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GENETIC AND MOLECULAR INSIGHTS INTO WATERBORNE DISEASES: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF TRANSMISSION MECHANISMS, MICROBIAL ETIOLOGY, AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

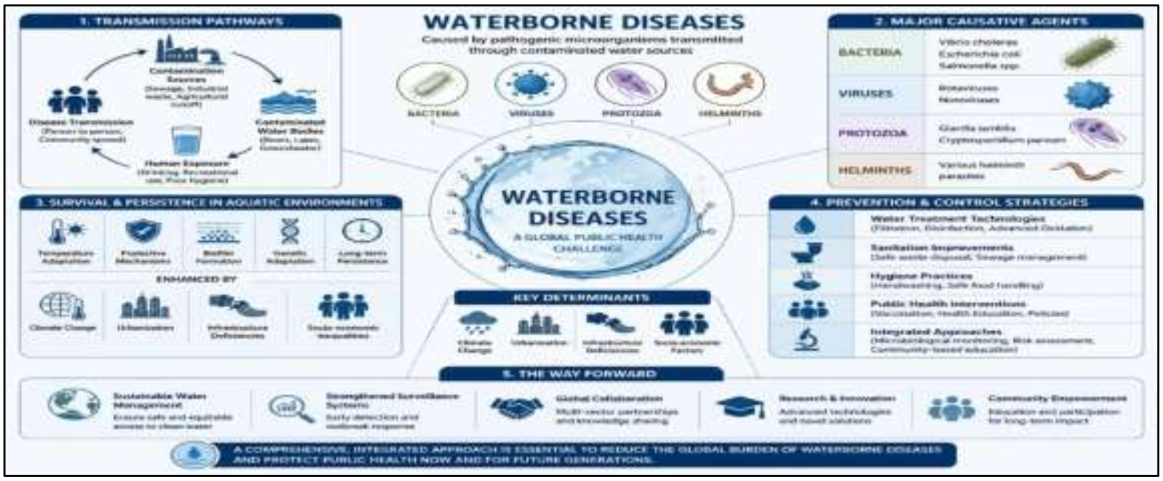
Ali Khalaf Ahmed Albaggar

Department of Public Health, Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences, Al-Baha University, Saudi Arabia
aalbaggar@bu.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

Waterborne diseases remain a major global public health concern, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation is limited. These diseases are primarily caused by a diverse group of pathogenic microorganisms, including bacteria, viruses, protozoa, and helminths, which are transmitted through contaminated water sources. This review provides a comprehensive overview of the transmission pathways, microbial etiology, and key environmental and socio-economic determinants influencing the spread of waterborne diseases. The paper highlights major causative agents such as Vibrio cholerae, Escherichia coli, Salmonella spp., rotaviruses, noroviruses, and protozoan parasites including Giardia lamblia and Cryptosporidium parvum. It further explores the mechanisms of pathogen survival, persistence, and resistance in aquatic environments, as well as the role of climate change, urbanization, and infrastructure deficiencies in exacerbating disease outbreaks.In addition, this review examines current prevention and control strategies, including water treatment technologies, sanitation improvements, hygiene practices, and public health interventions. Emphasis is placed on integrated approaches that combine microbiological monitoring, risk assessment, and community-based education to reduce disease burden.Despite significant advancements, waterborne diseases continue to pose serious health risks, underscoring the need for sustainable water management, strengthened surveillance systems, and global collaboration. This review aims to provide a comprehensive scientific foundation for researchers, policymakers, and public health professionals working to mitigate the impact of waterborne diseases worldwide..

KEYWORDS: Waterborne diseases; Microbial etiology; Pathogen persistence; Water treatment; Public health; Sanitation.



Graphical abstract. Waterborne Diseases: Microbial Etiology, Transmission Dynamics and Integrated Prevention Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

The provision of chemically and microbiologically safe drinking water remains a cornerstone of global public health and a fundamental requirement for sustainable development. However, ensuring water safety and preventing waterborne illnesses have emerged as multifaceted challenges within modern global health systems, exacerbated by the convergence of anthropogenic pressures and environmental instability (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). In the contemporary era, the global landscape of water management is being reshaped by unprecedented demographic shifts; rapid population growth and uncontrolled urbanization have outpaced the development of adequate sanitation infrastructure in both developing and transition economies. These systemic deficits place considerable pressure on conventional water management strategies, often leading to the compromise of hydraulic integrity in distribution networks and facilitating the ingress of hazardous contaminants into potable supplies (UN-Water, 2024).

Beyond the structural challenges, the microbiological profile of waterborne threats is undergoing a significant transformation. Pathogenic microorganisms, particularly enteric bacteria such as *Salmonella* spp., *Escherichia coli*, and *Vibrio cholerae*, continue to pose a persistent threat to human populations worldwide. Despite advancements in molecular detection and high-throughput sequencing, these agents result in significant morbidity and mortality rates, disproportionately affecting vulnerable demographics and immunocompromised individuals (Ashbolt, 2015). Unlike foodborne illnesses, which are frequently localized and associated with specific consumption events, waterborne outbreaks possess a unique "multiplier effect." Due to the shared, fluid, and interconnected nature of hydraulic resources, a single contamination event at a source or treatment facility can rapidly escalate into a community-wide or regional health crisis, transcending geographical and political boundaries. The intensification of anthropogenic climate change further complicates the predictive modeling of these outbreaks. Altered hydrological cycles, characterized by extreme precipitation events and prolonged thermal anomalies, have been shown to enhance the environmental fitness and vertical transmission of pathogens in surface and groundwater reservoirs . Furthermore, the emergence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) within aquatic ecosystems has introduced a critical layer of bio-risk. Water bodies now act as environmental sinks and dissemination pathways for multidrug-resistant (MDR) genes, where horizontal gene transfer between non-pathogenic and pathogenic microbial communities creates "superbugs" that are increasingly difficult to eradicate using standard chlorination techniques (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (2023).). In light of these escalating threats, there is a burgeoning scientific imperative to transition from traditional, reactive water quality monitoring to a proactive, "One Health" integrated safety paradigm. This shift necessitates the integration of **Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment (QMRA)** and the adoption of advanced, non-thermal disinfection technologies such as ultraviolet (UV) irradiation and membrane bioreactors to achieve a higher log-reduction of resistant cysts and viral particles. This review, therefore, aims to provide a high-level, comprehensive evaluation of the molecular mechanisms governing pathogen survival and environmental resilience in complex aquatic matrices. By synthesizing the latest data on microbial etiology and discussing the strategic role of sustainable water management frameworks.

2. Objective

The primary objective of this review is to provide a high-level synthesis of the multifaceted challenges posed by waterborne diseases. Specifically, this paper aims to:

1. **Evaluate Microbial Etiology:** To critically analyze the taxonomical classification and molecular virulence profiles of key waterborne bacteria, viruses, and protozoa.
2. **Assess Persistence Mechanisms:** To investigate the physiological strategies, such as biofilm formation and the "Viable But Non-Culturable" (VBNC) state, that enable pathogens to survive within aquatic matrices and distribution networks.
3. **Analyze Environmental Drivers:** To explore the impact of anthropogenic climate change, rapid urbanization, and infrastructure deficiencies on the proliferation and transmission of waterborne outbreaks.
4. **Identify Future Frontiers:** To highlight the role of emerging technologies, such as IoT-enabled nanobiosensors and real-time genomic surveillance, in forging a path toward global water resilience.

- **Search Strategy and Review Methodology :** To ensure a comprehensive and objective evaluation of the current landscape of waterborne diseases, a structured literature search was conducted. This review predominantly synthesizes peer-reviewed articles, global health reports, and strategic policy documents published between 2015 and 2024, with inclusion of landmark studies for historical context. The search was executed across major academic databases, including **PubMed**, **ScienceDirect**, **Web of Science**, and **Google Scholar**, using specific Boolean operators and keywords such as "Waterborne Pathogens," "Microbial Persistence," "Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment (QMRA)," and "Saudi Vision 2030 Water Strategy." Articles were selected based on their relevance to molecular mechanisms, technological innovations in water treatment, and integrated public health frameworks. This systematic approach ensures that the synthesized data reflects the most recent advancements in genomic surveillance, digital water management, and the "One Health" paradigm.

3. Microbial Etiology and Pathogenic Persistence Mechanisms.

The persistence of pathogens in aquatic matrices is a dynamic process governed by "Microbial Ecology" and genomic expression. Beyond simple presence, these microorganisms undergo complex physiological transitions to survive the nutrient-poor and high-stress conditions of water distribution systems (Wingender et al., 2011). These multi-faceted survival strategies and taxonomical distinctions are systematically illustrated in (Figure 1).

3.1. Taxonomical Classification and Advanced Virulence Profiles

- **Bacterial Pathogenic Matrix:** While *Vibrio cholerae* and *Salmonella Typhi* are the classical indicators, emerging threats like **Non-tuberculous Mycobacteria (NTM)** and **Antibiotic-Resistant *E. coli*** have gained prominence. These bacteria utilize **Quorum Sensing** a chemical communication system to coordinate the formation of robust biofilms. This collective behavior allows them to survive chlorine concentrations that would easily eliminate planktonic cells (Ashbolt, 2004).
- **Viral Genomic Stability:** Enteric viruses (Rotavirus, Norovirus, and Hepatitis A/E) are characterized by their extreme environmental persistence. Their protein capsids are not only resistant to pH fluctuations but also to common proteolytic enzymes found in wastewater. Studies have shown that Noroviruses can remain infectious on environmental surfaces and in water for weeks, owing to their ability to bind to suspended particulate matter, which acts as a protective "shield" against UV degradation (WHO, 2023).
- **Protozoan Parasites and the Encystation Barrier:** The oocysts of *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia* represent the pinnacle of environmental resilience. The oocyst wall contains a unique acid-fast lipid layer that prevents the penetration of chemical oxidants. At the molecular level, these parasites remain in a state of "metabolic arrest" until they sense the bile salts and body temperature of a human host, triggering **Excystation** (Berry et al., 2006).

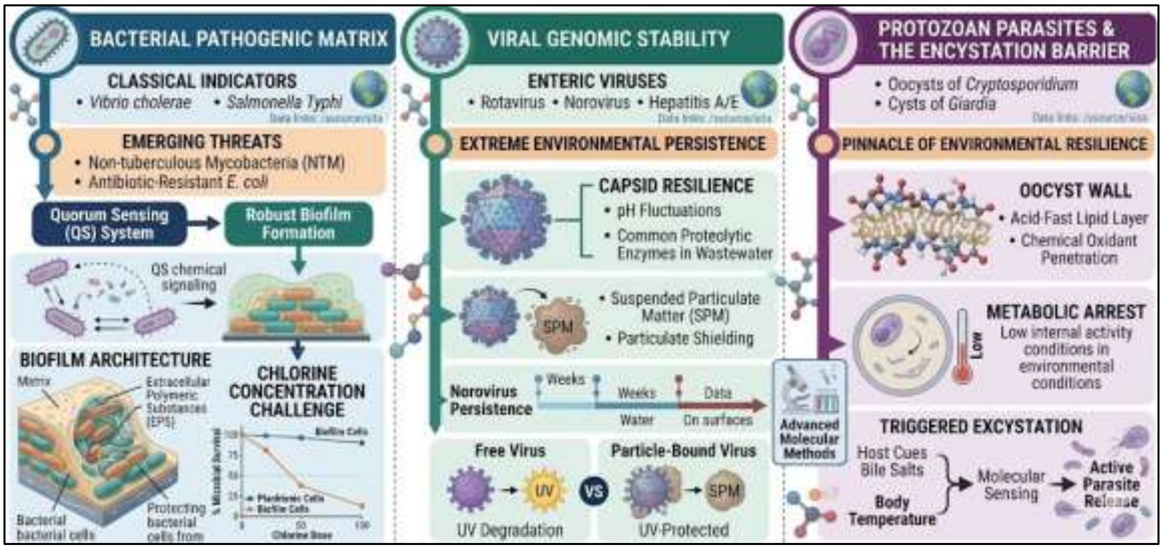


Figure 1: Taxonomical Classification and Advanced Virulence Profiles of Waterborne Pathogens: Mechanisms of Biofilm Formation, Genomic Stability, and Environmental Resilience.

3.2. Molecular Mechanisms of Environmental Resilience

Pathogens utilize a dual-track strategy for survival:

- **Direct Genomic Adaptation:** Exposure to solar radiation or sub-lethal disinfection doses triggers the **SOS Response** in bacteria a global DNA repair mechanism. This often leads to increased mutation rates, potentially fostering the development of antimicrobial resistance within the water network.
- **The VBNC Paradigm and Resuscitation:** The "Viable But Non-Culturable" (VBNC) state is a sophisticated survival tactic where cells become smaller (dwarf cells) and change their membrane fatty acid composition to decrease permeability. These "dormant" pathogens can persist for years in water pipes and "resuscitate" into a fully virulent state once they enter the human intestine, leading to underestimated risk in standard quality tests (Ramírez-Castillo et al., 2015).
- **Water Radiolysis and Redox Homeostasis:** Similar to the effects described in your research on food irradiation, water undergoing natural or artificial treatment produces reactive oxygen species (ROS).

Pathogens manage this oxidative stress through the up-regulation of genes like *oxyR* and *soxRS*, which produce neutralizing enzymes, ensuring their survival even in treated water.

4. Multi-Dimensional Determinants of Disease Proliferation.

The spread of waterborne diseases is an "Integrated Epidemiological Response" to environmental instability and anthropogenic activities.

4.1. Hydro-Climatic Volatility and Pathogen Shedding

Anthropogenic climate change acts as a "force multiplier" for waterborne risks.

- **The "Flush Effect":** Intense precipitation events cause rapid flushing of animal waste and fecal matter from terrestrial environments into reservoirs. This leads to a sudden spike in **Turbidity**, which significantly reduces the efficacy of UV and chlorine disinfection by providing physical cover for microbes (Woolway et al.,2020).
- **Thermal Stratification:** Rising water temperatures promote the growth of thermophilic pathogens and harmful algal blooms (HABs). These blooms can produce toxins that weaken human immune responses, making individuals more susceptible to co-occurring microbial infections (Paerl et al., 2013).

4.2. Urbanization and Environmental Determinants of Pathogenic Proliferation

The phenomenon of rapid, unplanned urbanization frequently precipitates a condition known as "Infrastructure Lag." This socio-technical disparity occurs when the expansion of centralized sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities fails to maintain a stoichiometric balance with escalating population densities. Consequently, this systemic mismatch engenders a high-velocity transmission environment, characterized by increased hydraulic loads on aging systems and a significantly higher probability of cross-contamination between fecal waste streams and potable water supplies. In densely populated megacities, this public health challenge is further exacerbated by the "Urban Heat Island (UHI)" effect. Atmospheric thermal retention in urban centers, driven by anthropogenic heat and concrete density, facilitates a localized elevation in the temperature of water within distribution networks and building plumbing systems. Such thermal shifts are biologically significant; they create a favorable ecological niche for the proliferation of opportunistic premise plumbing pathogens (OPPPs), most notably Legionella pneumophila. These elevated temperatures catalyze metabolic activity and accelerate biofilm maturation within the plumbing matrix. Under these conditions, pathogens transition from a planktonic state to a protected, sessile existence within biofilms, thereby increasing their resistance to residual disinfectants and posing a heightened risk of waterborne and aerosolized infections in urban populations.

4.3. Hydraulic Integrity and the "Ageing Infrastructure" Crisis: The degradation of water networks is a critical global vulnerability.

- **Back-Siphonage and Venturi Effects:** In systems with intermittent supply, the loss of internal pressure creates a vacuum that sucks in surrounding groundwater—often contaminated by leaking sewer lines through cracks and joints. This "Cross-Contamination" is a leading cause of outbreaks in urban centers (Hrudey & Hrudey, 2019).
- **Bio-corrosion:** The interaction between biofilms and metal pipes leads to bio-corrosion, which releases nutrients into the water, further fueling microbial growth and protecting pathogens from residual disinfectants.

Table 1. Comprehensive Analysis of Environmental Drivers and Microbial Responses

Environmental Driver	Molecular/Physical Mechanism	Primary Pathogens Affected	Public Health Risk Level
Thermal Stress	Up-regulation of Heat-Shock Proteins (HSPs)	Vibrio, Legionella	High (Endemic growth)
Hydraulic Pressure Drop	Ingress of contaminants (Back-flow)	E. coli, Norovirus	Critical (Acute outbreaks)
Nutrient Loading (N/P)	Biofilm expansion & Quorum Sensing	Salmonella, Pseudomonas	Moderate (Persistent colonization)
Solar UV Exposure	DNA Photolyase-mediated repair	Viruses, Bacteria	Variable (Diurnal fluctuations)

5. Prevention, Mitigation, and Control Frameworks

The mitigation of waterborne diseases requires a transition from fragmented interventions to a holistic "Multi-Barrier Approach." This strategic framework ensures that if one barrier fails, subsequent stages maintain the safety of the water supply. Contemporary control strategies are categorized into advanced technological treatments, systemic sanitation reforms, and socio-behavioral interventions (Falkinham et al ., 2015).

5.1. Advanced Technical and Engineering Interventions

Technological advancements have shifted toward chemical-free and non-thermal disinfection, mirroring the trends in food preservation to avoid the formation of toxic by-products.

- **Advanced Membrane Filtration Technologies:** Modern membrane-based systems, including Ultrafiltration (UF) and Reverse Osmosis (RO), represent highly efficient approaches for water purification. These technologies function as precise physical barriers that effectively remove enteric viruses and chlorine-resistant protozoa, including organisms such as *Cryptosporidium*.
- **Ultraviolet (UV) Disinfection:** This method utilizes UV-C radiation at a wavelength of approximately 254 nm to damage the genetic material of microorganisms, thereby inhibiting their ability to reproduce and spread. In addition, UV treatment preserves the physicochemical characteristics of water because it does not require thermal processing or chemical additives.
- **Advanced Oxidation Processes (AOPs):** These processes rely on the combination of strong oxidizing agents, such as ozone with hydrogen peroxide or ultraviolet irradiation, to generate highly reactive hydroxyl radicals (OH). Such radicals possess exceptional capability to degrade persistent organic contaminants and inactivate highly resistant microbial forms, including bacterial and fungal spores (WHO, 2023).

5.2. Integrated Sanitation and Environmental Management

Sustainable prevention is impossible without addressing the "Source-to-Tap" continuum.

- **Fecal Sludge Management (FSM):** In rapidly urbanizing areas, the safe containment, transport, and treatment of sludge prevent the leaching of pathogens into groundwater aquifers.
- **Climate-Resilient Infrastructure:** Modernizing sewerage systems to handle "Peak Flow" during extreme weather events prevents Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs), which are major drivers of urban outbreaks (UN-Water, 2024).
- **WASH Protocols in Clinical and Domestic Settings:** Integrating Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) into primary healthcare ensures that water security is maintained at the point of use, particularly in vulnerable communities.

5.3. Socio-Economic and Behavioral Paradigms

The efficacy of technical solutions is often limited by human behavior and socio-economic constraints.

- **Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS):** This approach empowers communities to analyze their own sanitation profile and mobilize toward "Open Defecation Free" (ODF) status through behavioral change rather than just subsidy-led hardware.
- **Digital Surveillance and Early Warning Systems:** Utilizing mobile-based reporting and real-time microbiological monitoring allows public health authorities to detect "Micro-outbreaks" before they escalate into regional crises.

Table 2. Comprehensive Matrix of Mitigation Strategies and Epidemiological Impacts

Strategy Level	Core Interventions	Target Pathogens	Mechanistic Impact	Public Health Outcome
Primary (Source)	Catchment protection, Riparian buffers	Zoonotic bacteria, Helminths	Prevents pathogen ingress at the source	Significant reduction in baseline endemicity
Secondary (Treatment)	Nanofiltration, UV-C, Ozone, Chlorination	Viruses, Bacteria, Protozoa	Genomic disruption and physical removal	Elimination of acute outbreak risks
Tertiary (Distribution)	Pipe replacement, Residual monitoring	*Legionella*, Biofilm bacteria	Prevents secondary contamination and regrowth	Ensures safety at the consumer's tap
Quaternary (Social)	Hygiene education, Handwashing (WASH)	All enteric agents	Breaks the fecal-oral transmission route	Long-term sustainability of health gains

6. Risk Characterization and Future Perspectives

The trajectory of global water safety is currently undergoing a paradigm shift, transitioning from conventional "end-point" testing to predictive, data-driven biosecurity frameworks. The future of waterborne disease mitigation lies in the synergistic integration of **Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment (QMRA)** with the burgeoning field of real-time sensor technology and artificial intelligence.

6.1. Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment (QMRA) and Predictive Modeling

QMRA serves as a robust mathematical framework to estimate the probability of adverse health outcomes resulting from exposure to specific pathogenic densities. Unlike traditional "presence/absence" testing, QMRA incorporates the **Dose-Response** relationship, accounting for the varying virulence of pathogens and the susceptibility of different population cohorts (e.g., pediatric vs. geriatric). By applying stochastic models such as the *Monte Carlo simulation*, researchers can quantify uncertainty and variability in exposure pathways. This allows policymakers to move beyond generic safety standards and prioritize strategic investments in hydraulic infrastructure where the simulated risk of infection is highest, thereby optimizing resource allocation in resource-constrained settings (Ashbolt, 2015).

6.2. Real-Time Biomonitoring and Nanotechnology

The inherent lag-time in laboratory-based microbial cultivation (often 24–48 hours) is a critical vulnerability in outbreak prevention. The integration of **Internet of Things (IoT)**-enabled sensors and **Nanobiosensors** offers a transformative solution.

- **Molecular Diagnostics:** Future systems will utilize automated, on-site **Quantitative PCR (qPCR)** and **Loop-mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP)** platforms to detect DNA/RNA signatures of pathogens within minutes.
- **Surface-Enhanced Raman Spectroscopy (SERS):** This emerging optical technique allows for the rapid fingerprinting of bacteria and viruses at extremely low concentrations. When coupled with machine learning algorithms, these sensors can provide "Early Warning Alerts" to water utility operators, enabling the immediate isolation of contaminated sectors before the water reaches the consumer (WHO, 2023).

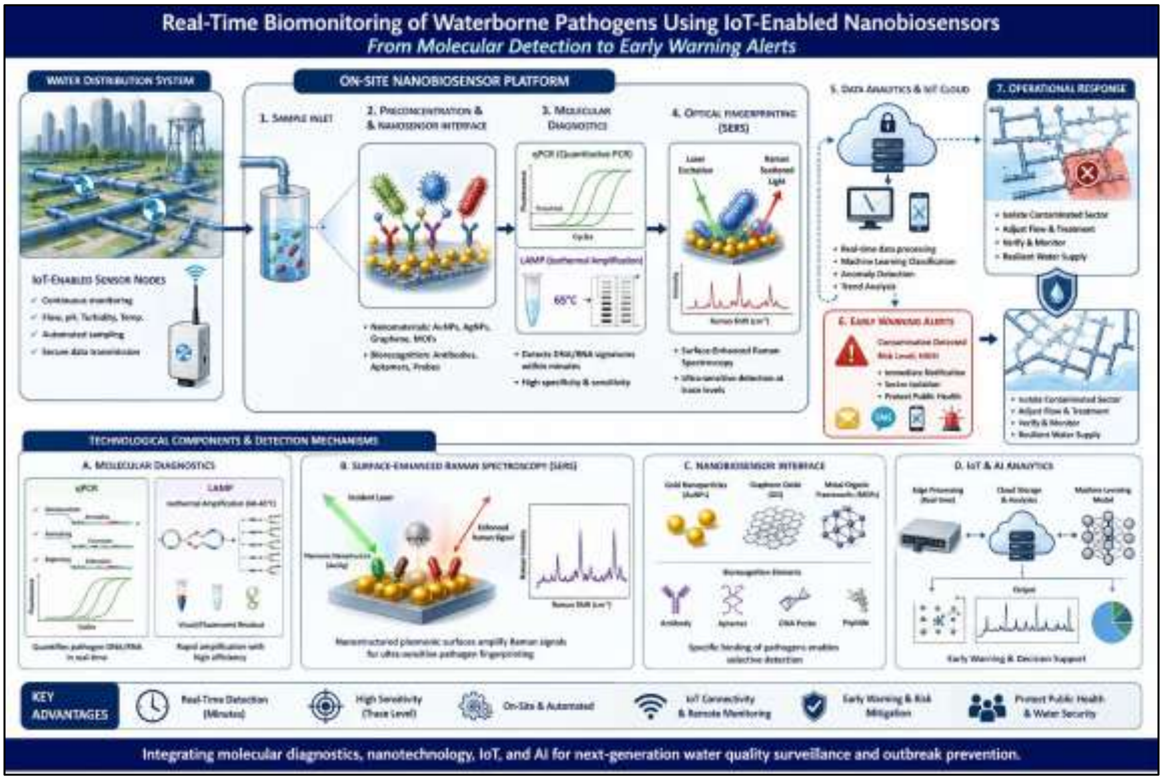


Figure 2. Integrated Mechanistic Framework for Real-Time Biomonitoring of Waterborne Pathogens via IoT-Enabled Nanobiosensors, Molecular Diagnostics, and AI-Driven Early Warning Surveillance

6.3. The Circular Economy and Sustainable Wastewater Valorization

As global water scarcity intensifies, the adoption of **Circular Economy** principles specifically the **"Safe Reuse"** of treated wastewater has evolved from an innovative strategy into an ecological necessity. However, this shift toward a **Recycled Water Paradigm** introduces a complex matrix of microbiological risks. The primary concern lies in the potential for the re-introduction of enteric pathogens and **Antibiotic-Resistance Genes (ARGs)** into the human food chain through agricultural irrigation. This creates a critical

"Environmental Reservoir" for pathogens, where sub-lethal concentrations of contaminants may foster the selection of multi-drug resistant strains (Pruden et al ., 2006).

6.3.1. Multi-Barrier Valorization and "Fit-for-Purpose" Standards

To mitigate these risks, future frameworks must mandate stringent microbiological standards that transcend current agricultural guidelines. The transition toward **"Fit-for-Purpose"** water reclamation requires the integration of high-tier technological barriers:

- **Membrane Bioreactors (MBR):** By combining biological degradation with membrane filtration (Microfiltration or Ultrafiltration), MBR systems provide a superior physical barrier against suspended solids and pathogenic clusters(Rizzo et al., 2013).
- **Advanced Oxidation Processes (AOPs):** These are essential for the degradation of persistent organic micropollutants and the inactivation of viral fragments that evade conventional treatment. The goal is to ensure that reclaimed water achieves a high "Log Reduction Value" (LRV) for bacteria, viruses, and protozoa before any terrestrial application (Le-Minh et al .,2010).

6.3.2. The Resource Recovery Interface and "One Health" Equilibrium

Beyond hydraulic reuse, the extraction of vital nutrients specifically **Nitrogen (N)** and **Phosphorus (P)** from wastewater represents a significant advancement in sustainable agriculture. However, this **Resource Recovery Interface** must be meticulously managed to prevent the "Co-concentration" of biological and chemical contaminants in resulting bio-fertilizers.

Applying a **"One Health"** perspective is imperative here; it ensures a delicate equilibrium between enhancing agricultural productivity and safeguarding public health. Management strategies must prioritize the elimination of residual pathogens in biosolids to prevent their persistence in the soil matrix, thereby ensuring that the circularity of water resources does not inadvertently accelerate the transmission of waterborne diseases (World Health Organization (WHO).2022).

Table 3. Future Trends and Technological Convergence in Water Safety

Emerging Trend	Technological Driver	Mechanism of Action	Strategic Benefit
Digital Twin Models	AI & Hydraulic Simulation	Real-time virtual mapping of the water network	Predicts contamination spread during pipe bursts
Smart Disinfection	Pulse-LED UV & Automated Chlorination	Adjusts disinfectant dose based on real-time sensor feedback	Reduces Disinfection By-Products (DBPs) and energy use
Metagenomic Surveillance	Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS)	Profiling the entire microbial community (Microbiome)	Identifies "Emerging Pathogens" before they cause clinical cases
Decentralized Treatment	Point-of-Use (POU) Nanofilters	Localized filtration at the household level	Provides a final safety barrier in areas with aging pipes

7. Conclusion and Future Perspectives: Forging a Path Toward Water Resilience

Waterborne diseases represent a complex, multi-component challenge that transcends simple microbiological contamination, necessitating a sophisticated, multi-disciplinary solution. As synthesized in this review, the persistence of pathogens in aquatic matrices is not a static threat but a dynamic biological response to anthropogenic and environmental stressors. While significant advancements in treatment technologies ranging from advanced membrane filtration to sophisticated oxidation processes offer promising results in laboratory settings, the sustainable reduction of the global disease burden remains contingent upon the seamless integration of technology, policy, and community engagement (Rice et al.,2023).

7.1. Strengthening Global Surveillance and Community Resilience

The future of water biosecurity depends heavily on strengthening global surveillance systems through the adoption of **Digital Epidemiology**. Transitioning from intermittent manual sampling to continuous, real-time microbiological monitoring will allow for the early detection of "pathogen spikes" before they escalate into clinical outbreaks. Furthermore, community resilience must be fostered through decentralized water management strategies. Empowering local populations with low-cost, point-of-use (POU) technologies ensures a final safety barrier in regions where centralized infrastructure remains vulnerable to hydraulic failures or intermittent supply.

7.2. Convergence with Non-Thermal Food Preservation Technologies

One of the most promising frontiers in water science is the integration of emerging **Non-Thermal Technologies**, analogous to those utilized in advanced food preservation (e.g., ionizing radiation, pulsed electric fields, and high-pressure processing). Future research should prioritize the optimization of these methods such as **UV-LED matrices** and **Cold Plasma treatment** to achieve superior log-reduction of resistant oocysts and viral particles with minimal energy consumption. By mimicking the precision of food irradiation, these technologies can provide high-level disinfection efficiency while circumventing the formation of carcinogenic disinfection by-products (DBPs), such as trihalomethanes, which are inherent to traditional chlorination (Al-Zahrani et al., 2021).

7.3. The "One Health" and Circular Economy Integration

The scientific community must pivot toward a "One Health" framework that recognizes the inextricable link between human health, animal waste management, and environmental integrity. As we move toward a **Circular Water Economy**, the safe reclamation of wastewater for agricultural and industrial reuse will require the establishment of stringent "Biological Safety Levels" for reclaimed water. Future studies must investigate the long-term fate of antibiotic-resistance genes (ARGs) within these cycles to prevent the environmental "recycling" of multidrug-resistant pathogens World Health Organization (WHO)2023).

7.4. Final Synthesis

In conclusion, mitigating the impact of waterborne diseases worldwide requires more than technical innovation; it demands a robust scientific foundation that informs evidence-based policymaking. By harmonizing molecular diagnostics, sustainable infrastructure, and global collaboration, we can fortify the world's hydraulic resources against the evolving spectrum of microbial threats. This review serves as a call to action for researchers and stakeholders to prioritize "Water-Smart" solutions that are not only effective but also equitable and environmentally sustainable for future generations(World Health Organization (WHO) 2022).

8. Recommendations

Based on the critical analysis provided in this review, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance global water biosecurity and strengthen the management of waterborne pathogens:

1. Advanced Research and Genomic Surveillance

- **Implementation of Molecular Diagnostics:** Future research should prioritize the use of high-throughput sequencing and metagenomics to identify pathogens in a **Viable But Non-Culturable (VBNC)** state, which often evade traditional culture-based detection methods.
- **Monitoring Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR):** It is imperative to investigate the role of water distribution networks as reservoirs for antibiotic-resistance genes (ARGs) and to evaluate how conventional disinfection processes might inadvertently select for resistant microbial populations.

2. Technological Innovation and Infrastructure

- **Transition to Real-Time Monitoring:** Policy-makers and water authorities should shift from periodic laboratory testing to continuous, real-time monitoring systems integrated with **Nanobiosensors** and **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** for the early detection of contamination events.
- **Adoption of Sustainable Disinfection:** The deployment of **Advanced Oxidation Processes (AOPs)** and **UV-LED** technology should be expanded as more effective and environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional chlorination, particularly for neutralizing chlorine-resistant protozoa.

3. Strategic and Policy Integration

- **The "One Health" Approach:** National health strategies must adopt a multi-sectoral **One Health** framework that harmonizes environmental protection, veterinary surveillance, and human clinical data to mitigate the zoonotic transmission of waterborne diseases.
- **Aligning with Vision 2030 (Regional Context):** In arid regions like Saudi Arabia, focus should remain on scaling up carbon-neutral desalination and maximizing the valorization of treated sewage effluent (TSE) to ensure long-term water resilience in the face of climate change.

4. Public Health and Community Resilience

- **Sustaining WASH Protocols:** Community-level interventions focused on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) must be integrated with digital health education platforms to ensure the sustainability of preventive behaviors at the household level.

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