis*. 2017;81(1):1–5.
37. Tashkin D. Smoking Cessation in Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. *Semin Respir Crit Care Med*. 2015;36(4):491–507.
38. Oca M. Smoking Cessation/Vaccinations. *Clin Chest Med*. 2020;41(3):495–512.
39. Farley A, Hajek P, Lycett D, Aveyard P. Interventions for preventing weight gain after smoking cessation. *Cochrane Datab Syst Rev*. 2012;18(1):CD006219.
40. Ussher M, Faulkner G, Angus K, Hartmann-Boyce J, Taylor A. Exercise interventions for smoking cessation. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2019;8:CD002295.
41. Lutter J, Lukas M, Schwarzkopf L, Jörres R, Studnicka M, Kahnert K. Utilization and determinants of use of non-pharmacological interventions in COPD: Results of the COSYCONET cohort. *Respir Med*. 2020;171:106087.
42. Wirth I, Penz E, Marciniuk D. Examination of COPD management in patients hospitalized with an acute exacerbation of COPD. *Critical Care, and Sleep Med*. 2020;6(1):14–23.
43. Sheikh-Taha M, Asmar M. Polypharmacy and severe potential drug-drug interactions among older adults with cardiovascular disease in the United States. *BMC Geriatrics*. 2021;21(1):233.
44. Newnham D. Asthma Medications and their Potential Adverse Effects in the Elderly. *Drug Safety*. 2001;24:1065–80.
45. Rossi A, Zanardi E, Zamboni M, Rossi A. Optimizing Treatment of Elderly COPD Patients: What Role for Inhaled Corticosteroids? *Drugs Aging*. 2015;32(9):679–87.
46. Gupta P, Mahony M. Potential Adverse Effects of Bronchodilators in the Treatment of Airways Obstruction in Older People. *Drugs Aging*. 2008;25(5):415–43.
47. Kristjansson S, Wyller T. Tidsskrift for den Norske laegeforening: tidsskrift for praktisk medicin, ny raekke. and others, editor. Generic; 2010. p. 1726–34.
48. Ogbu C, Sarker P, Oparanma C, Ogbu S, Stouras I, Eze E, et al. Prevalence of Comorbidities among United States Adults with asthma and Their Association with Asthma Severity. *Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol*. 2023;132(1):42–53.
49. Meier J, Lopez J, Siegel D. Prevalence and Treatment of Hypertension Complicated by Comorbid Conditions. *Journal of clinical hypertension*. 1999;1:209–211.
50. Pandya R, Shah A, Francis S, Shah K, Shah P, George A, et al. Underdiagnosis of asthma in elderly. *Indian J Aller*. 2016;30(1):27–31.

51. Mahdavian M, Power B, Asghari S, Pike J. Effects of Comorbidities on Asthma Hospitalization and Mortality Rates: A Systematic Review. *Canadian Respir J*. 2018;2018:6460379.
52. Trinh H, Ban G, Lee J, Park H. Leukotriene Receptor Antagonists for the Treatment of Asthma in Elderly Patients. *Drugs Aging*. 2016;33:699–710.
53. Ierodiakonou D, Sifaki-Pistolla D, Kampouraki M, Poulorinakis I, Papadokostakis P, Gialamas I, et al. Adherence to inhalers and comorbidities in COPD patients. A cross-sectional primary care study from Greece. *BMC Pulm Med*. 2020;20(1):253.
54. Arlt S, Lindner R, Rösler A, Renteln-Kruse W. Adherence to Medication in Patients with Dementia. *Drugs Aging*. 2008;25:1033–47.
55. Restrepo R, Álvarez M, Wittnebel L, Sorenson H, Wettstein R, Vines D. Medication adherence issues in patients treated for COPD. *Int J Chronic Obstruc Pulm Dis*. 2008;3(3):371–84.
56. Campbell N, Boustani M, Skopelja E, Gao S, Unverzagt F, Murray M. Medication adherence in older adults with cognitive impairment: a systematic evidence-based review. *Am J Ger Pharmacother*. 2012;10(3):165–77.
57. Blake K. Improving adherence to asthma medications: current knowledge and future perspectives. *Curr Opin Pul Med*. 2017;23(1):62–70.
58. O’Conor R, Wolf MS, Smith SG, Martynenko M, Vicencio DP, Sano M, et al. Health literacy, cognitive function, proper use, and adherence to inhaled asthma controller medications among older adults with asthma. *Chest*. 2015;147(5):1307–15.
59. Cowie R. Written self-management plans improve asthma control. *Canad Respir J*. 2003;10(3):157.
60. Powell H, Gibson P. Options for self-management education for adults with asthma. *Cochrane Datab Syst Rev*. 2002;2002(1):CD004107.
61. Marshall T, Asperen P, Selvadurai H, Robinson P. Don’t write off paediatric asthma action plans just yet. *Prim Care Respir J Gen Pract Airways Group*. 2013;22:144–5.
62. Choi J, Kweon Y. Effects of Education about Action Plans according to Self-Monitoring on Self-Management Adherence, Knowledge, Symptom Control, and Quality of Life among Adult Asthma Patients: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *J Korean Acad Nurs*. 2017;47(5):613–23.
63. Turner M, Taylor D, Bennett R, Fitzgerald J. A randomized trial comparing peak expiratory flow and symptom self-management plans for patients with asthma attending a primary care clinic. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 1998;157(2):540–6.
64. Gibson P, Coughlan J, Wilson A, Abramson M, Bauman A, Hensley M. Self-management education and regular practitioner review for adults with asthma. *Cochrane Datab Syst Rev*. 2000;1:1117.
65. Wu B, Yang Y, Tang Y, Zheng Y, Xie M, Yang K. Characteristics of elderly-specific oncology trials registered in ClinicalTrials.gov. *J Clin Oncol*. 2021;39(15):12040.
66. Gurwitz J, Col N, Avorn J. The exclusion of the elderly and women from clinical trials in acute myocardial infarction. *JAMA*. 1992;11:1417–22.
67. Dotan E. Advancing Treatment Approach to the Older Patient with Cancer Through Clinical Trials Participation. *Surg Oncol Clin North Am*. 2017;26(4):719–28.
68. Al-Mansour Z, Pang L, Bathini V. Novel Cancer Therapeutics in Geriatrics: What is Unique to the Aging Patient? *Drugs Aging*. 2018;36(1):1–11.
69. Mishra M, Showalter T, Dicker A. Biomarkers of aging and radiation therapy tailored to the elderly: future of the field. *Seminars Radiat Oncol*. 2012;22(4):334–42.

Author’s biography

Shivshankar M. Nagrik, Student  <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-2109-1865>

Shatrughna U. Nagrik, Associate Professor

Durgesh B. Thakur, Student

Sanjana R. Bali, Assistant Professor

Mayuri G. Zore, Assistant Professor

Satish Shelke, Associate Professor

Cite this article: Nagrik SM, Nagrik SU, Thakur DB, Bali SR, Zore MG, Shelke S. Optimizing asthma care in the elderly: A guidelines-based therapeutic approach for enhanced diagnosis and management. *J Pharm Biol Sci* 2024;12(2):100-108.