Research & Reviews: Drug Delivery

Mechanism of Action of Targeted Drug Delivery and Applications in Precise Cancer Treatment

Forough Maleki*

Department of Biochemistry and Clinical Laboratories, Tabriz University of Medical Science, Tabriz, Iran

Perspective

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***For Correspondence:**
Forough Maleki, Department of Biochemistry and Clinical Laboratories, Tabriz University of Medical Science, Tabriz, Iran
E-mail: forough@tbzmed.ac.ir

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Cancer continues to be a formidable adversary in the realm of healthcare, demanding innovative solutions for more effective and less harmful treatments. Targeted drug delivery has emerged as a game-changing approach in the fight against cancer, offering the promise of improved therapeutic outcomes and reduced side effects. This article explores the significance of targeted drug delivery in cancer treatment, its mechanisms, current applications, and the potential it holds for the future of oncology.

The need for precision

Traditional cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy, often lack the precision needed to selectively eradicate cancer cells while sparing healthy tissue. This imprecision can result in debilitating side effects and suboptimal therapeutic outcomes. Targeted drug delivery seeks to address this challenge by precisely delivering therapeutic agents to cancer cells, minimizing collateral damage.

Mechanisms of targeted drug delivery

Targeted drug delivery operates on the principle of specificity. It involves the use of specialized drug carriers, such as nanoparticles, liposomes, or antibodies, which are engineered to recognize and bind to specific markers or receptors present on the surface of cancer cells. These carriers act as vehicles to transport therapeutic agents directly to the tumor site.

One of the most widely utilized mechanisms of targeted drug delivery in cancer treatment is Antibody-Drug Conjugates (ADCs). ADCs consist of monoclonal antibodies that specifically target cancer cells coupled with cytotoxic drugs. Upon binding to the cancer cells, the ADCs are internalized, releasing the toxic payload within the tumor cells, thereby destroying them from the inside.

Current applications

Targeted drug delivery has demonstrated remarkable success in several cancer types, revolutionizing treatment paradigms. Here are a few notable applications:

Breast cancer: Herceptin (trastuzumab) is an example of a targeted therapy used in breast cancer. It specifically targets cells overexpressing the HER2/neu receptor, which is commonly found in aggressive breast cancers. By delivering the drug directly to HER2-positive cancer cells, Herceptin has improved survival rates for these patients.

Lung cancer: EGFR inhibitors, such as Erlotinib, target the Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR) present in Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC). These drugs have shown significant efficacy in patients with EGFR mutations, leading to more personalized and effective treatment approaches.

Leukemia: Targeted therapies like Imatinib have revolutionized the treatment of Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML). Imatinib inhibits the activity of a specific protein produced by the BCR-ABL gene fusion, which drives the growth of CML cells, leading to prolonged remission and improved quality of life.

Colorectal cancer: Bevacizumab, a monoclonal antibody, targets Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (VEGF) in colorectal cancer, inhibiting angiogenesis and depriving tumors of their blood supply. This approach has been integrated into standard treatment regimens for advanced colorectal cancer.

The future of targeted drug delivery in cancer

The potential of targeted drug delivery in cancer treatment is vast and continually expanding. Here are some avenues for its future development:

Personalized medicine: As our understanding of cancer biology deepens, targeted therapies can become increasingly personalized. Genomic profiling and biomarker identification will enable oncologists to match patients with the most suitable targeted treatments based on their specific tumor characteristics.

Overcoming drug resistance: Targeted drug delivery can be leveraged to overcome resistance mechanisms that cancer cells develop against conventional therapies. By modifying drug carriers or developing new agents, we can stay ahead of cancer's ability to adapt.

Combination therapies: Combining targeted drug delivery with other treatment modalities, such as immunotherapy or radiation therapy, can synergistically enhance treatment outcomes. These combinations are being actively explored in clinical trials.

Rare and undruggable targets: Targeted drug delivery systems hold promise for addressing rare and challenging cancer subtypes and previously "undruggable" targets. By customizing drug carriers, we can expand the repertoire of treatable cancers.

CONCLUSION

Targeted drug delivery represents a remarkable advancement in cancer treatment, offering the potential for more effective, personalized, and less toxic therapies. As we continue to unravel the intricacies of cancer biology and refine the mechanisms of targeted drug delivery, we move closer to a future where the devastating impact of cancer is mitigated through precision medicine. With ongoing research, innovation, and collaboration between scientists, clinicians, and pharmaceutical companies, the future of oncology holds great promise, with targeted drug delivery at its forefront.