

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF DIABETIC RETINOPATHY: A SYSTEMIC REVIEW OF PHARMACOTHERAPY AND NEW TREATMENT PARADIGMS

KAKARLA INDRA CHENNA REDDY*, KOMPALA KIRAN KUMAR, CH. LAKSHMI,
CHANDU BABU RAO

Priyadarshini Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, 5th Mile, Pulladigunta, Guntur-522017, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Article History: Received: 24 Apr 2026, Revised: 16 May 2026, Accepted: 26 May 2026

*Corresponding Author

Kakarla Indra Chenna Reddy

Abstract

Retinal vasculitis brought on by the consequences of diabetes mellitus is known as diabetic retinopathy. Globally, the prevalence of diabetic retinopathy has skyrocketed, making it a primary cause of blindness and visual impairment in individuals over 20. There are a number of risk factors for diabetic retinopathy including duration of diabetes, poor metabolic control, puberty, gender, hypertension, high lipid levels, nephropathy, and surgery. Clinical practice recommendations include 1) treating hyperlipidemia, 2) controlling arterial hypertension to levels below 130/80 mm Hg, and 3) bringing blood sugar levels down to levels to normal (HbA1c = 7.0%). It is possible to reduce the prevalence and incidence of diabetes mellitus and, consequently, its consequences by weight loss, exercise, and healthy eating. We have reviewed different pathological aspects of diabetic retinopathy and its underlying mechanism of occurrence. In this review, we aim to provide an in-depth understanding and illustration of the progression of diabetic retinopathy, its pathophysiology, epidemiology, and prospective therapeutic targets. The aim of this review is to provide a comprehensive overview of the published literature pertaining to the latest progress in the treatment of DR.

Keywords: Diabetic Retinopathy, Ophthalmological Findings, Pharmacotherapy, Diabetic Control, Metabolic Control, type 2 diabetes mellitus; hyperglycemia; insulin; retinopathy; vision loss.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial 4.0 International License.
Copyright © 2026 Author(s) retains the copyright of this article.



I. INTRODUCTION

Diabetic retinopathy (DR), mainly impacts the quality of life of diabetic cases, it remains, in developed countries, the leading cause of vision loss in working age grown-ups (20-65 times) [1]. Presently, about 90 million diabetics suffer from DR, including 17 million diabetics with proliferative diabetic retinopathy (PDR), 21 million with diabetic macular edema (DME), and 28 million cases with DR that pose a serious trouble to vision, and this frequency of DR is anticipated to double by 2025 in the absence of better preventative remedial strategies.

Retinal vasculitis brought on by the consequences of diabetes mellitus is known as diabetic retinopathy. Neovascularization and macular edema are two possible differences, with the ultimate being more constantly. Encyclopedically, the frequency of diabetic retinopathy has soared, making it a primary cause of blindness and visual impairment in persons over 20. Diabetic retinopathy (DR) involves microaneurysms or worse lesions affecting at least a single eye. It's one of the most pervasive secondary microvascular

complication natural in diabetes mellitus (DM), convinced by leakage from breakdown of the inner blood-retinal hedge and microvascular occlusion [2]. DR plays a vital part in blindness and vision impairment in the working-class population (aged 20-65 times) worldwide. A aggregate of 2.6 of global blindness is a attendant of hyperglycemia. In South Asian developing countries, DR is occasional (19.9) compared to the advanced European homes (45.7). Within South Asia, depending on salutary patterns and life variations, the civic population is more susceptible to DR than the suburban or pastoral communities. On the other hand, several epidemiologic studies suggest that DR is more current in youthful individualities with type 1 rather than type 2 DM and thus presents a substantial burden to the socio-frugality due its goods on working-progressed individualities. DR is nearly asymptomatic; veritably many visual or ophthalmic symptoms are noticed before complete blindness. Its pathogenesis is also not certain, although some studies have demonstrated a significant co-relation with sleep apnea, post-translational emendations of histones within

chromatins, and methylation of DNA and non-coding RNAs. Some specified threat factors for DR include hyperglycemia, hypertension, rotundity, age, coitus, race, and genetics. Hence, following a healthy diet as well as maintaining blood pressure and glucose within the normal range is likely to delay the onset and progression of the complaint [3]. DR is a progressive health challenge, but forestalment is possible, and bettered knowledge about the introductory mechanisms of the complaint and its early discovery could minimize vision loss. This review aims to epitomize the epidemiology, threat factors, operation, and pharmacological intervention of diabetic retinopathy. Regulation of blood glucose situations and blood pressure is pivotal in hampering DR development and arresting its progression.

PATHOPHYSIOLOGY AND EPIDEMIOLOGY

Pathophysiology

Diabetic retinopathy is a microvascular complaint, characterized in colorful ways grounded on elevated vascular inflow and vascular leakage due to the presence of vascular lesions, cell inflammation, edema in apkins, adhesion patch expression and of inner retinal cell, and neo vascularization in the pathogenesis of DR, hyperglycemia plays an important part. The biochemical pathways associated with hyperglycemia-convincing vascular damage include elevated glucose flux by means of the polyol pathway, AGE- product accumulation, inflammation, as well as the activation of protein kinase C (hexosamine pathway). The overkill of superoxide in the mitochondria convinced by hyperglycemia leads to oxidative stress, which acts as a stressor, linking all these metabolic pathways. Oxidative stress gives rise to multiple early clinical emblems of DR that include a thickened basement membrane, pericyte apoptosis, and mitochondrial dysfunction, which altogether affect in BRB breakdown. BRB impairment thickens the retina, as well as adding leucocytosis, which is an intravascular vulnerable response and one of the early clinically recognizable pathologies of DR. It causes the adherence of white blood cells (WBCs) to the endothelial cells lining the blood vessels that impact the plugging of capillaries and vascular leakage [4].

Diabetes mellitus represents a set of metabolic conditions and, grounded on its mechanisms, it has been classified substantially into two orders, type 1 and type 2 diabetes. It's associated with a wide range of macrovascular and microvascular (retinopathy, neuropathy, nephropathy) complications. A meta-analysis in 2010 revealed that DR caused the blindness and visual impairment of 0.8 million people out of 32.4 million eyeless people worldwide and 3.7 million individualities from a aggregate of 191 million moderate- to- oppressively visually bloodied (MSVI) people In 2015, these values elevated drastically; 36 million people were stated to be eyeless, 1.1 of which were due to DR. also, DR contributed 1.3 to 216 million cases of visual impairment in 2015. It becomes

more current with the adding inflexibility and duration of diabetes. According to a population- grounded study in southern Wisconsin among youthful type 1 diabetic cases, DR was set up to be more current in individualities with an onset of diabetes lower than five times before , varied to those with cases of 15 times or further [5].

RISKFACTORS

1 Gender

Another factor is the case's gender. In addition to having a advanced chance of diabetes than men, women are roughly doubly as likely to be eyeless overall According to a study conducted by the Department of Ophthalmology at Marburg University, 446 women and 233 men with diabetes in the state of Hesse were eyeless or seriously visually bloodied in 1997 and 1998 also, there's a strong association between the threat of development of diabetic retinopathy and gestation due to factors including endocrinal and metabolic changes during gestation

2. Hypertension

One of the systemic aspects that has been studied the most is the direct relationship between high blood pressure to retinopathy. still, it's uncertain if nephropathy causes hypertension, in which case both conditions would be consequences of diabetes

3. High lipid situations

It appears that retinopathy and elevated lipid situations are related. Elevated quantities of hard exudates are identified with high cholesterol situations. High situations of triglycerides are linked to the in flexibility of retinopathy

4.Nephropathy

It has been noted in multicentric exploration that both type 1 and type 2 diabetes are accompanied by nephropathy and diabetic retinopathy. Conceivably more frequent than nephropathy, diabetic retinopathy is a microvascular consequence of diabetes

5.Surgery

Diabetic cases who have surgery for early cataracts run the threat of developing proliferative diabetic retinopathy and macular edema In every case, ray remedy of proliferative diabetic retinopathy and retinal edema, as well as preoperative optimization of blood pressure and glucose control, are critical. also, due to the cataract procedure, glucocorticoids or VEGF analogues are released into the vitreous body, which increases the pitfalls

6.Pathogenesis

Diabetic retinopathy is a type of microangiopathy that impacts the arterioles, capillaries, venules, and bitsy retinal highways The vascular lesion is the root cause of the retinal problems. These lesions feel to be primarily caused by endothelial damage [6]. The attendant clinical incarnation of diabetic retinopathy is caused by microvascular problems in addition to this. Anatomical differences include thickening of the rudimentary membrane and pericyte loss; physiological changes include dropped blood inflow; biochemical

changes include increased sorbitol and glucose metabolism end products; and blood retinal hedge dislocation.

3. CLASSIFICATION OF DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

- Non proliferative diabetic retinopathy
- Proliferative diabetic retinopathy

- Non proliferative diabetic retinopathy

The foremost morphological sign of non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy is the conformation of microaneurysms, i.e., outward paragliding of the capillary wall. These are generally originally located on the temporal side of the fovea, and they're generally asymptomatic when they first arise, though they may rupture and give rise to intraretinal punctuate hemorrhages. They're sensible only by ophthalmoscopy. Fluorescein angiography reveals leakage, which is a cause of macular edema. farther signs of non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy of adding inflexibility, from mild to moderate to vere, include honey shaped and spot hemorrhages, hard exudates, oscillations of venous quality ("venous beading"), and intraretinal microvascular anomalies. The ultimate are dilated telangiectatic capillaries in the area conterminous to capillary occlusions; they're visible under ophthalmoscopy as capillary widening. They're considered a classic sign of ischemia and a predictor of imminent progression to proliferative retinopathy [7]. Micro aneurysm development, or outward paragliding of the capillary wall, is the first morphological hallmark of non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy when these first appear, they're generally asymptomatic and are originally set up on the temporal side of the fovea. still, they've the eventuality to rupture and beget intraretinal punctuates haemorrhages. Only ophthalmoscopy can identify them Macular edema is caused by oohing, which is shown by fluorescein angiography. fresh pointers of non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy range in intensity from mild to severe, and include spot and f lame- shaped hemorrhages, hard exudates, venous class oscillations (venous beading), and intraretinal microvascular abnormalities [8]. The ultimate are ophthalmoscopically apparent as capillary widening; they're dilated telangiectatic capillaries in the vicinity of capillary occlusions. They're allowed to be a well- known index of ischemia and an suggestion that proliferative retinopathy may soon do. Cotton hair spots or microinfarcts in the whim-whams- fiber subcaste may be a sign of inadequately managed arterial hypertension.

- Proliferative diabetic retinopathy

As hypoperfusion in the retinal capillary bed becomes more severe and spreads across the retinal area, proliferative diabetic retinopathy develops. As a response to ischemia, neovascularization arises at the papilla (neovascularization of the fragment, NVD) and on the retina outside the papilla (neovascularization

away, NVE). Retinal vascular proliferation can be allowed of as a fruitless attempt to compensate for ischemia by forming new vessels at the papilla, on the retina.

4 MECHANISUM OF DABETIC RETINOPATHY

DR has been classified as the most generally being major secondary complication in individualities diagnosed with DM It has also been classified as the most proved microvascular trouble to diabetic cases (10). A lack of opinion or timely remedial intervention could affect in visual impairment, partial blindness, and ophthalmic com plications beyond these goods therefore understanding the mechanisms involved in DR is of great significance in order to insure the proper opinion, assessment, and treatment of this complaint. Depending on the pathophysiology of microvascular aneurysms, pre-retinal vascularization, retinal hemorrhages, intraretinal microvascular abnormality (IRMA), anatomy of complications faced as retinal vessel hemorrhage and microaneurysms abnormal vascular development on the retinal surface and the accumulation of yellowish thick fluids towards the middle of the retina results in edema formation and other clinical patterns, DR can be discerned into two major classes, videlicet, PDR and NPDR PDR primarily begins with the abnormal growth of stringy connective towel on the retinal face, where as NPDR occurs due to lesions inside the retinal capillaries performing from edema, hemorrhage, microaneurysms of the blood vessels, and/ or capillary blockage.

Hyperglycaemia in Diabetic Retinopathy

Hyperglycemia is a clinical incarnation india bet sand refers to an escalated position of blood glucose due to an insufficiency of insulin. An escalated glucose position causes non-enzymatic glycosylation that causes an increase of complex cross-linked substances known as advanced glycation end products (AGE). AGE conformation leads to multitudinous secondary complications, for illustration, the addition of intracellular reactive oxygen species (ROS), which causes oxidative- stress- convinced damage to retinal cells. In addition, the raising product of AGE have shown reduction in standard mRNA situations of color epithelium- deduced factor (PEDF), which coherently initiates inflammation and damage inside the microvascular endothelial cells of the retina since PEDF has a defensive part.

Malfunction of Insulin Signaling in Retinopathy

The peptide anabolic hormone, insulin has a major influence on the immersion of different macromolecules, similar as adipose acids, carbohydrates, proteins, etc., in the cells. Insulin equally interacts with glucagon to regulate glucose metabolism in the liver. These responses are intermediated by the signal transduction pathway. The blood-retina hedge acts naturally furnishing vulnerable humor to the eye; therefore at the physiological standard position of

insulin the transport medium across this hedge works potently [9].

5 DIAGNOSES AND TREATMENT DIAGNOSIS

(ETDRS) group certified the grading of stereoscopic color fundus photos in seven standard fields (SSFs) as a honored standard for the opinion of DR. Although this system is precise and unremarkable, it requires the use of professional shutterbugs and print compendiums as well as advanced photographic outfit, film processing, and archiving. A diabetic retinopathy opinion methodology on the base of single- field fundus photography has also been used. Cases with type 1 or type 2 diabetes were mugged successively through anon-pharmacologically ballooned pupil using single-field digital monochromicnon-mydratic photography (SNMDP), and also pharmacologically dilated before being examined by an ophthalmologist using ophthalmoscopy and having 30 ° color stereoscopic photos taken in SSFs. still, relative studies that were well planned have shown that single- field fundus photography may be used as an early individual fashion for diabetic retinopathy, detecting individualities with retinopathy and recommending them for ophthalmic opinion and care.

TREATMENT

photocoagulation

The substantiation- grounded treatment for diabetic macular edema and diabetic retinopathy is ray photocoagulation The prospective, randomised, controlled ETDR trial, which was published in 1991 and for which 3711 cases in total were signed, serves as the foundation for the recommendation for this type of treatment [10]. Accordingly, the Working Group on Diabetes and the Eye [Arbeitsgemeinschaft Diabetes und Auge, AGDA] and the Initiative Group for the Early Discovery of Diabetic Eye conditions (Initiativegruppe Zur Früherkennung diabetischer Augenerkrankungen, IFdA) have published public guidelines in Germany presently, a double- frequence neodymium yttrium- aluminium garnet (Nd YAG) ray produces light with a wavelength of 532 nm. With the use of a contact lens placed on the cornea, the ray is connected to a split- beacon microscope to administer the treatment. When there's advanced opacification of the cornea or lens, treatment with a Nd YAG ray may not be doable due to poor sight and light ray scattering from the remedial operation. An 810 nm diode ray may be employed in these circumstances, or the cataract may be treated first, with the ray treatment administered a many days after the cataract surgery

Surgery

Non-resorbing vitreous hemorrhage, subhyaloid hemorrhage, ghost- cell glaucoma, tractional retinal detachment, and tractional macular edema are among the conditions that can be treated with pars plana vitrectomy (PPV) [11]. With a pars plana vitrectomy, the cloudy vitreous body, scarred cords, and membranes can be removed, the retina can be duly

dislocated, and the stylish ray photocoagulation treatment can be administered. An disquisition that was prospective, randomized, controlled, and controlled (the Diabetic Retinopathy Vitrectomy Study, or DRVS) vindicated the benefits of pars plana vitrectomy and linked the stylish time point for treatment. individualities who had their vitre sections beforehand on endured noticeably superior vision than those who got the mistime latterly. The contemporary microsurgical ways, vitrectomy has come a routine procedure [12]. In recent times, specialized advances have docked the operative time and averted the need for stitching.

Laser Photocoagulation

Ray photocoagulation is the substantiation- grounded treatment of diabetic retinopathy and diabetic macular edema. The recommendation for this form of treatment is grounded on the prospective, randomized, controlled ETDR study, published in 1991, for which a aggregate of 3711 cases was signed. Consequently, public companion lines have been published in Germany by the Initiative Group for the Early Discovery of Diabetic Eye conditions, Initiativgruppe zur Früherkennung diabetischer Augenerkrankungen (IFdA) and the Working Group on Diabetes and the Eye (AGDA) (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Diabetes und Auge).

6 PHARMACOLOGICAL TARGETS AND FUTURE PRESPECTIVES

Diabetic retinopathy can be treated pharmacologically in multiple ways. High blood glucose situations beget significant changes in cellular metabolisms, similar as endothelial dys function, which starts the morphological process of diabetic retinopathy [13]. numerous diabetic cases suffer from DR, which can lead toa variety of other serious ails, taking ray photocoagulation treatment as well as the operation of blood glucose situations and blood pressure [14]. Pharmacologically the metabolic damage caused by habitual hyperglycemia can be significantly impacted, although not inescapably restored, with colorful drug groups now under development. Asa result, tight glycemic operation, together with an effective ophthalmologic discovery and follow- up program in diabetic cases, is a critical step in avoiding the onset or progression of DR. Antiplatelet medicines have been shown to decelerate the elaboration of diabetic retinopathy in its early stages, including a dropped degree of microaneurysms, suggesting that endothelial dys function is intertwined. still, a new strategy for regulating endothelial dysfunction, substantially through the use of VEGF impediments, appearsto be promising [15].

7.CONCLUSION

A multidisciplinary approach can help significantly reduce the threat for vision loss from diabetes and associated eye conditions, similar as DR. Primary forestallment of DR and its progression through control of threat factors similar as hyperglycemia and

dyslipidemia are presumably the high end of all clinicians. Current pharmacotherapies, particularly anti VEGF agents and corticosteroids, now form the dependence of treatment in the maturity of cases where they serve as an important adjunct to ray. Since these need to be used via an intravitreal route, certain pitfalls are involved and exploration is fastening on medicines which may be administered orally.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Not Declared

9. FUNDING STATEMENT

No

10. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No

11. INFORM CONSENT AND ETHICAL STATEMENT

Taken from the study participants.

12. REFERENCES

- Prasanthi G, Chandu BR, Kumar YP, Swarnalatha D, Gopinath C. Chemical pharmacology of khat leaves. *J Glob Trends Pharm Sci.* 2014;5(4):2024-2029.
- Hwisa NT, Gindi S, Rao CB, Katakam P, Chandu BR. Evaluation of antiulcer activity of *Picrasma quassioides* Bennett aqueous extract in rodents. *VRI Phytomedicine.* 2013;1(1):27-32.
- Gindi S, Methra T, Chandu BR, Boyina R, Dasari V. Antiurolithiatic and in vitro anti-oxidant activity of leaves of *Ageratum conyzoides* in rat. *World J Pharm Pharm Sci.* 2013;2(2):636-649.
- Nama S, Awen BZ, Chandu BR, Khagga M. Development and validation of a new RP-HPLC method for the determination of aprepitant in solid dosage forms. *Trop J Pharm Res.* 2011;10(4):489-495.
- Kiranmai M, Renuka P, Brahmaiah B, Chandu BR. Vitamin D as a promising anticancer agent. *Int J Res Pharm Chem.* 2012;2(2):636-649.
- Anka Rao A, Rao CHB, Devanna N. Design and evaluation of mucoadhesive buccal bilayered tablets of metoprolol succinate. *World J Pharm Res.* 2017;7(3):172-178.
- Bethapudi V, Pasam NA, Velchuri S, Chandu BR. Dendrimers: emerging polymers for drug delivery and its future prospects. *Res J Pharm Biol Chem Sci.* 2012;3(2):735-746.
- Le HG, Shakoar A. Diabetic and retinal vascular eye disease. *Med Clin (North Am).* 2021;105(3):455-472. doi:10.1016/j.mcna.2021.02.004
- Gardner TW, Antonetti DA, Barber AJ, Lanoue KF, Nakamura M. New insights into the pathophysiology of diabetic retinopathy: potential cell-specific therapeutic targets. *Diabetes Technol Ther.* 2000;2(4):601-608. doi:10.1089/15209150050502023
- Kropp M, Golubnitschaja O, Mazurakova A, Koklesova L, Sargheini N, Vo TT, de Clerck E, Polivka J Jr, Potuznik P, Polivka J, Stetkarova I. Diabetic retinopathy as the leading cause of blindness and early predictor of cascading complications—risks and mitigation. *EPMA J.* 2023;14(1):21-42. doi:10.1007/s13167-023-00309-9
- Provis JM. Development of the primate retinal vasculature. *Prog Retin Eye Res.* 2001;20(6):799-821. doi:10.1016/S1350-9462(01)00012-X
- Wang W, Lo AC. Diabetic retinopathy: pathophysiology and treatments. *Int J Mol Sci.* 2018;19(6):1816. doi:10.3390/ijms19061816
- Reiter CE, Gardner TW. Functions of insulin and insulin receptor signaling in retina: possible implications for diabetic retinopathy. *Prog Retin Eye Res.* 2003;22(4):545-562. doi:10.1016/S1350-9462(03)00035-1
- Song SJ, Wong TY. Current concepts in diabetic retinopathy. *Diabetes Metab J.* 2014;38(6):416-425. doi:10.4093/dmj.2014.38.6.416
- Barot M, Gokulgandhi MR, Patel S, Mitra AK. Microvascular complications and diabetic retinopathy: recent advances and future implications. *Future Med Chem.* 2013;5(3):301-314. doi:10.4155/fmc.12.206