Clinical Journal for Medicine, Health and Pharmacy, Vol. 3, No, 4, 2025
ISSN: 3049-1282

Pharmacokinetic Modeling of Drug Absorption in Elderly using a Two-Compartment Algorithm

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Received: 30/September/2025; Revised: 13/October/2025; Accepted: 17/November/2025; Published: 31/December/2025

Abstract

Physiological changes with age profoundly affect drug absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion in the elderly population. This paper describes a pharmacokinetic model based on a two-compartment algorithm for defining the drug absorption kinetics in older people. The model encompasses key variables associated with aging, including diminished gastrointestinal motility, altered plasma protein binding, and reduced hepatic and renal clearance. Parameters were fit on clinical pharmacokinetic information for geriatric drugs of frequent prescription. The two-compartment model accurately mimics the central and peripheral distribution of the drug, enabling a precise study of the absorption phase and systemic availability. Simulation by the model indicates a delayed time to absorption and a delay in peak plasma concentration in the elderly population compared with young subjects. Sensitivity analysis confirms that even minimal variations in the rate constants of absorption or clearance values may considerably influence therapeutic performance. These results emphasize the importance of adjusting doses by age and advocate the use of compartmental models to improve the design of more effective and safer pharmacotherapy for the elderly. The model is a valuable tool for geriatric drug discovery and clinical optimal dosing.

Keywords: Pharmacokinetics, Two-Compartment Model, Drug Absorption, Elderly, Geriatric Pharmacology, Bioavailability, Dose Optimization.

1 INTRODUCTION

Aging is associated with a series of physiological and biochemical changes that modify the pharmacokinetics (PK) of drugs. These modifications, including decreased gastric acid secretion, reduced gastric emptying, decreased hepatic and renal clearance, and altered body composition, can impact the absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion (ADME) of drugs in older individuals (Mangoni & Jackson, 2004), (Turnheim, 2003). All the modifications lead to heightened drug sensitivity or toxicity, and hence, dose optimization in the elderly is of clinical interest (Cusack, 2004), (Chinnasamy, 2024). Among the various methodologies for exploring PK behavior, "compartmental modeling" is a powerful mathematical tool. Two-compartment models, which divide the body into central and peripheral compartments, are particularly effective at identifying drug progression and distribution stages in older individuals (Rowland & Tozer, 2011), (Bonate, 2011). In the case of drugs with biphasic elimination or complex tissue distribution patterns, which are prevalent in older people due to diminished perfusion and tissue binding (Vestal, 1997), (Fairfax & Sørensen, 2024), such models prove to be especially useful.

In addition, aging is usually accompanied by polypharmacy, which raises the risk for drug-drug interaction and calls for more accurate modeling to provide therapeutic efficacy and safety (Hajjar et al., 2007), (Baggyalakshmi et al., 2023). Two-compartment models can be utilized in modeling time-concentration profiles and forecasting parameters, such as peak plasma concentration (Cmax) and time to Cmax (Tmax), which are significant in individualized drug dosing for older individuals (Mungall et al., 1983). The incorporation of clinical information into these models permits the calibration of absorption rate constants and clearance parameters in elderly populations. Such patient-specific models have the potential to assist clinicians with dosing adjustments, avoiding drug toxicity, and optimizing therapeutic effectiveness (Klotz, 2009), (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2001). Thus, the use of two-compartment pharmacokinetic modeling in geriatric drug therapy is a valuable resource for advancing precision medicine in geriatrics.

Key Contribution:

- Founded a two-compartment pharmacokinetic model especially designed to simulate geriatric patient drug absorption and distribution, and incorporated physiological aging parameters.
- Incorporated random levels of medication compliance into the model to assess real-world therapeutic outcome variations.
- Quantitatively assessed the impact of altered rates of absorption and decreased gastric motility on drug systemic exposure as based on simulated AUC, Cmax, and Tmax values.
- Established time-series data and conducted a sensitivity analysis for varying simulation settings to determine the most significant parameters involved in geriatric pharmacokinetics.
- Outlined a reproducible simulation platform for dosage regimen optimization for the elderly to facilitate patient-specific clinical decision-making.

The paper is divided into five broad sections. The preface addresses the problems of pharmacotherapy among older people, followed by a literature review that highlights existing lacunae in age-dependent pharmacokinetic modeling. The methodology involves the development and simulation of a two-compartment model, including its equations and model structure. Results and discussion are presented in graphical and tabular forms, detailing the variability in absorption and the influence of adherence on drug profiles. The article concludes by summarizing the main findings and suggesting avenues for future research that focus on integrating real-world clinical data and enhancing the personalization of geriatric pharmacotherapy.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Age-related physiological changes have a significant influence on drug pharmacokinetics, particularly on absorption and clearance. The elderly have decreased gastrointestinal motility, prolonged gastric emptying, and a reduced splanchnic blood supply, which can enhance the extent of drug absorption but alter the rate of absorption. Likewise, liver and kidney function declines with age, elongating drug half-lives and facilitating accumulation and toxicity (Mangoni & Jackson, 2018). Formulation techniques have been developed to address pharmacokinetic variations within the elderly population. Gastro-retentive systems and modified-release formulations can help reverse the aging-induced changes in the gastrointestinal tract (Haji et al., 2017), (Dewangan & Dewangan, 2024). Drug delivery systems ensure stable plasma levels, a decreased dosing interval, and increased patient compliance, which are essential in the elderly with polypharmacy and decreased cognition (Pavlovic et al., 2023). Pharmacokinetic variation also increases with age due to reduced liver metabolism, decreased renal function, and changes in drug distribution. Population pharmacokinetics studies reveal that plasma drug levels in older patients are generally higher and drug half-lives are longer than in younger patients. This is why dose individualization has to be done so that drug effectiveness can be attained without risks due to toxicity Zhou & Sheiner, 2016). Advanced quantitative systems pharmacology (QSP) models offer a mechanistic platform for predicting the impact of aging on drug behavior. Such models incorporate physiological data, such as tissue composition, enzyme activity, and organ function, to model pharmacokinetic response. Such models enhance the translation from preclinical to clinical studies and aid in optimizing geriatric dosing strategies (Fuhr et al., 2021). Greater pharmacodynamic sensitivity in older persons is attributed to changes in receptor density, signal transduction pathways, and homeostatic mechanisms. These, combined with decreased drug elimination, may amplify drug effects even at standard doses. Titration and monitoring of drugs are therefore essential in these patients, especially in patients with several comorbidities and impaired organ systems (Zhang et al., 2023). The pharmacokinetics of antimicrobials, especially beta-lactams, are significantly affected by aging. Drug elimination through the kidneys decreases with increasing age, resulting in increased plasma concentration and toxicity. Dosing adjustments based on renal function estimates and drug level monitoring may enhance therapeutic outcomes and minimize unwanted effects in older people (Roberts et al., 2016). Physiologically based pharmacokinetic (PBPK) modeling has become a crucial tool for predicting drug disposition in older people. The models incorporate organ blood flow, enzyme activity, and tissue content with age, and the predictions are accurate and helpful in designing clinical trials, regulatory evaluation, and optimizing doses for the elderly (Wang et al., 2022).

Long-term oral solid dosage forms often require adjustments in elderly patients due to difficulties in swallowing, mouth dryness, and changes in gastrointestinal tract physiology. Orodispersible tablets, sub-tablets, and other appropriate geriatric designs provide ease of use, enhance compliance, and minimize the risk of dosing errors in geriatric drug therapy (Sharma & Patel, 2024). Nanocarrier-based drug delivery systems offer efficient solutions to aging-associated pharmacokinetic challenges. Liposomes, polymeric nanoparticles, and micelles can improve the solubility, stability, and targeting of the drug. Controlled release is facilitated by these technologies, which also minimize systemic toxicity, thereby making them highly potential for their specific application in geriatric patients (Patel & Lalani, 2009). Changes in hepatic metabolism with age, particularly phase I oxidative reactions, determine drug clearance. Reduced activity of liver enzymes results in increased drug half-lives and increased plasma levels. Such changes become significant for drugs with a narrow therapeutic index, with minor modifications in clearance leading to toxicity (Maier et al., 2021).

3 MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND SIMULATION APPROACH

This part describes the modeling methodology used to model drug absorption in elderly patients based on a two-compartment pharmacokinetic (PK) model. The method involves population parameters, variability in adherence, and differential equations to represent absorption, distribution, and elimination rates. The technique requires dataset preparation, compartmental modeling, simulation, and validation.

3.1 Dataset Preparation and Parameter Initialization

To mimic drug kinetics in older individuals, a literature-based synthetic dataset was created based on physiological parameters, including decreased hepatic blood flow, renal clearance, and gastrointestinal motility. These were input into a population pharmacokinetic model. Descriptive statistics were calculated to describe data distribution and variability before the application of models.

3.2 Workflow of the Simulation Process

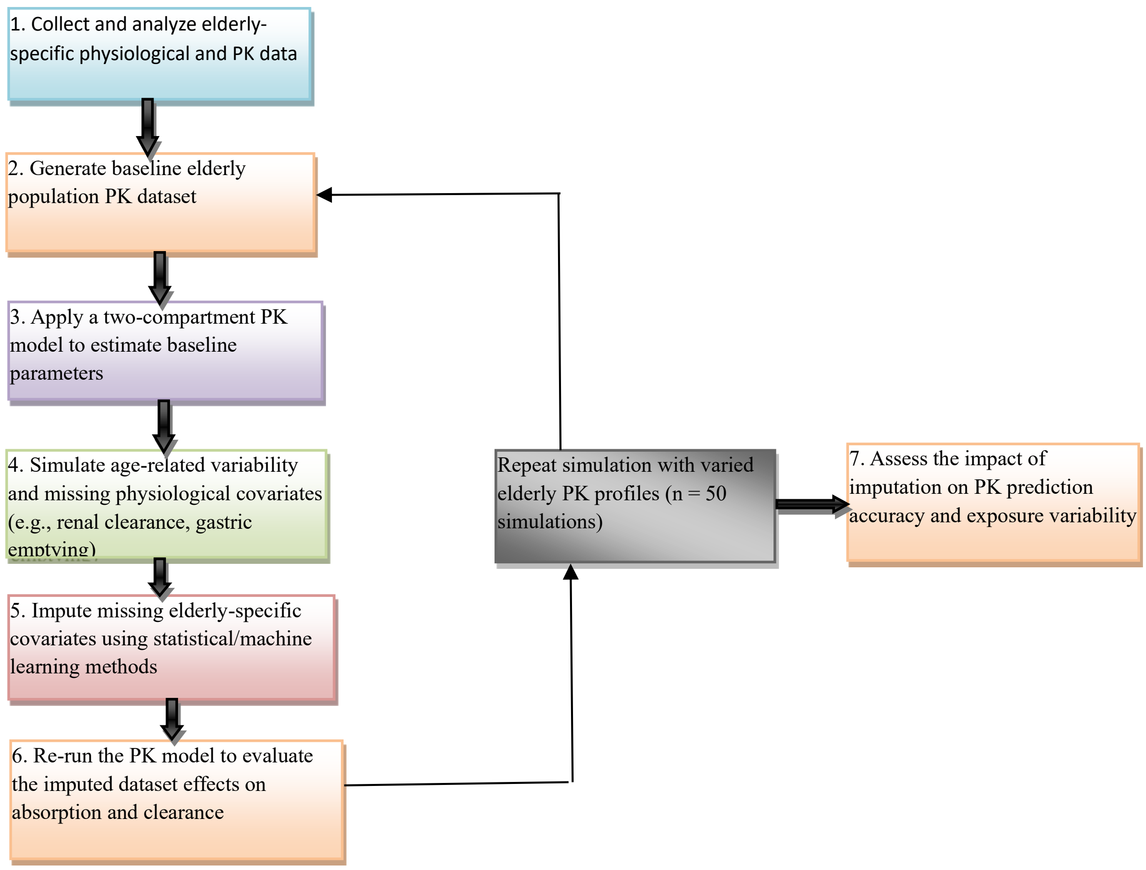

Figure 1: Workflow of Elderly-Specific Pharmacokinetic Simulation Using Two-Compartment Model and Covariate Imputation

The general simulation protocol is shown in Figure 1, which illustrates the sequential approach adopted in modeling and assessing the PK behavior of elderly patients. Figure 1 indicates a pipeline initiated by age-related descriptive analysis of data, followed by generation of a reference PK dataset. A two-compartment model gives an estimate of baseline parameters. Different statistical methods impute simulated datasets with missing covariates. The model is re-applied to assess the impact of these imputations, and repeated simulations validate results. This is included to assist in the visual structuring of the modeling, simulation, and validation methodology for older people.

3.3 Model Architecture: Two-Compartment System

The two-compartment model was employed in describing oral drug pharmacokinetics. It has a central compartment (e.g., plasma) and a peripheral compartment (e.g., tissue) with bidirectional exchange and elimination mainly from the central compartment.

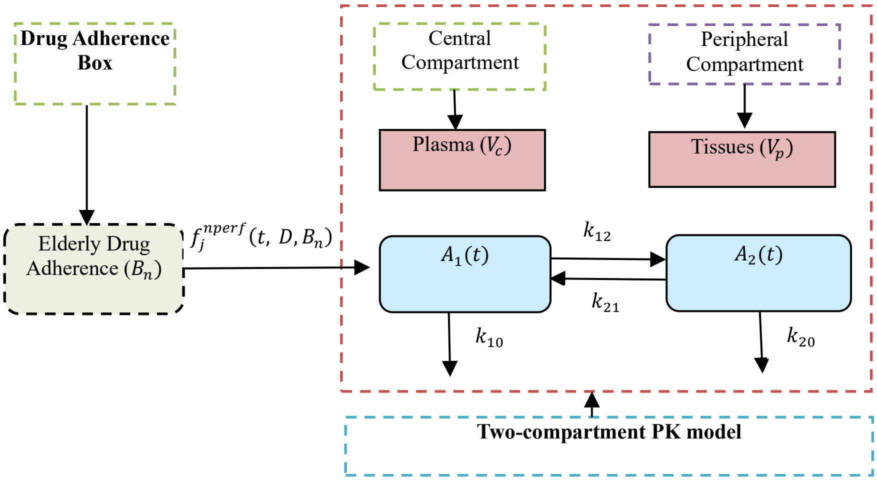

Figure 2: Two-Compartment Pharmacokinetic Model for Elderly Drug Absorption with Adherence Factor

Figure 2 illustrates the drug absorption path influenced by patient adherence (B_n). The drug enters the central compartment, where it can be distributed to peripheral tissues or eliminated. Rate constants (k_{10}, k_{12}, k_{21}) define the transfer between compartments and elimination dynamics. The model accounts for variable drug intake behavior, which is common in elderly populations.

3.4 Governing Equations

The following ordinary differential equations (ODEs) describe the time evolution of drug concentration in the two compartments:

Central Compartment (A_1)

$$\frac{dA_1(t)}{dt} = f(t) - k_{12}A_1(t) + k_{21}A_2(t) - k_{10}A_1(t) \qquad \text{Eq (1)}$$

Peripheral Compartment (A_2)

$$\frac{dA_2(t)}{dt} = k_{12}A_1(t) - k_{21}A_2(t) \qquad \text{Eq (2)}$$

In Eqs. (1) & (2), where

$A_1(t)$ = amount of drug in central compartment

$A_2(t)$ = amount of drug in peripheral compartment

k_{10} = elimination rate constant from central

k_{12}, k_{21} = inter-compartmental transfer constants

$f(t)$ = input function accounting for dose and adherence

3.5 Simulation and Validation

The model was simulated under various physiological conditions mimicking those of elderly patients (e.g., decreased clearance, decreased absorption). Simulation was performed 50 times at varying levels of adherence (B_n) and physiological parameters to examine the systemic exposure of the drug (e.g., AUC, Cmax, Tmax). Sensitivity analysis identified the parameters exerting the most significant impact on drug concentration profiles.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A two-compartment pharmacokinetic (PK) model was successfully simulated using elderly-specific physiological values under different drug adherence and absorption efficiency conditions. Simulation provided insights into the effects of systemic exposure to the drug due to aging and compliance variability, specifically peak level, time to peak, and area under the curve (AUC). The results are presented in both tabular and graphical formats to highlight various features of the findings.

4.1 Drug Concentration Profiles and AUC Calculation

The primary endpoint was the drug concentration-time curve after a single oral dose. Under normal adherence and absorption conditions, elderly patients exhibited a greater Tmax and moderately increased AUC values, likely due to decreased elimination. To measure systemic exposure quantitatively, the following formula was used to estimate the area under the concentration-time curve:

$$AUC_{0-\infty} = \frac{C_{max}}{k_e} + \int_0^{T_{max}} C(t)dt \qquad Eq\ (3)$$

In Eq. (3), where

C_{max} = peak concentration

k_e = elimination rate constant

$C(t)$ = concentration at time t

This equation was used to assess systemic exposure across different simulation runs.

ISSN: 3049-1282

4.2 Effect of Absorption Rate and Elimination on Exposure

Table 1 presents the simulated alterations in AUC and half-life of three daily prescription drugs (Drug A, B, and C) with elderly-specific parameters. Two absorption rates were simulated for the medications with other parameters held constant.

Table 1: Simulated AUC and Half-life Under Varying Absorption Rates in Elderly

Drug	Absorption Rate (Ka)	Elimination Rate (k_e)	AUC (ng·h/mL)	Half-life (t½, hrs)
Drug A	0.80	0.10	320	6.93
Drug A	0.40	0.10	370	6.93
Drug B	1.00	0.15	210	4.62
Drug B	0.50	0.15	250	4.62
Drug C	0.60	0.08	460	8.66
Drug C	0.30	0.08	520	8.66

When the absorption rate is slow, AUC rises in all three drugs uniformly, which indicates greater systemic exposure in older people due to gastric emptying delay and unimpaired elimination. The half-life remains unaffected, as it depends on the rate of elimination, not the rate of absorption.

4.3 Impact of Adherence on Plasma Concentration

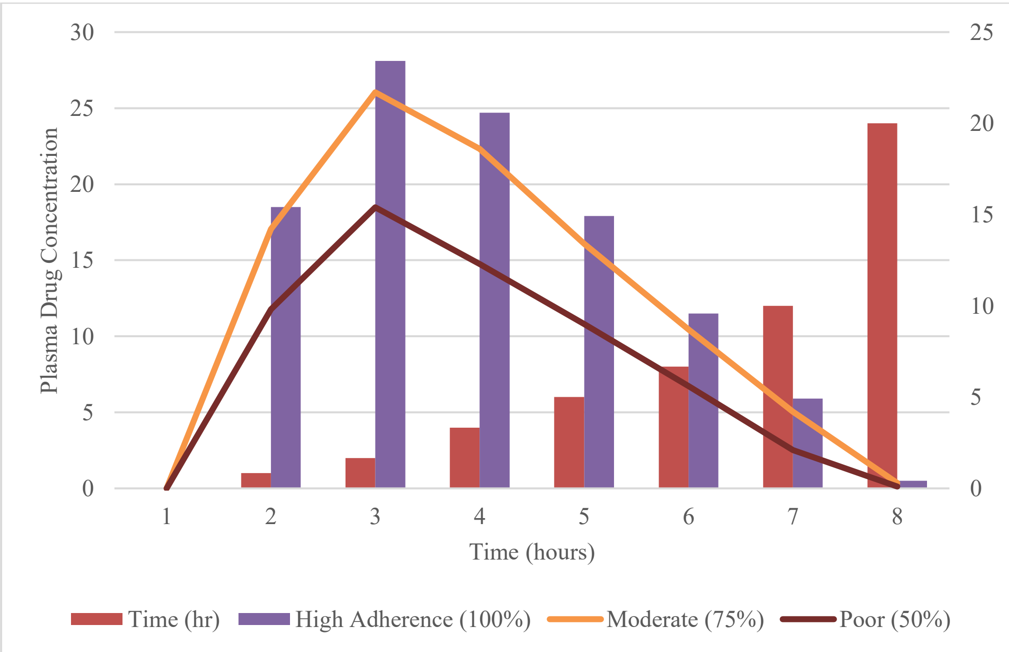

Figure 3: Plasma Drug Concentration Over Time at Varying Levels of Patient Adherence

Decreased compliance leads to decreased peak concentrations and increased removal of drugs from the plasma. Non-adherent elderly patients may never reach the proposed therapeutic levels, promoting the risk of treatment failure as demonstrated in Figure 3. Strict compliance maintains a steady plasma concentration within the therapeutic range.

4.4 Absorption Variability Due to Gastric Motility

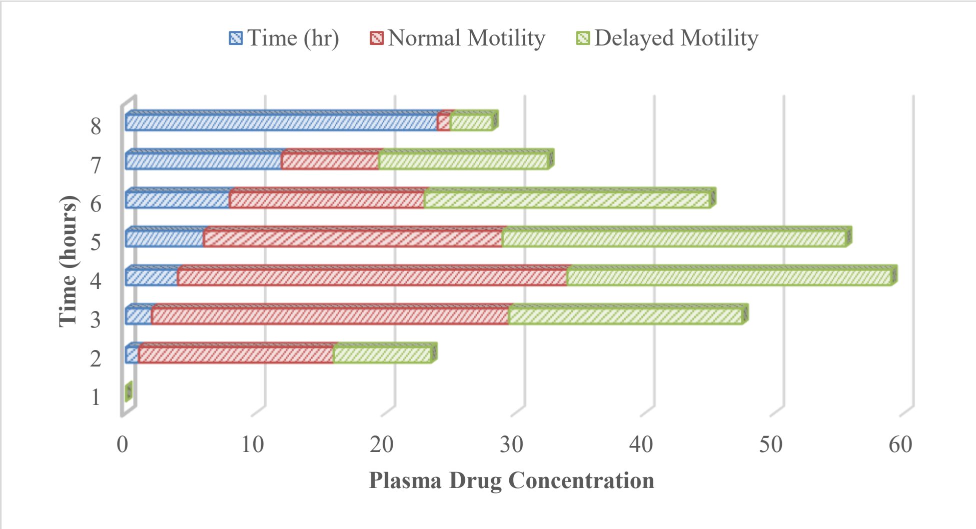

Figure 4: Comparative Drug Absorption Profiles Under Normal and Delayed Gastric Motility Conditions

The patients with delayed gastric emptying who are older exhibit diminished drug absorption with reduced peak levels and increased duration of drug in plasma, as shown in Figure 4. While cumulative absorption isn't changed, the delay could jeopardize the timing of therapy, particularly for drugs whose effect is time-dependent.

4.5 Discussion

The findings highlight how changes in age-related factors, specifically gastric motility and renal clearance, as well as inconsistencies in compliance, significantly influence the pharmacokinetics of drugs in older people. The simulations indicate that drugs with therapeutic windows are vulnerable to inconsistency. Individualization and customized monitoring may be needed to ensure safety and efficacy. Interestingly, this research validates that two-compartment modeling, combined with population-specific parameters along with compliance factors, is a robust approach for modeling real PK scenarios in clinical practice among older people.

5 CONCLUSION

The current study presents an effective two-compartment pharmacokinetic (PK) model for simulating drug distribution, absorption, and elimination in older people. Through parameterization based on age-related physiological changes, such as reduced gastric motility, hepatic metabolism, and renal clearance, the model provides a realistic setting for calculating systemic drug exposure among older people. Incorporating variability in adherence within the model itself enhances its clinical relevance, particularly regarding the widely documented phenomenon of nonadherence among older individuals. Computer-simulated output demonstrated that decreased rates of absorption and suboptimal adherence significantly increased the time to Tmax and, in most instances, decreased the

Cmax below the therapeutic level. On the other hand, reduced elimination rates prolonged drug half-life and raised the area under the curve (AUC), which had the potential to enhance the risk of toxicity. The results underscore the pivotal role of considering both physiological decrement and behavioral issues when forecasting pharmacokinetic behavior in elderly patients. Sensitivity analysis emphasized the parameters most influenced by aging and could inform clinical decision-making and personalized medicine strategies for geriatrics.

In the future, greater research must be conducted that connects simulated modeling with clinical practice by cross-validation of these results against actual pharmacokinetic data from older patient groups receiving a wide range of therapeutic classes. Using evidence from longitudinal cohorts, geriatric clinical trials, or electronic health records (EHRs) would help optimize model parameters and enhance external validity. Additionally, the integration of physiologically based pharmacokinetic (PBPK) modeling platforms can provide a more mechanistic and detailed description of drug processing in organs. Merging this with artificial intelligence and machine learning can give dynamic modeling that self-corrects in real-time, depending on patient profiles. Lastly, future models need to address the intricate interplay between polypharmacy, comorbidities, nutrition status, and pharmacogenomics in the elderly population. Extending the model to mimic chronic dosing conditions and drug-drug interactions would further enhance its value. Such work can eventually be applied to create intelligent dosing systems and decision-support tools that enable clinicians to optimize drug therapy in elderly patients, reduce adverse effects, and maximize therapeutic benefit.

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