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Commentary

Environmental Noise Exposure and Its Influence on Cellular Gene Regulation and Cardiovascular Function

Henrik Salomon*

Department of Environmental Physiology and Biomedical Systems, Nordic Institute of Health Sciences, Oslo, Norway

DESCRIPTION

Environmental noise is increasingly recognized as a biological stressor that extends beyond auditory discomfort and social disturbance. Continuous or repeated exposure to traffic sounds, industrial activity, aviation noise, and urban crowding can influence physiological regulation at multiple levels. Modern biomedical research explores how noise exposure affects cellular signaling systems, gene regulation processes, and cardiovascular function through stress-mediated biological pathways.

Human auditory perception is the primary route through which environmental noise is detected, but the physiological impact is not restricted to the ear. Noise is processed by neural systems that interpret it as a stress signal when intensity or unpredictability exceeds normal thresholds. This activation triggers systemic responses involving hormonal release, autonomic nervous system activation, and downstream molecular changes in multiple organs.

The cardiovascular system is particularly sensitive to chronic noise exposure. Repeated activation of stress pathways can influence blood pressure regulation, vascular tone, and heart rate variability. These physiological responses are associated with changes in gene expression patterns within endothelial cells, cardiac tissue, and smooth muscle cells of blood vessels. Over time, these molecular alterations may contribute to increased cardiovascular risk.

At the cellular level, stress hormones such as cortisol and catecholamines play a central role in translating noise exposure into biological responses. These hormones bind to receptors that activate transcriptional regulators, which in turn modify gene expression in stress-responsive pathways. Genes involved in inflammation, vascular contraction, and metabolic regulation may become either upregulated or suppressed depending on exposure patterns.

Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) methylation is one mechanism through which environmental noise influences long-term biological regulation. Chronic stress exposure has been associated with altered methylation patterns in genes related to inflammatory signaling and vascular function. These epigenetic modifications can persist beyond immediate exposure periods, potentially contributing to long-term changes in cardiovascular health.

Histone modification processes are also affected by stress-induced signaling pathways. Changes in histone acetylation and methylation influence chromatin accessibility in genes involved in immune activation and metabolic regulation. These modifications may enhance or suppress gene transcription depending on the intensity and duration of noise exposure. Persistent alterations in chromatin state may contribute to long-term physiological adaptation or maladaptation.

Non-coding Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) molecules are increasingly recognized as mediators of noise-related biological responses. MicroRNAs regulate stress-responsive genes involved in endothelial function, inflammation, and cardiac remodeling. Long non-coding RNAs contribute to chromatin regulation and may influence how cells respond to chronic environmental stressors. These RNA-based mechanisms provide fine-tuning of gene expression under fluctuating environmental conditions.

Inflammatory pathways are strongly influenced by environmental noise exposure. Stress-induced signaling can activate immune-related genes that regulate cytokine production and inflammatory cell recruitment. While short-term activation of these pathways may serve adaptive functions, chronic activation can lead to sustained inflammation and tissue damage in cardiovascular systems.

Sleep disruption is a major indirect pathway through which noise exposure affects gene regulation. Nighttime noise can interfere with sleep cycles, leading to altered hormonal rhythms and disrupted circadian gene expression. Sleep deprivation has been associated with changes in metabolic, immune, and cardiovascular gene activity, amplifying the biological impact of environmental noise.

Metabolic regulation is also influenced by stress-related gene expression changes. Noise exposure has been linked to altered glucose metabolism, insulin signaling, and lipid regulation. These metabolic changes may result from combined effects of

Correspondence to: Henrik Salomon, Department of Environmental Physiology and Biomedical Systems, Nordic Institute of Health Sciences, Oslo, Norway, E-mail: henrik.salomon.nihs@researchmail.no

Received: 27-Feb-2026, Manuscript No. EROA-26-42350; **Editor assigned:** 02-Mar-2026, PreQC No. EROA-26-42350 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 16-Mar-2026, QC No. EROA-26-42350; **Revised:** 23-Mar-2026, Manuscript No. EROA-26-42350 (R); **Published:** 30-Mar-2026, DOI: 10.35248/EROA.26.8.251

Citation: Salomon H (2026). Environmental Noise Exposure and Its Influence on Cellular Gene Regulation and Cardiovascular Function. J Epigenetics Res. 8:251.

hormonal imbalance, inflammatory activation, and disrupted circadian gene regulation. Over time, these alterations can increase the risk of metabolic disorders. Early-life exposure to environmental noise may have long-term consequences for biological regulation. During developmental stages, stress-responsive gene networks are highly sensitive to environmental conditions. Chronic noise exposure in early life may influence the maturation of stress regulation systems, potentially affecting long-term cardiovascular and metabolic health outcomes. Psychological stress responses to noise also play an important role in biological regulation. Individual perception of noise intensity and annoyance can influence hormonal responses and gene expression patterns. Variability in stress sensitivity may explain differences in physiological outcomes among individuals exposed to similar environmental conditions.

Advances in molecular biology techniques have enabled detailed analysis of stress-related gene regulation. Genome-wide expression profiling, chromatin accessibility assays, and methylation mapping allow researchers to identify biological pathways affected by environmental noise exposure. These tools provide insight into how external stressors influence internal regulatory systems.

CONCLUSION

Environmental noise exposure influences gene regulation and physiological function through stress-mediated biological pathways. By affecting hormonal signaling, inflammatory responses, chromatin modifications, and RNA-based regulation, noise acts as a systemic environmental factor with significant health implications. Continued research in environmental physiology is essential for understanding these mechanisms and developing strategies to mitigate adverse health outcomes associated with chronic noise exposure.