



International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science

e-ISSN: 2544-9435

Operating Publisher
SciFormat Publishing Inc.
ISNI: 0000 0005 1449 8214

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Calgary, Alberta, T3E0A7,
Canada
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ARTICLE TITLE MODERN DIAGNOSTIC STRATEGIES IN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES

DOI [https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.1\(49\).2026.4750](https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.1(49).2026.4750)

RECEIVED 08 December 2025

ACCEPTED 09 February 2026

PUBLISHED 18 February 2026

LICENSE



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MODERN DIAGNOSTIC STRATEGIES IN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES

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ABSTRACT

Background: Autoimmune diseases constitute a heterogeneous group of disorders characterized by immune-mediated damage to self-tissues. Their prevalence has increased over recent decades, and early diagnosis remains challenging due to heterogeneous clinical presentations and overlapping symptoms. Advances in immunology and molecular biology have significantly transformed diagnostic approaches in autoimmune diseases.

Aim: This review discusses modern diagnostic strategies used in autoimmune diseases. It presents emerging serological, molecular, and multi-parameter diagnostic tools, as well as the role of personalized diagnostics and advanced data analysis methods in improving diagnostic accuracy.

Methods: The review was conducted using the PubMed, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases, limited to full-text, open-access publications published between 2013 and 2025.

Results: Recent studies indicate that novel diagnostic approaches, including next-generation autoantibody profiling, molecular biomarkers, “omics”-based technologies, and advanced imaging methods, improve early disease detection and patient stratification. The integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms enhances the interpretation of complex clinical and laboratory data, increasing diagnostic sensitivity and specificity.

Conclusion: Modern diagnostic strategies significantly improve the early recognition and monitoring of autoimmune diseases. Integrating classical diagnostic methods with advanced molecular and computational tools supports the development of personalized medicine and may lead to better clinical outcomes in patients with autoimmune disorders.

KEYWORDS

Autoimmune Diseases, Diagnostics, Biomarkers, Molecular Diagnostics, Personalized Medicine, Artificial Intelligence

CITATION

Bartosz Lautenbach, Anastasiia Holoborodko, Eliza Garbacz, Patrycja Stępińska, Agnieszka Pocheć, Ewa Wieczorkiewicz, Dariusz Nędza, Klaudia Wojciech, Anhelina Loputs, Wiktoria Błaszczuk. (2026) Modern Diagnostic Strategies in Autoimmune Diseases. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 1(49). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.1(49).2026.4750

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Introduction

Autoimmune diseases constitute a heterogeneous group of disorders characterized by a loss of immunological tolerance and the development of immune responses directed against self-antigens [1,2]. This category includes rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, multiple sclerosis, type 1 diabetes, and autoimmune thyroid diseases. These conditions are typically chronic, exhibit variable clinical manifestations, and significantly affect patients' quality of life [1,2].

In recent decades, an increase in the incidence of autoimmune diseases has been observed, which can be attributed to both genetic and environmental factors, including lifestyle, pathogen exposure, and alterations in gut microbiota [2,17]. Early and accurate diagnosis remains a critical clinical challenge, as initial disease stages often present with nonspecific symptoms, and clinical criteria alone may not allow for definitive diagnosis [5].

Traditional diagnostic approaches rely primarily on clinical assessment and the detection of autoantibodies, such as antinuclear antibodies (ANA), anti-double-stranded DNA antibodies (anti-dsDNA), and anti-cyclic citrullinated peptide antibodies (anti-CCP) [3,10]. While these methods remain foundational in diagnosing many autoimmune conditions, their limitations include suboptimal specificity, variability in results, and insufficient capacity for precise patient stratification [7].

Advances in immunology, molecular biology, and high-throughput technologies have enabled the development of modern diagnostic strategies, allowing a more comprehensive evaluation of autoimmune processes [9,13]. The implementation of “omics” approaches—including genomics, proteomics, and metabolomics—facilitates the identification of novel disease biomarkers and enables detection of subclinical disease states [13]. Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) tools are increasingly applied to analyze complex clinical and laboratory datasets, improving diagnostic precision and patient stratification [6,7,11,15].

Aim of the Publication

The purpose of this review is to provide a comprehensive overview of both current and emerging diagnostic strategies in autoimmune diseases, with particular emphasis on their applications in early disease detection, monitoring of disease activity, and the advancement of personalized medicine [17,20].

Methodology

This study employs a narrative literature review to examine contemporary and emerging diagnostic strategies in autoimmune diseases, with particular emphasis on technological innovations, digital health solutions, and clinical decision-support systems, including AI- and ML-based tools [7,11]. The review integrates perspectives from medical sciences, health technologies, and social sciences to highlight the role of innovation in improving diagnostic processes and healthcare delivery.

A structured literature search was conducted using PubMed, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and free-text keywords were used, including autoimmune diseases, diagnostic strategies, biomarkers, molecular diagnostics, omics technologies, digital health, artificial intelligence, machine learning, decision-support systems, and personalized medicine. Boolean operators (“AND”, “OR”) ensured comprehensive retrieval of relevant publications [8].

The review included peer-reviewed, full-text, English-language articles published between 2013 and 2025. Eligible publications comprised original research, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and narrative reviews addressing innovative, technology-driven, or digitally supported diagnostic approaches in autoimmune diseases. Studies focusing exclusively on pharmacological interventions or without diagnostic relevance, as well as conference abstracts, editorials, commentaries, and non-peer-reviewed sources, were excluded [2,8].

Titles and abstracts were initially screened for relevance. Subsequently, full-text articles were analyzed in detail. Data extraction focused on the type of technological innovation, integration of digital health tools, application of AI-based or algorithmic decision-support systems, and relevance to early disease detection, monitoring of disease activity, and patient stratification [7,15]. Selected studies were analyzed qualitatively and synthesized thematically to identify key trends, implementation challenges, and future directions in technology-enhanced diagnostics.

As this publication is based solely on previously published data and does not involve human participants or animals, ethical approval was not required.

Results

1. Advances in Serological and Molecular Diagnostics

Serological and molecular diagnostic methods remain fundamental in autoimmune disease evaluation. Traditional tests, such as ANA, anti-dsDNA, and anti-CCP, are still widely used [1,4]. However, their limitations in sensitivity and specificity have prompted the development of multiplex immunoassays and high-throughput molecular techniques, enabling simultaneous detection of multiple biomarkers [4,5].

Molecular diagnostics, including PCR-based gene expression profiling and targeted next-generation sequencing, facilitate early detection of autoimmune responses prior to clinical manifestation [13,15]. Recent studies also highlight the role of epigenetic markers, such as microRNAs, as potential early indicators of autoimmune disease [9]. These biomarkers may improve patient stratification and allow monitoring of disease progression.

2. Omics Approaches in Autoimmune Disease Detection

Omics technologies—genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, and metabolomics—provide comprehensive insights into disease mechanisms [13,17]. Genomic studies detect susceptibility loci and single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) associated with autoimmunity, while transcriptomic profiling identifies altered gene expression patterns [15]. Proteomic and metabolomic analyses reveal protein and metabolite changes associated with disease activity [20].

Integrating multi-omics data enables holistic patient assessment, aiding early diagnosis, prediction of disease progression, and personalized treatment [13,17,20]. Multi-omics approaches have been applied successfully in SLE, RA, and multiple sclerosis, helping to distinguish clinical phenotypes and optimize therapy [15,20].

3. Digital Health and Remote Monitoring Tools

Digital health tools, including wearable devices, mobile health applications, and telemonitoring platforms, are increasingly used in autoimmune diagnostics [12]. Continuous monitoring of parameters such as joint activity, fatigue, and inflammation markers improves early detection and supports longitudinal tracking.

Cloud-based platforms allow aggregation and analysis of large patient datasets, enabling timely interventions and adaptive management strategies. Digital tools enhance patient engagement and adherence, particularly in chronic conditions where clinical visits are intermittent [12].

4. Artificial Intelligence and Decision-Support Systems

AI and machine learning algorithms facilitate the analysis of complex, multidimensional data from serology, molecular profiling, omics, and digital health platforms [6,7,11]. AI-enhanced decision-support systems assist clinicians in diagnosis, risk stratification, and prioritization of further testing [7,15].

Recent studies show that AI models can predict flares in autoimmune diseases, classify disease subtypes, and recommend personalized treatment strategies, thereby enhancing clinical decision-making [7,15]. Deep learning methods applied to imaging and laboratory data also improve early detection of organ involvement in systemic autoimmune disorders [11,15].

5. Imaging Technologies in Autoimmune Diagnostics

Advanced imaging modalities, such as high-resolution MRI, PET-CT, and ultrasound with power Doppler, complement serological and molecular diagnostics [7,11]. Imaging allows direct assessment of organ involvement, disease activity, and tissue inflammation, providing objective markers for early diagnosis and monitoring of treatment efficacy.

AI-assisted imaging analysis further improves sensitivity and reproducibility, facilitating detection of subtle pathological changes in joints, brain, or other organs affected by autoimmune processes [7,11].

6. Integration of Multi-Modal Data

The integration of serology, molecular diagnostics, omics data, digital health metrics, imaging, and AI-based analytics represents the next frontier in autoimmune disease diagnostics [6,7,17]. Multi-modal approaches enable comprehensive assessment of patient status, improve diagnostic accuracy, support precision medicine, and reduce time to diagnosis [11,20].

Challenges remain in standardizing data formats, ensuring interoperability, and validating predictive models across diverse populations [7,12]. Nonetheless, early studies demonstrate improved patient stratification and outcomes through these integrative strategies [15,20].

Discussion

The present review highlights significant advancements in diagnostic strategies for autoimmune diseases, emphasizing technological innovation, digital health, and AI-driven decision-support systems [6,7,11]. Traditional diagnostic approaches, including serological and molecular tests, remain foundational; however, their limitations in sensitivity and specificity underscore the need for complementary and integrative strategies [1,4,15].

Modern serological and molecular techniques, omics technologies, digital health tools, AI-based decision-support systems, and advanced imaging collectively enhance early detection, patient stratification, and personalized management [5,13,17,7,11]. Integrating these multi-modal data sources facilitates more accurate diagnosis, prediction of disease progression, and individualized therapeutic decision-making, reflecting the trends identified in recent studies [15,20].

Despite remaining challenges related to standardization, interoperability, and external validation, these innovations are reshaping the diagnostic landscape of autoimmune diseases [7,12]. Early evidence suggests that combining molecular, imaging, digital, and AI-driven approaches improves patient outcomes and supports precision medicine initiatives [15,20].

Conclusions

Modern diagnostic strategies in autoimmune diseases have evolved beyond traditional serological testing to encompass molecular diagnostics, multi-omics approaches, digital health technologies, advanced imaging, and AI-driven decision-support systems [4,7,13,15,20]. These innovations enable earlier disease detection, precise patient stratification, and continuous monitoring of disease activity, thereby facilitating personalized medicine.

The integration of multi-modal data represents the next frontier in autoimmune diagnostics, allowing clinicians to assess patients holistically and make informed, individualized clinical decisions. While challenges related to standardization, interoperability, and external validation remain, technological advancements continue to transform the diagnostic landscape, improving patient outcomes and optimizing healthcare delivery [11,15].

Disclosure

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All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable

Data availability statement: Data sharing is not applicable to this article

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

Declaration of the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process: In preparing this work, the authors used generative AI tools (ChatGPT) solely to support language editing and text formatting. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the text as needed and accepted full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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