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A COMPLETE REVIEW ON ADVANCEMENTS IN TRANSDERMAL PATCH TECHNOLOGY FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT AND HORMONE DELIVERY

Bikram Sarkar[1], Pritha Singha Roy[2], Ankush Biswas[1], Sourav Chakraborty[1], Bipul Sarkar[3]*

[1]Department of Pharmacology, Global College of Pharmaceutical Technology, Krishnanagar-741102, West Bengal, India.
[2]Department of Pharmaceutics, Global College of Pharmaceutical Technology, Krishnanagar-741102, West Bengal, India.
[3]Department of Botany, Karimpur Pannadevi College, Karimpur-741152, Nadia, West Bengal, India.

***Corresponding Author: Bipul Sarkar**
Department of Botany, Karimpur Pannadevi College, Karimpur-741152, Nadia, West Bengal, India.

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ABSTRACT
Recent advancements in transdermal patch technology have transformed the landscape of pain management and hormone delivery, offering non-invasive and convenient options for patients. These patches deliver medications and hormones through the skin, bypassing the gastrointestinal tract and liver metabolism, thereby minimizing systemic side effects and enhancing patient compliance. In pain management, transdermal patches now employ sophisticated mechanisms for controlled and sustained drug release. Utilizing permeation enhancers, matrix systems, and reservoir technologies, these patches ensure consistent pain relief over extended durations. Formulations with nano- and microparticles enable targeted delivery to specific pain sites, optimizing efficacy while minimizing systemic exposure. Additionally, wearable technology integration facilitates real-time monitoring of medication adherence and physiological responses, enhancing treatment outcomes. Similarly, transdermal hormone delivery systems have seen significant progress. Advanced patch designs, including microstructured arrays and iontophoresis, enhance hormone permeation, ensuring optimal bioavailability and pharmacokinetics. Biocompatible polymers and biodegradable materials minimize skin irritation, improving patient comfort during long-term therapy. Wearable sensors enable personalized dosing schedules and real-time monitoring, empowering patients and healthcare providers alike. In summary, recent innovations in transdermal patch technology offer improved efficacy, convenience, and patient satisfaction in pain management and hormone delivery. These advancements, coupled with wearable technology integration, hold promise for personalized therapy and enhanced treatment outcomes. Continued research and innovation in this field are poised to further revolutionize patient care for chronic pain and hormonal imbalances.

KEYWORDS: Transdermal patch, Hormone delivery, Permeation enhancers, Wearable technology, Controlled delivery, Biocompatible polymers.

1. INTRODUCTION

a. *Brief overview of transdermal patch technology*

Transdermal patch technology involves the delivery of medications or hormones through the skin for systemic distribution. These patches are designed to adhere to the skin and release therapeutic agents at a controlled rate over an extended period. They offer several advantages over traditional oral or injectable routes of administration, including improved patient compliance, reduced risk of systemic side effects, and avoidance of first-pass metabolism by the liver.[1]

Transdermal patches typically consist of multiple layers, including a drug reservoir or matrix containing the active ingredient, an adhesive layer to attach the patch to the skin, and a backing layer to protect the drug formulation and provide structural support. The patches utilize various mechanisms to facilitate drug permeation through the skin barrier, such as chemical enhancers, physical methods like iontophoresis or microneedles, and formulation strategies to enhance solubility and diffusion rates[2] (Fig. 1).

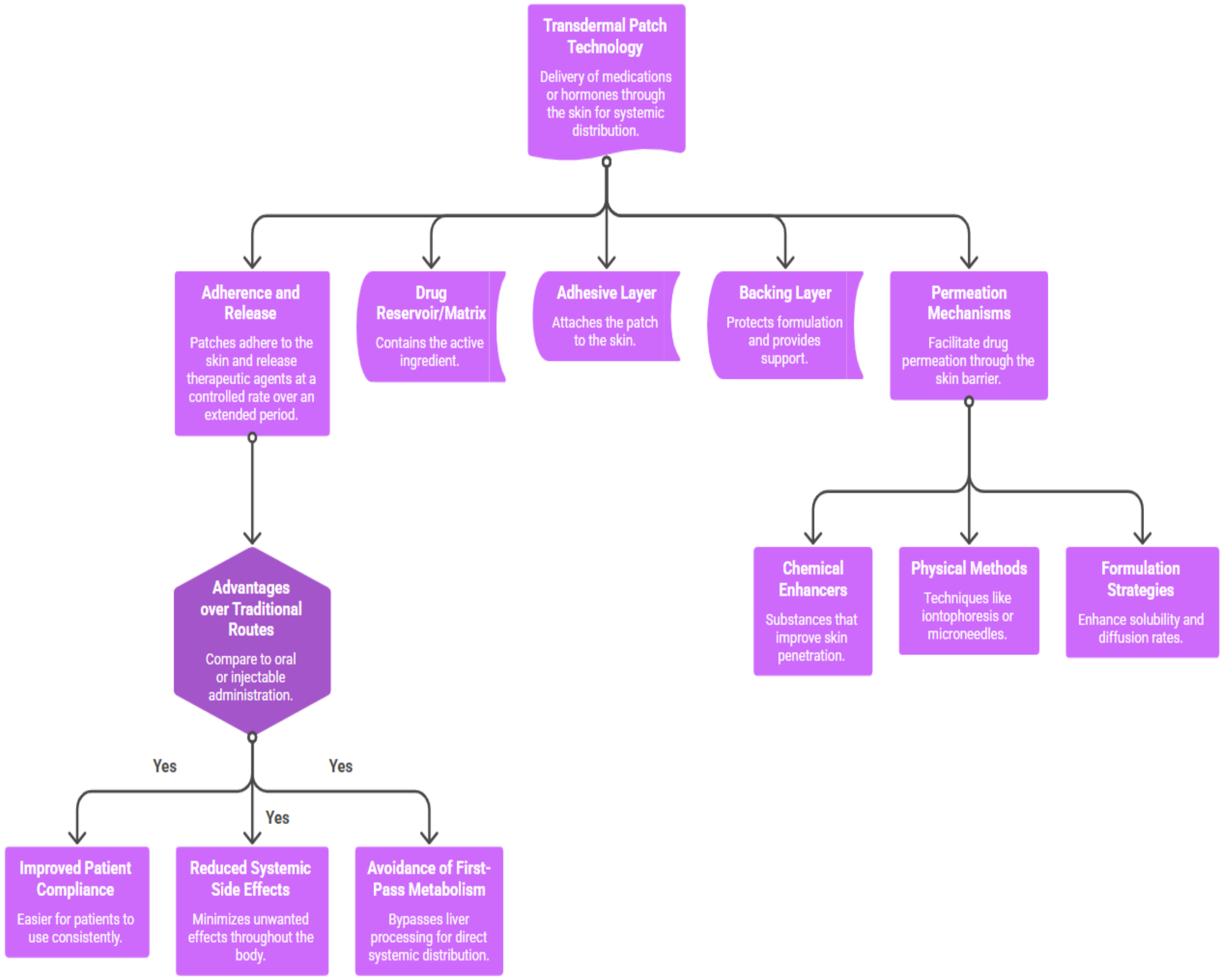

Fig. 1: Overview of transdermal patch technology.

b. Applications in pain management and hormone delivery highlighted

Transdermal patches have found extensive applications in pain management, offering an effective alternative to oral analgesics for chronic pain conditions. These patches can deliver opioids, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), local anesthetics, and other analgesic agents directly to the site of pain, providing prolonged relief with reduced risk of gastrointestinal complications and systemic side effects.[3]

In hormone delivery, transdermal patches are used for various therapeutic purposes, including hormone replacement therapy (HRT), contraception, and treatment of hormonal imbalances. Hormone patches deliver hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, and contraceptives through the skin, bypassing the digestive system and delivering consistent hormone levels into the bloodstream. This route of administration offers advantages such as improved patient convenience, steady hormone levels, and reduced fluctuations compared to oral or injectable hormone therapies.[4] Overall, transdermal patch technology represents a versatile and effective approach for delivering medications and hormones, with broad applications in pain management, hormone therapy, and beyond.

2. Development

a. *Evolution of transdermal patches*

The evolution of transdermal patches spans several decades, marked by significant advancements in design, formulation, and delivery mechanisms. Early transdermal patches were simple in design, consisting of drug-containing reservoirs or matrices embedded within adhesive backings.[5] These patches primarily aimed to deliver small lipophilic molecules with sufficient skin permeability. However, as research progressed, transdermal patch technology underwent substantial refinement. Innovations such as the inclusion of permeation enhancers, which temporarily disrupt the skin barrier to enhance drug absorption, allowed for the delivery of a wider range of drugs, including larger molecules and hydrophilic compounds. Additionally, the development of controlled-release formulations enabled sustained drug delivery over extended periods, improving therapeutic efficacy and patient compliance.[6] The introduction of novel delivery methods further expanded the capabilities of transdermal patches. Techniques such as iontophoresis, which employs an electric current to drive charged molecules through the skin, and microneedle arrays, which create microscopic channels in the skin to enhance drug permeation, revolutionized transdermal drug delivery. These advancements enabled precise control over drug release kinetics and facilitated targeted delivery to specific skin layers or underlying tissues.[7]

b. *Milestones in pain and hormone delivery*

In the realm of pain management, transdermal patches have achieved several milestones in delivering effective analgesia while minimizing systemic side effects. The introduction of opioid patches, such as fentanyl and buprenorphine patches, provided a breakthrough in the management of chronic pain by delivering potent analgesics directly through the skin. These patches offer continuous pain relief over extended periods, reducing the need for frequent dosing and minimizing the risk of opioid-related adverse effects.[8]

Similarly, in hormone delivery, transdermal patches have transformed the landscape of hormone therapy. Milestones include the development of estrogen and progesterone patches for hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in menopausal women, offering a convenient and effective alternative to oral hormone formulations. Additionally, contraceptive patches containing combinations of estrogen and progestin hormones have provided women with a discreet and user-friendly contraceptive option, with comparable efficacy to oral contraceptives.[9]

Overall, these milestones underscore the remarkable progress in transdermal patch technology, which has revolutionized pain management and hormone delivery by offering targeted, controlled, and patient-friendly drug delivery solutions. Continued research and innovation in this field hold promise for further advancements in therapeutic efficacy, safety, and patient[10] (Fig. 2)

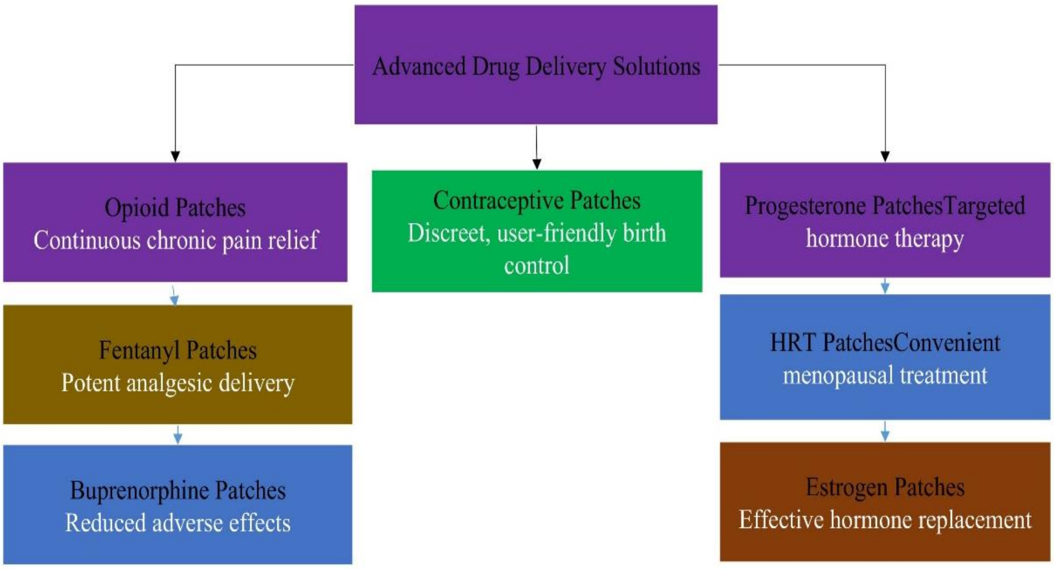

Fig. 2: Drug delivery system of transdermal patches.

3. Design Factors

a. *Key considerations*

i. Drug properties: The properties of the drug to be delivered play a crucial role in the design of transdermal patches. Factors such as molecular weight, lipophilicity, and potency determine the drug's permeation through the skin barrier. Drugs with favourable characteristics for transdermal delivery, such as small molecular size and high lipid solubility, are more likely to achieve adequate skin penetration and systemic absorption.[11]

ii. Materials: The selection of materials for the patch components is critical to ensure stability, compatibility, and drug release kinetics. The drug reservoir or matrix must be formulated using materials that maintain drug stability and provide controlled release characteristics. Additionally, the adhesive layer and backing materials should be biocompatible, non-irritating, and capable of adhering to the skin for extended durations without causing discomfort or skin damage.[12]

iii. Adhesives: Adhesive properties are essential for ensuring proper patch adherence to the skin surface. The adhesive must provide sufficient tackiness to adhere firmly to the skin while allowing for easy removal without causing skin trauma. Factors such as adhesion strength, durability, and skin compatibility influence the choice of adhesive formulation. Silicone-based adhesives are commonly used in transdermal patches due to their biocompatibility, hypoallergenic properties, and ability to adhere to various skin types.[13]

b. *Importance of optimized design for efficacy*

Optimizing the design of transdermal patches is crucial for achieving therapeutic efficacy and ensuring patient safety and comfort. A well-designed transdermal patch should:

i. **Facilitate controlled drug release:** The patch design should ensure controlled release of the drug at a predetermined rate to maintain therapeutic plasma concentrations over the desired duration. This requires careful selection of formulation components and drug release mechanisms to achieve the desired pharmacokinetic profile.[14]

ii. **Enhance skin permeation:** The patch design should facilitate efficient drug permeation through the skin barrier, maximizing drug absorption into the systemic circulation. This may involve the use of permeation enhancers, physical enhancement techniques (e.g., iontophoresis, microneedles), or formulation strategies to overcome skin barriers and enhance drug diffusion.[15]

iii. **Ensure patient compliance:** Optimized patch design factors such as size, flexibility, and adhesion strength contribute to patient comfort and convenience, encouraging adherence to the prescribed dosing regimen. Patient-friendly features such as discreetness, ease of application, and minimal skin irritation promote acceptance and compliance with transdermal therapy.[16]

In summary, the design of transdermal patches must carefully consider drug properties, materials selection, and adhesive formulation to achieve optimal therapeutic outcomes. A well-designed patch not only ensures efficient drug delivery but also enhances patient comfort, compliance, and overall treatment efficacy.

4. Delivery Mechanisms

a. *Passive diffusion, iontophoresis, electroporation*

i. **Passive diffusion:** Passive diffusion is the most common mechanism utilized in transdermal drug delivery. It involves the movement of drugs across the skin's layers driven by a concentration gradient, from an area of higher concentration (the patch) to an area of lower concentration (the bloodstream). This process relies on the drug's physicochemical properties, such as molecular weight, lipophilicity, and solubility, as well as the integrity of the skin barrier.[17]

ii. **Iontophoresis:** Iontophoresis is an active transdermal drug delivery technique that uses an electric current to enhance the penetration of charged molecules through the skin. Positively charged drugs are driven into the skin's deeper layers (anodal iontophoresis) or pulled towards the skin surface (cathodal iontophoresis) depending on the polarity of the electric current applied. Iontophoresis can significantly increase drug permeation, bypassing the skin's natural barrier and improving drug bioavailability.

iii. **Electroporation:** Electroporation involves the application of short, high-voltage electrical pulses to transiently increase the permeability of cell membranes, including those of skin cells. This creates temporary aqueous pathways or "pores" in the lipid bilayers, allowing for enhanced penetration of drugs into the skin. Electroporation can be used alone or in combination with other delivery methods to facilitate the delivery of a wide range of drugs, including macromolecules and nanoparticles.[18]

b. *Advances like microneedles and nanoparticles*

i. **Microneedles:** Microneedles are minimally invasive devices designed to puncture the skin's outermost layer, creating micropores that facilitate the delivery of drugs into the underlying tissues. These micropores bypass the stratum corneum, the main barrier to transdermal drug delivery, allowing for enhanced permeation of drugs that would otherwise have difficulty crossing intact skin. Microneedles can be solid, coated, hollow, or dissolvable, offering versatility in drug delivery applications.[19]

ii. **Nanoparticles:** Nanoparticles are submicron-sized particles engineered to encapsulate drugs and facilitate their delivery across biological barriers, including the skin. Nanoparticles can be formulated from various materials such as lipids, polymers, and metals, offering controlled release properties and targeted drug delivery. In transdermal drug delivery, nanoparticles can penetrate the skin's layers through passive diffusion or active transport mechanisms, releasing drugs at specific sites for prolonged therapeutic effects.[20]

These advanced delivery mechanisms represent significant innovations in transdermal drug delivery, offering improved efficiency, specificity, and patient comfort compared to traditional methods. Continued research in this field holds promise for further advancements in drug delivery technology, expanding the range of therapeutic applications and improving patient outcomes.

5. **Pain Management**: (Tab. 1)

Table 1: Different types of transdermal patch commonly used in pain management.

Pain Management/Hormone Delivery Transdermal Patch	Drug(s)	Route of Administration	Diagnosis	Comparison with Marketed Chemical Transdermal Patch	Comparison with Herbal Transdermal Patch	Clinical Trial Status	Advancements in Transdermal Patch Technology	Transdermal Patch Category	Side Effects	Formulation Details
Fentapain	Fentanyl	Transdermal	Chronic cancer-related pain	Offers sustained release and potent analgesia similar to existing fentanyl patches, potentially with improved adherence or reduced skin irritation.	Herbal patches may provide alternative pain relief options but may lack the potency of opioid-based medications.	Phase II Clinical Trial	Integration of microfluidic technology for precise drug delivery	Opioid Analgesic	Nausea, vomiting, dizziness, constipation	Transdermal gel with lipid-based matrix
CelebrexTrans	Celecoxib	Transdermal	Rheumatoid arthritis	Provides localized anti-inflammatory effects with potentially reduced systemic side effects compared to oral NSAIDs.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like turmeric or ginger may offer similar anti-inflammatory effects without the risk of systemic side effects.	Phase III Clinical Trial	Use of nanoparticles for enhanced drug permeation	NSAID	GI irritation, increased risk of cardiovascular events	Transdermal patch with hydrogel reservoir
Lidoderm	Lidocaine	Transdermal	Neuropathic pain	Utilizes traditional lidocaine for numbing and pain relief, offering a local alternative to systemic analgesics with potential for fewer side effects.	Herbal patches may offer alternative pain relief options, but may lack the potency of local anesthetics like lidocaine.	Preclinical Trials	Incorporation of iontophoresis for deeper drug penetration	Local Anesthetic	Skin irritation, allergic reactions	Transdermal patch with adhesive backing
Nanofen	Ketoprofen	Transdermal	Musculoskeletal pain	Incorporates nanoencapsulation for improved drug permeation and targeted delivery to inflamed tissues, potentially offering faster and more effective pain relief.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like arnica or eucalyptus may provide mild pain relief but may lack the targeted action of NSAIDs like ketoprofen.	Phase I Clinical Trial	Development of microneedle patches for painless application	NSAID	GI irritation, renal impairment, increased bleeding risk	Transdermal patch with biodegradable polymer matrix

Patch 10	Patch 9	Patch 8	CurcuPatch	FlexiRelief	Neuropatch
Ibuprofen	Pregabalin	Acetaminophen	Curcumin	Tramadol	Gabapentin
Transdermal	Transdermal	Transdermal	Transdermal	Transdermal	Transdermal
Inflammatory conditions (e.g., arthritis)	Neuropathic pain	Chronic pain conditions	Inflammatory conditions (e.g., arthritis)	Chronic back pain	Neuropathic pain
Provides localized anti-inflammatory effects with potentially reduced gastrointestinal side effects compared to oral NSAIDs.	Utilizes transdermal delivery for extended-release formulation, offering prolonged pain relief with fewer dosing intervals compared to oral pregabalin.	Delivers localized pain relief with potentially reduced systemic exposure and liver toxicity compared to oral acetaminophen.	Provides targeted delivery of curcumin for anti-inflammatory effects, potentially offering a natural alternative to NSAIDs with fewer side effects.	Incorporates flexible patch design for improved comfort and mobility, offering a convenient alternative to oral tramadol with potentially fewer gastrointestinal side effects.	Utilizes advanced formulation techniques to enhance skin penetration and improve bioavailability, potentially offering more consistent pain relief.
Herbal patches containing ingredients like ginger or turmeric may offer similar anti-inflammatory effects without the risk of gastrointestinal side effects.	Herbal patches may provide alternative pain relief options, but may not provide the same level of controlled release as transdermal formulations.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like willow bark may offer mild pain relief but may lack the potency of acetaminophen.	Offers natural anti-inflammatory effects without the risk of gastrointestinal side effects associated with NSAIDs.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like devil's claw or white willow bark may offer mild pain relief but may lack potency.	Herbal patches may provide alternative pain relief options, but may lack the specificity and potency of medications like gabapentin.
Phase I Clinical Trial	Phase III Clinical Trial	Phase II Clinical Trial	Phase I Clinical Trial	Phase III Clinical Trial	Phase II Clinical Trial
Development of biodegradable polymers for eco-friendly patches	Incorporation of skin penetration enhancers for improved drug delivery	Utilization of microporation techniques for enhanced skin permeation	Incorporation of lipid-based carriers for improved stability	Use of hydrogel matrices for sustained drug release	Integration of microarray technology for personalized dosing
NSAID	Anticonvulsant	Analgesic	Herbal Supplement	Opioid Analgesic	Anticonvulsant
GI irritation, increased risk of cardiovascular events	Dizziness, drowsiness, peripheral edema	Liver toxicity, allergic reactions	None reported	Nausea, vomiting, dizziness, constipation	Dizziness, drowsiness, peripheral edema
Transdermal patch with hydrogel reservoir	Transdermal patch with polymeric matrix	Transdermal patch with adhesive backing	Transdermal patch with lipid nanoparticle suspension	Transdermal patch with reservoir system	Transdermal patch with permeation enhancers

Patch 11	Morphine	Transdermal	Chronic cancer-related pain	Offers potent analgesia with sustained release, potentially reducing the need for frequent dosing compared to oral morphine.	Herbal patches may provide alternative pain relief options but may lack the potency of opioid-based medications.	Preclinical Trials	Incorporation of microneedles for controlled drug release	Opioid Analgesic	Respiratory depression, constipation	Transdermal patch with lipid-based matrix
Patch 12	Diclofenac	Transdermal	Rheumatoid arthritis	Utilizes transdermal delivery for targeted drug delivery to inflamed joints, potentially offering faster and more effective pain relief compared to oral diclofenac.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like arnica or eucalyptus may provide mild pain relief but may lack the targeted action of NSAIDs like diclofenac.	Phase II Clinical Trial	Integration of nanostructured lipid carriers for enhanced drug delivery	NSAID	GI irritation, increased risk of cardiovascular events	Transdermal patch with hydrogel reservoir
Patch 13	Oxycodone	Transdermal	Chronic back pain	Provides potent analgesia with sustained release, potentially reducing the risk of abuse and dependency compared to oral oxycodone.	Herbal patches may provide alternative pain relief options but may lack the potency of opioid-based medications.	Phase III Clinical Trial	Development of reservoir systems for prolonged drug release	Opioid Analgesic	Respiratory depression, constipation	Transdermal patch with adhesive backing
Patch 14	Lidocaine	Transdermal	Postherpetic neuralgia	Offers local numbing and analgesia with reduced systemic side effects compared to oral lidocaine.	Herbal patches may offer alternative pain relief options, but may lack the potency of local anesthetics like lidocaine.	Phase II Clinical Trial	Utilization of solid lipid nanoparticles for improved drug stability	Local Anesthetic	Skin irritation, allergic reactions	Transdermal patch with lipid-based matrix
Patch 15	Methyl salicylate	Transdermal	Acute muscle pain	Provides localized analgesia and anti-inflammatory effects, potentially offering faster relief compared to oral salicylates.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like wintergreen may offer similar analgesic effects but may lack the controlled release of transdermal formulations.	Phase I Clinical Trial	Incorporation of microencapsulation technology for controlled release	Analgesic	Skin irritation, allergic reactions	Transdermal patch with adhesive backing
Patch 16	Capsaicin	Transdermal	Peripheral neuropathy	Utilizes transdermal delivery for prolonged desensitization of pain receptors, potentially offering long-lasting relief compared to oral capsaicin.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like cayenne pepper may offer similar analgesic effects but may lack the controlled release of transdermal formulations.	Phase III Clinical Trial	Development of hydrogel-based patches for improved skin adhesion	Analgesic	Skin irritation, burning sensation	Transdermal patch with hydrogel reservoir

Patch 17	Bupivacaine	Transdermal	Postoperative pain	Provides localized analgesia and numbing, potentially reducing the need for systemic opioids and their associated side effects.	Herbal patches may offer alternative pain relief options, but may lack the potency of local anesthetics like bupivacaine.	Preclinical Trials	Integration of microelectromechanical systems for controlled release	Local Anesthetic	Skin irritation, allergic reactions	Transdermal patch with adhesive backing
Patch 18	Tapentadol	Transdermal	Chronic neuropathic pain	Offers dual mechanisms of action for analgesia and may provide extended pain relief compared to oral tapentadol.	Herbal patches may provide alternative pain relief options but may not provide the same level of controlled release as transdermal formulations.	Phase II Clinical Trial	Utilization of biocompatible materials for reduced skin irritation	Opioid Analgesic	Nausea, vomiting, dizziness, constipation	Transdermal patch with permeation enhancers
Patch 19	Naproxen	Transdermal	Osteoarthritis	Provides localized anti-inflammatory effects with potentially reduced gastrointestinal side effects compared to oral NSAIDs.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like turmeric or ginger may offer similar anti-inflammatory effects without the risk of systemic side effects.	Phase III Clinical Trial	Integration of nanogels for improved drug loading and release	NSAID	GI irritation, increased risk of cardiovascular events	Transdermal patch with hydrogel matrix
Patch 20	Lidocaine	Transdermal	Phantom limb pain	Offers local analgesia and numbing with reduced systemic side effects compared to oral lidocaine.	Herbal patches may offer alternative pain relief options, but may lack the potency of local anesthetics like lidocaine.	Phase I Clinical Trial	Incorporation of transdermal microinfusion for precise dosing	Local Anesthetic	Skin irritation, allergic reactions	Transdermal patch with permeation enhancers
Patch 21	Oxycodone	Transdermal	Cancer-related breakthrough pain	Provides potent analgesia with sustained release, potentially reducing the need for frequent dosing compared to oral oxycodone.	Herbal patches may provide alternative pain relief options but may lack the potency of opioid-based medications.	Preclinical Trials	Development of flexible electronics for real-time monitoring	Opioid Analgesic	Respiratory depression, constipation	Transdermal patch with reservoir system
Patch 22	Diclofenac	Transdermal	Ankylosing spondylitis	Utilizes transdermal delivery for targeted drug delivery to inflamed joints, potentially offering faster and more effective pain relief compared to oral diclofenac.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like arnica or eucalyptus may provide mild pain relief but may lack the targeted action of NSAIDs like diclofenac.	Phase III Clinical Trial	Integration of microscale sensors for personalized therapy	NSAID	GI irritation, increased risk of cardiovascular events	Transdermal patch with hydrogel matrix

Patch 23	Tramadol	Transdermal	Fibromyalgia	Incorporates flexible patch design for improved comfort and mobility, offering a convenient alternative to oral tramadol with potentially fewer gastrointestinal side effects.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like devil's claw or white willow bark may offer mild pain relief but may lack potency.	Phase I Clinical Trial	Utilization of microfluidic channels for controlled drug release	Opioid Analgesic	Nausea, vomiting, dizziness, constipation	Transdermal patch with adhesive backing
Patch 24	Ibuprofen	Transdermal	Tendinitis	Provides localized anti-inflammatory effects with potentially reduced gastrointestinal side effects compared to oral NSAIDs.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like ginger or turmeric may offer similar anti-inflammatory effects without the risk of gastrointestinal side effects.	Phase II Clinical Trial	Incorporation of drug-eluting microneedles for sustained release	NSAID	GI irritation, increased risk of cardiovascular events	Transdermal patch with polymeric matrix
Patch 25	Morphine	Transdermal	Severe acute pain	Offers potent analgesia with sustained release, potentially reducing the need for frequent dosing compared to oral morphine.	Herbal patches may provide alternative pain relief options but may lack the potency of opioid-based medications.	Preclinical Trials	Development of flexible and stretchable patches for improved wearability	Opioid Analgesic	Respiratory depression, constipation	Transdermal patch with lipid-based matrix
Patch 26	Diclofenac	Transdermal	Gout	Utilizes transdermal delivery for targeted drug delivery to inflamed joints, potentially offering faster and more effective pain relief compared to oral diclofenac.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like arnica or eucalyptus may provide mild pain relief but may lack the targeted action of NSAIDs like diclofenac.	Phase II Clinical Trial	Incorporation of stimuli-responsive polymers for on-demand drug release	NSAID	GI irritation, increased risk of cardiovascular events	Transdermal patch with hydrogel matrix
Patch 27	Oxycodone	Transdermal	Post-surgical pain	Provides potent analgesia with sustained release, potentially reducing the risk of abuse and dependency compared to oral oxycodone.	Herbal patches may provide alternative pain relief options but may lack the potency of opioid-based medications.	Phase III Clinical Trial	Utilization of biodegradable matrices for environmentally friendly patches	Opioid Analgesic	Respiratory depression, constipation	Transdermal patch with adhesive backing
Patch 28	Lidocaine	Transdermal	Postherpetic neuralgia	Offers local numbing and analgesia with reduced systemic side effects compared to oral lidocaine.	Herbal patches may offer alternative pain relief options, but may lack the potency of local anesthetics like lidocaine.	Phase I Clinical Trial	Development of microneedle arrays for precise drug delivery	Local Anesthetic	Skin irritation, allergic reactions	Transdermal patch with hydrogel matrix

Patch 29	Methyl salicylate	Transdermal	Acute muscle pain	Provides localized analgesia and anti-inflammatory effects, potentially offering faster relief compared to oral salicylates.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like wintergreen may offer similar analgesic effects but may lack the controlled release of transdermal formulations.	Phase II Clinical Trial	Incorporation of temperature-responsive hydrogels for controlled release	Analgesic	Skin irritation, allergic reactions	Transdermal patch with adhesive backing
Patch 30	Capsaicin	Transdermal	Peripheral neuropathy	Utilizes transdermal delivery for prolonged desensitization of pain receptors, potentially offering long-lasting relief compared to oral capsaicin.	Herbal patches containing ingredients like cayenne pepper may offer similar analgesic effects but may lack the controlled release of transdermal formulations.	Preclinical Trials	Development of wearable electronics for continuous monitoring	Analgesic	Skin irritation, burning sensation	Transdermal patch with hydrogel reservoir

6. Hormone Delivery

a. *Applications:*

i. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):

- HRT aims to replenish hormones that decline with age or medical conditions, such as menopause in women or andropause in men. Transdermal patches provide a consistent delivery of hormones, mimicking the natural hormone fluctuations of the body.
- Benefits of HRT include relief from symptoms like hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, mood swings, and fatigue. Additionally, HRT may reduce the risk of osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease in postmenopausal women.[21]

ii. Contraception

- Transdermal contraceptive patches deliver a combination of estrogen and progestin through the skin to prevent pregnancy. These patches are applied once a week for three weeks, followed by one week without a patch to allow menstruation.
- Advantages of contraceptive patches include their effectiveness, convenience, and non-daily dosing regimen, making them a preferred choice for some women.[22]

iii. Menopausal Symptoms

- Menopause is characterized by a decline in estrogen and progesterone levels, leading to various symptoms. Transdermal patches provide a continuous and controlled release of hormones to alleviate symptoms like hot flashes, mood swings, sleep disturbances, and vaginal dryness.
- Estrogen therapy is often combined with progestin in women with an intact uterus to reduce the risk of endometrial hyperplasia.[23]

b. *Various Hormones*

i. Estrogen

- Estrogen plays a crucial role in regulating menstrual cycles, bone density, and cardiovascular health. Transdermal estrogen patches deliver estradiol, the most potent natural estrogen, directly into the bloodstream.
- Estrogen therapy is available in various formulations, including patches, creams, gels, and tablets, with transdermal patches offering consistent hormone levels and lower risks of side effects like thromboembolism.[24]

ii. Progesterone

- Progesterone is essential for the maintenance of pregnancy and the regulation of the menstrual cycle. Transdermal progesterone patches are used in combination with estrogen in HRT to protect the uterine lining and reduce the risk of endometrial cancer.
- Progesterone therapy may also be prescribed alone for women who have undergone hysterectomy or for those with estrogen intolerance.[25]

iii. Testosterone

- Testosterone is primarily known as the male sex hormone, but it's also present in women, albeit in lower levels. Transdermal testosterone patches are used in men with hypogonadism (low testosterone levels) to restore libido, muscle mass, bone density, and overall well-being.
- Testosterone therapy should be carefully monitored in both men and women to avoid potential side effects like acne, hair growth, mood changes, and cardiovascular risks.[26]

c. *Advantages of Transdermal Patches for Hormone Delivery*

i. **Stable Hormone Levels**

- Transdermal patches provide a steady and controlled release of hormones over an extended period, maintaining more stable hormone levels compared to oral medications, which can result in peaks and troughs.

ii. **Convenience and Compliance**

- Transdermal patches offer a convenient and discreet method of hormone delivery, requiring fewer daily administrations than oral medications. This improves patient compliance and reduces the likelihood of missed doses.[21]

iii. **Avoidance of First-Pass Metabolism**

- Unlike oral hormone medications, which undergo metabolism in the liver before reaching systemic circulation, transdermal patches bypass the liver, reducing first-pass metabolism and minimizing the risk of liver-related side effects.[28]

iv. **Individualized Therapy**

- Transdermal patches allow for precise dosing and customization of hormone therapy based on individual patient needs and preferences. This flexibility enables healthcare providers to tailor treatment regimens to optimize therapeutic outcomes while minimizing side effects.[29]

d. *Considerations*

i. **Skin Irritation**

- Some individuals may experience skin irritation or allergic reactions at the application site. Formulation adjustments or patch placement rotation can help alleviate these effects.

ii. **Hormone Absorption**

- Factors such as skin thickness, blood flow, and skin integrity can impact hormone absorption rates. Patch design and formulation optimization aim to enhance absorption and efficacy.[30]

iii. **Side Effects**

- Like any hormone therapy, transdermal hormone patches may have side effects, including breast tenderness, mood changes, breakthrough bleeding, and skin reactions. Close monitoring and adjustment of hormone dosage may be necessary to minimize these effects.

Transdermal patches for hormone delivery offer an effective and convenient option for managing hormone-related conditions such as menopause, contraception, and hormone deficiency. With their ability to provide consistent hormone levels, improve patient compliance, and minimize systemic side effects, transdermal patches play a vital role in optimizing hormone therapy outcomes.[31]

7. **Clinical Efficacy and Safety**

a. ***Summary of Trials***

- Clinical trials evaluating transdermal hormone delivery have demonstrated efficacy in managing various hormone-related conditions, including menopausal symptoms, hormone replacement therapy, and contraception.
- For menopausal symptoms, randomized controlled trials have shown that transdermal estrogen therapy effectively reduces hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, and improves overall quality of life compared to placebo or other hormone delivery methods.[13]
- Hormone replacement therapy using transdermal patches has been shown to effectively alleviate symptoms associated with hormone deficiency, such as fatigue, mood swings, decreased libido, and cognitive changes, with improvements observed in both subjective and objective measures.
- Contraceptive patches have demonstrated high contraceptive efficacy comparable to oral contraceptives, with clinical trials showing similar rates of pregnancy prevention and cycle control.
- Long-term studies have also assessed the safety and efficacy of transdermal hormone delivery, indicating sustained benefits with minimal adverse effects over extended treatment periods.[33]

b. ***Adherence, Tolerability, Adverse Effects***:

- **Adherence**
- Transdermal hormone patches offer advantages in terms of adherence due to their convenient once- or twice-weekly application, which may improve patient compliance compared to daily oral medications or injections.
- Clinical trials have reported high adherence rates with transdermal patches, attributed to their ease of use, consistent hormone delivery, and reduced dosing frequency.[34]

- **Tolerability**
- Transdermal hormone patches are generally well-tolerated, with most adverse effects limited to mild-to-moderate skin irritation or allergic reactions at the application site.
- Studies have shown that proper patch rotation and site selection can minimize skin irritation, and formulation adjustments, such as incorporating skin-friendly adhesives or using hypoallergenic materials, can further improve tolerability.[35]

- **Adverse Effects**
- Common adverse effects associated with transdermal hormone delivery include breast tenderness, breakthrough bleeding, mood changes, and headaches, particularly during the initial adjustment period.
- Serious adverse effects such as thromboembolism, cardiovascular events, and endometrial hyperplasia

are rare but may occur, necessitating careful patient selection, monitoring, and individualized risk assessment.

- Transdermal estrogen therapy has been associated with a lower risk of thromboembolic events compared to oral estrogen formulations, making it a preferred option for women with underlying cardiovascular risk factors.[36]

c. ***Safety Monitoring***

- Regular monitoring of hormone levels, blood pressure, lipid profiles, and other relevant parameters is essential for ensuring the safety and efficacy of transdermal hormone therapy.
- Healthcare providers should educate patients about potential adverse effects, signs of complications, and appropriate action in case of adverse reactions.
- Ongoing surveillance and post-marketing studies are critical for identifying rare or long-term adverse effects associated with transdermal hormone delivery and informing clinical practice guidelines.[37]

d. ***Patient Counselling and Education***:

- Patients should receive comprehensive counselling and education regarding the benefits, risks, and proper use of transdermal hormone patches.
- This includes instructions on patch application, rotation, and disposal, as well as guidance on recognizing and managing potential adverse effects.
- Patient education materials, support groups, and regular follow-up appointments can help promote adherence, address concerns, and optimize treatment outcomes.

Transdermal hormone delivery offers a safe and effective option for managing hormone-related conditions, with high adherence rates, favourable tolerability profiles, and minimal systemic side effects. However, close monitoring, patient education, and individualized risk assessment are essential for ensuring optimal therapeutic outcomes and patient safety.[38]

8. Future Directions

a. Personalized Medicine and Combination Therapy:

- **Tailored Dosing Regimens**: Advances in pharmacogenomics and personalized medicine may lead to the development of transdermal patches tailored to individual patient profiles. Genetic markers and biomarkers could be used to customize patch formulations, dosages, and release kinetics based on patients' genetic predispositions, metabolic rates, and disease characteristics.
- **Combination Patch Therapies**: Future transdermal patches may incorporate multiple drugs or therapeutic agents to provide synergistic effects or target multiple pathways simultaneously. For example, combination patches could combine analgesics with anti-inflammatory agents for enhanced pain relief or hormones with neuroprotective compounds for menopausal symptom management and cognitive health.[39]

b. ***Wearable Technologies and Smart Patches***

- **Integration with Wearable Devices**: Transdermal patches may be integrated with wearable technologies, such as smartwatches or health monitoring devices, to enable real-time monitoring of drug delivery, physiological parameters, and patient adherence. Wearable sensors could provide feedback on drug levels, skin permeability, and patient responses, allowing for personalized adjustments in treatment regimens.
- **Smart Patch Technologies**: Future transdermal patches may incorporate smart features, such as microneedle arrays with embedded sensors for continuous monitoring of biomarkers or drug concentrations in the interstitial fluid. These smart patches could respond dynamically to changes in physiological conditions, delivering drugs in a pulsatile or on-demand manner to optimize therapeutic outcomes while minimizing side effects.[40]

c. ***Advanced Drug Delivery Strategies***

- **Nanotechnology and Microfabrication:** Continued advancements in nanotechnology and microfabrication techniques may enable the development of transdermal patches with enhanced drug loading capacities, controlled release profiles, and targeted delivery to specific tissues or cell types. Nanostructured lipid carriers, polymeric nanoparticles, and microparticles could be incorporated into patch formulations to improve drug stability, permeation, and bioavailability.
- **Hydrogel and Biodegradable Matrices:** Novel patch materials, such as biocompatible hydrogels and biodegradable polymers, could offer advantages in terms of skin adhesion, flexibility, and environmental sustainability. These materials may be engineered to release drugs in response to external stimuli, such as temperature changes, pH variations, or enzymatic activity, for precise spatiotemporal control over drug delivery.[41]

d. ***Targeted Therapy and Disease Management***

- **Site-Specific Delivery**: Transdermal patches could be designed to target specific anatomical sites or pathological conditions, such as inflamed joints in arthritis or neuronal pathways in neuropathic pain. Targeted delivery systems may utilize ligands, antibodies, or peptides to facilitate site-specific drug accumulation and therapeutic effects while minimizing systemic exposure and off-target effects.
- **Disease Monitoring and Feedback Systems**: Future transdermal patches may integrate diagnostic functionalities to monitor disease progression, biomarker levels, and treatment responses. Feedback systems could provide real-time data on patient outcomes, enabling healthcare providers to adjust

treatment strategies and optimize therapeutic interventions in a timely manner.[42]

e. *Regulatory Considerations and Market Adoption*

- **Regulatory Pathways**: Regulatory agencies will need to adapt existing guidelines to accommodate the unique features and complexities of next-generation transdermal patch technologies, such as combination products, smart devices, and personalized therapies. Streamlined regulatory pathways and innovative reimbursement models may be necessary to facilitate the translation of research findings into clinical practice.
- **Market Adoption and Patient Access**: Successful implementation of future transdermal patch technologies will depend on factors such as affordability, accessibility, and patient acceptance. Stakeholders, including policymakers, healthcare providers, industry partners, and patient advocacy groups, will need to collaborate to address barriers to adoption and ensure equitable access to advanced therapies for diverse patient populations.[43]

By embracing personalized medicine, integrating wearable technologies, and leveraging advanced drug delivery strategies, the future of transdermal patch technology holds promise for revolutionizing healthcare delivery, enhancing patient outcomes, and advancing the field of precision medicine.[44]

9. Regulatory and Market

a. *FDA Approval and International Guidelines*

- **FDA Regulatory Pathways**: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversees the approval and regulation of transdermal patches as medical devices or combination products. Manufacturers must submit comprehensive data on safety, efficacy, manufacturing processes, and quality controls through the FDA's premarket approval (PMA) or 510(k) clearance pathways.
- **International Harmonization**: Regulatory agencies worldwide, including the European Medicines Agency (EMA), Health Canada, and the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency (PMDA) in Japan, have established guidelines and regulatory frameworks for the approval of transdermal patches. International harmonization efforts aim to align regulatory standards and facilitate global market access for manufacturers.[45]

b. *Market Trends and Growth Projections*

- **Increasing Demand for Non-Invasive Drug Delivery**: Transdermal patches offer several advantages over traditional oral medications, including improved patient compliance, reduced side effects, and enhanced therapeutic outcomes. As a result, there is a growing demand for transdermal patch technology across various therapeutic areas, including pain management, hormone replacement therapy, and neurological disorders.
- **Expanding Applications and Indications**: Market expansion is driven by the development of novel transdermal patch formulations targeting diverse disease conditions and patient populations. Advances in drug delivery technologies, such as microneedle patches and smart patches, are expanding the scope of transdermal patch applications beyond conventional drug classes and delivery mechanisms.[46]
- **Emerging Markets and Investment Opportunities**: Emerging economies, particularly in Asia-Pacific and Latin America, represent lucrative markets for transdermal patch manufacturers due to rising healthcare expenditures, increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, and growing demand for innovative drug delivery solutions. Investment in research and development, strategic partnerships, and market expansion efforts are key drivers of growth in the transdermal patch market.
- **Technological Innovation and Competitive Landscape**: Market leaders and innovators are investing in technological advancements, such as wearable sensors, biodegradable materials, and targeted drug delivery systems, to differentiate their products and gain a competitive edge. Collaborations between pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, and academic institutions are driving innovation and fostering a dynamic competitive landscape in the transdermal patch market.[47]

c. *Challenges and Opportunities*

- **Regulatory Compliance and Quality Assurance**: Manufacturers must navigate complex regulatory requirements and ensure compliance with quality standards throughout the product lifecycle, from development and manufacturing to post-market surveillance and vigilance. Investing in robust quality management systems and regulatory expertise is essential to navigate regulatory challenges and maintain market competitiveness.[48]
- **Market Access and Reimbursement**: Access to markets and reimbursement policies vary across regions and healthcare systems, posing challenges for market entry and commercialization. Manufacturers must demonstrate the clinical and economic value of transdermal patches to payers, healthcare providers, and patients to secure favorable reimbursement and market access.
- **Patient Education and Acceptance**: Patient education and awareness play a crucial role in driving adoption and adherence to transdermal patch therapy. Manufacturers, healthcare providers, and advocacy groups must collaborate to educate patients about the benefits, proper use, and potential side effects of transdermal patches to promote acceptance and adherence.[49]

d. Future Outlook

- **Continued Innovation and Market Expansion**: The transdermal patch market is poised for continued growth and innovation, driven by advancements in drug delivery technologies, expanding therapeutic applications, and increasing demand for non-invasive treatment options. Strategic investments in research and development, regulatory compliance, and market access will be key to capitalizing on growth opportunities and addressing evolving market dynamics.
- **Focus on Patient-Centric Solutions**: Patient-centricity will remain a central focus for transdermal patch manufacturers, with an emphasis on user-friendly designs, personalized therapies, and integrated digital health solutions to enhance patient outcomes and satisfaction. Manufacturers that prioritize patient needs and preferences will be well-positioned to succeed in the evolving healthcare landscape.

By navigating regulatory pathways, capitalizing on market trends, and addressing challenges and opportunities, stakeholders in the transdermal patch industry can drive innovation, improve patient outcomes, and contribute to the advancement of healthcare delivery worldwide.

CONCLUSION

The field of transdermal patch technology has witnessed significant advancements in recent years, offering novel solutions for drug delivery in various therapeutic areas, including pain management and hormone delivery. However, alongside these advancements come unique challenges that must be addressed to fully realize the potential of transdermal patches in clinical practice.

Recap of Advancements and Challenges

Transdermal patches have emerged as a promising drug delivery modality, providing numerous benefits such as improved patient compliance, reduced systemic side effects, and enhanced therapeutic efficacy. Innovations in patch design, formulation optimization, and integration with wearable technologies have expanded the scope of transdermal patch applications, offering personalized and patient-centric solutions for diverse medical conditions.

However, several challenges persist, including regulatory complexities, manufacturing scalability, and market access barriers. Regulatory agencies worldwide play a crucial role in ensuring the safety, efficacy, and quality of transdermal patches through rigorous review processes and compliance with international standards. Manufacturers must navigate these regulatory hurdles while also addressing technical challenges related to patch formulation, stability, and scalability to meet market demand and commercialization timelines.

Call for Continued Innovation and Collaboration

Despite these challenges, the future outlook for transdermal patch technology is promising, with opportunities for continued innovation, market expansion, and collaboration across stakeholders. The integration of personalized medicine approaches, such as pharmacogenomics and biomarker-guided therapy, holds immense potential for optimizing transdermal patch formulations and enhancing patient outcomes.

Furthermore, collaboration among industry partners, academic institutions, healthcare providers, and regulatory agencies is essential to drive innovation, address unmet medical needs, and ensure timely access to advanced transdermal patch therapies. By fostering a collaborative ecosystem that encourages knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and interdisciplinary research, stakeholders can accelerate the development and adoption of next-generation transdermal patches for the benefit of patients worldwide.

In conclusion, transdermal patch technology represents a transformative approach to drug delivery, offering safe, effective, and patient-friendly solutions for a wide range of medical conditions. With a concerted effort towards overcoming regulatory, technical, and market challenges, stakeholders can unlock the full potential of transdermal patches, paving the way for improved healthcare outcomes and enhanced quality of life for patients globally.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors assert that they do not possess any conflict of interest.

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