

Gene Editing and Cancer Therapy: Breaking New Ground in Treatment Options

Gregory Bi*

Department of Cancer Biology, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, OH 45267, USA

Introduction

Chronic heat exposure and its impact on health, particularly in terms of hyperthermia risks, is an issue that is gaining increasing attention in today's rapidly changing climate. Rising global temperatures, as a result of climate change, are intensifying heat waves, which are contributing to prolonged periods of heat exposure that can overwhelm the body's natural ability to regulate temperature. This manuscript explores the physiological mechanisms behind heat regulation, the risks associated with chronic heat exposure, and the profound health consequences of hyperthermia. The human body maintains a delicate balance of internal temperature, typically hovering around 37°C (98.6°F), through a complex system of thermoregulation. Thermoregulation involves various physiological processes, including sweating, vasodilation, and behavioural responses like seeking shade or drinking water. When external temperatures rise beyond a certain threshold, the body begins to lose its ability to regulate temperature effectively, especially when combined with factors such as high humidity, which reduces the evaporative cooling of sweat. This condition can lead to hyperthermia, a state in which the body's core temperature exceeds the normal range, resulting in serious health consequences.

Description

Hyperthermia, when the body's temperature rises above 38°C (100.4°F), can manifest in various forms, from heat exhaustion to heat stroke, which is the most severe and life-threatening form of hyperthermia. Heat exhaustion occurs when the body becomes dehydrated and loses essential electrolytes through excessive sweating, leading to symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, weakness, and confusion. If left untreated, heat exhaustion can progress to heat stroke, where the body's temperature can rise above 40°C (104°F), and the body's ability to regulate temperature ceases entirely. This condition can result in organ failure, brain damage, or death without immediate medical intervention. Chronic exposure to excessive heat can lead to recurrent episodes of hyperthermia, weakening the body's resilience over time and increasing the risk of severe heat-related illness [1].

One of the significant concerns with chronic heat exposure is its cumulative impact on health, especially in vulnerable populations. People who live in regions that experience persistent or intensifying heat waves, including many parts of South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and urban areas in the global north, are more likely to suffer from the long-term effects of heat. Chronic heat exposure is particularly dangerous for individuals with pre-existing

health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory disorders, and diabetes. For example, heat stress can exacerbate cardiovascular problems by placing additional strain on the heart, causing blood vessels to dilate and increasing the volume of blood circulating. The heart must work harder to pump blood, and for those with underlying heart conditions, this can precipitate dangerous events such as heart attacks or arrhythmias. Similarly, people with respiratory conditions like asthma may find that prolonged heat exacerbates their breathing difficulties due to poor air quality, which often accompanies heat waves [2,3].

Elderly individuals are especially susceptible to heat-related illnesses. As the body ages, its ability to regulate temperature declines, and older adults often have a diminished sense of thirst, which reduces their ability to stay hydrated. Moreover, chronic illnesses and medications that affect thermoregulation further increase the risks associated with heat exposure. Infants and young children are also at heightened risk, as their bodies are less efficient at regulating temperature compared to adults. Pregnant women face unique risks as well, as excessive heat can have adverse effects on fetal development, leading to complications such as dehydration, heat stress, and preterm labor. Low-income communities are disproportionately affected by chronic heat exposure. These communities often lack access to cooling infrastructure, such as air conditioning, and may live in areas with a higher urban heat island effect. The urban heat island effect occurs when cities absorb and retain heat due to the concentration of buildings, roads, and other man-made surfaces that trap heat. This phenomenon results in urban areas being significantly hotter than their rural counterparts, contributing to higher instances of heat-related illnesses [4,5].

The social determinants of health also play a crucial role in determining the impact of chronic heat exposure. Access to resources such as air conditioning, hydration, and cooling centers can significantly influence the outcome of heat exposure, with wealthier individuals having greater access to these life-saving measures. Climate change exacerbates this inequality, as the frequency, intensity, and duration of heat waves are expected to increase, with disadvantaged communities bearing the brunt of the consequences. In addition to the direct effects on human health, chronic heat exposure also contributes to a variety of secondary health risks. Prolonged heat can lead to dehydration, which not only affects the body's ability to regulate temperature but also causes electrolyte imbalances that disrupt cellular functions and organ systems. Chronic dehydration can lead to kidney damage, urinary tract infections, and even kidney failure in extreme cases. Furthermore, heat exposure can lead to mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. The constant stress of dealing with heatwaves, coupled with the uncertainty of future climate conditions, can take a toll on mental well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, chronic heat exposure poses significant risks to human health, with hyperthermia being one of the most immediate and severe consequences. The risks of heat-related illnesses are heightened in vulnerable populations, including the elderly, children, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, and those living in low-income communities. Climate change is expected to exacerbate these risks by increasing the frequency and intensity of heatwaves, making it imperative that we take proactive steps to protect public health. This includes both mitigation strategies, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptation strategies, such as improving

*Address for Correspondence: Gregory Bi, Department of Cancer Biology, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, OH 45267, USA, E-mail: bigrgory@gmail.com

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urban infrastructure and providing better access to cooling resources. By addressing the health impacts of chronic heat exposure, we can help safeguard the well-being of individuals and communities in the face of a rapidly warming world.

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Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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