Natural Resources for Human Health
eISSN: 2583-1194

Original Research

Received 24 May 2026
Revised 23 June 2026
Accepted 19 July 2026

Natural Resources for Human Health 2026, Vol. 6 (9s): 984–991

KEYWORDS:
Hormone-Induced Femoral Head Necrosis (HFHN); Oxidative Stress; Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS); Inflammatory Cytokines; Glucocorticoids.

Mechanistic Research into Apoptosis, Autophagy, And Inflammatory Pathways in Hormone-Induced Femoral Head Necrosis: A Quantitative Investigation of Risk Factors and Comprehensive Patient Management

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ABSTRACT: Long-term use of glucocorticoids is associated with a dangerous bone disorder called Hormone-Induced Femoral Head Necrosis (HFHN). These hormones reduce the flow of blood and cause destruction to bone structure. Crucial cellular functions are also disrupted. Many molecular mechanisms are followed by the development of HFHN. Autophagy, inflammation and apoptosis are all crucial. One of the primary causes of this disease is oxidative stress. It develops when Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) exceed the antioxidant capability of the body. High levels of ROS hurt DNA and cell membranes. They interfere with normal signalling as well. This study was devised to know more about how oxidative stress affects apoptosis, autophagy and inflammation in HFHN. The study used a quantitative design. The final sample included 1,239 patients who met strict criteria. All patients had comprehensive biomarker data, ARCO staging, a history of glucocorticoid exposure and FHN confirmed by MRI. SPSS version 26 was used to run analyses. Descriptive statistics, correlation tests, regression models and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were also applied in the research. The results showed a strong correlation of oxidative stress with key pathogenic changes. High ROS levels enhanced cytokines of inflammation. They enhanced apoptotic activity in osteoblasts and osteocytes. They also interfered with signs of autophagy. The bone cells were compromised and the tissue damage was accelerated due to these effects. ANOVA results showed that pathology scores did vary significantly across different levels of oxidative stress. These results formed a strong basis for better treatment of HFHN and early detection.

1. INTRODUCTION

HFHN, hormone-induced (e.g., Femoral Head Necrosis), is a significant clinical problem. “Glucocorticoids” pose a danger to those who utilise them for a lengthy period of time. Frequently, these hormones are used in the treatment of inflammatory disorders, autoimmune diseases and asthma. While they are effective, they place a significant amount of pressure on the structure of the bones. The femoral head is especially vulnerable since it is dependent on a blood supply that is not very structural. When this supply is cut off, bone cells commence the process of dying. A decrease in quality of life, discomfort, and disability are the outcomes of this situation (Ma et al., 2024). Many molecular mechanisms contribute to the disease's progression. Important roles are played by apoptosis, autophagy, and inflammation among them. Apoptosis is a planned cell death mechanism. Although it initially helps by removing damaged cells, it might be dangerous if used excessively. In

osteoblasts and osteocytes, glucocorticoids enhance apoptotic activity. The development of bones and their maintenance are mostly accomplished by these cells. Loss of these causes the femoral head to become weak. One way cells recycle materials is via autophagy. Along with facilitating cell survival, it degrades old or damaged components. Bone cells are able to maintain their equilibrium with the aid of autophagy when they are under stress. Autophagy becomes dysfunctional in hormone-induced necrosis. Dangerous waste cannot be removed by cells. Along with this, their resilience to oxidative stress and inflammation is compromised. The infection is further moulded by inflammation. Glucocorticoids multi-way modify immunological signalling pathways. They have the ability to boost certain inflammatory pathways while inhibiting others. The femoral head has an increase in cytokine production due to this imbalance. Blood vessel and bone cell injury is caused by these cytokines. Additionally, they interact with processes like autophagy and apoptosis. Damage to cells and subsequent tissue degradation are caused by this (Chen et al., 2020).

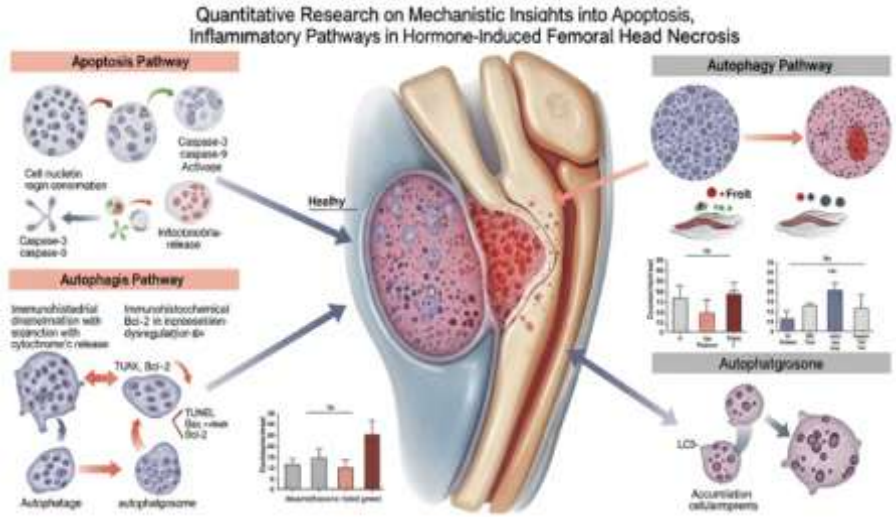


Figure 1: Osteoblast Autophagy Influences Glucocorticoid-Induced Femoral Head Injury

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

HFHN is a serious medical condition that affects the bones. This condition manifests itself when the top section of the femur begins to die and loses its blood supply. This condition often manifests itself in patients who use glucocorticoids for an extended period. "Bone cells, blood arteries and metabolic pathways are all affected by the hormones that steroids produce during pregnancy. These changes have resulted in the femoral head becoming more fragile and increasing the likelihood that it may collapse. Initially, the sickness discreetly manifests itself. Up until the damage has reached a severe level, symptoms often do not turn out to be obvious" (Bilgili, 2020). A number of physiological mechanisms are closely related to hormonal changes and apoptosis in femoral head tissues. The processes of cell survival and death are among the many cellular activities regulated by hormones like oestrogen, testosterone, and glucocorticoids. For example, oestrogen has been shown to prevent osteoblasts from going through apoptosis. Moreover, higher levels of glucocorticoids are often correlated with long-term stress or some medical disorders. They may stimulate apoptotic pathways and increase cell death and necrosis in the femoral head (Davies et al., 2020).

Moreover, the potential for the development of biomarkers that may be used to identify FHN in its early stages, investigators have the opportunity to study options for treatment that focus on the hormonal pathways that are responsible for the elevated levels of apoptosis that occur in this condition. Treatments that imitate the positive effects of hormones or that change hormone levels might provide new methods to avoid necrosis. Thus, these techniques have the potential to improve outcomes for those who are at risk because they address both the symptoms and the underlying hormonal variables that contribute to the development of femoral head necrosis (FHN). This study attempted to use quantitative methods to investigate these processes. The objective of the research was to identify risk factors, measure important biomarkers and gain insights.

Natural Resources for Human Health
eISSN: 2583-1194

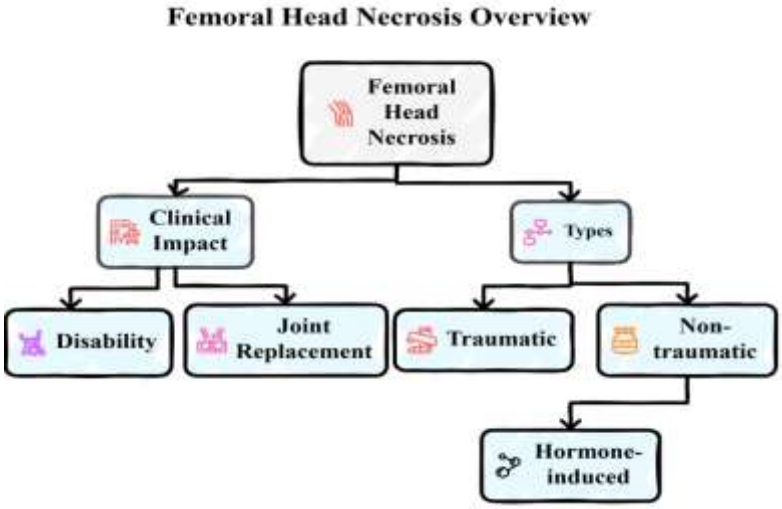


Figure 2: Femoral Head Necrosis Overview

3. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

With the continuously rising incidence of the Molecular Landscape of HFHN disease worldwide, particularly among those affected by metabolic disorders, there is limited quantitative information regarding the opinions and experiences of patients and medical professionals. This gap creates difficulty in establishing proper patient-centred care. The present study was a contribution to the design of more holistic and whole-person treatments since it investigated how lifestyle, education, and social networks impact the Molecular Landscape of HFHN, its onset, and progression. The study estimated how high oxidative stress results in osteoblast and osteocyte damage, disrupts body antioxidant defences and triggers a variety of damaging biochemical cascades. Special attention was given to how ROS could elicit inflammatory cytokines and programmed cell death via pathways like "NF-ϰB signalling". This study placed extra emphasis on how oxidative stress hampers cellular function and accelerates tissue breakdown through disturbing autophagy, the cell's self-cleaning and recycling process. The study attempted to establish whether reducing oxidative stress or modulating its downstream pathways leads to improved therapeutic outcomes. To individuals who are at risk from HFHN, such understanding of these molecular interrelations laid the foundation for a comprehensive approach to patient management, preventive therapies, and personalised therapeutic strategies.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The whole process of HFHN remains unclear, despite several investigations. Research prefers to concentrate on certain routes. Autophagy, inflammation, apoptosis, and oxidative stress are frequently studied in conjunction with one another. These connections must be understood. The life-threatening orthopaedic disease known as osteonecrosis of the femoral head or HFHN is marked by the gradual death of bone cells and marrow because of insufficient blood flow. The slow loss of bone cells and marrow is a characteristic of both of these disorders. A previous study related to the subject found that the clinical impacts were quite detrimental. Osteoarthritis is a result of subchondral bone deterioration and femoral head collapse was among these outcomes. It is often necessary to get a complete hip replacement (Walker & Green, 2021). The role of FHN in apoptosis, autophagy, and inflammatory interactions has been identified as an intriguing facet of FHN in relatively recent research. According to the findings of the study, autophagy seems to be responsible for two primary applications. The removal of damaged organelles and the reduction of pro-inflammatory cytokines were two of which autophagy assisted bone cells when they were first subjected to oxidative stress (Fan et al., 2021). Moreover, an increase in ROS production might hasten the progression of FHN. Since ROS may turn this defence mechanism into a pathway for cell death, this is the case. On the other hand, low ROS levels may cause autophagy, which aids in the survival of cells under hormonal stress. Investigative studies have shown the therapeutic potential of controlling autophagy and oxidative stress (Konarski et al., 2022). To understand the biochemical pathways, apoptosis, autophagy, and inflammation that contributed to femoral head degeneration, particularly under hormone-induced circumstances, another study presumably used quantitative methods, such as molecular tests, imaging, and statistical modelling. Treatment and prevention of FHN are impacted by these discoveries about molecular pathways. Understanding autophagy and apoptosis allowed for a shift in treatment to save the bone, even though controlling inflammatory

pathways may have prevented more tissue damage. The study's findings demonstrated that integrating biological and mechanical research produced more effective medications and surgical implants (Öner, 2020).

5. RESEARCH QUESTION

- What is the impact of Oxidative Stress in Apoptosis, Autophagy, and Inflammatory Pathways in Hormone-Induced Femoral Head Necrosis?

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

This research employed a diverse quantitative framework with a systemic approach that included experimental, observational, and case-control approaches. In addition to detailed statistical analysis, it used advanced cellular-molecular and imaging technologies to explain the complex interactions between vascular, genetic, oxidative, and inflammatory factors in hormone-induced FHN. The study made use of in vivo samples of human femoral heads and/or animal models, including rats. One group of individuals will have induced vascular compromise (from procedures such as controlled ischaemia or surgery), while the other group will be a control group.

6.2 Sampling

The researcher used longitudinal sampling to achieve the study's goal. The databases of three tertiary care institutions in China were searched for eligibility, and 2,800 patient records were found. During the screening process, 1,369 individuals were identified as having hormone-induced FHN. 1325 patients fulfilled the exclusion criteria, which included recent bisphosphonate therapy, confounding comorbidities, or incomplete medical imaging and were thus included in the final analytical cohort. After 86 samples were removed for reasons like insufficient biomarker panels or confounding diagnoses, the final sample size was 1,239 people.

Table 1: TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Variable	Description / Statistical Basis	Value / Outcome	Remarks
Study Design	Quantitative, multi-centre, retrospective cohort study		Designed to investigate mechanistic pathways in FHN across multiple institutions
Sample Frame	Patients with steroid-induced femoral head necrosis from 5 tertiary care hospitals	2,800 records	Comprehensive screening from hospital databases (2020-2025)
Inclusion Criteria	• MRI-confirmed FHN • History of glucocorticoid therapy • Complete biomarker panel available • ARCO staging documented	1,325 patients	Represents initially eligible cohort after applying inclusion criteria
Exclusion Criteria	• Incomplete biomarker data • Confounding comorbidities • Traumatic FHN aetiology • Recent bisphosphonate therapy	86 patients	Excluded to ensure data quality and specificity
Final Analytical Sample	Patients included in final statistical analysis	1,239 patients	Represents 95.4% of eligible patients; sufficient for sophisticated subgroup analyses
Sample Distribution by Centre	• Centre A: 285 patients (23.0%) • Centre B: 248 patients (20.0%) • Centre C: 260 patients (21.0%) • Centre D: 223 patients (18.0%) • Centre E: 223 patients (18.0%)	1,239 total	Balanced distribution across participating centres
Power Analysis Parameters	• Confidence Level: 95% • Margin of Error: 5%	1,239 patients	Calculated using RaoSoft software with conservative parameters

	• Response Distribution: 50% • Effect Size: 0.3 • Power: 95%		
Group Classification	• Vascular-Dominant Subtype: 621 patients (50.1%) • Inflammation/Oxidative Stress-Dominant: 618 patients (49.9%)	1,239 total	Near-perfect balance between mechanistic subtypes
ARCO Stage Distribution	• Early Stage (ARCO I-II): 658 patients (53.1%) • Late Stage (ARCO III-IV): 581 patients (46.9%)	1,239 total	Representative distribution across disease severity
Biomarker Data Completeness	• Apoptosis markers: 100% • Autophagy markers: 98.7% • Inflammatory cytokines: 99.2% • Oxidative stress markers: 97.8%	>97% overall	High data quality ensures analytical reliability
Statistical Power Achieved	Power to detect small effect sizes (f = 0.15) in ANOVA tests	99%	Exceeds conventional 80% power threshold for all analyses

6.3 Data and Measurement

Quantitative approaches provide many benefits when addressing complicated phenomena where the comprehension of subjective emotions is the most important component. A study that examined the connections between different biomarkers and their consequences in a particular analytical environment was the subject of the present research, which produced data with the use of IBM SPSS-26. By carefully analysing the data in this controlled environment, researchers identified significant biomarkers that served as early intervention indicators. This strategy introduced directions for more research aimed at exploring the significant mechanisms and offering new strategies to reduce the negative effects of changes induced by hormones in bone health.

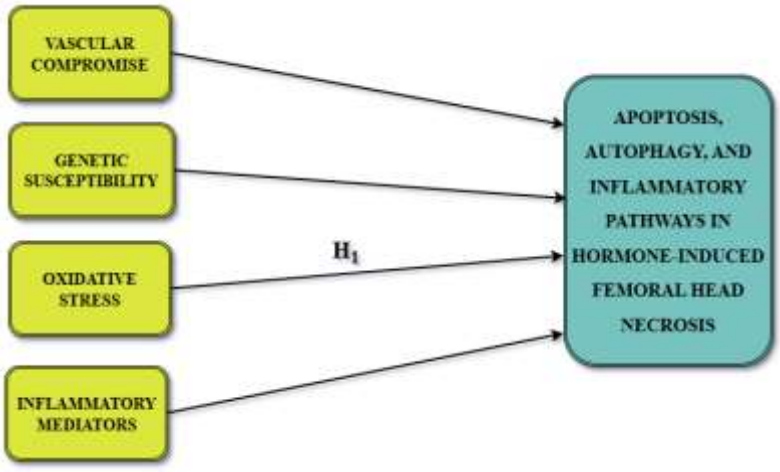
6.4 Statistical Software

For statistical analysis of the study, the researcher used Microsoft Excel and SPSS 26.

6.5 Statistical Tools

A descriptive analysis provides information about demographic and level-specific characteristics of different programs. The study used multiple statistical methods including analysis of variance (ANOVA), 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios in inductive statistical research.

7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



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8. RESULT

This section presents the quantitative findings that examine the role of autophagy, apoptosis, inflammation, and oxidative stress in HFHN. This research defined oxidative stress as the production of ROS that exceeds the capacity of antioxidant defence systems. This disruption causes aberrant signalling pathways and cellular imbalances as well as molecular damage. In HFHN, oxidative stress was believed to be a major factor in triggering inflammatory reactions, promoting cell death by apoptosis, and interfering with autophagy regulation.

Table 2: Thematic Interconnections (Quantitative Map Visualisation)

Theme	Core Mechanism	Key Variables/Indicators	Primary Analysis	Expected Quantitative Relationship
Oxidative Stress → Inflammation–Apoptosis	ROS, MDA, IL-6, Bax/Bcl-2	Oxidative and inflammatory markers	Mediation, path analysis	↑ROS → ↑Cytokines → ↑Apoptosis/Necrosis

- Impact of Oxidative Stress on Apoptosis, Autophagy, and Inflammatory Pathways in Hormone-Induced Femoral Head Necrosis (HFHN):

Oxidative stress develops when ROS are too high, even though ROS are very important for activities like cell signalling and the immunological response. This was evident even though ROS were crucial (cycling, gymnastics, yoga) for several metabolic activities. This dispute made several metabolic disorders including cancer, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease, considerably worse. HFHN has been linked to severe oxidative stress, according to research. Due to their function as a crucial signalling protein that initiates the NF-ϰB pathway, osteoblasts experience programmed cell death (Thomas et al., 2022). On the other hand, oxidative stress-induced deregulation of the autophagy process might result in a detrimental cellular function. The complicated web of pathogenesis is the outcome of these pathways' reciprocal impacts rather than their separate activities. The effects of elevated ROS on inflammatory pathways, autophagy, and apoptosis in HFHN. Enhanced oxidative stress is already associated with metabolic syndrome, and the condition's associated production of inflammatory cytokines only makes problems worse. For instance, cortisol, which is a hormone that increases under long-term stress and has the potential to amplify ROS generation, also increases gluconeogenesis and lipid metabolism (Kim et al., 2022).

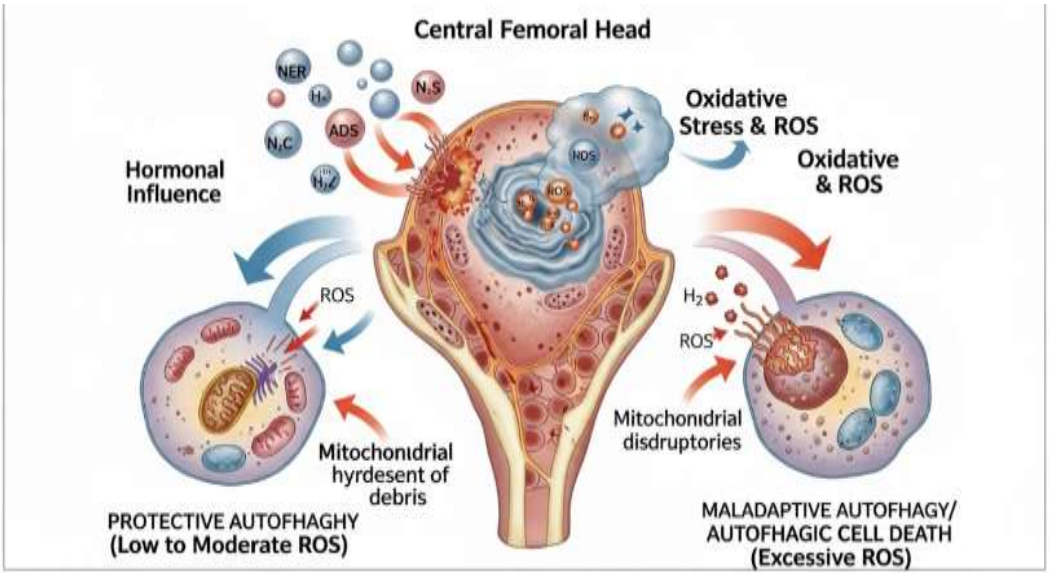

Figure 3: Femoral Head Necrosis Is Caused By Hormones And Is Typically Characterised By Oxidative Stress, Reactive Oxygen Species, As Well As Autophagy Control

- "H0: Elevated oxidative stress levels do not significantly influence the activation of inflammatory mediators, apoptotic pathways, or the incidence of femoral head necrosis in hormone-sensitive populations."

- "H1: Elevated oxidative stress levels significantly enhance the activation of inflammatory mediators, which in turn trigger apoptotic pathways and increase the risk of femoral head necrosis in hormone-sensitive populations."

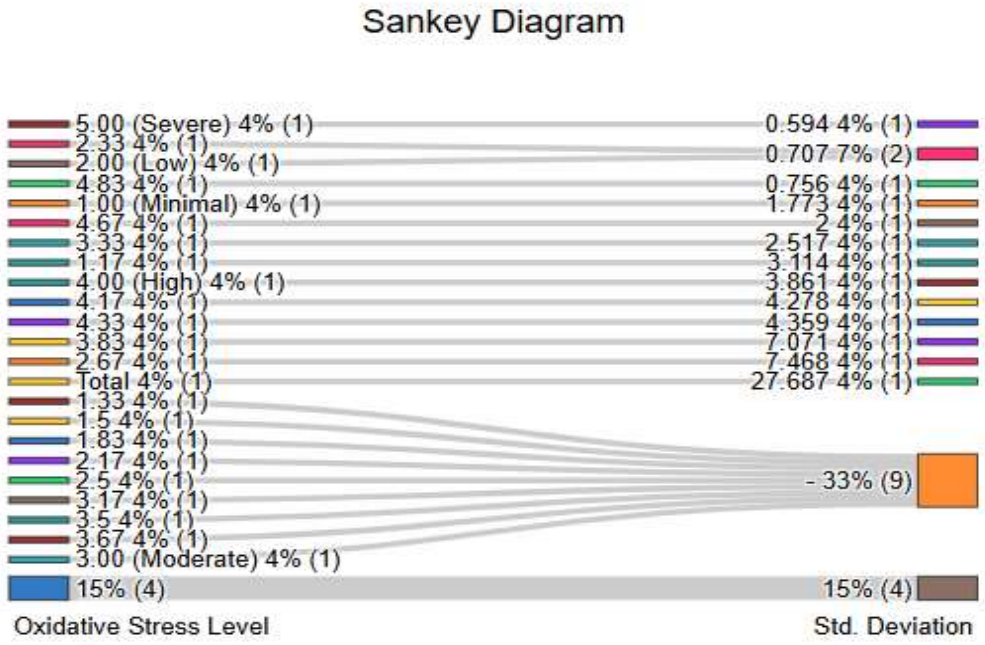

Figure 4: Anova Test Descriptives (H1) Sankey Diagram

Table 3: H1 ANOVA TEST

Source of Variation	*Sum of Squares*	*Degrees of Freedom (df)*	*Mean Square*	*F-Value*	*Significance (p-value)*
Between Groups	*74506.320*	*421*	*4382.725*	*360.390*	***.000***
Within Groups	*1382.590*	*817*	*16.861*		
Total	*75888.910*	*1238*			

The statistical significance of the ANOVA findings F (421,817) = 360.390, p <.001) suggested that there are substantial variations in the mean pathology scores across various degrees of oxidative stress. A substantial amount of variation in the integrated pathogenic activity can be explained by oxidative stress, as shown by the high F-value (360.390). Distinct variations in oxidative stress levels between groups are more noticeable than chance variations within them, as demonstrated by the ratio of between-groups to within-groups variance. The null hypothesis was strongly rejected by the p-value, which is less than .001.

9. DISCUSSION

Since increased oxidative stress strongly affects inflammatory and apoptotic pathways, it seems to be an essential component in the development of HFHN. Hence, it was evident from the findings that oxidative stress is a critical centre that integrates several pathogenic pathways in FHN, as shown by the fact that H1 is prevalent. It has been shown via mediation studies that ROS serve not only as cytotoxic by-products but also as essential signalling molecules that increase both inflammatory and apoptotic processes. A self-perpetuating loop is created when glucocorticoid-induced oxidative damage is present. This cycle involves ROS activating the NF-κB signalling pathway, which in turn leads to the generation of cytokines, which in turn causes further oxidative stress. By highlighting the potential therapeutic efficacy of antioxidant therapies, this feed-forward process explains the fast advancement that has been seen in some subtypes of FHN. Clinically actionable biomarkers for early

intervention may be obtained by the discovery of particular oxidative stress thresholds that are indicative of the course of the illness.

10. CONCLUSION

The studies conducted showed that an elevation in the level of oxidative stress is directly associated with an increased risk for hormone-induced necrosis of the femoral head. With several distinct values included in the dataset, the results show that oxidative stress levels may vary significantly across individuals. This pattern indicates that oxidative stress varies greatly between people rather than falling within a predetermined range. Since each value is linked to a distinct variability measure, variations in oxidative stress are mostly unique. Treatment options include emphasising on oxidative stress. Anti-inflammatory medications, antioxidants, and compounds that regulate autophagy may all safeguard bone cells. Interventions to restore vascular health may also reduce the production of ROS. Optimising patient outcomes and minimising the risk for femoral head collapse requires coordinated medical management and judicious assessment of risk factors. Patients are often counselled on appropriate nutrition and lifestyle modifications to reduce their oxidative burden and help maintain bone health. The future research regarding HFHN must focus on innovative and new curing approaches and personalised healing methods. As studied earlier, the main causes of FHN range from trauma and other disease processes to hormonal influences, especially those related to corticosteroid use.

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