



ANTIMICROBIAL ACTIVITY OF NANOPARTICLES: AN ALTERNATE AGAINST DRUG-RESISTANT PATHOGENIC MICROBES

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ABSTRACT

Antimicrobial agents, considered as miracle drugs, can be obtained from natural sources such as plant or animal or can be produce synthetically. They are used against various pathogens however, the misuse of these drugs has resulted in the development of drug resistance in pathogenic microbes, which is one of the biggest challenges in healthcare field and is a substantial global threat. Another concern that arises from this, is the spreading of the resistant organism. The alternative of conventional antimicrobial drugs is being studied and research. In the present situation, nanoparticles are considered as new and effective therapeutic agent. The exceptional physiochemical characteristics of nanoparticles with the addition of growth inhibitory capabilities against microorganisms led the increase in nanoparticle studies and their effective antimicrobial applications. In the past, silver was used as therapeutic agent to treats chronic wounds and burns moreover, copper was used for water cleaning. It is much apparent that many of the metallic compounds have antimicrobial characteristic. Present days, the convergence of biology and nanotechnology has taken metal in the form of nanoparticles as an effective agent as many microorganisms. Nanoparticles have unique and well organized chemical and physical characteristics that can be altered according to the situation. In addition to that, potential antimicrobial efficiency because of their large surface area to volume ratio has given them an upper hand over chemical antimicrobial agents which is now having problem of drug resistance in microorganisms.

KEY WORDS: Nanoparticles, antimicrobial, resistant organisms.

INTRODUCTION

Antimicrobial substances inhibit the growth of large range of pathogenic microbes such as fungi, bacteria and viruses. Antimicrobial may be of animal or plants sources or may be synthetic or they may be chemically modified natural substances (Von *et al*, 2006). They are used for various purposes such as chemotherapy and prophylaxis. The mode of action of antimicrobial drugs includes inhibition of synthesis of protein, inhibition of synthesis of cell wall, inhibition or alteration of intermediate metabolism and inhibition of replication of DNA (Awad *et al*, 2010). It is necessary for antimicrobials to penetrate into the cell if their target is present inside the cell of microorganism. Hence, antimicrobial substances must have ability to penetrate into cell to the site of action. However, microbes have shown a remarkable ability of survive, adapt and evolve by developing resistance to antimicrobial substances. The misuse of antimicrobial substances has led to the advancement of new resistant processes in microbes which eventually spread in the microbes globally. This threaten the treatment of even simple infectious diseases. (Gudepalya *et al* 2016)

There are various factors which resulted in the development of antimicrobials resistance in pathogens, these factors include 1) lessen binding capacity of drug because of modification in the binding site, 2) modification or inactivation of the antimicrobial substances 3) decrease in the antimicrobial effect because of the alteration of metabolic pathways or 4) reduced permeability or enhanced active reflex which led to the decrease of intracellular accumulation of antimicrobial substances (Schmieder and Edwards, 2012). However, antimicrobial resistance may be inherent or developed; it can be acquired by developing the mutation in existing genes (Crumplin and Odell, 1987; Martinez and Baquero, 2000) or through the transfer of genes from one microbial specie to another (Palmer and Kos, 2010; Hegstad *et al* 2010).

Resolving antimicrobial resistance is a main priority in human, animal and plant health. Various strategies are analyzed to cope the antimicrobial resistance, these strategies include, minimization of extensive use of antimicrobial agents, collection and study of data, prevention of misuse of antimicrobials agents in animal farms, advancement in development of new drugs and

nanotechnology (Laxminarayan *et al.*, 2013; Akhtar *et al.*, 2015). Emerging nanotechnology have led to the development of organic and inorganic molecules with nano size with efficient industrial applications, textiles, food packaging, therapeutics and healthcare field. The development of new nano-sized antimicrobial substances can be used as an alternative technique to cope the antimicrobial resistance (Akhtar *et al.*, 2015). The advancement in nanotechnology, the major leading invention of present time, has modernized healthcare field.

The demand for nan-based products is increasing day by day. The technology has a reflective influence on refining human health. Increased durability, strength, performances, flexibility and unique physical and chemical characteristics of nano substances have been analyzed in the health industry. Nanomaterials can be used in various treatments such as targeted drug delivery, predictive visual monitoring of treatment and for the tumor detection (Wong *et al.*, 2013; Jena *et al.*, 2013).

Nanoparticles (NPs)

The use of nanoparticles as antimicrobial agents is highly promising and gaining a lot of interest as they might fill the lacking that antibiotics demonstrate which includes coping multidrug resistant microbial strains and biofilms (Zhang *et al.*, 2010; Pelgrift and Friedman, 2013). Antimicrobial nanomaterials such as metal, oxides of metal and organic NPs, exhibit a wide range of intrinsic chemical composition characteristics. Hence, it is not surprising that they have various mode of actions. Moreover, the target pathogens vary accordingly to their genetic makeup and eventually in their cell wall structure, important metabolic pathways and various components which if ruptured, could be fatal to the microbes. The physiological state of pathogens such as their growth rate, stationary or starved great add to the sensitivity of pathogens to nano material (Baek and An, 2011; Nath and Banerjee, 2013). In some scenarios, the ration between nano material and pathogens is critical to the latter's toxicity (Huh and Kwon, 2011). Furthermore, various environmental factors also contribute and effect the antimicrobial activity of nano materials to pathogens. The physical and chemical characteristics of the NPs such as shape, size, chemical alteration and coating, and mixture of many ratios of other NPs and solvent used, all contribute to effectiveness of NPs regarding their antimicrobial activity (Gatoo *et al.*, 2014). Hence, with this complexity, it is no surprising that nano materials antimicrobial mode of action and hazard level they inflict on pathogens are still unclear and one can find contradictory analysis and reports in literature (Ashkarrann 2012; Hajipour *et al.*, 2012).

Nonetheless, usually nano materials act along two important fatal pathways which are similar to each other and in various cases occurs concurrently, these pathways are; a) disruption of integrity and potential of membrane, b) release of reactive oxygen species (ROS), also called

as oxygen free radicals. (Huh and Kwon, 2011; Blecher *et a.*, 2011; Pelgrift and Friedman, 2013).

NPs damage the pathogens' membranes when they bind electrostatically to the pathogens' cell wall and membranes, followed by the modification of membrane, depolarization of membrane, loss of integrity which eventually result in an imbalanced transport, reduced respiration, disruption transduction of energy or cell lysis, and ultimately death of cell (Pelgrift and Friedman, 2013). ROS are considered to be the most effective determinants for both in vivo and in vitro cytotoxicity of NPs and are directly induced because of disruption of respiratory chain or directly by NPs themselves (Nathan and Cunningham-Bussel, 2013). A spurt of ROS causes, through great oxidative stress, damage to all macromolecules of cell, followed by peroxidation of lipids, protein alteration, enzyme inhibitions and damage of DNA and RNA. High dose of ROS causes death of cell and low concentration cause severe damage to DNA and sometime cause mutation (Pan *et al.*, 2010; Wang *et al.*, 2011). In some scenarios, where ROS produce by UV or visible light (Mat'eejka and Tokarsk'y, 2014), the toxicity of NPs is phtocatalytic. For example, titanium di oxide (TiO₂) NPs exhibited induce peroxidation of lipids under UV light which resulted in dysfunction of respiration and death of *E. coli* cell (Maness *et al.*, 1999).

Many other factors of NPs include inhibition of many important enzymes directly, production of nitrogen reactive species (Huh and Kwon, 2011; Blecher *et al.*, 2011; Hajipour *et al.*, 2012; Pelgrift and Friedman, 2013) and initiation of programmed cell death (Beyth *et al.*, 2010).

Inorganic NPs with Antimicrobial Activities

Metals and their oxides have been majorly studied, analyzed and experimented for their antimicrobial activities (Loomba and Scarabelli, 2013). Metal oxides NPs, well known for their lethal antimicrobial effect include titanium oxide (TiO₂) NPs, silver (Ag) NPs and zinc oxide (ZnO) NPs. Most NPs of metal oxides show antimicrobial characteristics via reactive oxygen species (ROS) production, while some are effective because of release of metal ion and their physical structure.

Silver Nanoparticle (Ag-NPs)

Among many metal NPs, silver nanoparticles have been commonly used for a potential antimicrobial agent against pathogens such as fungi, bacteria and viruses (Rai *et al.*, 2009). Effect of silver nanoparticles was known in ancient times. Silver and its compounds have been used for the medical services, disinfection and purification of water for a long time. In healthcare field, silver compounds are generally applied for the treatment of wounds, burns and many infectious diseases (Elliott, 2010; Aditya *et al.*, 2013; Avalos *et al.* 2014). The antimicrobial efficiency of silver, compare to other metals and their oxides NPs, was documented to be

dependent of size (Poulose *et al.*, 2014). Though the action mechanism of silver nanoparticles is still unclear, silver nanoparticles with less diameter have better antimicrobial activity compare to the large diameter silver nanoparticles (Pan'acek, *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, antimicrobial efficiency of Ag-NPs surpasses that of their bulk equivalent. However, high surface energy may conciliate their efficiency because of their vulnerability to combine into large particles, which then may compromise their antimicrobial activity.

Like many other non-antibiotic treatment, silver as antimicrobial agent, was abandoned when penicillin, followed by other antibiotics, were discovered. However, present day with the rise of antibiotics resistance microbial strains, it has regained its new yet controversial status (Chopra, 2007). Silver was stated to be an effective antimicrobial agent against many pathogenic microorganisms I both in vivo and I vitro (de Simone *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, it is reported that bacteria seem to be less prone to develop resistant against silver compare to other antibiotics (Leid *et al.*, 2012; Chernousova and Epple, 2013). Nevertheless, many controversial debate remain to be solved such as; the debate on the determination of minimal inhibitory concentration (MIC) of silver and its breaking point, the ease of advent of resistant strains (Silver, 2003; Ugur and Ceylan, 2003), whether silver NPs kill only biofilms or just planktonic cells (Sheng and Liu, 2011), or side effects of silver NPs on human health humans (Drake and Hazelwood, 2005; Tolaymat *et al.*, 2010; Bartłomiejczyk *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, the antimicrobial mechanisms of Ag-NPs are not completely understood (Majdalawieh *et al.*, 2014). It is reported that in Gram-negative Bacteria *E. coli*, Ag-NPs caused pits in the cell wall by enhancing the permeability of membrane and by deactivating the respiratory chain (Sondi and B. Salopek-Sondi, 2004; Beyth *et al.*, 2010). Other studies demonstrated that the silver ions, which has an affinity to nitrogen and sulfur, can deter and disturb structure of protein by binding with amino and thiol group (Choi *et al.*, 2008). In conclusion, it was determined that the Ag-NPs are photocatalytic (Ashok *et al.*, 2014) and can initiate ROS (Carlson *et al.*, 2008; Piao *et al.*, 2011; Ninganagouda *et al.*, 2014), an analysis that was controversial by others demonstrated that, in eukaryotic cells, this effect is dependent of the type of cell (Luther *et al.*, 2011; Greulich *et al.*, 2011). It is also reported that Ag-NPs demonstrated to have synergistic antimicrobial effect on both Gram-negative and Gram-positive bacteria when applied in combination with different antibiotics (Shahverdi *et al.*, 2007; Khurana *et al.*, 2014). Nevertheless, regardless the controversial debates, Ag-NPs are probably the most promising method against resistant pathogens.

Titanium Oxide Nanoparticles (TiO₂-NPs)

Similar to Ag-NPs, titanium dioxide nanoparticles (TiO₂-NPs) has been extensively studied and experimented for its antimicrobial effect (Allahverdiyev

et al., 2011). TiO₂ has been known for its capability to kill both Gram-negative and Gram-positive bacteria (Wei *et al.*, 1994). Currents studies has demonstrated the efficiency of TiO₂ against many parasite and viral species (Zan *et al.*, 2007; Brady-Est'ève *et al.*, 2008; Allahverdiyev *et al.*, 2013).

TiO₂-NPs as antimicrobial agents have been commercialized for quite some time (Maness *et al.*, 1999). Similar to silver, TiO₂-NPs are photocatalytic; their toxicity is induced by UV or visible light (Pelgrift and Friedman, 2013), influenced ROS spurt. The ROS disrupt the cell membrane, DNA and various other macromolecules and ultimately the function of microbial cell (Blecher *et al.*, 2011). TiO₂-NPs are efficient against many bacterial strains including *Bacillus* spores (Hamal *et al.*, 2010), which is most antibiotic resistant organism known. Combination of Ti or its oxide with other NPs, such as silver, demonstrated synergistic effect and increase their antimicrobial activity (Pratap *et al.*, 2007; Devi and Nagaraj, 2014; Ungureanu *et al.*, 2014).

Zinc Oxide Nanoparticle (ZnO-NPs)

Another broad spectrum antimicrobial NPs are ZnO-NPs (Palanikumar *et al.*, 2014). ZnO-NPs demonstrated to have a broad range of antimicrobial effect against many different kind of microbes, which is greatly dependent on the certain dose and size of particles (Palanikumar *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, ZnO-NPs inhibited the growth of methicillin-resistant *S. epidermidis* (MRSE), methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* (MRSA), and methicillin-sensitive *S. aureus* (MSSA) strains and proved to be efficient antimicrobial agents that were ineffective by the resistant process of MRSE and MRSA (Ansari *et al.*, 2012; Malka *et al.*, 2013).

ZnO-NPs are relatively cheap (Huh and Kwon, 2011) and effective (Palanikumar *et al.*, 2014) against broad range of pathogenic microbes (Huang *et al.*, 2008; Hakraborti *et al.*, 2014). These pathogenic microbes include; *Salmonella enteritidis*, *Listeria monocytogenes* (Jin *et al.*, 2009), *E. coli* (Jin *et al.*, 2009; Liu *et al.*, 2009), *Klebsiella pneumonia* (Reddy *et al.*, 2014), *Lactobacillus* and *Streptococcus mutans*, (Kasraei *et al.*, 2014) with low toxicity to human cells (Reddy *et al.*, 2007). The white color of ZnO-NPs blocks UV light and have capability to prevent formation of biofilms which make them appropriate for glass (Applerot *et al.*, 2012) and fabric (Dastjerdi and Montazer, 2010) industries as coating ingredient designed for medical and other devices. Moreover, FDA approved zinc based treatment and current Zn is used for food additive (Blecher *et al.*, 2011).

Antimicrobial activity of organic nanoparticles

Polymeric/organic NPs kill microbes either by releasing antimicrobial peptides, antibiotics, antimicrobial substances or direct contact with cationic surfaces such as alkyl pyridiniums, quaternary phosphonium and quaternary ammonium compounds. Many mechanism action have been analyzed for how these cationic groups

raptured the cell membrane of microbes, to allow the penetration of hydrophobic polymeric chain into the cell and disrupt the membrane. It has been analyzed that enhance level of positive charge have ability to confer antimicrobial characteristics regardless of hydrophobic chain length, possibly through an ion exchange process between the charged surface and cell membrane of pathogens. The antimicrobial ability of polycations is dependent on the capability of charges to attach and interact with the plasma membrane. The experiments propose that the engineering wide range of positively charged polymer surfaces can create a variety of contact killing materials (Lichter and Rubner, 2009).

Organic antimicrobial substances are considered less stable in nature especially in high temperature compare to inorganic substances. This may result in complications which arise when designing product supposed to be stable and can cope the harsh conditions of processing. Hence, inorganic NPs material are more often used against pathogenic microbes as compare to organic nano-size materials (Nurit *et al.*, 2015).

Quaternary Ammonium Compounds

Quaternary ammonium compounds (QAC) such as benzalkonium chloride, stearylalkonium chloride and cetyltrimonium chloride are considered to be well known disinfectants. The length of N-alkyl chain regulates the antimicrobial activity of QACs. QACs with alkyl chain length of 12-14 carbons have effective antimicrobial activity against gram positive bacteria, while QACs with 14-16 carbon are effective against gram negative bacteria (Xue *et al.*, 2015). The mode of action of QACs is based on the interaction of positively charge QACs and negatively charged bacterial membrane. QACs denature the structural protein and enzymes of microbes by integration of QAC hydrophobic tail into the hydrophobic membrane. Nano-sized substances integrated with N-alkylated polyethyleneimine (PEI) have antimicrobial activity against fungal strains with most antibiotic resistance efficiency, gram-negative and gram-positive bacteria, both airborne and water, by rupturing the cell membrane (Beyth *et al.*, 2015). Replacement of PEIs with different group also has antimicrobial activity of *C. albicans*. Au-NPs and TiO₂ have shown an excellent antimicrobial activity without external excitation (Wan and Yeow, 2012). It is analyzed that quaternary ammonium compounds integrated with Si-NPs have shown an 96.6% antimicrobial activity against *E. coli*, 98.5% against *S. aureus* and 99.6% *Deinococcus geothermalis* compared to Si-NPs alone (Song *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, NPs based on QAC-PEI completely repressed the growth of *E. coli* and *S. aureus* (Yudovin-Farber *et al.*, 2010).

Polysiloxanes

Another major class of organic NPs is polysiloxanes, of silicon oxide (SiO₂). Block and statistical siloxane copolymer with quaternary ammonium salt exhibited great antimicrobial activity against both *Staphylococcus*

aureus and *E. coli* (sauvet *et al.*). however, no difference was analyzed in both statistical copolymer and block type polymers (Sauvet *et al.*, 2003).

Triclosan

Triclosan is amongst the most widely used antimicrobial agent. A study experimented the effect of solution of water-based styrene-acrylate emulsion with triclosan against *Enterococcus faecalis*. According to agar diffusion test, it was shown that the triclosan release depends on the solvent, almost very slow or totally repressed with water and very fast with n-heptane (Chung *et al.*, 2003). Triclosan with water-PVA nanoparticles exhibits the effective antimicrobial activity against *Corynebacterium* compare to organic solution of triclosan (Zhang *et al.*, 2008).

Chitosan

Chitosan NPs show a wide range of antimicrobial activity against fungi, bacteria and viruses. The characteristics properties of chitosan such as, non-toxicity, bio-compatibility, antimicrobial activity, low immunogenicity, and its ability of increase absorption, enhances its usage in many fields (Beyth *et al.*, 2015; Cheung *et al.*, 2015). The antimicrobial activity of chitosan-NPs depends on many factors such as solvent and pH (Beyth *et al.*, 2015). The NPs shows efficient antifungal activity against *Fusarium solani* and *C. albicans*. However, some fungal strains such as *A. niger* exhibit resistance to the NPs. The zeta potential is assumed to have an influence on the negatively charged surface of microbes and add to the antifungal activity of chitosan (Yien *et al.*, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

The emergence of drug resistant microbes carried a great challenge in healthcare field. Microbes create antimicrobial resistance by many mechanisms. Medicines based on nanotechnology offer the chance of early detection, NP based bio-imaging and treatment of diseases caused by drug resistant microbes. The advances in the development or synthesis of NPs has also greatly developed the biomedicine field. Many NPs have been synthesized by different research studies and their antimicrobial effect has been experimented on various microbes. The synthesis of NPs using biological techniques decreases the environmental concerns related to their chemical synthesis. Many research experiments have created biological methods for the NPs synthesis which are environmental friendly. The mode of action of NPs differ with the NP type, their composition and size. NPs have wide range of application in various other fields beside health department such as cancer therapy, gene and drug delivery and bio-imaging.

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