# **REVIEW PAPER**

# **GENOMICS ERA IN THE NUTRITION FIELD**

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> Received on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 Revised on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Nutritional deficiencies or the imbalance between food ingestion and physical inactivity correlated with a genetic susceptibility are the main cause for disease development. This review discusses the basic concepts of nutrigenetics and nutrigenomics and offers a few examples of genes polymorphisms in relation with human predisposition to disease according to its diet. These two new 'omic' technologies use complex sources of investigation in order to develop mechanisms through it would be easy to explain the genetic basis of interindividual differences in response to the same nutrient. Moreover, there are presented the anticarcinogenic and antioxidative activities of some biologically active compounds and the used mechanisms for maintaining cell homeostasis.

**Keywords**: genes polymorphisms, nutrigenomics, metabolic syndrome, cancer, biologically active compounds

# Introduction

In the last decade, nutrition and human genome were interconnected resulting new research fields, nutrigenetics and nutrigenomics, both being very promising for the human health' solutions.

When the scientists analysis the response of gene variants to nutrients and relates these variations to disease states, it can speak about nutrigenetics or "personalized nutrition" (Simopoulos, 2010; Kohlmeier *et al.*, 2016; Sharma and Dwivedi, 2017; German *et al.*, 2011). On the other hand, when the studies are based on the influence of the nutrients (vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, fats and proteins) on gene expression regulation, it can speak about nutrigenomics.

The association between nutrients and human health is a primordial one, which is now studied by novel epidemiological techniques. The environmental factors, the socio-economic status together with the micro- and macronutrients are involved in genes expression regulation and play a specific role in determining the human health.

There are two-ways of interaction between nutrients and genes: from nutrients to genes expression and metabolic responses and then, from the health condition to

susceptibility to appear the disease state based on what is happened in the human genome.

First, it is interesting to analyse how the polymorphism change the metabolic response to diet and influence the risk patterns of disease. In the human population genome occur natural genetic variations that are called polymorphisms. When the variation take place at a single base pair cause a single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) which define the risk of each person to disease, nutrient variation requirements and emphasizes the gene variability (of different individuals) to the same nutrient.

On the other hand, nutrients act directly or indirectly to DNA and, in consequence to gene expression in terms of: transcription, or translation process, influencing proteins biosynthesis.

The main important aspect of nutrigenetics and nutrigenomics could be the process of specific dietary programmes development based on individual genotype in order to promote the health and to have a better management of chronic diseases.

This review is focused on some specific examples of association between gene polymorphisms and human diseases, correlated with specific food components.

## Interdependence between MTHFR Gene Polymorphisms and Human Diseases

Each individual is unique due to variability existing in its genome. Existence of variation in the gene copy number, the chromosomal rearrangements, deletions, insertions or the presence of nucleotide polymorphisms offer to each person a predisposition to disease, in the context of environment factors - nutrient – gene interaction.

Microarray technology was used in studies of human single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) and was able to provide results that were correlated with a specific disease or trait or with some ethnicity.

Nutrigenetics studies offered answers to the oldest question: why and how people reveal different physiology responses to the same nutrient? Thus, the nutrigenetics made possible the correlation between genetic differences that influenced the individual response to diet.

In the scientific literature the main example of nutrigenetics is the response of methylene-tetra-hydro folate reductase gene (MTHFR) to folic acid. The encoded enzyme of MTHFR catalyses the transformation of 5,10-methylenetetrahydrofolate (5,10-MTHF) to 5-methyltetrahydrofolate (5-MTHF), which is a methyl donor for DNA methylation, and also a co-substrate for re-methylation of homocysteine (Fohr *et al.*, 2002). Abnormal folate metabolism, some vascular disease, neural tube errors, Down syndrome, colon cancer or acute leukaemia were associated with genetic variations in this gene.

Computation analysis of each non-synonymous SNP (nsSNP) of MTHFR gene revealed that R157Q (substitution of arginine from 157 position with glutamine), L323P (substitution of leucine from 323 position with proline) and W500C (substitution of tryptophan from 500 position with cysteine) are the most

deleterious SNP affecting protein stability and also the interaction of ligand molecules with MTHFR protein (Desai and Chauhan, 2018).

Another two SNPs variants of MTHFR gene, A222V (alanine from 222 position was substituted with valine) and E429A (glutamic acid from 429 position was substituted with alanine), were associated with Down syndrome, intellectual disability (Saccucci *et al.*, 2008; Coppedè, 2015; Desai and Chauhan, 2016b) or with a risk factor for spontaneous abortions and decreased fetal viability, respectively (Stover, 2004).

Moreover, other polymorphism in the exon-4 region of this gene (the rs1801133 – the substitution of alanine by valine) has been correlated with the symptomatology of ischemic stroke (IS) (Shi *et al.*, 2018). It is known that, the encoded enzyme, MTHFR plays a crucial role in total homocysteine (tHcy) metabolism, which can activate MAP (Mitogen-activated protein) Kinase signaling by a broad range of stimuli, one of them being the excessive production of reactive oxygen species (ROS). Because, MAP kinase pathway is involved in a variety of cellular processes like motility, stress response, or apoptosis (Arthur and Ley, 2013; Cargnello and Roux, 2011) it is possible that the tHcy accumulation to produce death in the arterial and venous endothelial cells.

Nojima *et al.* (2018) showed that the individuals with different MTHFR gene polymorphisms demonstrate lower DNA methylation degree when plasma folate level is low whereas for the individuals with a normal MTHFR activity, the DNA methylation level is keep up irrespectively of plasma folate level. The explanation that the authors offered was based on the presence of other DNA methylation determinants, like alcohol intake, that can modify the relation between folate intake and global DNA methylation levels, respectively (Ono *et al.*, 2012). More exactly, it was observed a complex association between alcohol consumption, C reactive protein (CRP) level and DNA methylation among individuals carrying the minor allele of the MTHFR rs1801133 missense SNP (Nojima *et al.*, 2018).

# Polymorphisms of Peroxisome Proliferator Activated Receptors (PPARs) and their Consequences on Human Health

Peroxisome Proliferator-Activated receptors were discovered in the early 90s and then, 20 years later, many articles arose on this topic. PPARs are found in the peroxisomes, a single membrane subcellular organelles, where fulfil important functions, being involved not only in the peroxisomal metabolism but also in the lipid one.

Actually, there are three isoforms: PPAR- $\alpha$ , PPAR- $\delta$ , and PPAR- $\gamma$ , included to the superfamily of nuclear receptors. Each of them having its own functionality in accordance with cells distribution, as follows: PPAR- $\alpha$  is expressed predominantly in cells with active fatty acid catabolism (like: liver cells, enterocytes, non-neuronal cells, vascular and immune cell types) (Moreno et al., 2004; Heneka and Landreth, 2007), whereas the PPAR- $\delta/\beta$  were found in skin, skeletal muscle, adipocytes, macrophages, and brain (Barish *et al.*, 2006; Tyagi *et al.*, 2011).

The resulting consequences in case of abnormalities in PPARs functions are huge if it can be considered their role in genes modulation, their control on lipid and glucose metabolism, or their involvement in gluconeogenesis, and glycogenolysis pathways (Vamecq *et al.*, 2014).

It have been studied the influence of two PPARs polymorphisms (PPAR- $\delta$  A/G and PPAR- $\delta$  C/G) on the anthropometric and blood measurements in response to exercise-centered lifestyle intervention in Japanese middle-aged men. The results showed that the anthropometric parameters and clinical blood measurements were not significantly different among the two tested SNPs (Nishida *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, Ke *et al.*, (2016) investigated (using Asian data sets from Singapore), if the interaction between 53 common SNPs, found in the PPAR- $\alpha/\delta/\gamma$ , with other genetic variants across the genome, effects plasma high-density lipoprotein-cholesterol (HDL-C) levels. The study is based on the fact that, HDL-C level is inverse correlated with risk of coronary heart disease. An increase of HDL-C of only 10 mg·L<sup>-1</sup> is possible to induce a risk reduction of 2–3% (Gordon *et al.*, 1977; Ali *et al.*, 2012).

The study of Ke *et al.* (2016) provides, for the first time, that the interaction between PPAR- $\delta$ , SNP rs2267668 and the epithelial membrane protein 2 (*EMP2*), SNP rs7191411, cause an increase of HDL-C levels in the Singaporean Chinese population who are carrying minor alleles from both SNPs. Moreover, the result of the interaction between PPAR- $\delta$  and EMP2 is a reverse cholesterol transport, from peripheral tissues back to the liver, which has a relevant biological meaning.

In general, physical exercises activate the transcription factors, PPAR- $\gamma$  and LXR $\alpha$  (Liver X Receptor), that increase the FAT-CD36 (Fatty Acid Translocase), ABCA1 (ATP Binding Cassette Subfamily A Member 1), and ABCG1 (ATP-binding cassette sub-family G member 1) gene expression, (genes which encode the cholesterol-related reverse transporters).

The hypocaloric diets, a replacement of carbohydrates by lipids, the functional foods and bioactive compounds offer an increased HDL-C level, improve its functionality, promote a better metabolic profile and decrease the risk of atherosclerotic cardiovascular diseases (Siri-Tarino, 2011; Chen *et al.*, 2014; Farràs *et al.*, 2015; Hernáez *et al.*, 2016; Rondanelli *et al.*, 2016; Marques *et al.*, 2018).

Because PPAR- $\delta$  was also linked with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), Raj *et al.*, (2017) analysed its role on early and late onset of T2DM, in North Indian population. They found that polymorphisms, Pro12Ala of PPAR- $\delta$ , intron7 polymorphism of PPAR- $\alpha$  and T + 294C polymorphism of PPAR- $\delta$  are significant connected with T2DM at the subjects which have more than 25 years from disease onset.

Even T2DM particularly depends on diet and lifestyle, it was observed an inverse correlation between the distribution of Ala allele (from Pro12Ala polymorphism of PPAR- $\delta$ ) frequency in the European populations and T2DM prevalence (Scacchi *et al.*, 2007). The present pattern seems to have a descending distribution, from northern to southern populations, depended on the temperature and on the diet rich

in lipids. In Table 1 are presented many others examples of polymorphisms and their effects as an outcome of gene-diet interaction.

Gene affected /Genotype	SNPs	Effects of gene expression	Susceptible or tested population	Dietary	References
Peroxisome Proliferator- Activated Receptor Delta -PPARD	rs7770619	Type 2 diabetes (T2D)	Korean	Diet rich in unsaturated fat	Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2018
Cholesterol transport gene - <i>ABCG5</i> Bile acid synthesis- <i>CYP7A1</i> Cholesterol	rs6720173 rs3808607 rs760241	Significant variability in the cholesterol responsiveness	Healthy people carrying the SNPs	High-PUFA diet Lower intake of red meat, animal fat, and eggs Dietary	Abdullah et al. 2016; Abdullah et al., 2018; Hubacek et al., 2003
synthesis gene DHCR7				products	
9p21 variants	rs10757274 rs10757278 rs2383206 rs1333049 rs4977574	Cardiovascular disease (CVD)	Women, young adults from different ethnocultural groups	CVD risk can be reduced by a diet high in raw vegetables and fruits, or by higher vegetable, and wine intake	Do <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Hindy <i>et al.</i> , 2012;
Apolipoprotein A5- APOA5	rs662799 rs2075291	Low level of adiponectin, Higher risk of atherosclerosis	Korean people with low HDL- cholesterol levels	High saturated fatty acid consumption	Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2018
LDL Receptor - LDLR Protein convertase subtilisin/ kexin type 9 - PCSK9	rs2569556 rs565436	Autosomal Dominant Hypercholestero lemia	Asian with high LDLc levels	CHO and fat	Lye <i>et al.</i> , 2013
Apolipoprotein E -APOE	rs405509	Higher TC, LDL-C or TAG levels, lower HDL-C levels	Inuit	High Total fat and saturated fat intake	Rudkowska et al., 2013
ATP binding cassette subfamily A member 1- ABCA1	rs9282541	Low HDL, Tangier disease	Mexican Mestizos	4 weeks of LSF followed by 8 weeks of LSF+SSF	Acuña- Alonzo et al., 2010; Guevara- Cruz et al., 2010

Table 1. Examples of gene-dyet interaction effects

	rs2230806 (R219K)	Higher HDL-C level, Lower risk of cardiovascular disease for R219K carriers	Asian	6597 cases and 15,369 controls found in different publications (data analysis)	Jung et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2011
Dedicator of Cytokinesis 7 - DOCK7 Finc Finger - ZPR1/ZNF259	rs645040 rs964184	Increased risk for chronic metabolic disease	Children and adults	High consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages	Haslam <i>et</i> <i>al.</i> , 2017; Sonestedt <i>et</i> <i>al.</i> , 2015
Finc Finger - ZNF664	rs4765127				
Alpha- ketoglutarate dependent dioxygenase	rs1121980	Adiposity, Genetic predisposition to obesity	Data from three cohorts	Intake of sugar- sweetened beverages	Olsen <i>et al.</i> , 2016
- FTO	rs9939609	Association with body mass index, obesity and a predisposition to T2D	Adults with morbid obesity; Romanian obese children	Low physical inactivity, preferences for high caloric density in foods	Frayling <i>et al.</i> 2007; Simopoulos, 2010; Duicu <i>et al.</i> , 2016
<i>FTO</i> - associated noncoding variants - ARID5B, (IRX3 and IRX5 are repressed)	rs1421085	Adipocyte browning, lipid storage, and fatty acid oxidation	Epigenomics data from human cell lines	High fat diet	Claussnitzer et al., 2015
Glucokinase regulatory protein gene - <i>GCKR</i>	rs1260326, rs780094	T2D and MetS	European population, Japanese population	Not specified	Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Onuma <i>et</i> <i>al.</i> , 2010
Hephaestin like 1 - HEPHL1	rs7946162 rs2460063 rs7127348	Colorectal cancer (CRC)	Adults with these SNPs	High Iron intake	Nicholas et al., 2013
Solute Carrier Family 30 Member 8- SLC30A8	rs13266634	T2D	Postmenopaus al women	Zn intake	Goyal <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Glutathione peroxidase 1 - GPX1; Superoxide dismutase 2 - SOD2	rs1050450	Prostate cancer risk	Nested case control study as a part of the Physicians Health Study, carried out in a large number of US population	Nutritional Selenium deficiency	Torrens <i>et</i> <i>al.</i> , 2006
Aldehyde dehydrogenase 2 -ALDH2	rs671	Facial flushing and severe hangovers	Individuals with either one or two copies of the A-allele	Higher alcohol intake	Takeuchi <i>et</i> <i>al.</i> 2011; Wang <i>et al.</i> 2013

Vitamin D	rs2228570	Skin cancer	Caucasians,	Low calcium	Raimondi et
receptor - VDR		risk, Colorectal cancer risk	Asians, Africans	intake, energy intake, energy expenditure	al., 2009
Endothelial nitric oxide synthase - eNOS	rs2070744 rs1799983	Vascular and renal disease risk, susceptibility to diabetic nephropathy	South Indian Systemic lupus erythematosus patients	Not specified	Dong <i>et al.</i> , 2018
Long-chain acyl CoA synthetase 1 – ACLS1	rs9997745 rs12503643	Metabolic syndrome	Cohort of 13,000 adults selected from an existing French SU.VI.MAX	Fatty acid intake	Phillips <i>et</i> <i>al.</i> , 2010
Leptin receptor - LEPR	rs1137101 rs1137100	Hypertension or lipid abnormality	Older Han adults from China	Not specified	Wu <i>et al.</i> , 2016

## Nutrigenomics and Diet Reach in Omega-6/Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Nutrigenomics, as a subset of genomics field, use multiple disciplines and establish the effects of ingested nutrients on genome stability, epigenome alterations, transcriptome, proteome and metabolome.

Nutrigenomics have an important role to identify the genes that are expressed/repressed after food ingestion and also, to analyse the response of polymorphisms to diet. Based on these results will be possible to determine the individual nutritional requirement, a personalized diet, mainly to help each person in preventing the chronic diseases manifestation (Nielsen and El-Sohemy, 2012; Kirwan *et al.*, 2016; de Toro-Martín *et al.*, 2017).

It is significant to understand all the events that take place in cells at posttranscriptional levels and to analyse, in a complex manner, using bioinformatics software, the metabolism pathways of each person in order to obtain the ideal diet that will provide the nutritional value for maintaining the health or to help the body to heal.

Such intelligent interventions will bring a new vision on human diet management, will recommend foods, supplements, and lifestyle modifications for each person based on the personal sensory preferences or intolerances to foods. Of course that, the effects of nutrients should be correlated with the physiological processes, including food digestion, nutrients and vitamins transport, cellular metabolism and with the activation of transcriptional factors.

Worldwide, many people are suffering from metabolic syndrome (MetS) and their number increases (Cameron *et al.* 2004). MetS is a consequences of urbanization, of sedentary lifestyle and obesity and is linked with the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases (like, atherosclerosis, hypertension, and thrombosis), type 2 diabetes mellitus or cancer.

In western diets because of a modern agriculture, the ratio between omega-6 and omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) achieve 20:1, instead of 1:1, (Simopoulos, 2003; 2008; 2013; Kang, 2003; Donahue, 2011; Kromhout and de Goede, 2014). In order to avert obesity, Simopoulos (2016), concluded that, a balanced omega-6: omega-3 ratio of 1–2:1 is one of the most important dietary factors for health maintaining. Instead, for Chinese population, in order to lower the risk of total mortality, the ratio ranging 6:10 may be a solution (Zhuang et al., 2018).

While omega-3 fatty acids derivatives have strong anti-inflammatory effects, and are involved in controlling the apoptosis, or in lymphocyte proliferation, the omega-6 fatty acids is pro-inflammatory (de Pablo and Alvarez de Cienfuegos, 2000; Kruger *et al.* 2010; Wymann and Schneiter, 2008).

In recent years, new studies offered epidemiologic evidence on the fact that n-6:n-3 ratio is obsolete and non-specific and also that, a consistent dietary cannot be given stand on it (Mensink et al., 2003; Chowdhury *et al.*, 2014; Harris, 2018; Zhuang *et al.*, 2018). The base of these observations is the reason that, while two saturated fatty acids, (palmitic and stearic), both from the same class, have shown antagonic physiological effects, there are some trans monounsaturated fatty acids, from different classes, with more similar effects. In his review, Harris (2018) brings to discussion four assumptions underlying why this metric is questionable and offered a new metric to n-6:n-3 ratio, called the Omega-3 Index, which represents the sum of eicosapentaenoic and docosahexaenoic acids in red blood cell membranes expressed as a percent of total fatty acids (Harris *et al.*, 2013; Harris, 2018).

Both omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids influence gene expression. Szostak *et al.*, (2016) investigated, using RNA-Seq analysis, the physiological effects of increased dietary intake of omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids. The results highlighted a reduced expression of CYP7A1 gene (Cytochrome P450 Family 7 Subfamily A Member 1), which is one of the target genes of LXR (Liver X Receptor), suggesting a major down-regulation of lipid metabolism and an increase of  $\beta$ -oxidation (Ramayo-Caldas *et al.* 2012; Szostak *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the expression of fatty acid desaturase (FADS) cluster, which act predominantly in the omega-3 metabolic pathway, increases (Ratnayake and Galli, 2009). The biological meaning is a higher absorption and storage, or lower degradation of omega-3 fatty acids in detriment of omega-6 fatty acids (Szostak *et al.*, 2016).

# Nutrigenomics and Diet Reach in Biologically Active Compounds for Cancer Prevention

When a cell is getaway from the genes control, its growth and division become uncontrollably. Consequently, the cell is dividing more rapidly forming a tumor, which is more resistant to the controls that maintain the equilibrium between proliferation and suppression. Most cancers are the results of gene mutations and are associated, according to epidemiological data, with lifestyle diet. The natural compounds have the potential to interfere with the early or later tumorigenesis stages influencing tumor behavior. Nutrigenomics study the gene expression after interaction with bioactive compounds or nutrients, being part of cancer management. It is known that some food compounds interfere with the epigenome but the molecular mechanisms is not well understood, even that some progresses were made.

Moreover, there are some geographical areas where the incidence for specific tumors, in the same population, is higher compare with others, which means that genome background alone does not justify the susceptibility for one or other tumor types (Cook *et al.*, 1999; Imai *et al.*, 1997). So, the dietary and environmental factors, together with endogenous reactions could initiate the tumorigenesis process.

Resveratrol and quercetin, flavonoids, lutein, lycopene or other carotenoids are biologically active substances that were used for hundreds of years in traditional medicine for chemoprevention and therapy.

Resveratrol found in many plants (e.g. grapes, peanuts, berries or plums) proved to have anticancer activity by suppressing some microRNAs that are usually involved in human colon and prostate cancer (Tili *et al.* 2010; Dhar *et al.* 2011).

Flavonoids are known as gene modulators in signalling pathways in different cancer types, like: breast, colon, prostate, or ovarian (Weng *et al.*, 2012; Omene *et al.*, 2013; Du *et al.*, 2011; Wubetu *et al.*, 2016). Epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) is found in green tea, represents more than 50% of the total polyphenols, and has the ability to induce apoptosis in the human breast cancer cells by inhibition of the human telomerase reverse transcriptase (*hTERT*) or the activity of DNA methyltransferases (DNMTs) and histone acetyltransferases (HATs). The effects are: hypo methylation of the DNA and histone deacetylation, both processes contributing to inhibition of *hTERT* expression, and consequently to cellular apoptosis (Meeran *et al.*, 2011).

Genistein is a natural isoflavone found in fava beans, lupins, or soybeans. It has anticarcinogenic and antioxidative effects, and inhibits angiogenesis and metastasis in breast, gastric, lung, pancreatic, renal, and melanoma cancer (Kaufman *et al.*, 1997; Banerjee et al., 2008) by nuclear factor kappa-light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells (NF- $\kappa$ appa B) and protein kinase B (Akt) signalling pathways inhibition and GSTP1 (Glutathione S-transferase P), RASSF1A (Ras association domain-containing protein 1), EPH2 (ephrin type-A receptor 2), BRCA1 promoter (Breast cancer susceptibility gene 1), methylation (Vardi *et al.*, 2010).

Curcumin is a polyphenol extracted from *Curcuma longa* rhizomes and is recognized for its anti-tumor and chemopreventive effects. This compound acts on the major pathogenic pathways for blood cancer, activates the tumor suppressor gene - p53 and represses NF-kappa B, exhibiting its anticancer properties (McCubrey *et al.*, 2012; Sidhar *et al.*, 2017; Marin *et al.*, 2007).

Various natural carotenoids like, alpha- and beta-carotenes, lutein, zeaxanthin, lycopene, beta-cryptoxanthin, fucoxanthin, astaxanthin, capsanthin, phytoene, have the ability to reduce the oxidative stress by modulating ROS-producing enzymes (Nishino *et al.*, 2002; Tanaka *et al.*, 2012), to act on the expression of cell cycle

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regulatory proteins in order to inhibit the cancer cell proliferation, or to inactivate the growth factor (Platelet-derived growth factor-PDGF, Vascular endothelial growth factor-VEGF, Insulin-like growth factor -IGF)-induced PI3K/AKT/PKB and Ras/RAF/MAPK signalling pathways (Seren *et al.*, 2008; Ip and Wang, 2013; Sahin *et al.*, 2010; Trejo-Solís *et al.*, 2013; Sahin *et al.*, 2017).

Overall, these bioactive compounds are promising as nutraceuticals in the alternative cancer therapy but their mechanism of action is complex and require integral studies of transcriptomics, nutrigenetics, proteomics and metabolomics.

### Conclusions

Indubitably, nutrigenomics and nutrigenetics are sciences with a higher impact on nutrition area. Nowadays obesity, metabolic syndromes, type 2 diabetes mellitus or cancer with their plethora of clinical manifestations are the main concerns of society. The natural compounds are able to exhibit important antioxidant and antitumor properties by blocking specific enzymes or some checkpoints in the cell cycle, or by many others mechanisms.

The vision that nutrigenomics/nutrigenetics offers at this moment is promising and can be very well applied, perhaps, in the next 20 years.

Whole-genome sequencing, and the analysis of genetic expression profile will reveal for each person, its risk on illness developing, in the context of gene-nutrient association. It will be possible to access a personalized diet aiming to prevent diseases and to improve the quality of live.

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