

Beyond the Spinning Sensation: A Contemporary Review of Vertigo in Clinical Practice

Abhishek Ruia¹, Vikas Sinha², Arun Banik³

¹Research Scholar, Maharaja Krishnakumarsinhji Bhavnagar University, Bhavnagar, Gujarat, India; Abhishek Speech and Hearing Centre, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India
Email: [abhishekruia10\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:abhishekruia10[at]gmail.com)

²Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Nootan Medical College and Research Centre, Visnagar, Gujarat, India
Email: [vikassinha1958\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:vikassinha1958[at]gmail.com)

³Professor and Director, School of Rehabilitation and Behavioural Sciences, Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation (Deemed to be University), Puducherry, India
Email: [drarunbanik\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:drarunbanik[at]gmail.com)

Abstract: *Vertigo is a frequently encountered clinical symptom that significantly affects balance, mobility, and quality of life. It arises from a broad spectrum of peripheral and central vestibular disorders, often presenting diagnostic challenges because of overlapping clinical manifestations and variable symptom profiles. Accurate diagnosis is essential for effective management and improved patient outcomes. In recent years, advances in vestibular assessment, including vestibular evoked myogenic potentials (VEMP), video head impulse testing (vHIT), computerized posturography, and other specialized diagnostic techniques, have enhanced the clinician's ability to evaluate vestibular dysfunction with greater precision. This narrative review presents an overview of contemporary concepts in vertigo, focusing on its classification, clinical evaluation, diagnostic approaches, and management strategies. Common vestibular disorders, recent advances in vestibular rehabilitation, and emerging developments such as telemedicine and digital health technologies are also discussed. A comprehensive understanding of current evidence and evolving clinical practices may support accurate diagnosis, facilitate evidence-based decision-making, and contribute to improved patient care in individuals experiencing vertigo.*

Keywords: Vertigo, Vestibular Disorders, Vestibular Assessment, Balance Disorders, Vestibular Rehabilitation

1. Introduction

Vertigo is one of the most common symptoms encountered in clinical practice and is frequently reported in audiology, otolaryngology, neurology, and primary healthcare settings. Patients often describe vertigo as a sensation of spinning, swaying, tilting, or movement when no actual motion is present. Although vertigo itself is not a disease, it is an important symptom that may indicate an underlying disorder affecting the vestibular system or central nervous system. [1-3]

Maintenance of balance relies on the coordinated interaction of the vestibular, visual, and somatosensory systems. Dysfunction of any of these components can lead to dizziness, imbalance, or vertigo. Based on the site of involvement, vertigo is broadly classified as peripheral or central. Peripheral vertigo usually results from disorders of the inner ear or vestibular nerve, whereas central vertigo is associated with abnormalities involving the brainstem, cerebellum, or other central nervous system structures.[4]

Vertigo can significantly affect an individual's quality of life by interfering with daily activities, mobility, and overall well-being. Common causes include benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), Ménière's disease, vestibular neuritis, vestibular migraine, and various neurological disorders. Because several vestibular conditions present with similar symptoms, accurate diagnosis remains a clinical challenge.[5]

Recent developments in vestibular assessment, including vestibular evoked myogenic potentials (VEMP), video head

impulse testing (vHIT), caloric testing, and computerized posturography, have improved the evaluation of vestibular disorders and contributed to more effective clinical management. This review brings together current information on vertigo, focusing on common causes, clinical presentation, diagnostic evaluation, and recent developments that may support better patient management.

2. Literature Survey

Vertigo continues to be one of the most commonly reported symptoms in clinical practice and has attracted considerable research attention over the years. Traditionally, the evaluation of vestibular disorders relied heavily on patient history, bedside clinical examination, and caloric testing. Although these methods remain valuable, they provide only limited information regarding the function of specific vestibular structures.[6]

Among peripheral vestibular disorders, benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV) is widely recognized as the most common cause of vertigo. Other frequently encountered conditions include Ménière's disease and vestibular neuritis, both of which contribute significantly to vestibular dysfunction. In recent years, vestibular migraine has emerged as an important and often under-recognized cause of recurrent dizziness and vertigo.[7]

Technological advancements have considerably improved vestibular assessment. Vestibular evoked myogenic potentials (VEMP) allow objective evaluation of otolith organ function, while video head impulse testing (vHIT) provides rapid

assessment of semicircular canal function. These investigations complement conventional vestibular tests and assist clinicians in identifying the site of pathology with greater accuracy.[8]

Audiological assessment also plays an important role in the comprehensive evaluation of patients with vertigo. Pure tone audiometry, speech audiometry, and immittance testing can provide useful information regarding associated auditory involvement and support the diagnosis of conditions such as Ménière's disease and vestibular schwannoma.[9]

Recent evidence highlights the effectiveness of vestibular rehabilitation in reducing dizziness, improving balance, and enhancing quality of life. In addition, advances in telemedicine, virtual reality, and wearable technologies are expanding opportunities for vestibular assessment and rehabilitation. Despite these developments, challenges remain because of overlapping symptoms, variations in clinical presentation, and differences in diagnostic protocols. Continued research is therefore essential to improve diagnostic accuracy and patient care.[10]

3. Problem Definition

Vertigo is a frequently encountered clinical symptom that may arise from a wide range of vestibular and neurological disorders. Despite significant advances in diagnostic technology, the evaluation of vertigo remains challenging because many conditions present with similar symptoms and no single test can establish the diagnosis in every case.[11]

Delayed or inaccurate diagnosis may result in prolonged symptoms, unnecessary investigations, and reduced quality of life. Although modern vestibular assessment techniques have improved diagnostic precision, successful diagnosis still

depends on the careful integration of patient history, clinical examination, and test findings.[12]

Given the growing number of diagnostic and management options available, there is a need for a concise review of contemporary approaches to vertigo. This review aims to summarize current evidence and provide practical information relevant to clinicians involved in the assessment and management of patients with vertigo.

4. Methodology

This narrative review was based on published literature related to vertigo and vestibular disorders. Relevant articles were identified through searches of electronic databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar, and other peer-reviewed sources. Keywords such as vertigo, dizziness, vestibular disorders, vestibular assessment, VEMP, vHIT, and vestibular rehabilitation were used during the literature search. Review articles, original research studies, and clinical guidelines published in English were considered for inclusion. The selected literature was reviewed and synthesized to provide an overview of current concepts in the evaluation, diagnosis, and management of vertigo in clinical practice. [13,14]

5. Results and Discussion

The literature reviewed in this study highlights the continuing clinical importance of vertigo due to its high prevalence and wide range of underlying causes. Accurate diagnosis remains essential because treatment strategies differ according to the specific vestibular or neurological condition involved. A detailed patient history and careful clinical examination continue to form the cornerstone of vertigo assessment, often providing valuable information regarding symptom characteristics, triggering factors, associated auditory complaints, and neurological findings.[15]

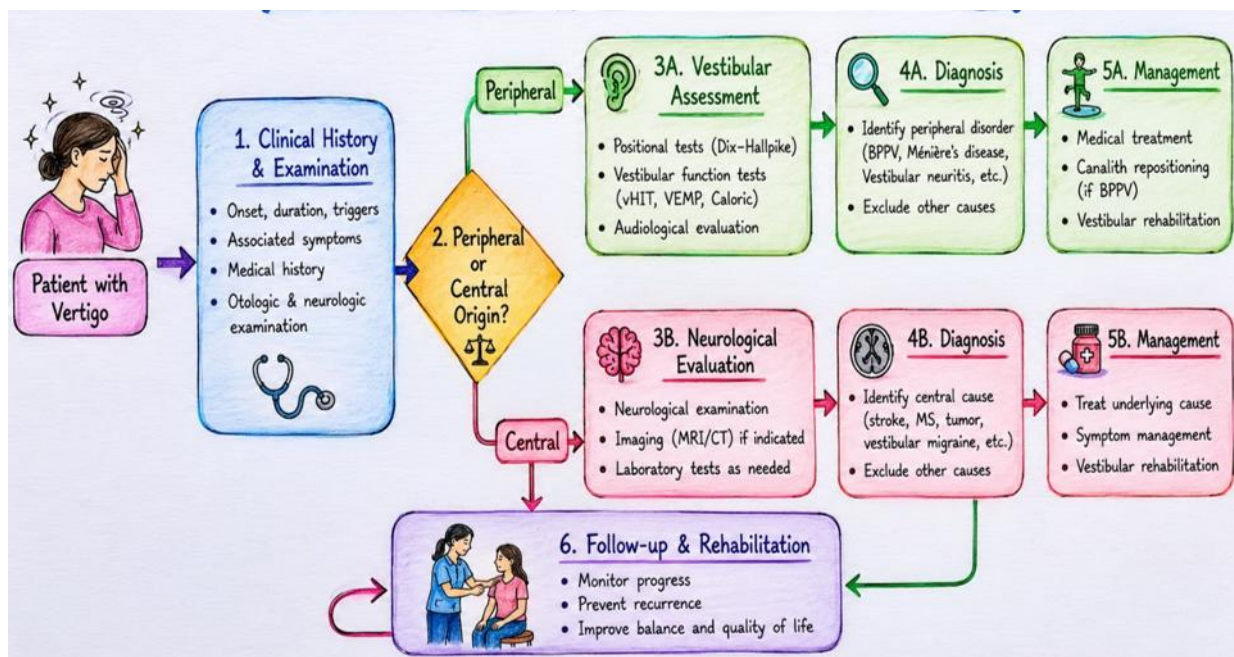


Figure 1: Clinical Approach to a Patient with Vertigo

Among peripheral vestibular disorders, benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV) is the most frequently encountered

condition and is characterized by brief episodes of vertigo triggered by changes in head position. Clinical manifestations

vary among vestibular disorders. Individuals with Ménière's disease commonly report recurring episodes of vertigo associated with auditory symptoms, whereas vestibular neuritis is generally characterized by acute dizziness and

postural instability in the absence of significant auditory involvement. Vestibular migraine has also gained recognition as an important cause of recurrent vertigo and may clinically resemble other vestibular disorders.[16]

Table 1: Common Causes of Vertigo and Their Clinical Features

Disorder	Type	Key Clinical Features
BPPV	Peripheral	Brief episodes of vertigo triggered by head movements
Ménière's Disease	Peripheral	Recurrent dizziness episodes accompanied by hearing fluctuations, ear ringing, and a feeling of pressure in the affected ear
Vestibular Neuritis	Peripheral	Sudden severe vertigo, nausea, imbalance, no hearing loss
Vestibular Migraine	Central/Neurological	Recurrent vertigo associated with migraine symptoms
Stroke	Central	Acute vertigo with neurological signs and symptoms
Multiple Sclerosis	Central	Vertigo associated with other neurological deficits

Advances in vestibular assessment have improved the ability of clinicians to identify vestibular dysfunction with greater accuracy. Vestibular evoked myogenic potentials (VEMP) provide information regarding otolith organ function, while video head impulse testing (vHIT) enables rapid evaluation of semicircular canal function. These investigations complement conventional assessments such as caloric testing and audiological evaluation, resulting in a more comprehensive approach to vestibular diagnosis.[17]

Table 2: Common Vestibular Tests and Their Clinical Applications

Vestibular Test	Primary Function Assessed
Caloric Test	Horizontal semicircular canal function
vHIT	High-frequency vestibulo-ocular reflex
cVEMP	Saccular and inferior vestibular nerve function
oVEMP	Utricular and superior vestibular nerve function
Posturography	Balance and postural control

Additional investigations such as computerized posturography and audiological assessment may provide complementary information regarding balance performance and associated auditory involvement.

Management strategies vary according to the underlying disorder. Canalith repositioning maneuvers are highly effective in the treatment of BPPV, whereas medical management, lifestyle modifications, and vestibular rehabilitation play important roles in other vestibular conditions. Recent developments in telemedicine, wearable technologies, and digital health platforms have further expanded opportunities for vestibular assessment and rehabilitation, with the potential to improve accessibility and patient-centered care in the future.[18]

6. Conclusion

Vertigo remains a common and clinically significant symptom that affects individuals across all age groups and healthcare settings. Its diverse etiologies and often overlapping clinical presentations continue to pose diagnostic challenges for healthcare professionals. Effective evaluation requires a systematic approach that combines detailed history taking, clinical examination, and appropriate vestibular assessment.

Advances in vestibular science have improved the understanding of both peripheral and central causes of vertigo, leading to more accurate diagnosis and targeted

management strategies. The availability of modern diagnostic tools, including VEMP and vHIT, has enhanced the clinician's ability to evaluate vestibular function and support evidence-based decision-making. In addition, growing recognition of the role of vestibular rehabilitation has contributed to improved patient outcomes and quality of life.

Although substantial progress has been achieved in recent years, continued efforts are needed to improve awareness, early diagnosis, and access to specialized vestibular care. Collaboration among audiologists, otolaryngologists, neurologists, and rehabilitation professionals remains essential for delivering comprehensive patient-centered management. A better understanding of contemporary approaches to vertigo can ultimately contribute to improved clinical outcomes and more effective healthcare delivery.

7. Future Scope

The future of vertigo management is expected to be shaped by ongoing advances in diagnostic technology, rehabilitation methods, and digital healthcare solutions. Emerging developments such as artificial intelligence, wearable monitoring devices, and telemedicine-based vestibular services have the potential to improve diagnostic accuracy and expand access to specialized care. Future research should focus on the development of standardized assessment protocols, early identification of vestibular disorders, and personalized treatment approaches.

In addition, virtual reality-based rehabilitation and other technology-driven interventions may offer innovative ways to improve patient engagement and treatment outcomes. As research in vestibular science continues to evolve, these advancements are expected to support more efficient diagnosis, targeted management, and improved quality of life for individuals experiencing vertigo.[18]

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vestibular evoked myogenic potentials (VEMP), hearing rehabilitation, speech and language disorders, and evidence-based clinical practice. He has authored research publications in the fields of audiology and vestibular sciences.



Dr. Vikas Sinha is Professor and Head of the Department of Otorhinolaryngology (ENT) at Nootan Medical College and Research Centre, Visnagar, Gujarat, India. He has extensive experience in clinical practice, medical education, and research. Throughout his academic career, he has guided numerous undergraduate, postgraduate, and research scholars. His professional interests include otology, neurotology, vestibular disorders, hearing loss, and the comprehensive management of ear, nose, and throat diseases. He has contributed significantly to teaching, patient care, and scholarly activities in the field of otorhinolaryngology.



Dr. Arun Banik is Professor and Director of the School of Rehabilitation and Behavioural Sciences at Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation (Deemed to be University), Puducherry, India. He is a distinguished academician, researcher, and mentor with extensive experience in audiology, speech-language pathology, rehabilitation sciences, and higher education. He has supervised and guided a large number of undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral scholars and has published numerous research papers in national and international journals. His areas of expertise include vestibular sciences, hearing assessment and rehabilitation, speech and language disorders, rehabilitation research, and interdisciplinary healthcare education.

Author Profile



Abhishek Ruia is a PhD Research Scholar at Maharaja Krishnakumarsinhji Bhavnagar University, Gujarat, India, and holds a Master's degree in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology from the

Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech and Hearing Disabilities (Divyangjan), Mumbai. He is a practicing Audiologist and Speech-Language Pathologist and serves as the Director of Abhishek Speech & Hearing Centre, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. His clinical and research interests include diagnostic audiology, vestibular assessment,