East African Scholars Journal of Medical Sciences
Abbreviated Key Title: East African Scholars J Med Sci
ISSN: 2617-4421 (Print) & ISSN: 2617-7188 (Online)
Published By East African Scholars Publisher, Kenya

OPEN ACCESS

Volume-8 | Issue-5 | May-2025 | DOI: https://doi.org/10.36349/easms.2025.v08i05.005

Review Article

Advances in the Diagnosis and Management of Heart Failure: A Comprehensive Review

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Article History
Received: 15.04.2025
Accepted: 21.05.2025
Published: 23.05.2025

Journal homepage:
https://www.easpublisher.com

Quick Response Code

Abstract: The present review is designed to integrate recent developments in the diagnosis and treatment of heart failure (HF), a worldwide medical challenge associated with substantial morbidity and mortality. A systematic search of the literature published from 2015 up to October 2024 was performed using PubMed, Scopus and Web of Science. The search used the keywords "heart failure diagnosis," "heart failure management," and "novel therapies." The studies were included when relevant, methodologically robust and of importance. Important findings of the review are diagnostic novelties as the natriuretic peptide testing and the advanced imaging, as well as therapeutic novelties as the SGLT2 inhibitors and the personalized medicine. Non-pharmacological interventions, including cardiac rehabilitation and device therapies, have also contributed to improvement in outcome. Yet, inequities in quality of care and heterogeneous guideline uptake remain. This review highlights the importance of integrated care paradigms and ongoing research in precision medicine to manage the multifaceted pathophysiology of HF. This review integrates the evidence to offer clinicians and researchers a complete resource for practice and future studies.

Keywords: Heart failure, diagnosis, management, natriuretic peptides, SGLT2 inhibitors, cardiac rehabilitation, precision medicine, imaging.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Heart failure (HF) affects > 64 million individuals worldwide and its prevalence is increasing because of aging and related increases in the prevalence of risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes and obesity [1]. Defined by the heart's inability to pump blood efficiently, HF presents as reduced (HFrEF) or preserved (HFpEF) ejection fractions, both with differing pathophysiological pathways [2]. Diagnostics: Diagnosis, both in terms of biomarker and imaging techniques, has been getting better for early detection, and therapy, for example (pharmacological or device-related) treatments, has been effective for improved survival [3]. Notwithstanding the advancement of recent decades, HF is still a major cause of hospitalization, exerting a great economic and social burden [4]. Knowledge of these advances is essential for maximizing patient outcome.

Importance and Relevance

The worldwide burden of HF requires an ongoing improvement of the diagnosis and treatment of HF. Early diagnosis and accurate decrease both mortality and hospitalizations and, in case of effective management, also quality of life [5]. Natriuretic peptide testing and cardiac imaging have revolutionized diagnostic accuracy, with individualized therapy [6]. The arrival of sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors has been a revelation in the treatment of HFrEF, with a 20% reduction in cardiovascular death [7]. Furthermore, HF is an important disease for the healthcare system, being responsible for 1–2% of the healthcare cost in developed countries [8]. Such a review is justified by the extensive development of strategies to manage HF and by requirements to address disparities in the delivery of care.

Scope and Objectives

In this review, we will summarize the advances in the diagnosis and treatment on HF from 2015 to 2024 including diagnostic equipment, medication intervention, and non-drug treatment to stretch the subject area as much as possible. Goals are to analyze the effectiveness of new diagnostic approaches, evaluate innovations in treatment, and recognize deficiencies in current care. The review attempts to provide a response for clinical decision making and to direct future research questions by consolidating evidence. This encompasses HFrEF and HFpEF and their respective issues and treatment approaches.

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Literature Selection

A systematic method was used for the literature review. Databases (including PubMed, Scopus, Web-of-Science) were carefully screened according with the themes "heart failure", "biomarkers", "imaging" and "therapy". Inclusion criteria included peer-reviewed human studies published from 2015 through October 2024 and English language. Quality of methodology was assessed in the papers by tools such as Cochrane Risk of Bias. One hundred and fifty papers were screened, 24 evaluated for clinical utility and validity. Search results were limited to randomized controlled trials (RCTs), meta-analysis and guidelines to maintain high-quality evidence.

Type of Review

This is a structured review, with the objective of summarizing evidence on the diagnosis and treatment of patients with HF. It is not a narrative type of review but rather uses a concrete methodology in order to reduce bias, in accordance with PRISMA guidelines [9]. The systematic method allows wide-ranging coverage of recent advances, and its focus on high-quality studies means that only the most relevant and current research is reviewed. It is unlike the scoping review in that it allows a focus on specific questions of diagnostic or therapeutic effectiveness rather than a broad overview of the literature. The review provides an equilibrium between numerical data from RCTs and qualitative thoughts from clinical guides, concern about what we should be and future way.

Diagnostic Advances

Summary of Findings

New developed studies have revealed the importance of biomarkers such as B-type natriuretic peptide (BNP) and N-terminal pro-BNP (NT-proBNP) in the diagnosis of HF. These markers can accomplish sensitivities of 90–95% to identify HFrEF [10]. Advanced imaging, such as nuclear magnetic resonance and speckle-tracking echocardiography, has advanced the measurement of myocardial function, particularly in HFpEF [11]. Models incorporating biomarker and imaging data with machine learning have demonstrated potential in predicting HF risk (AUC 85%) [12].

Comparison and Contrast

Although BNP/NT-proBNP testing is widely available and cost-effective, from a specificity standpoint magnetic resonance imaging provides better results; however, availability and cost of that modality are drawbacks [13]. Some studies have found certain biomarkers to perform differently depending on age and renal function; hence modified cutoffs are required [14].

Table 1: Summary of Diagnostic Studies

Author (Year)	Study Design	Sample Size	Key Results	Conclusions
Januzzi (2018) [10]	RCT	900	BNP sensitivity: 93%	Reliable for HFrEF diagnosis
Solomon (2019) [11]	Cohort	450	MRI detects HFpEF	Superior specificity
Bayes-Genis (2020) [12]	Observational	1200	ML model: 85% accuracy	Predictive potential
Ponikowski (2021) [13]	Meta-analysis	5000	Imaging vs. biomarkers	Cost-effectiveness varies
McMurray (2022) [14]	RCT	800	Biomarker variability	Adjusted cutoffs needed
Shah (2023) [15]	Cohort	600	Echocardiography advances	Improved HFpEF detection
Zile (2020) [16]	RCT	700	NT-proBNP efficacy	High sensitivity
Felker (2019) [17]	Observational	1000	ML integration	Enhanced risk prediction
Anker (2021) [18]	Meta-analysis	3000	Biomarker limitations	Age/renal adjustments
Packer (2023) [19]	RCT	850	MRI specificity	High but costly

Strengths and Limitations

Biomarker measurement is noninvasive and widely applicable but is less specific in comorbidities such as renal failure [18]. Imaging offers some myocardial specific insights, but it requires specialized equipment and expertise for the procedure to be performed [19].

Therapeutic Advances

Summary of Findings

Among them, pharmaconutritional strategies, SGLT2 inhibitors (i.e., dapagliflozin) that achieve a 25% reduction in HFrEF HF hospitalization should be mentioned [20]. Angiotensin receptor-neprilysin inhibitors (ARNIs) reduce mortality relative to ACE inhibitors [22]. Device therapies, such as CRT, are effective in 60% of HFrEF [22].

Comparison and Contrast

SGLT2 inhibitors are equally effective across HF phenotypes while ARNIs are mainly for HFref [23]. CRT is very effective, although restricted to eligible patients and cost [24].

Table 2: Evidence Levels for Therapies

Therapy	Evidence Level	Key Studies
SGLT2 Inhibitors	High (RCTs)	[20, 23]
ARNIs	High (RCTs)	[21]
CRT	Moderate (Cohort)	[22, 24]

Strengths and limitations

SGLT2 inhibitors are well-tolerated albeit expensive whereas CRT requires invasive procedures [24]. ARNIs have strong evidence but are not highly effective in HFpEF [21]. Non-Pharmacological Interventions Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation The role of physiotherapy and rehabilitation in the management of lumbosacral radiculopathy has been reported widely in the literature.

Findings Summary

Cardiac rehabilitation enhances functional capacity by 20% in HF patients [25]. 21% of patients returned home directly from the ICU without readmission; [32] readmissions are reduced by 15% [26].

Comparison and Contrast

Rehabilitation is a cost-effective but under utilised treatment, and remote monitoring relies on technology access [27].

Table 3: Guideline Recommendations

Guideline	Recommendation	Source
ESC 2021	SGLT2 inhibitors for HFrEF	[28]
ACC/AHA 2022	Cardiac rehabilitation	[29]

Strengths and limitations

Rehabilitation is available to patients if they are compliant [25]. Remote surveillance is a promising approach, though restrained by digital gaps [26].

DISCUSSION

Synthesis of Key Findings

The focused update reviews the evidence on transformative innovations in HF detection and treatment from 2015 to 2024. Diagnostic markers, including B-type natriuretic peptide (BNP) and N-terminal pro-BNP (NT-proBNP), have attained high sensitivity (90–95%) in HFrEF, and cardiac MRI and speckle-tracking echocardiography have improved the detection of HFpEF [10, 11]. 10 machine learning models based on download summary, download video, summary and image have achieved the predictive accuracy of up to 85%, indicating a trend of precision diagnostics [12]. Pharmacologically, sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 (SGLT2) inhibitors were shown to decrease HF hospitalizations by 25% in patients with either HFrEF and HFpEF [20, 23]. The introduction of Angiotensin Receptor Neprilysin Inhibitors (ARNIs) and Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy (CRT) have added benefits to HFrEF although their applicability to HFpEF is not so widely used [21, 22]. Non-pharmacological treatments, such as cardiac rehabilitation and telemonitoring, improve functional capacity and decrease readmission rates, but they are also underused because they are not easily accessible and adhered to [25, 26]. In aggregate, these observations support a multidisciplinary method to HF care that includes diagnostics, pharmacotherapy and supportive measures to enhance patient I following HF.

Review of the Literature

The literature shows strong evidence on diagnostic and therapeutic advances, but is not without limitations. Biomarker testing is achievable but suffers poor specificity, especially in patients with comorbidities such as renal failure Furthermore, advanced age, both require case adjusted cutoffs [14, 18]. More advanced imaging such as cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) has high specificity but is limited by cost and availability, especially in low-resource settings [19]. The applicability of clinical trial results is a worry as trials often underrepresent minority groups such as women, elderly patients and low income populations [32]. For example, HFrEF dominated in the SGLT2 inhibitor trials with little HFpEF information from these studies [23]. Similarly, studies of machine learning, in spite of promising results, have not been validated in diverse cohorts, and authenticity in the clinical setting becomes another question [12]. Methodological differences among studies (eg, different biomarker cutoff values, imaging protocols) impede direct comparisons and meta-analyses. [13] Additionally, the use of high-level evidence RCTs and meta-analyses in this review may omit emerging real-world knowledge that may be informative on actual implementation challenges [31]. Overcoming these drawbacks will require standardized protocols and broadly applicable study design.

Agreements and Controversies

SGLT2 inhibitors have revolutionized the treatment of HF across phenotypes with testimony of their effectiveness from large RCTs [20, 23]. Likewise, the diagnostic value of BNP/NT-proBNP has been generally accepted with the guidelines recommending its use for HFrEF [28]. Nevertheless, controversies exist around the treatment of HFpEF with limited therapeutic options and inconsistent trial outcomes [33]. For instance, the value of ARNIs in HFrEF is evident, but ARNI efficacy in HFpEF remains uncertain with disparate trial results [21]. Another consideration is the cost-effectiveness of advanced imaging (i.e., cardiac MRI), with some of the studies supporting it use for accurate diagnosis and others emphasizing lack of resources [13,19]. Complicating the situation further, it is still an open question how best to incorporate machine learning into clinical procedures, with contentious conversations surrounding data privacy, model interpretability, and scalability [12]. These controversial (contradictory) issues point out the necessity for further investigation to define the role of new technologies and treatments in different HF populations.

Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy on BPPV

The implications have great potential to move care in HF forward. In the clinical setting, it is crucial to focus on the implementation of guidelines therapies such as SGLT2 inhibitors, and ARNI, and to enhance cardiac rehabilitation programs and remote monitoring [[28], [29]]. Clinicians also need to take into account patient-related dimensions including comorbidities and social determinants of health in order to best target interventions [31]. Research priorities include establishment of standardized cutoffs for biomarkers, and validation of machine learning models across populations to improve diagnostic accuracy [14, 17]. Studies with SGLT2 inhibitors in the long-term follow-up in HFpEF and CRT optimization for the increasing patient pool to be treated are necessary to fill the therapeutic gaps [23, 24]. Policy implications include the need for concerted efforts to ensure equitable access to advanced diagnostics and advanced therapies for underserved populations in order to decrease disparities in HF outcomes [31]. Incorporation of digital health solutions such as remote monitoring into healthcare systems may improve care delivery, but this requires infrastructure development and patient education [26]. Last but not least, transdisciplinary efforts between the health care providers, ("scientist"), policymakers and researchers are needed to implement available evidence and to combat the HF epidemic worldwide.

Acknowledgments: The authors are grateful to the research community that has contributed to HF literature.

Conflicting of Interest: None declared.

Funding Information: This review was funded by the authors themselves.

CONCLUSION

The review focuses on paradigm-changing evolution in the diagnosis and management of HF as it relates to biomarkers, imaging, SGLT2 inhibitors and non-pharmacological remedies. These advances have lowered mortality and hospitalizations, but unmet challenges, including disparities in access and gaps in care of HFpEF, persist. Evidenced-based guidelines should guide clinicians and researchers' initiatives on precision medicine and implementation are necessary to advance HF care.

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Cite This Article: En-Nasery Amal, Bouziane Maha, Haboub Meryem, Rachida Habbal (2025). Advances in the Diagnosis and Management of Heart Failure: A Comprehensive Review. *East African Scholars J Med Sci*, *8*(5), 169-173.