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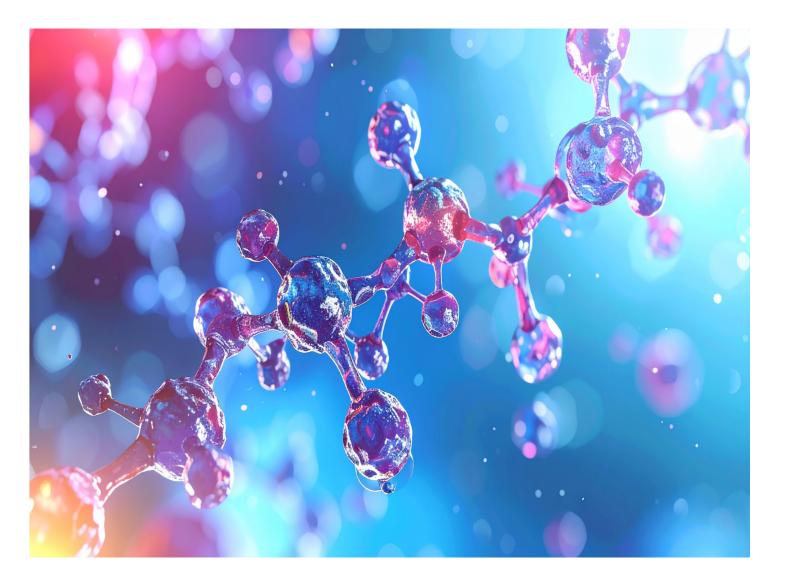
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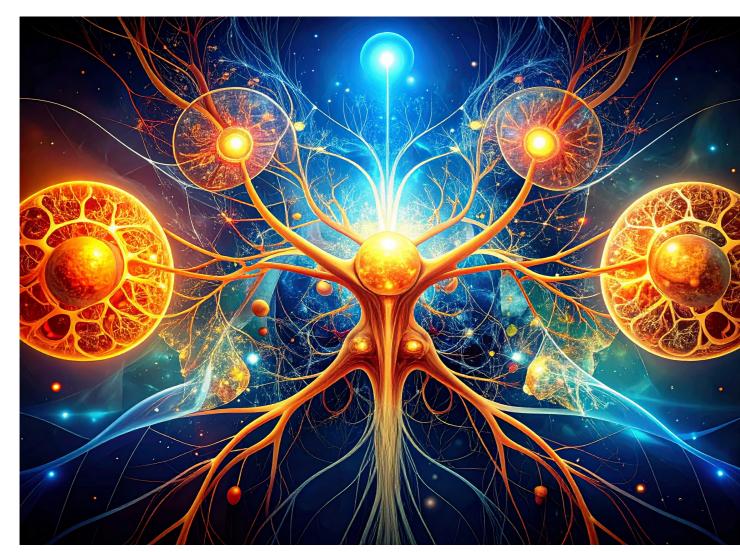
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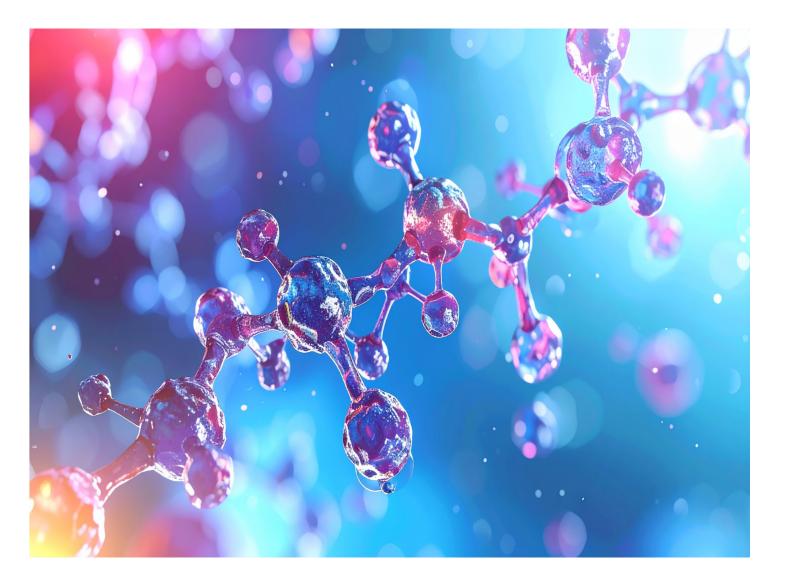
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PATHOGENESIS OF DIABETES

- **Etiologic Classification of Diabetes Mellitus** Kenneth R. Feingold, MD
- Pathogenesis of Type 1 Diabetes 2 Dana VanBuecken, ARNP, Sandra Lord, MD and Carla J. Greenbaum, MD
- Pathogenesis of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus 3 Carolina Solis-Herrera, MD, Curtis Triplitt, PharmD, Eugenio Cersosimo, M.D. PhD and Ralph A. DeFronzo, M.D.

4 Atypical Forms of Diabetes

Carolina Solis-Herrera, MD, Curtis Triplitt, PharmD, Eugenio Cersosimo, M.D. PhD and Ralph A. DeFronzo, M.D.

DIABETES TREATMENT – STRATEGIES

18 Changing the Course of Disease in **Type 1 Diabetes**

Dana VanBuecken, ARNP, Sandra Lord, MD and Carla J. Greenbaum, MDD and Ralph A. DeFronzo, M.D.

- **19** The Management of Type 1 Diabetes Savitha Subramanian, MD and David Baidal, MD
- **20** Management Of Type 2 Diabetes: Selecting **Amongst Available Pharmacological Agents** Emily B. Schroeder, MD, PhD

21 Management of Diabetes and Hyperglycemia in Hospitalized Patients

Ketan Dhatariya, MBBS, MSc, MD, MS, FRCP, PhD and Guillermo E. Umpierrez, MD, CDE, FACE, MACP

36 Diabetic Kidney Disease

M. Luiza Caramori, MD, PhD, MSc and Peter Rossing, MD, DMSc

37 Diabetic Neuropathies

Mohummad Goonoo, MbChB, MRCP and Dinesh Selvarajah, PhD, MRCP

38 Diabetic Striatopathy

Subhankar Chatterjee, MBBS, MD, Ritwik Ghosh, MBBS, MD and Souvik Dubey, MBBS, MD, DM.

39 The Diabetic Foot

Andrew JM Boulton, MD, DSc, FICP, FACP, FRCP and Richard W Whitehouse, MD, FRCR

40 Sexual Dysfunction in Diabetes

Alan W. Shindel, MD, MAS and Tom F. Lue, MD, PhD (hon)

- **Diagnosis and Clinical Management of** 5 **Monogenic Diabetes** Rochelle N Naylor and Louis H. Philipson, M.D., Ph.D.
- **Diabetes Mellitus After Solid Organ** 6 **Transplantation**

Phuong-Thu Pham, Mrinalini Sarkar, MD, Phuong Mai Pham and Phuong Chi Pham

Atypical Forms of Diabetes

Carolina Solis-Herrera, MD, Curtis Triplitt, PharmD, Eugenio Cersosimo, M.D. PhD and Ralph A. DeFronzo, M.D.

Metabolic Syndrome 8

David W. Lam and Derek LeRoith, M.D., PhD.mo, M.D. PhD and Ralph A. DeFronzo, M.D.

Prediabetes 9

Leigh Perreault, MD

DIABETES DIAGNOSIS, ASSESSMENT, AND MONITORING

10 Diagnostic Tests For Diabetes Mellitus Melanie Nelson, MS and Kathleen Dungan, MD, MPH

11 Monitoring Technologies – Continuous Glucose Monitoring, Mobile Technology, Biomarkers of Glycemic Control Nihaal Reddy, BS, Neha Verma, MD and Kathleen Dungan, MD, MPH

12 Assessing Insulin Sensitivity and Resistance in Humans Ranganath Muniyappa, MD, PhD, Ritu Madan, MBBS, MD and Ron T. Varghese, MBBS

DIABETES DIAGNOSIS, ASSESSMENT,

22 Gestational Diabetes

Xiao-Yu Wang, MD, Erin M. Cleary, MD, Stephen F. Thung, MD, Kartik Venkatesh, MD, PhD and Elizabeth O. Buschur, MD, FACE

23 Pregestational Diabetes Mellitus

Christine P. Field, MD, MPH, Erin M. Cleary, MD, Stephen F. Thung, MD, Kartik Venkatesh, MD, PhD and Elizabeth O. Buschur, MD, FACE

24 Islet Transplantation Lorenzo Piemonti, M.D

25 Update On Pancreatic Transplantation In The Management Of Diabetes

Carlo Lombardo, Gabriella Amorese, Fabio Vistoli, Walter Baronti, Piero Marchetti and Ugo Boggi

26 Surgical Prevention and Treatment of **Diabetes**

Alexis Sudlow, MBChB, PhD, Dimitri Pournaras, PhD, FRCS and Paul O'Brien, MD, FRACS

27 Diabetes in the Elderly

Anna Milanesi, MD PhD and Jane E. Weinreb, M.D.

28 Diabetes Mellitus in People with Cancer

Dr. Nalinie Joharatnam-Hogan, Dr. Thomas J. Carter, Neil Reynolds, Dr. Jan Hoong Ho, Dr. Safwaan Adam and Dr. Ruth Board

DIABETIC COMPLICATIONS

29 Hyperglycemic Crises: Diabetic **Ketoacidosis And Hyperglycemic** Hyperosmolar State

Adair R. Gosmanov, M.D., Ph.D., F.A.C.E., Elvira O. Gosmanova, M.D., F.A.S.N. and Abbas E. Kitabchi, M.D., Ph.D., M.A.C.E.

41 Skin Manifestations of Diabetes Mellitus Elise Edwards, BA and Gil Yosipovitch, MD

42 Sexual Dysfunction in Female Patients with **Diabetes**

Shiv Charan Navriya, Mch, Manali Jain, Om Yadav and Ravi Chandra Chowdaryndra Lord, MD and Carla J. Greenbaum, MD

43 Diabetes Mellitus and Infections

Keren Zhou, MD and M. Cecilia Lansang, MD, MPH

44 Diabetes and Depression

Richard IG Holt, MA, MB, BChir, PhD, FRCP

45 Gastrointestinal Disorders in Diabetes

Chinmay S. Marathe, MBBS, PhD, FRACP, Christopher K. Rayner MBBS, PhD, FRACP, Tongzhi Wu, MD, PhD, Karen L. Jones Dip App Sci (Nuclear Med), PhD and Michael Horowitz, MBBS, PhD, FRACP, FAAHMS, DSc, AO

46 Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease: The **Overlooked Complication of Type 2** Diabetes

Divya Akshintala*, MD, Radhika Chugh*, MD, Farah Amer and Kenneth Cusi, MD

DIABETES DIAGNOSIS, ASSESSMENT, AND MONITORING

47 Non-Diabetic Hypoglycemia Maria S. Rayas, MD and Marzieh Salehi, MD, MS

48 Insulinoma

Wouter W. de Herder, MD, PhD and Johannes Hofland, MD, PhD

DIABETES AND HYPOGLYCEMIA IN

AND MONITORING

- **13** Insulin Pharmacology, Therapeutic **Regimens And Principles Of Intensive Insulin Therapy** Thomas Donner, MD. and Sudipa Sarkar, MD, MSCI
- **14 Oral and Injectable (Non-Insulin)** Pharmacological Agents for the Treatment of Type 2 Diabetes Kenneth R. Feingold, MD
- **15 15 Non-Pharmaceutical Intervention Options for Type 2 Diabetes: Complementary Health Approaches and** Integrative Health (Including Natural **Products and Mind/Body Practices)** Skye A. McKennon, PharmD, BCPS, ACSM-GEI
- **16** The Role of Exercise in Diabetes

Salwa J. Zahalka, M.D, Layla A. Abushamat, MD, MPH, Rebecca L. Scalzo, PhD and Jane E. B. Reusch, MD

17 Dietary Advice for Individuals with Diabetes

Andrew Reynolds, BSc, MSc, PhD, MPH and Joanna Mitri, MD, MS

30 Hypoglycemia During Therapy of Diabetes

Hugh A. Davis, MD, Elias K. Spanakis, MD, Philip E. Cryer, MD, Maka Siamashvili, MD and Stephen N. Davis, MBBS

31 Hypertension in Diabetes

Sowjanya Naha, MD, Darshan Khangura, MD, L. Romayne Kurukulasuriya, MD and James R. Sowers, M.D.

32 Platelets, Coagulation, and Antithrombotic **Therapy in Diabetes**

William A. E. Parker, MA, MB, BChir, PhD, MRCP, Robert F. Storey, BSc, BM, DM, FRCP, FESC and Ramzi A. Ajjan, MD, FRCP, MMed.Sci, PhD

33 Role Of Glucose And Lipids In The

Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease In **Patients With Diabetes** Kenneth R. Feingold, MD

34 Diabetes, Cardiomyopathy, and Heart Failure

Ahmet Afşin Oktay, MD, Timir K. Paul, MD, PhD, MPH, Christian A. Koch, MD, PhD and Carl J. Lavie, MD

35 Diabetic Retinopathy

Jay M. Stewart, M.D., Marco Coassin, M.D., Ph.D. and Daniel M. Schwartz, M.D.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENCE

49 Etiology and Pathogenesis of Diabetes Mellitus in Children and Adolescents Mabel Yau, MD, Noel K. Maclaren, MD and Mark A. Sperling, MD

50 Treatment of Diabetes mellitus in Children and Adolescents

Mabel Yau, MD and Mark A. Sperling, MD

51 Type 2 Diabetes In Children and **Adolescents – A Focus On Diagnosis and** Treatment

Orit Pinhas-Hamiel, MD and Philip Zeitler, MD, PhDa, MD and Kathleen Dungan, MD, MPH

52 Cardiovascular Risk Reduction In Youth With Diabetes- Opportunities And Challenges

Amy S. Shah, MD MS, FNLA and Don P. Wilson, MD, **FNLA**

53 Hypoglycemia in Neonates, Infants, and Children

Elizabeth Rosenfeld, MD, MSCE and Paul S. Thornton, MB, BCh, MRCPI, DCH

Chapter Sections

Pediatric Endocrinology

Editor: Constantine A. Stratakis, MD, D(med)Sci, PhD(hc), Mark A. Sperling, MD, Radhika Muzumdar, MD, S. Faisal Ahmed, MD and Rodolfo Rey, MD, PhD

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Skin Manifestations of Diabetes Mellitus

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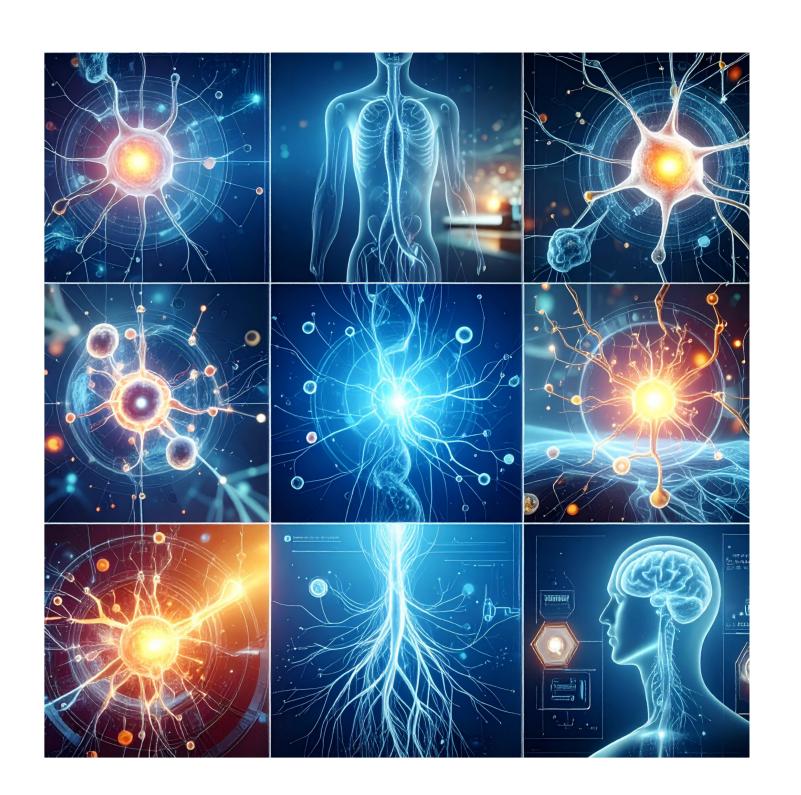
Gil Yosipovitch, MD

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Updated: March 21, 2025

ABSTRACT

Diabetes mellitus is a common and debilitating disease that affects a variety of organs including the skin. Between thirty and seventy percent of patients with diabetes mellitus, both type 1 and type 2, will present with a cutaneous complication of diabetes mellitus at some point during their lifetime. A variety of dermatologic manifestations have been linked with diabetes mellitus; these conditions varyin severity and can be benign, deforming, and even life-threatening. Such skin changes can offer insight into patients' glycemic control and may be the first sign of metabolic derangement in undiagnosed patients with diabetes. Recognition and management of these conditions is important in maximizing the quality of life and in avoiding serious adverse effects in patients with diabetes mellitus.



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drate MetabolismDiabetesManager Sec-
tion

Search for...

Q

INTRODUCTION

The changes associated with diabetes mellitus can affect multiple organ systems. Between thirty and seventy percent of patients with diabetes mellitus, both type 1 and type 2, will present with a cutaneous complication of diabetes mellitus at some point during their lifetime (1). Dermatologic manifestations of diabetes mellitus have various health implications ranging from those that are aesthetically concerning to those that may be life-threatening. Awareness of cutaneous manifestations of diabetes mellitus can provide insight into the present or prior metabolic status of patients. The recognition of such findings may aid in the diagnosis of diabetes mellitus and the skin, more specifically: (1) skin manifestations strongly associated with diabetes, (2) non-specific dermatologic signs and symptoms associated with diabetes, (3) dermatologic diseases associated with diabetes, (4) common skin infections in diabetes, and (5) cutaneous changes associated with diabetes.

SKIN MANIFESTATIONS STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH DIABETES

MELLITUS

Acanthosis Nigricans

EPIDEMIOLOGY

Acanthosis nigricans (AN) is a classic dermatologic manifestation of diabetes mellitus that affects men and women of all ages. AN is more common in type 2 diabetes mellitus (2) and is more prevalent in those with darker skin color. AN occurs more frequently in African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans (3). AN is observed in a variety of endocrinopathies associated with resistance to insulin such as acromegaly, Cushing syndrome, obesity, polycystic ovarian syndrome, and thyroid dysfunction. Unrelated to insulin resistance, AN can also be associated with malignancies such as gastric adenocarcinomas and genitourinary cancers, as well as with autoimmune disorders, various medications, and familial disorders (4-4F).

PRESENTATION

AN presents chronically as multiple poorly demarcated plaques with grey to dark brown hyperpigmentation and a thickened velvety to verrucous texture (figure 1). Classically, AN has a symmetrical distribution and is located in intertriginous or flexural surfaces such as the back of the neck, axilla, elbows, palmar hands (also known as "tripe palms"), inframammary creases, umbilicus, or groin. Affected areas are asymptomatic; however, extensive involvement may cause discomfort or fetor. Microscopy shows hyperkeratosis and epidermal papillomatosis with acanthosis. The changes in skin pigmentation are primarily a consequence of hyperkeratosis, not changes in melanin. AN can present prior to the clinical diagnosis of diabetes; the presence of AN should prompt evaluation for diabetes mellitus and for other signs of insulin resistance. TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT INTRODUCTION **SKIN MANIFESTATIONS STRONGLY AS-**SOCIATED WITH DIABETES MELLITUS **Acanthosis Nigricans EPIDEMIOLOGY** PRESENTATION PATHOGENESIS TREATMENT **Diabetic Dermopathy EPIDEMIOLOGY** PRESENTATION PATHOGENESIS TREATMENT **Diabetic Foot Syndrome** EPIDEMIOLOGY PRESENTATION PATHOGENESIS TREATMENT **Diabetic Thick Skin** SCLERODERMA-LIKE SKIN CHANGES Epidemiology Presentation Pathogenesis Treatment LIMITED JOINT MOBILITY Epidemiology Presentation Pathogenesis Treatment LIMITED JOINT MOBILITY Epidemiology Presentation Pathogenesis



Figure 1. Acanthosis nigricans. From Wikipedia.



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Treatment

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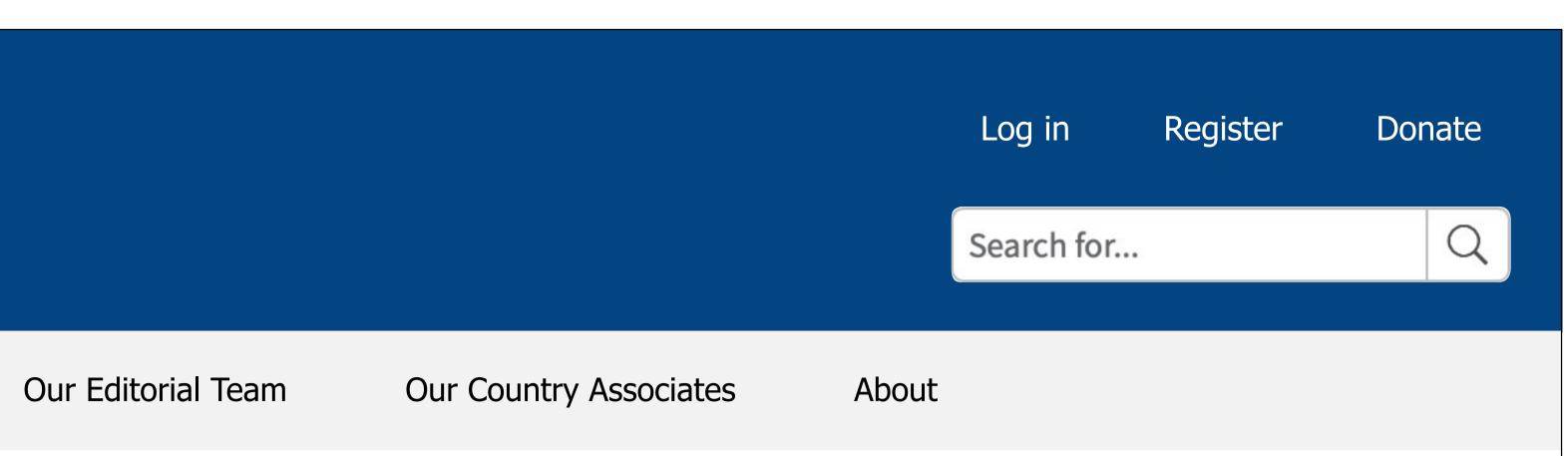
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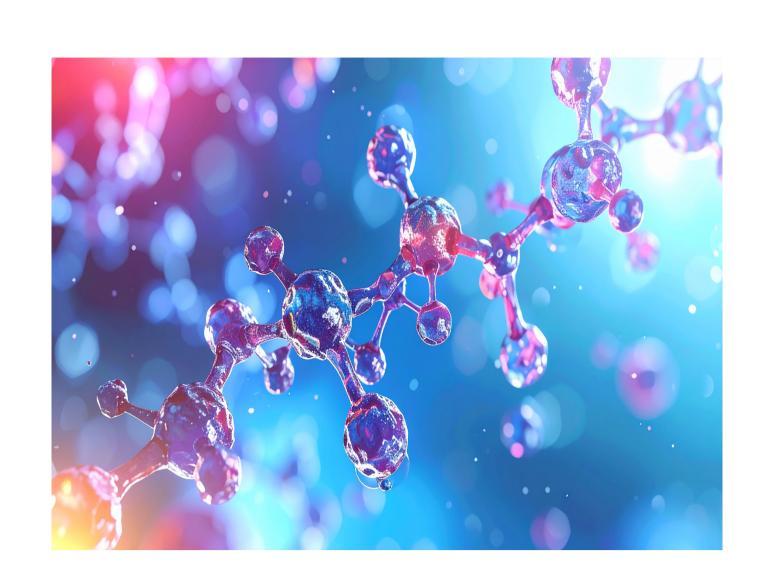
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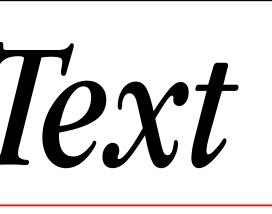
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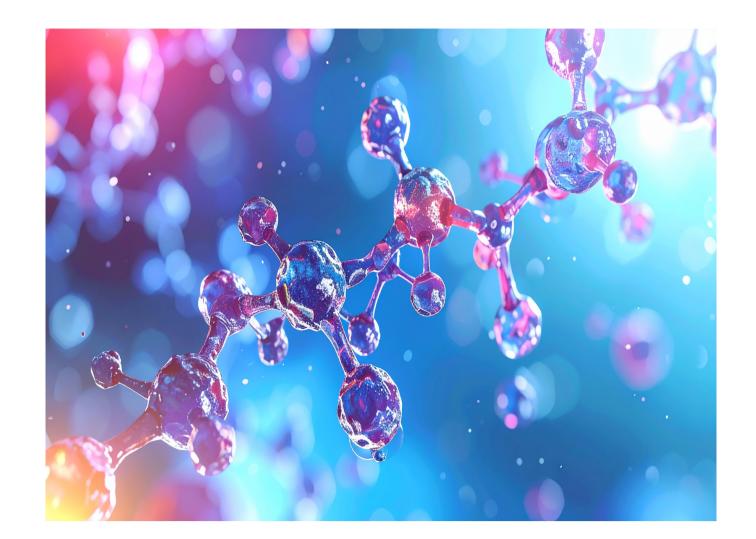
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