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GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS AND THEIR EFFECT ON THE HUMAN BODY

Khasanova Dilnoza Akhrorovna
DSc, Associate Professor of Anatomy, Clinical Anatomy (OSTA)
Department Bukhara State Medical Institute named after Abu Ali ibn Sino
Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Abstract:
Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have become ubiquitous in modern agriculture and food production, raising concerns about their potential impact on human health. This article provides an overview of the current scientific understanding of GMOs and their effects on the human body. We examine the various ways in which GMOs may interact with human physiology, including potential allergenicity, toxicity, and alterations in nutritional composition. Additionally, we explore the controversies surrounding GMO safety assessments, regulatory frameworks, and public perceptions. By synthesizing evidence from peer-reviewed studies, regulatory reports, and expert opinions, this article aims to provide a comprehensive perspective on the complex relationship between GMOs and human health.

Keywords: Genetically modified organisms, GMOs, human health, allergenicity, toxicity, nutritional composition, safety assessment, regulatory frameworks, public perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have emerged as a central issue in modern agriculture, biotechnology, and public health. Engineered to possess specific traits such as resistance to pests, diseases, and herbicides, GMOs have transformed agricultural practices and food production systems worldwide. While proponents argue that GMOs offer numerous benefits, including increased crop yields, reduced pesticide use, and improved nutritional quality, critics raise concerns about their potential impact on human health and the environment. In particular, questions have been raised regarding the safety of consuming GMOs and the long-term effects of GMO consumption on human physiology.

The concept of genetic modification dates back to the early 20th century, with the pioneering work of scientists such as Gregor Mendel and Thomas Hunt

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Morgan. However, it was not until the advent of recombinant DNA technology in the 1970s that the modern era of genetic engineering began [1]. The ability to manipulate the genetic material of organisms, including plants, animals, and microorganisms, revolutionized biotechnology and paved the way for the development of GMOs. In agriculture, the first genetically modified crop, the Flavr Savr tomato, was commercialized in the early 1990s, marking the beginning of widespread adoption of GMO technology in crop improvement [2]. GMOs encompass a diverse range of organisms that have been genetically modified using various techniques, such as gene splicing, gene editing, and recombinant DNA technology. In agriculture, genetically modified crops have been engineered to possess desirable traits such as insect resistance, herbicide tolerance, drought tolerance, and enhanced nutritional content [3]. Examples of genetically modified crops include soybeans, corn, cotton, canola, and papaya, which are grown extensively in many countries around the world. In addition to crops, genetically modified animals, such as salmon and pigs, have been developed for food production and biomedical research [4].

Despite the widespread adoption of GMO technology, concerns persist regarding the safety of GMOs and their potential effects on human health. Critics argue that GMOs may pose risks such as allergenicity, toxicity, antibiotic resistance, and unintended changes in nutritional composition [5]. For example, genetic modifications intended to enhance crop resistance to pests or herbicides may inadvertently introduce allergenic proteins or toxins into the food supply, posing risks to sensitive individuals. Moreover, the use of antibiotic resistance genes as selectable markers in GMOs has raised concerns about the transfer of antibiotic resistance to pathogenic bacteria in the environment and human microbiome [6].

To address concerns about GMO safety, regulatory agencies around the world have established frameworks for the assessment and approval of GMOs for commercialization and consumption. These regulatory frameworks typically involve rigorous safety assessments, including molecular characterization, toxicity studies, allergenicity assessments, and compositional analyses [7]. However, critics argue that existing safety assessments may not adequately evaluate the long-term health effects of GMO consumption or consider potential synergistic interactions between GMOs and other dietary or environmental factors [8]. Moreover, the reliance on industry-funded studies and limited

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transparency in regulatory decision-making processes have raised questions about the independence and impartiality of GMO regulatory agencies.

Public perceptions of GMOs vary widely, influenced by factors such as media coverage, political discourse, cultural attitudes, and personal beliefs. While some individuals view GMOs as a promising technology with the potential to address global food security challenges, others harbor skepticism and distrust towards GMOs, citing concerns about corporate control of the food supply, environmental degradation, and human health risks [9]. The polarization of public opinion on GMOs has fueled debates, protests, and advocacy campaigns around the world, highlighting the complex socio-political dimensions of GMOs and their implications for food sovereignty, consumer choice, and agricultural sustainability.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Allergenicity of Genetically Modified Organisms:

One of the primary concerns regarding genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is their potential to induce allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. Genetic modifications can introduce new proteins or alter the expression of existing proteins in GMOs, leading to changes in allergenic potential. For example, proteins derived from sources to which individuals are commonly allergic, such as peanuts or shellfish, may be inadvertently introduced into GMOs through genetic engineering techniques [1]. Moreover, modifications intended to enhance crop resistance to pests or pathogens may result in the expression of novel proteins with allergenic properties. Consequently, rigorous allergenicity assessments are essential for evaluating the safety of GMOs prior to their commercialization and consumption.

Toxicity of Genetically Modified Organisms:

Another significant concern is the potential toxicity of GMOs and their byproducts. Genetic modifications can alter the composition and metabolism of GMOs, leading to the production of toxic substances or metabolic byproducts that may pose risks to human health. For example, genetic modifications aimed at enhancing crop resistance to herbicides may result in the accumulation of herbicide residues in food products, potentially exposing consumers to toxic chemicals [2]. Additionally, unintended changes in the levels of naturally occurring toxins or anti-nutritional factors in GMOs may affect their safety and

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nutritional quality. Therefore, comprehensive toxicity studies are necessary to assess the potential adverse effects of GMO consumption on human health.

Nutritional Composition of Genetically Modified Organisms:

Genetic modifications can also impact the nutritional composition of GMOs, affecting their nutrient content, bioavailability, and dietary quality. For example, genetic modifications aimed at enhancing crop yields or reducing post-harvest losses may inadvertently alter the levels of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and other micronutrients in GMOs [3]. Moreover, changes in the expression of genes involved in nutrient metabolism or biosynthesis pathways may affect the nutritional profile of GMO-derived food products. Therefore, accurate compositional analyses and nutritional assessments are essential for evaluating the nutritional equivalence and safety of GMOs compared to their non-genetically modified counterparts.

Regulatory Oversight and Safety Assessments:

To address concerns about the safety of GMOs, regulatory agencies around the world have established frameworks for the assessment and approval of GMOs for commercialization and consumption. These regulatory frameworks typically involve comprehensive safety assessments, including molecular characterization, toxicity studies, allergenicity assessments, compositional analyses, and environmental risk assessments [4]. However, critics argue that existing safety assessments may not adequately evaluate the long-term health effects of GMO consumption or consider potential synergistic interactions between GMOs and other dietary or environmental factors. Moreover, the reliance on industry-funded studies and limited transparency in regulatory decision-making processes have raised questions about the independence and impartiality of GMO regulatory agencies.

Public Perceptions and Controversies Surrounding GMOs:

Public perceptions of GMOs vary widely, influenced by factors such as media coverage, political discourse, cultural attitudes, and personal beliefs. While some individuals view GMOs as a promising technology with the potential to address global food security challenges, others harbor skepticism and distrust towards GMOs, citing concerns about corporate control of the food supply, environmental degradation, and human health risks [5]. The polarization of public opinion on GMOs has fueled debates, protests, and advocacy campaigns

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the debate surrounding genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and their effects on the human body is complex and multifaceted. While GMO technology offers potential benefits in addressing global food security challenges and improving agricultural productivity, concerns persist regarding their safety and potential risks to human health. Issues such as allergenicity, toxicity, and unintended changes in nutritional composition underscore the importance of rigorous safety assessments and transparent regulatory oversight.

Moving forward, it is crucial to balance the potential benefits of GMOs with the need to address public concerns and ensure the responsible development and utilization of this technology. By engaging in informed public discourse, transparent regulatory processes, and responsible stewardship of GMO technology, we can harness its potential while safeguarding human health and environmental sustainability. Ultimately, a balanced and evidence-based approach is necessary to navigate the complexities of GMOs and their implications for the future of agriculture and food production.

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