Neurodegeneration: Evolving Models, Technology, Therapies

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Received: 01-Jul-2025; **Accepted:** 08-Aug-2025; **Published:** 08-Aug-2025

Introduction

Human induced pluripotent stem cell (iPSC)-derived organoids serve as sophisticated in vitro models for studying neurodegenerative diseases. They reflect complex cellular interactions and pathological hallmarks observed in patients, offering a superior platform for dissecting disease mechanisms and advancing drug discovery efforts, moving beyond the limitations of traditional 2D cultures and conventional animal models [1].

Significant advancements are seen in animal models employed in Parkinson's disease research, encompassing toxin-induced, genetic, and transgenic approaches. These models contribute indispensably to unraveling disease mechanisms, pinpointing therapeutic targets, and rigorously testing novel interventions, despite ongoing challenges in fully recapitulating the multifaceted nature of human pathology [2].

CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing technology, applied to induced pluripotent stem cells, offers transformative potential for creating highly precise in vitro models for neurodegenerative diseases. This technology is instrumental in correcting disease-causing mutations, establishing crucial isogenic controls, and deciphering gene functions, opening new avenues for understanding diseases and developing advanced gene therapies [3].

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are increasingly influencing neurodegenerative disease modeling. They enhance early diagnosis, predict disease prognosis, and identify crucial biomarkers. AI algorithms process complex datasets from imaging, genetics, and clinical observations to refine precision medicine strategies for these conditions [4].

Microfluidic chip technology has emerged as a versatile platform for constructing more physiologically relevant in vitro models of neurodegenerative diseases. These chips provide advanced capabilities for precise control over the cellular microenvironment, facilitating complex co-culture experiments, and enabling high-throughput screening essential for drug discovery and deep mechanistic investigations [5].

The powerful integration of multi-omics data, including genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, and metabolomics, helps achieve a holistic understanding of neurodegenerative disease pathology. These comprehensive systemic approaches are vital for identifying novel biomarkers, uncovering promising therapeutic targets, and dissecting complex disease mechanisms that might remain obscure in single-omics studies [6].

Molecular mechanisms underpinning tauopathies, a class of neurodegenerative diseases marked by the pathological aggregation of tau protein, are a key area of study. Various in vitro and in vivo models are utilized to investigate tau pathology, develop advanced diagnostic tools, and rigorously test innovative therapeutic strategies aimed at targeting tau [7].

Research also investigates the complex relationship between alpha-synuclein pathology, inflammation, and oxidative stress as drivers of Parkinson's disease progression. Models are employed to dissect these intertwined mechanisms, deepening our understanding of synucleinopathies and uncovering potential avenues for therapeutic intervention [8].

Recent breakthroughs in gene therapy strategies for neurodegenerative diseases provide a comprehensive overview. They explore viral and non-viral delivery systems, advanced gene editing tools, and novel therapeutic targets under investigation in preclinical models and clinical trials, aiming to address underlying genetic causes and slow disease progression [9].

Neuroinflammation stands out as a central component in the pathogenesis and progression of various neurodegenerative disorders. Systematic reviews detail the intricate cellular and molecular mechanisms fueling chronic inflammation within the brain, discussing contemporary modeling approaches used to investigate these pathways and develop targeted anti-inflammatory therapeutic interventions [10].

Description

The landscape of neurodegenerative disease research is shaped by sophisticated modeling approaches, moving beyond traditional limitations. Human induced pluripotent stem cell (iPSC)-derived organoids have emerged as crucial in vitro models, offering a more accurate reflection of complex cellular interactions and pathological hallmarks seen in patients. This superior platform allows for detailed dissection of disease mechanisms and drives efforts in drug discovery [1]. Concurrently, microfluidic chip technology provides a versatile platform for constructing physiologically relevant in vitro models, enabling precise control over the cellular microenvironment. This facilitates complex co-culture experiments and supports high-throughput screening, both essential for mechanistic investigations and drug development [5].

While advanced in vitro methods gain traction, animal models remain an

Cite this article: Ashworth R,(2025) Neurodegeneration: Evolving Models, Technology, *Therapies. nnr* 07: 167. DOI: 1037532.nnr.2025.7.3.167

indispensable part of understanding neurodegenerative conditions. For Parkinson's disease, for example, a range of animal models—including toxin-induced, genetic, and transgenic approaches—significantly contribute to unraveling disease mechanisms and testing novel interventions. Researchers acknowledge challenges in fully recapitulating the multifaceted nature of human pathology with these models, yet their utility is undeniable [2]. Complementing these approaches, CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing technology applied to iPSCs offers transformative potential. It facilitates the creation of highly precise in vitro models, instrumental in correcting disease-causing mutations, establishing crucial isogenic controls, and deciphering gene functions, thereby opening new avenues for understanding disease and developing advanced gene therapies [3].

Understanding the complexities of neurodegenerative diseases increasingly relies on integrating large datasets and advanced computational tools. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are showing escalating influence in this area, enhancing early diagnosis, predicting disease prognosis, and identifying crucial biomarkers. AI algorithms expertly process complex datasets derived from imaging, genetics, and clinical observations to refine precision medicine strategies [4]. Moreover, a holistic understanding of disease pathology is achieved through the powerful integration of multi-omics data, encompassing genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, and metabolomics. These comprehensive systemic approaches are vital for identifying novel biomarkers, uncovering promising therapeutic targets, and dissecting complex disease mechanisms that might remain obscure in single-omics studies [6].

Specific molecular mechanisms driving neurodegeneration are also under intense investigation. Tauopathies, a class of diseases characterized by pathological tau protein aggregation, are examined using various in vitro and in vivo models to investigate tau pathology, develop advanced diagnostic tools, and test therapeutic strategies targeting tau [7]. Similarly, the intricate relationship between alpha-synuclein pathology, inflammation, and oxidative stress is studied as a driver of Parkinson's disease progression. Researchers employ various models to dissect these intertwined mechanisms, deepening our understanding of synucleinopathies and uncovering potential therapeutic avenues [8]. Neuroinflammation, in particular, is recognized as a central component in the pathogenesis and progression of diverse neurodegenerative disorders. The focus here is on systematically reviewing cellular and molecular mechanisms that fuel chronic brain inflammation and developing targeted anti-inflammatory interventions [10].

Looking forward, significant breakthroughs are being made in gene therapy strategies for tackling neurodegenerative diseases. This involves exploring a variety of viral and non-viral delivery systems, advanced gene editing tools, and novel therapeutic targets. These strategies are currently under investigation in both preclinical models and clinical trials, all with the goal of addressing underlying genetic causes and slowing disease progression, holding substantial promise for future treatments [9].

Conclusion

Research in neurodegenerative diseases is rapidly evolving, leveraging diverse models and advanced technologies to understand complex pathologies and develop therapies. Induced Pluripotent Stem Cell (iPSC)-derived organoids and microfluidic chip technology provide sophisticated in vitro platforms, offering more accurate reflections of cellular interactions and enabling high-throughput screening for drug discovery. Traditional animal models continue to be indispensable for unraveling disease mechanisms, despite challenges in fully mimicking human pathology. Gene editing tools like CRISPR/Cas9 are transforming modeling by correcting mutations and establishing isogenic controls, alongside advanced gene therapy strategies targeting underlying genetic causes. Multi-omics approaches, including genomics, transcriptomics, and proteomics, are crucial for a holistic understanding of disease, identifying novel biomarkers and therapeutic targets. Furthermore, the field investigates specific pathological hallmarks, such as tau protein aggregation in tauopathies, and the roles of alpha-synuclein pathology, inflammation, and oxidative stress in conditions like Parkinson's disease. Neuroinflammation, a core feature, is also under scrutiny for its mechanisms and potential anti-inflammatory interventions. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are enhancing early diagnosis, prognosis prediction, and biomarker identification, refining precision medicine strategies. These combined efforts represent a comprehensive approach to combating neurodegenerative disorders.

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Cite this article: Ashworth R,(2025) Neurodegeneration: Evolving Models, Technology, *Therapies. nnr* 07: 167. DOI: 1037532.nnr.2025.7.3.167