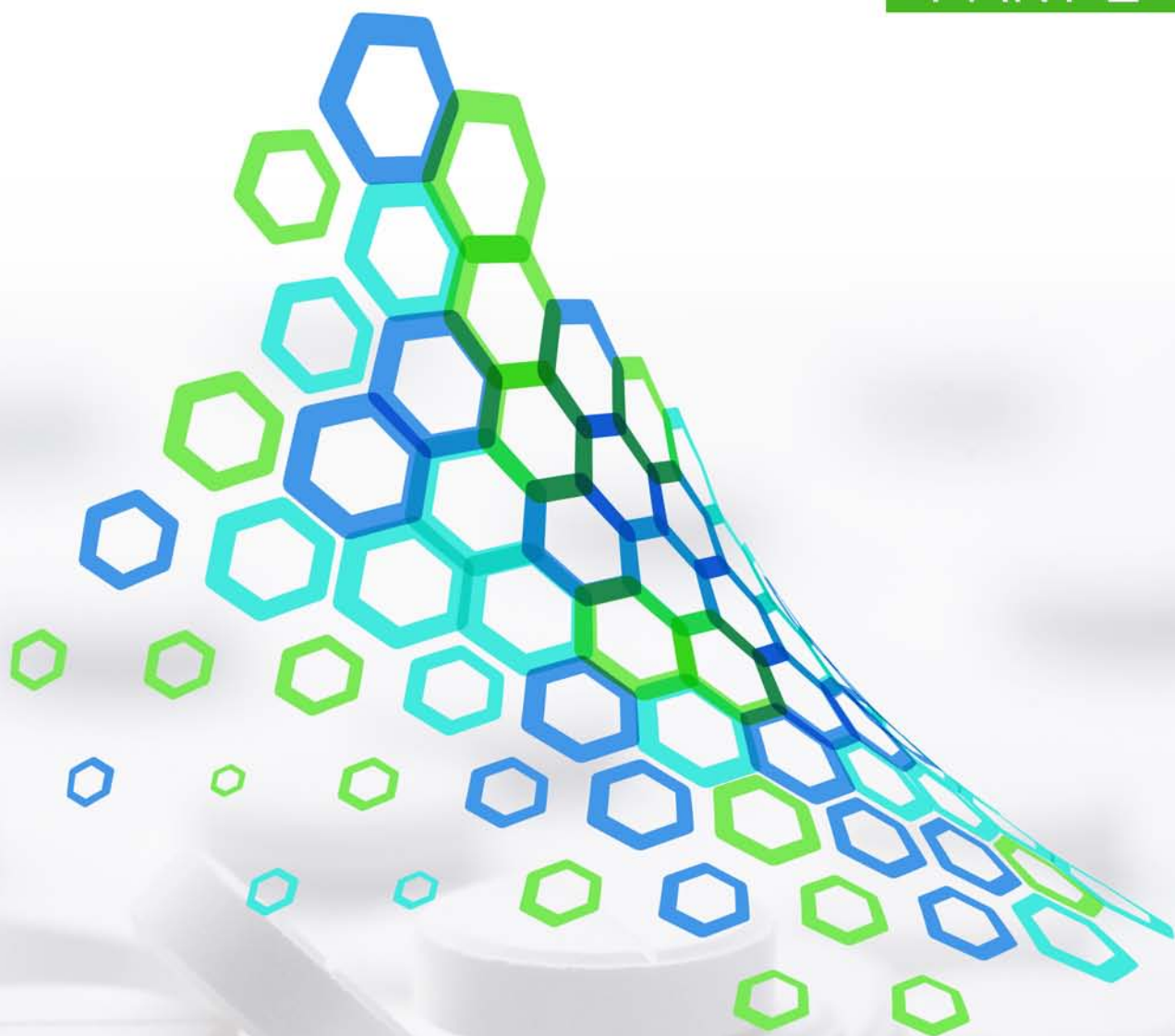


POLYMERS IN MODERN MEDICINE

PART 2



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Bentham Books

Polymers in Modern Medicine *(Part 2)*

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	i
PREFACE	ii
LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS	iii
CHAPTER 1 POLYMERS USED IN PERSONALIZED MEDICINES	1
<i>Sahebrao Boraste, Kartiki Bhandari, Deeliprao Derle and Prashant Pingale</i>	
INTRODUCTION	2
Introduction to Polymers used in Personalized Medicines	2
Types of polymers used in personalized medicines	5
<i>Thermo-Responsive Polymers</i>	6
<i>Photo-responsive Polymers</i>	7
<i>Self-repairing Polymers</i>	8
<i>Shape-memory Polymers (SMPs)</i>	9
Common Polymers used in Personalized Medicines	9
<i>Polyvinyl Alcohol (PVA)</i>	9
Case Study	11
<i>Polylactic Acid (PLA)</i>	12
<i>Polycaprolactone (PCL)</i>	13
Applications of Polymers used in Personalized Medicines	14
<i>3-D Printing</i>	15
<i>Medical Devices</i>	15
<i>Cell Therapy</i>	16
CONCLUDING REMARKS	17
REFERENCES	18
CHAPTER 2 POLYMERIC HYDROGELS IN MEDICINE	26
<i>Popat Mohite, Shubham Munde, Vrushali Gokhale, Shweta Marade, Shreya Chauhan, Vaibhav Wagh and Jayprakash Suryawanshi</i>	
INTRODUCTION	27
POLYMERIC HYDROGEL PROPERTIES	30
Chemical Structure and Composition	30
SOURCE	31
Natural Polymers	31
HYBRID HYDROGEL	33
PREPARATION	33
Co-polymer Hydrogel	33
Homopolymer Hydrogels	33
CROSSLINKING	33
Physical Crosslinking	33
Chemical Crosslinking	34
PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	34
Responsive Behaviour: Swelling	34
SYNTHESIS AND FABRICATION TECHNIQUE	36
Physically Cross-Linked Hydrogels	37
Chemically Cross-Linked Hydrogels	37
By Hydrogen Bonds	38
Free Radical Polymerization	38
Ionic-Mediated Gelation	39
Ionic Interaction	39

Polymer Solution Heating/Cooling	39
Irradiation Polymerization	40
Heating-cooling	40
Photocrosslinking	40
Enzymatic-induced Crosslinking	40
The Solution Polymerization/Crosslinking	41
Bioprinting in 3D	41
Solution Polymerization in Water	41
Layer-by-Layer [LbL] Fabrication	41
In Situ Injection Molding	42
Iontropic Gelation and Polyelectrolyte Complexation	42
BIOCOMPATIBILITY AND BIOFUNCTIONALITY	42
Interaction with Biological Systems	43
Tuning Biocompatibility for Specific Applications	45
Incorporation of Bioactive Agents	46
APPLICATIONS IN MEDICINE	47
Hydrogel Applications in Medication Delivery Systems	47
Case Study	48
Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine	48
Case Study	51
Wound Healing and Bandages	51
Case Study	53
Surgical Sealants and Adhesives	53
Case Study	55
CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS	55
CASE STUDIES AND SUCCESS STORIES	59
Case Study 1	59
Case Study 2	60
Case Study 3	60
Case Study 4	61
Success Stories	61
CONCLUDING REMARKS	64
ABBREVIATIONS	65
REFERENCES	66
CHAPTER 3 BIOPOLYMERS IN MEDICINE	74
<i>Sachin Namdeo Kothawade, Shankar M. Dhobale, Kunal G. Raut, Sandesh S. Bole, Prashant B. Patil and Vijaykumar S. Wakale</i>	
INTRODUCTION	75
CLASSIFICATIONS OF POLYSACCHARIDES	75
BIOPOLYMERS	76
Sodium Alginate Biopolymer	78
<i>Calcium Alginate Biopolymer</i>	79
<i>Extraction of Alginate</i>	79
<i>Properties</i>	80
<i>Applications</i>	80
Chitosan	81
<i>Chemical Properties of Chitosan</i>	81
<i>Biological Properties of Chitosan</i>	82
<i>Commercial Brand Name of Chitosan</i>	82
<i>Applications</i>	83

Collagen and Gelatin	83
<i>Practical Attributes of Gelatin and Collagen</i>	84
<i>Applications</i>	84
<i>Biological Properties</i>	85
<i>Physiological Properties</i>	85
Hydrocolloids	86
<i>Applications</i>	87
Catgut	87
Branan Ferulate	88
Superabsorbent Fibers	88
Resorbable Fibers	89
CONCLUDING REMARKS	90
REFERENCES	90
CHAPTER 4 POLYMER-BASED NANOMEDICINE FOR CANCER THERAPY	96
<i>Darshan Telange, Manjusha Bhange and Anil Peth</i>	
INTRODUCTION	96
ADVANTAGES OF NANOPARTICLE USAGE IN CHEMOTHERAPY	97
Targeted Drug Delivery	97
Improved Pharmacokinetics	98
Enhanced Cellular Uptake	98
Multifunctionality	98
Overcoming Biological Barriers	98
Reduced Systemic Toxicity	98
Combination Therapy	98
Personalized Medicine	99
CHARACTERIZATION OF DRUG DELIVERY SYSTEM WITH CANCER THERAPY	99
Physical Characterization	99
Biological Characterization	99
POLYMER-LIGAND NANOCARRIERS FOR TARGETED CANCER THERAPY	100
COMBINED DRUG DELIVERY AND IMAGING	102
CLINICAL STATUS OF POLYMERIC NANOMEDICINE	103
COMBINED PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY AND IMAGING	105
APPLICATIONS OF POLYMERIC NANOPARTICLES IN CANCER THERAPY	106
CONCLUDING REMARKS	108
REFERENCES	108
CHAPTER 5 POLYMERS IN DIAGNOSTICS	111
<i>Ashish Y. Pawar, Shubhangi N. Albhar, Sachin Namdeo Kothawade and Deepak D. Sonawane</i>	
INTRODUCTION	112
POLYMER-BASED SENSORS	112
Natural Polymer-Based Sensing Gadgets	114
Synthetic Polymer-Based Sensing Gadgets	115
<i>Polymers with Molecular Imprinting (MIPs)</i>	115
<i>Biocompatible Polymers</i>	117
<i>Acrylate Polymer</i>	118
<i>EVOH Polymers</i>	120
<i>Conducting Polymers</i>	121
<i>Polymer Nanocomposites</i>	121
<i>Polymer Inclusion Membranes</i>	121
LAB-ON-A-CHIP	122

What Exactly is a Lab-on-a-chip?	122
Advantages of LoC	123
Applications of LoC	123
<i>Lab-on-a-chip and Molecular Biology</i>	123
<i>Lab-on-a-chip and Proteomics</i>	124
<i>Lab-on-a-chip and Cell Biology</i>	124
<i>Lab-on-a-chip Technology and Chemistry</i>	124
POLYMER-MEDIATED IMAGING AGENTS	128
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	129
Nuclear Tomographic Imaging	130
Ultrasound Imaging	131
CONCLUDING REMARKS	131
REFERENCES	131
CHAPTER 6 POLYMER-BASED VACCINES	135
<i>Bhushan R. Rane, Vaibhav L. Patil, Nandini R. Mhatre, Aditi P. Padave, Nikita P. Mane, Mayur R. Gavit, Dinesh S. Mutkule, Sanskruti S. Gawade, Aarti V. Udmale, Puja P. Chaure and Ashish S. Jain</i>	
INTRODUCTION	135
History	136
POLYMER	138
Type of Polymers used in Vaccine	138
<i>Natural Polymer</i>	138
<i>Synthetic Polymer</i>	140
VACCINE	142
Different Types of Vaccines	142
<i>Live Attenuated Vaccines</i>	142
<i>Inactivated Vaccines</i>	143
<i>Subunit, Recombinant, Polysaccharide, and Conjugate Vaccines</i>	143
<i>Toxoid Vaccines</i>	144
ADJUVANT USED IN VACCINE	144
Immune Potentiators	145
<i>TLR1/2 Agonists</i>	145
<i>TLR3 Agonists</i>	146
<i>TLR4 Agonists</i>	146
<i>TLR5 Agonists</i>	146
<i>TLR7/8 Agonists</i>	147
<i>TLR9 Agonists</i>	147
Delivery Systems	147
<i>Mineral Salts</i>	147
<i>Emulsions</i>	147
<i>MF59</i>	148
<i>AS03</i>	148
Microparticles	148
<i>Virus-like Particles</i>	148
<i>Virosomes</i>	149
APPLICATIONS OF POLYMER IN VACCINE	149
Polymer-based Nanosystems in the Delivery of Vaccine	149
<i>Micelles</i>	150
<i>PLGA Based Some Other Nanoparticles</i>	151
Sustained-release Systems for Hormones	152

Immunopotentialization	152
<i>Polymers for Improvement of Autoimmune Responses</i>	152
Polymeric Carriers Specifically in Cell Targeting and Tissue Targeting	153
Stimuli-responsive Polymers for Delivery of Vaccine	153
PATENTED FORMULATION	154
FUTURE PERSPECTIVE	155
CONCLUDING REMARKS	156
REFERENCES	157
CHAPTER 7 POLYMERIC APPROACHES IN REGENERATIVE MEDICINES	169
<i>Popat Mohite, Govind Asane, Ramesh Bhusal, Ritika Mishra, Namrata Navale, Sandesh Bole and Rashmi Tambare</i>	
INTRODUCTION	170
Significance of Polymeric Materials in Tissue Engineering and Regeneration	171
DESIGNING POLYMERIC SCAFFOLDS FOR TISSUE REGENERATION	172
Natural Polymer	173
<i>Protein as Biomaterial</i>	173
<i>Polysaccharide as Biomaterial</i>	175
Synthetic Polymer	177
<i>Poly (ethylene glycol)</i>	177
<i>Polyurethanes</i>	178
Hybrid Polymeric Systems and Smart Polymers	178
<i>Hybrid Polymers</i>	178
<i>Smart Polymers</i>	181
SCAFFOLD DESIGN AND FABRICATION TECHNIQUES	183
3D Printing	183
Bioprinting	183
Electrospinning and Nanofiber-based Scaffolds	184
Microfluidic Technology	185
Micropatterning Technology	186
POLYMERIC NANOMATERIALS FOR DRUG DELIVERY IN REGENERATIVE MEDICINE	186
NANOPARTICLES FOR CONTROLLED DRUG RELEASE	187
A) Polymeric Nanoparticles	188
B) Ceramic Nanoparticles	188
C) Metal Nanoparticles	188
D) Liposomes	189
E) Dendrimers	189
F) Solid lipid nanoparticles	190
POLYMERIC MICELLES AND NANOGELS	191
Polymeric Micelles	191
<i>Polymeric Micelle Types</i>	191
Nanogels	192
<i>Classification of Nanogels [65]</i>	193
THERMOSTATIC APPROACHES: COMBINING DRUG DELIVERY AND IMAGING	194
POLYMERIC HYDROGELS IN REGENERATIVE MEDICINE	195
Injectable Hydrogels for Tissue Filling and Repair	195
Responsive Hydrogels for On-Demand Release	197
<i>Hydrogels with Temperature Response</i>	197
<i>pH-responsive Hydrogel</i>	197
<i>Hydrogels that Respond to Light</i>	198

<i>Hydrogels That Respond to Redox</i>	198
<i>Enzyme Responsive Hydrogel</i>	200
Hydrogel Composites and their Biomedical Applications	201
APPLICATIONS IN SPECIFIC TISSUES AND ORGANS	202
Cardiac Tissue Engineering	202
Bone Regeneration	203
Neural Tissue Engineering and Nerve Regeneration	204
<i>Case Study</i>	205
Soft Tissues	205
<i>Case Study</i>	206
Tendon Tissue Engineering	206
<i>Case Study</i>	206
IMMUNOMODULATION AND HOST RESPONSE	207
Polymeric Approaches to Modulate Immune Responses	207
<i>Antigen Presenting Cells (APC)</i>	207
<i>APCs for Immunostimulation</i>	207
<i>T-Cells</i>	208
<i>T Cells for Immunostimulation</i>	208
<i>Polymers as Immunological Attenuators</i>	208
Host-Material Interactions and Biocompatibility	209
Strategies for Minimizing Inflammation and Promoting Integration	210
CLINICAL TRANSLATION AND CHALLENGES	210
Challenges	211
FUTURE PERSPECTIVES AND INNOVATIONS	213
CONCLUDING REMARKS	214
ABBREVIATIONS	214
REFERENCES	217
SUBJECT INDEX	447

FOREWORD

As we stand at the forefront of medical innovation, the integration of polymers into modern medicine heralds a new era of possibility and advancement. In the pages of this forthcoming book, "POLYMERS IN MODERN MEDICINE", edited by Dr. Sachin Namdeo Kothawade and Dr. Vishal Vijay Pande, we embark on a journey through the intricate intersections of polymer science and medical practice.

Within these chapters, a mosaic of knowledge unfolds, revealing the pivotal roles polymers play in various facets of modern healthcare. From polymeric biomaterials shaping the landscape of regenerative medicine to the precision of polymer nanotechnology in targeted drug delivery, each chapter unveils the boundless potential of polymer-based solutions.

The scope of this compilation extends from polymeric scaffolds nurturing tissue regeneration to the intelligent design of polymers for personalized medicine. Through meticulous exploration, the contributors illuminate the transformative impact of polymers across diverse medical domains, from diagnostics to cancer therapy.

In an age where innovation is paramount, the editors have curated a comprehensive ensemble of chapters that not only elucidate existing paradigms but also illuminate future horizons. It is through their dedication and vision that this compendium stands as a beacon of knowledge, guiding researchers, clinicians, and pharmaceutical pioneers toward novel insights and therapeutic breakthroughs.

As we traverse the intricate terrain of polymers in modern medicine, it is my honor to contribute this foreword. May this volume serve as a cornerstone for scientific inquiry, a roadmap for translational research, and, ultimately, a catalyst for improving healthcare outcomes worldwide.

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PREFACE

Polymers have emerged as versatile materials with a wide range of applications in modern medicine, significantly impacting various aspects of healthcare. The book series, "Polymers in Modern Medicine," comprises two parts that collectively explore the multifaceted roles of polymers in advancing medical science and improving patient care.

Part 1 of this series provides a comprehensive introduction to the fundamental concepts and applications of polymers in the medical field. It begins with an overview of polymeric biomaterials and extends into the applications of polymer nanotechnology, scaffolds for tissue engineering, and innovative polymer-based drug delivery systems. The volume also discusses the use of smart polymers in medicine, along with advancements in polymeric implants, prosthetics, and coatings in medical devices.

Part 2 explores into more specialized and advanced topics, covering the applications of polymers in personalized medicine, sustainable healthcare, and nanomedicine for cancer therapy. It also explores the use of polymers in diagnostics, the development of polymer-based vaccines, and regenerative medicine approaches. By examining these innovative uses, the second part highlights the cutting-edge research and developments that are shaping the future of polymer applications in medicine.

Together, these two volumes offer a detailed and in-depth exploration of how polymers are revolutionizing the medical field. We hope this book series serves as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, students, and industry professionals interested in the dynamic and evolving landscape of polymer applications in healthcare.

We extend our sincere thanks to Bentham Science Publishers for their support and to all the contributors for their hard work and dedication in creating this comprehensive compilation. We believe that these two volumes will provide insightful perspectives on current developments and point towards future directions for leveraging polymers to address unmet medical needs.

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Polymers Used in Personalized Medicines

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Abstract: Personalized medicine (PM) is revolutionizing healthcare by tailoring treatments to individual patients' unique biological compositions and lifestyles. This approach considers various factors, including genetic data, lifestyle, and environmental influences, to create customized therapeutic strategies. Polymers play a crucial role in PM formulations, allowing for the creation of personalized dosage patterns without adverse effects. Smart polymers, such as thermo-responsive, photo-responsive, self-repairing, and shape-memory polymers, have garnered attention for their ability to adapt to environmental changes and stimuli. Thermo-responsive polymers like pluronics and poly(N-isopropyl acrylamide) exhibit temperature-dependent behavior, making them suitable for drug delivery and tissue engineering. Photo-responsive polymers offer spatial adaptability, allowing precise control over drug release and tissue engineering processes. Self-repairing hydrogels, with dynamic covalent and non-covalent bonds, can regenerate their structure post-injury, holding promise for various clinical applications. Shape-memory polymers can temporarily adopt multiple forms and return to their original shape upon stimulation, offering versatility in biomedical applications. Common polymers used in PM include polyvinyl alcohol (PVA), polylactic acid (PLA), and polycaprolactone (PCL). The applications of these polymers range from 3-D printing for personalized medical devices to controlled drug delivery systems. Future advancements in polymer science and genomic understanding will further enhance the effectiveness and scope of personalized medicine, leading to improved patient outcomes and reduced treatment side effects.

Keywords: Photo-responsive polymers, Polyvinyl alcohol, Polylactic acid, Polycaprolactone, Personalized medicines, Polymers, Self-repairing polymers, Shape-memory polymers, Smart polymers, Thermo-responsive polymers.

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of personalized medicines (PM) is to provide people with customized clinical therapies and procedures. This method is predicated on the notion that each individual has a unique biological composition, way of living, and surroundings, which have a significant impact on their well-being and reaction to therapy. In order to create a thorough management strategy that is customized for every person, PM considers not just DNA data but additionally other elements like the individual's routine, surroundings, and past health conditions. Because of modern technological advancements and improvements in our knowledge of genomics and the causes of illness, PM has assumed greater importance in the management of ailments. When it comes to treating some malignancies, like pulmonary or breast tumors, PM has demonstrated tremendous efficacy. Through an investigation of DNA abnormalities present in an individual's cancer, medical professionals can pinpoint precise biological targeting and create customized medicines that concentrate on these alterations. Contrary to conventional radiation treatment, this method has shown better results and less negative consequences. Additionally, novel medicines for conditions like Parkinson's or dementia are being developed using it. PM is becoming more and more significant in the management of illnesses; by considering the person's surroundings, routine, and past health events, physicians can create a customized course of action [1, 2].

For instance, based on nutrition, physical activity, and various other behavioral variables, an individual having hypertension may profit from an alternate therapy approach. Physicians can create an increasingly thorough, successful course of action with minimal adverse consequences by accounting for these criteria. PM has significant effects on premature illness recognition as well as mitigation alongside its involvement in medical therapy. Clinicians may recognize people who are in elevated danger for particular illnesses and create specific strategies that prevent the condition from occurring by examining the person's genome and additional indicators of illness. In general, PM is playing an increasingly important part in the management of disorders. This method is being utilized to create novel medicines for numerous illnesses and has so far resulted in a notable advancement in the treatment of several forms of malignancies. Future developments in technological advances and our growing knowledge of genomics and biological pathways will probably make PM increasingly significant [1].

Introduction to Polymers used in Personalized Medicines

PM preparation calls for a sizable quantity of particular, premium polymers that may formulate personalized dose patterns according to the patient's needs without interfering with API or other formulation components or producing adverse

consequences to individuals. Throughout the last decade, the healthcare area has seen a significant development of soft components due to advancements in medical equipment, stem cell treatment, and 3-D printing for personalized medication. One class of soft polymers that adapts to shifts in the surroundings is smart polymeric materials. Heat-sensitive polymer compounds, which are frequently utilized in 3-D printing processes and as cellular transporters, are also a common type. One kind of intelligent polymer compound that may rebuild the framework upon multiple harms is self-repairing polymers, which are frequently needle-injected. Another kind of polymer that can recall its initial form is called shape memory polymer. These intelligent materials can serve as transporters of proteins, drugs, or cells. They can be used in medical personalization, surgical procedures that are less hazardous, and biological printing due to their injectability and shape-retaining properties [3].

In recent years, there has been a lot of attention paid to softer composites that have a tensile strength and elastic modulus comparable to that of biological muscles, particularly those softer substances with specific qualities that scientists have dubbed “smart polymer composites”. Researchers and technologists have created adjustable, customized goods using innovative substances that circumvent the restrictions posed by the human being's diverse surroundings since the idea of a one-size-fits-all approach is out of time. Smart components, sometimes referred to as responsive substances, are artificial substances whose attributes may be subtly and precisely changed in response to outside stimuli [4]. The healthcare arena is where polymerized intelligent substances are the most frequently employed because they offer both the adjustable and practical features of artificial polymers [4] and the excellent biological compatibility of organic polymers [5]. Smart substances can be stimulated by a variety of environmental factors, such as climate [6], redox processes [7], moisture [8], electrical or magnetic forces [9], variations in pH [10], and exposure to sunlight [11]. Diverse biological usages, such as biological sensors [12], controlled administration of drugs [13, 14], regenerative medicine [15], localized injection, tumor cell barriers, least intrusive surgical procedures, and three-dimensional bioprinting [16], among others, have made use of such substances with distinct prompting processes. Personalized healthcare product development is made possible by the intelligent polymer components' adjustable characteristics and atmospheric sensitivities. A trio of common polymer intelligent materials, stimulation-responsive, self-repairing, and shape-memory, is mainly highlighted. A few contemporary PM usages, including 3-D printing, stem cell treatment, and transplantation, are also in focus.

The development of innovative surgical instruments for surgeries that are less intrusive has made use of stimuli-responsive polymers. For example, at lower regional pH of an infarcted region, thermo-sensitive and pH-dependent hydrogels

Polymeric Hydrogels in Medicine

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Abstract: This chapter of the book provides a detailed analysis of polymeric hydrogels in medicine, exploring their different properties, synthesis techniques, and biomedical applications. Starting with an introduction, it explains the definition and historical evolution of polymeric hydrogels and their importance in advancing biomedicine. The chapter then examines the physical characteristics, chemical structure, and responsive behavior of polymeric hydrogels to provide a foundational understanding. It also covers different synthesis and fabrication techniques, including polymerization approaches and various crosslinking methods, as well as advanced techniques such as microfluidics and 3D printing. The chapter then delves into the biocompatibility and bifunctionality of polymeric hydrogels, including their interactions with biological systems and the incorporation of bioactive agents for specific applications. It discusses their different applications in medicine, from drug delivery systems to wound healing and tissue engineering, with illustrative case studies. The chapter also addresses the challenges and solutions related to biodegradability, immunogenicity, and regulatory considerations, providing a holistic perspective. Finally, it explores future directions and emerging trends, identifying opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration and integration with emerging technologies. Its objective is to serve as a valuable resource for researchers, scientists, and professionals, fostering a deeper understanding of polymeric hydrogels and inspiring further advancements in this dynamic field.

Keywords: Applications, Adhesives, Biocompatibility and biofunctionality, Bioactive agents, Biomedical applications, Drug delivery, Hydrogels, Interaction with biological systems, Polymers, Properties, Regenerative medicines, Regenerative medicine, Responsive behaviour, Surgical sealants, Smart biomaterials, Tissue Engineering, Wound healing.

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INTRODUCTION

The acronym “polymer” arises from the Greek words 'polys' [meaning a lot] and 'meros' [meaning component or unit]. Polymers, exemplified by substances like proteins and cellulose, constitute the fundamental building blocks of living organisms [1]. A hydrogel is a polymeric network with crosslinks that might keep water in its porous structure. They can be produced in a single step by creating them in the presence of monomers, which are multifunctional cross-linkers, or by integrating molecules of polymer, including reactive groups, which makes it possible to build networks later [2]. Hydrogels tend to be made up of polar or functional groups with particular electrical characteristics that permit them to be hydrophilic, soak water, and swell up specific substances with broadened reactions to stimuli [3]. Although hydrogels do not dissolve in water, they are capable of holding to a minimum of 20% of water and biological fluids and a maximum of 99% when inflated. Hydrogels, which are biocompatible and can be liquid-swollen to 99% of their dry mass with no disappearing, might be offered the gentle rubbery consistency and have a very low interfacial tension with water [or biological fluids] that live tissues also offer [4]. Polymeric hydrogel exhibits viscoelastic characteristics and possesses a network structure resulting from the presence of a cross-linker and a solvent [5]. The field of hydrogel research has been progressively advancing and gaining increased recognition over the years [6]. Wichterle and Lim invented the first synthetic hydrogels in 1954, using pHEMA. After this discovery was made, hydrogels were immediately utilized in the fabrication of contact lenses. Over time, they have been widely used in a variety of sectors, including medication delivery systems, tissue engineering, environmental cleanup, biosensors, and agriculture [7].

The classic 1976 book published by Andrade² remains a reputable source of much knowledge in the field of hydrogel biomedical applications. With increasingly stringent biomaterial requirements, the design and production of innovative materials with smart functionalities are critical. The creation of composite materials that may overcome individual weaknesses while also providing synergistic benefits provides an effective way to increase biomaterial performance and broaden application ranges. Electrospun fibers and hydrogels have been widely used in various biological and biomedical disciplines due to their unique architectures and qualities. Based on this, increasing attention has been dedicated to composites of electrospun fibers and hydrogels as biomaterials, with the goal of bringing their unique excellence into full play while also correcting their inherent flaws [8].

In the last 25 years, significant scientific contributions to the fabrication, structure, characteristics, and biological uses of hydrogels have arisen. Although

various research organizations have contributed to this subject, a dozen top groups deserve special recognition. The Czechoslovakian group at the Academy of Sciences [O. Wichterle, J. Janacek, B. Sedlacek, and J. Kopecek] did a lot of early work on the structural, physical, and mechanical characteristics of hydrogels, particularly PHEMA hydrogels.

The diverse designs and adaptability of hydrogels make them applicable in various settings. Their flexibility, facilitated by high water content, allows for extensive use in both industrial and biological contexts. Fig. (1) illustrates several biomedical applications like biosensing, drug delivery, hygiene products, cancer treatment, bone regeneration, antimicrobial applications, and wound healing, where hydrogels find practical utility [9].

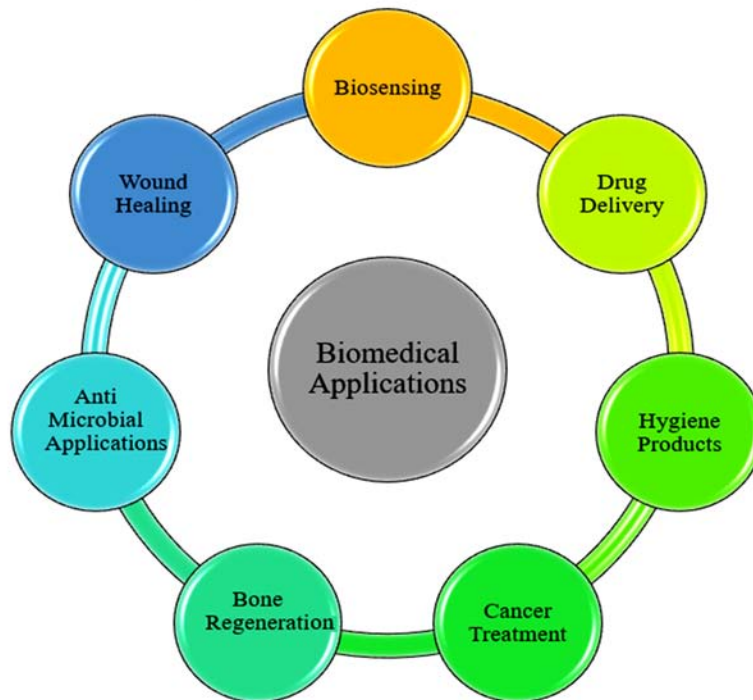


Fig. (1). Biomedical applications.

Until now, there has been a considerable amount of research dedicated to utilizing hydrogels as a primary element in sensor systems. This is logical, given the substantial rise in demand for versatile chemical and biochemical sensors [10].

Hydrogels, the extensively employed crosslinked polymeric network, serve as analogs to the extracellular matrix [ECM] owing to their high hydration capacity.

Biopolymers in Medicine

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Abstract: The chapter explores the extensive use of biopolymers in medical applications, tracing back to ancient times when natural polymers provided bioactive matrices for designing biocompatible materials. Polysaccharides, notably oligosaccharides and polysaccharides, derived from living organisms, exhibit diverse physiological functions and are increasingly investigated for potential biomedical applications. The chapter delves into various classifications of polysaccharides based on their sources and molecular structures, highlighting their non-toxic and abundant nature. Biopolymers, derived from renewable natural sources, offer a sustainable alternative to petroleum-based polymers, with applications ranging from drug delivery systems to wound care and tissue engineering. Examples include starch, cellulose, chitin, proteins, and peptides, each offering unique properties conducive to specific medical applications. The focus shifts to specific biopolymers like sodium alginate, chitosan, collagen, and gelatin, detailing their chemical properties, biological functions, and commercial applications in wound care, drug delivery, tissue engineering, and more. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the extraction methods, properties, and applications of hydrocolloids, catgut, branan ferulate, superabsorbent fibers, and resorbable fibers in medical contexts. It highlights the continuous research efforts aimed at harnessing the unique properties of biopolymers for innovative medical solutions, promising a sustainable and effective approach to healthcare management.

Keywords: Biopolymers, Bioactive matrix, Branan ferulate, Biocompatible materials, Chitin/chitosan, Collagen, Healing products, Hydrocolloids, Intelligent materials, Natural polymers, Oligosaccharides, Polysaccharides, Superabsorbent fibers, Surgical implant devices, Wound closure.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of natural polymers in medical applications dates back to ancient times. These polymers provided biologically active matrices for the creation of biocompatible and smart materials [1, 2]. Biopolymers such as oligosaccharides and polysaccharides are frequently present in living organisms, showcasing their physiological functions through distinctive conformations. Recent research has focused on uncovering the biological functions of polysaccharides for potential biomedical applications, whether they are natural polymers or composed of a single type of monosaccharide. These compounds can have a linear or branched structure and can be modified with various organic groups like methyl and acetyl groups [3 - 7]. Various polysaccharides extracted from plants and utilized in traditional medicine have been found to contain active sites that interact with complementary systems. New polymers are constantly being developed, along with traditional materials that have been enhanced using cutting-edge technologies and innovative methods. Research in this field is highly focused on technical advancements, technological innovations, functionality, and efficiency. Polymers and dressings have key qualities as healthcare products. They can be bacteriostatic, anti-viral, fungistatic, non-toxic, extremely absorbent, non-allergic, breathable, hemostatic, biocompatible, and manipulatable to incorporate medications; they can also provide reasonable mechanical properties. These products have many benefits over conventional materials when modified or blended with alginate, chitin/chitosan, collagen, and branan ferulate polymers [8, 9]. Exploring wound care involves using materials such as hydrogels, matrix, films, hydrocolloids, foams, and specialized additives with unique functions. These advancements in healthcare can help absorb odors, offer strong antibacterial properties, alleviate pain, and reduce irritation. Due to their distinct characteristics, such as a large surface area compared to volume ratio, film thickness, nano-scale fiber diameter, porosity, and lightweight, nanofibers find applications in the healthcare sector [10 - 17].

CLASSIFICATIONS OF POLYSACCHARIDES

There is a wide range of polysaccharides sourced from various natural origins, typically categorized as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Polysaccharides.

Structural Polysaccharides	Storage Polysaccharides	Marine Polysaccharides	Bacterial and Synthetic Polysaccharides
Pectin	Starch	Alginates	Bacterial alginate
Cellulose and hemicellulose		Brawn seaweed	Dextrans

(Table 1) cont....

Structural Polysaccharides	Storage Polysaccharides	Marine Polysaccharides	Bacterial and Synthetic Polysaccharides
Xylans	Glycogen	Carrageenans	Cyclodextrins
Xylanases		Red seaweed	Gellan
Glycosaminoglycans	Fructans	Agar and agarose	
		Chitosan	schizophyllan
		Chitin	

Polysaccharides may likewise be categorized by their molecular structure, such as polysaccharides with: -

- Red-shaped molecules, such as alginates, xanthans, and chitosans.
- Structures resembling linear random coils such as dextrans and pullulans
- Alginates, pectins, carrageenans, xanthans, and hyaluronic acid are examples of polyanions.
- Dextran derivatives, as well as chitosans, are polycations
- Guar, pullulan, and dextran are natural structures

Almost all of these compounds are safe and can be easily obtained in large quantities at a low price [18 - 21].

BIOPOLYMERS

Biopolymers are polymers made from sustainable natural sources, typically biodegradable and non-toxic during production. These substances can be created by living organisms such as microorganisms, plants, and animals, or they can be chemically made from biological sources like sugars, starch, natural fats, or oils. Biopolymers serve as a sustainable option for polymers made from petroleum (traditional plastics). Certain polymers break down within a few weeks, whereas others require several months. Biodegradability, along with other plastic characteristics, is closely linked to the polymer structure. Through modifying the structure, these characteristics can be adjusted [22 - 25].

There are four primary categories of biopolymers based on:

1. Starch
2. Sweetener

Polymer-Based Nanomedicine for Cancer Therapy

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Abstract: Specially polymer-based nanomedicine is of great interest for cancer, and has a tremendous level in nanotechnology, and nanomolecular intervention, and a higher specialty for treating cancer or repairing cellular content. In recent years, polymer-based nanomedicine, a field that includes the use of polymeric substances–nucleic acid complexes (polyplexes), polymer-drug encapsulation, and polymer nanoparticle bearing those drugs having hydrophobic properties, has received higher proliferation for providing highly effective treatment for cancer. Nano molecules show excellent biocompatibility, and biodegradability and can circulate in the plasma for sustainability to reach the specific targeted site. In addition, also the receptor overexpressed in the tumour cells can have an effect on tumour. This chapter highlights the history and current situation of the type of cancer in the world as per “GLOBOCON DATABASE”. Also, the focus will be on nano-medicine, which is formulated in various forms (nanomicells, dendrimers, gold nanoparticles, nanogels) and on rational approaches for the future development of polymer-based nanomedicine.

Keywords: Cancer therapy, Drug delivery, Imaging, Nanomedicine, Photodynamic therapy, Polymer ligand carrier, Polymer nanoparticles, Polymeric nanocarriers, Polymer conjugates, Stimuli-responsive polymers, Targeted therapy, Tumor targeting, Therapeutic nanoparticles.

INTRODUCTION

In the relentless battle against cancer, researchers continually seek innovative approaches to improve treatment efficacy while minimizing side effects. One such promising avenue is the utilization of nanoparticles in cancer therapy. Nanoparticles, due to their unique physicochemical properties, offer unprecedented opportunities to revolutionize the delivery of therapeutic agents to tumor sites. This introduction provides an overview of the application of nanoparticles in cancer therapy, highlighting their significance, advantages, and potential impact on patient outcomes.

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Cancer remains one of the most formidable challenges to human health worldwide, with conventional treatment modalities often limited by systemic toxicity, drug resistance, and inadequate targeting of malignant cells. Nanoparticles, defined as particles with dimensions ranging from 1 to 100 nanometers, represent a versatile platform for addressing these limitations. Their small size confers numerous advantageous properties, including a large surface area-to-volume ratio, tunable surface chemistry, and the ability to encapsulate or conjugate various therapeutic payloads.

The hallmark of nanoparticle-based cancer therapy lies in its capacity for targeted drug delivery. Nanoparticles can be engineered to selectively accumulate in tumor tissues through passive or active targeting mechanisms [1]. The enhanced permeability and retention (EPR) effect, inherent to many solid tumors, facilitates the preferential accumulation of nanoparticles within the tumor microenvironment, sparing healthy tissues.

Moreover, nanoparticles can be functionalized with targeting ligands, such as antibodies or peptides, enabling specific recognition and binding to cancer cell surface receptors, further enhancing their tumor-homing capabilities. Once localized within tumors, nanoparticles offer several distinct advantages over traditional chemotherapy [2]. Their multifunctional nature allows for the co-delivery of multiple therapeutic agents, including chemotherapeutic drugs, nucleic acids, or imaging agents, in a controlled manner. This synergistic combination therapy can overcome drug resistance, enhance treatment efficacy, and minimize the emergence of secondary malignancies. Additionally, nanoparticles can modulate the pharmacokinetics and biodistribution of encapsulated drugs, prolonging circulation time, and optimizing drug release kinetics [3].

The nanoparticle-based cancer therapy holds tremendous promise for personalized medicine. By tailoring nanoparticle properties to individual patient characteristics, such as tumor type, genetic profile, and disease stage, clinicians can optimize treatment regimens for improved outcomes. Furthermore, the integration of nanotechnology with emerging therapeutic modalities, such as immunotherapy and gene therapy, offers novel avenues for combating cancer with unprecedented precision and efficacy [4].

ADVANTAGES OF NANOPARTICLE USAGE IN CHEMOTHERAPY

Targeted Drug Delivery

Nanoparticles can be engineered to target specific cells or tissues, including cancer cells, through passive or active targeting mechanisms. This targeted deli-

very reduces off-target effects and enhances the concentration of the drug at the tumor site, increasing therapeutic efficacy while minimizing systemic toxicity.

Improved Pharmacokinetics

Nanoparticles can modify the pharmacokinetic profile of drugs by altering their distribution, metabolism, and elimination. This can result in prolonged circulation times, enhanced bioavailability, and controlled release kinetics, leading to improved drug efficacy and reduced dosing frequency [5].

Enhanced Cellular Uptake

Nanoparticles can facilitate cellular uptake through various mechanisms, including endocytosis and receptor-mediated internalization. This increased cellular uptake improves drug delivery to target cells, overcoming drug resistance mechanisms, and enhancing therapeutic outcomes.

Multifunctionality

Nanoparticles can be functionalized with multiple components, including drugs, targeting ligands, imaging agents, and therapeutic payloads. This multifunctional design enables synergistic therapeutic effects, simultaneous imaging and treatment, and personalized medicine approaches.

Overcoming Biological Barriers

Nanoparticles can overcome biological barriers, such as the blood-brain barrier or the stromal barrier in solid tumors, which limit the delivery of conventional chemotherapeutic agents. This allows for the treatment of previously inaccessible diseases and improves drug penetration into tumor tissues.

Reduced Systemic Toxicity

Targeted delivery of chemotherapeutic agents using nanoparticles reduces exposure to healthy tissues, minimizing systemic toxicity and adverse side effects commonly associated with conventional chemotherapy. This selective targeting enhances the therapeutic index of drugs, allowing for higher doses to be administered safely.

Combination Therapy

Nanoparticles enable the co-delivery of multiple therapeutic agents, such as chemotherapy drugs, immunomodulators, or gene therapy vectors, in a controlled

Polymers in Diagnostics

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Abstract: Historically, laboratory verification has been the mainstay of medical diagnostics. This has resulted in arduous processes, expensive equipment, and a shortage of medically educated workers, not to mention delayed findings. However, the growing need for point-of-care medical testing devices coupled with the ongoing medical and digital technology integration has made it easier to create devices that have high selectivity, specificity, and quick reaction times. Every pandemic has brought attention to the development of these devices on a global scale, underscoring the pressing need to improve accurate, timely, and dependable medical diagnosis and treatment. The need for innovative methods of identifying biological entities with quick and precise diagnostic capacities is now growing steadily. Polymeric materials have been used as a key component in the development of several analytical procedures. Due to their easily adjustable characteristics, including their viscoelasticity, chemical and mechanical resistance, and adaptability, polymers have a wide range of uses. The fundamental benefit of employing polymers is their adaptability when mixed with other materials to produce products with a variety of physicochemical properties. Therefore, the physicochemical qualities of the polymer, which include its physical and chemical characteristics, may be changed to suit the needs of a particular application, which are Polymer-Based Sensors, Lab-on-a-Chip Technologies, and Polymer-Mediated Imaging Agents. Special focus is on polymers that form multifunctional, stable systems with nanostructured architecture. This chapter provides an overview of the sorts of polymeric materials and how they function in the operation of important diagnostic equipment.

Keywords: Diagnostic capacities, High selectivity, Lab-on-a-Chip technologies, Nanostructured architecture, Polymer-mediated imaging agents, Point-of-Care, Polymers, Specificity.

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INTRODUCTION

The need for innovative methods of identifying biological entities with quick and precise diagnostic capacities is now growing steadily. Polymeric materials have been used as a key component in the development of several analytical procedures. Due to their easily adjustable characteristics, including their viscoelasticity, chemical and mechanical resistance, and adaptability, polymers have a wide range of uses. To manufacture polymeric materials with various topologies and morphologies, such as linear, branching, and crosslinked, films, micro- and nanoparticles, fibres, elastomers, and thermoplastics, a broad range of synthetic techniques are also accessible [1].

Numerous commercial products and equipment, including packaging, medical components, domestic goods, and industrial parts, among others, have polymers as a significant component. The fundamental benefit of employing polymers is their adaptability when mixed with other materials to produce products with a variety of physicochemical properties. Therefore, the physicochemical qualities of the polymer, which include its physical and chemical characteristics, may be changed to suit the needs of a particular application [2], which are;

1. Polymer-Based Sensors
2. Lab-on-a-Chip Technologies
3. Polymer-Mediated Imaging Agents

POLYMER-BASED SENSORS

Polymers are a vast variety of newly created materials that are beneficial in many applications due to their various physico-chemical characteristics. Polymers have gained interest because they may alter their properties, either permanently or reversibly, in response to external stimuli [3]. These include the presence of certain ions or bioactive substances, changes in pH or temperature, light radiation, electric or magnetic fields, and more. Solids, liquids, gels, nanoparticles, and films can all be forms of polymers. These materials can be modified or synthesised appropriately to adapt them to specific tasks in order to create sensor devices (Since the word “device” alludes to a piece of equipment or a mechanism made to carry out a certain task or function, it was used as a “synonym” for “solid-phase chemical sensor) as shown in Fig. (1) [4 - 6].

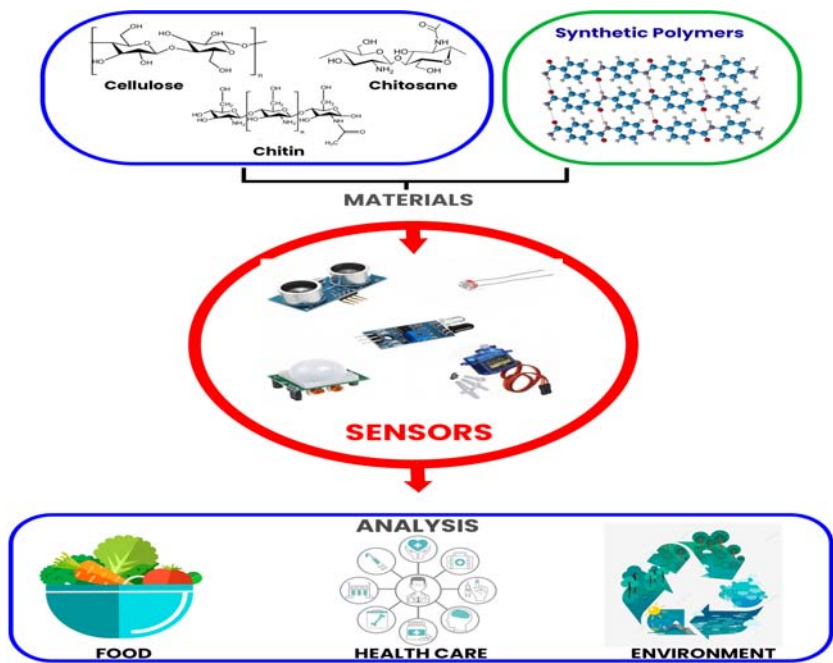


Fig. (1). Polymer-based sensors.

Several works on chemical sensors have been mentioned in recent literature.

Recent instances of polymer-based sensors were reported in relation to environmental monitoring, food safety, and human health monitoring.

Traditional analytical techniques typically needed complex equipment, experienced staff, and protocols that were not designed for widespread use by the general public or in places with limited resources. Therefore, it is crucial to provide inexpensive, user-friendly, and highly sensitive sensors.

The most promising technologies are those based on polymers for creating sensors and biosensors with greater performance. Molecular imprinted polymers (MIP), conducting polymers and their composites, hydrogels, and other polymeric materials are employed in sensor devices. These types of sensors frequently use polymer-based materials that enhance target molecule recognition, act as supports for functionalities immobilisation (such as dyes, fluorophores, and metal nanoparticles), and enable the detection of the target analytes by altering their physical or chemical properties. Another advantage is the possibility to modify chemical properties of polymer-based sensors to improve their reactive nature, biocompatibility, versatility, and durability against degradation [7].

Polymer-Based Vaccines

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Abstract: Vaccination remains the most effective and cost-efficient health intervention for preventing the spread of infectious diseases. However, new-generation vaccines are necessary, as a significant portion of chronic illnesses and infectious diseases remain untreatable with existing immunization programs. Polymer-based particles have recently been employed as vaccine adjuvants due to their ability to prevent antigen degradation and clearance, along with their enhanced uptake by antigen-presenting cells (APCs). Polymeric nanoparticles are readily internalized by APCs, making them valuable in vaccine delivery and demonstrating promising adjuvant effects. Polymer-based systems offer several advantages, including the ability to incorporate various immunomodulators and/or antigens, mimic infections through diverse mechanisms, and act as a depot, thereby prolonging immune responses. This chapter explores the use of polymeric materials as excipients in vaccine formulations and delivery systems in the pharmaceutical and vaccine industries, along with their potential future applications. As our understanding of polymer-based nanomaterials continues to advance, incorporating additional features such as targeted delivery, sustained release, and alternative administration routes becomes increasingly feasible. The integration of polymers into vaccine formulations can significantly enhance global efforts in disease prevention and public health, paving the way for next-generation vaccines.

Keywords: Adjuvant, Immunomodulators, Nanovaccine, Polymer, Vaccine.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have been exploring various strategies to protect people from fatal diseases for decades. Immunization remains the most effective and affordable method for preventing bacterial and viral infections that cause high morbidity and mortality rates [1, 2].

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Every year, millions of people are protected through vaccination, a remarkable achievement that stands as a major success in global health. Vaccines reduce the likelihood of developing infections by strengthening the body's defense mechanisms. Upon receiving a vaccine, the immune system responds to build protection [3]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, India's vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin, were administered in various countries to save lives.

However, there are still numerous infectious diseases and chronic conditions, such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), cytomegalovirus (CMV), malaria, healthcare-associated infections (HAIs), tuberculosis, and HIV, that cannot be fully prevented by current vaccines. Therefore, the development of new vaccines for these diseases remains essential [4].

New approaches, such as polymer-based delivery systems, non-viral vector strategies, and innovative vaccines, may contribute to the development of successful therapeutic vaccines targeting communicable diseases, chronic diseases, and malignancies. Additionally, these technologies may facilitate the creation of vaccines tailored for challenging target populations, including teenagers, adults, and individuals with compromised immunity [5, 6].

Recent vaccine formulations have transitioned from using inactivated viral particles, whole bacteria, or their lysates to highly purified recombinant protein antigens. Purified antigens have lower immunogenicity compared to live or attenuated vaccines despite offering improved safety and precise immune system targeting specific epitopes. Consequently, adjuvants—substances that enhance immune responses—play a crucial role in the development of modern vaccines [7 - 9].

More specifically, polymer-based particles can enhance antigen uptake by professional antigen-presenting cells (APCs) while limiting antigen degradation and clearance, making them useful as adjuvants and vaccine platforms. Polymeric nanoparticles have been employed in vaccine delivery because they are readily absorbed by APCs and have shown significant adjuvant effects. In other words, polymer-based systems offer numerous advantages, including versatility and flexibility in design, the ability to incorporate various immunomodulators and antigens, depot formation for sustained antigen release, and the capacity to mimic infection pathways. This ultimately leads to prolonged immune responses and the development of adaptive immunity [10 - 14].

History

The concept of immunization is not new. In the 17th century, Buddhist monks in China practiced a form of immunization by drinking snake venom to develop

immunity against snake bites [15]. In the 18th century, Edward Jenner coined the term “vaccine”, derived from the Latin word *vacca*, meaning “cow”. In 1796, Jenner vaccinated an eight-year-old child using material from cowpox sores, which ultimately provided immunity against smallpox [16 - 18].

Eighty years later, Louis Pasteur developed a live attenuated vaccine for treating rabies in humans. In the 20th century, the development of toxoids marked a significant advancement, coinciding with the evolution of germ theory and the discovery of numerous microbes in the 19th century [19]. This progress led to the development of tetanus and diphtheria vaccines. In the 1930s, chick embryo membranes were used to cultivate viruses, resulting in the development of vaccines for yellow fever and influenza. The creation of vaccines for polio, varicella, mumps, rubella, and measles during this period has often been referred to as the “golden age” of vaccine development [20 - 26].

History offers invaluable lessons in addressing infectious diseases. As the saying goes, “No one is safe until everyone is safe.” Our current global efforts to combat COVID-19 and other potential pandemics underscore the necessity of close international collaboration [27, 28].

The use of polymers in vaccination dates back to the idea of adjuvants—substances that enhance the immune system's response to a vaccine. Research into adjuvants, including aluminum salts, began in the early to mid-1900s, with the primary goal of prolonging immune system exposure to antigens and thereby increasing vaccine effectiveness [29 - 31].

Aluminum hydroxide was first used as a vaccine adjuvant in the 1920s and is still commonly included in vaccine formulations today. Aluminum salts were among the first materials used to enhance immune responses, and their adjuvant properties are well-established [32].

In the latter part of the 20th century, researchers began investigating the use of polymers as adjuvants. These adjuvants offered several advantages, including improved stability, targeted immune responses, and controlled antigen release. Biocompatible and biodegradable polymers like PLGA (poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid)) became increasingly popular [33, 34].

The rise of nanotechnology in the late 20th century enabled the creation of polymeric nanoparticles with precise and customizable properties. These nanoparticles provided vaccine formulations with a highly specific, adaptable platform. The size, surface charge, and functionalization of polymeric nanoparticles made them well-suited for targeted vaccine delivery.

Polymeric Approaches in Regenerative Medicines

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Abstract: This book chapter provides an in-depth examination of the diverse applications of polymeric approaches in regenerative medicine. It starts with an introduction and highlights the significance of polymeric materials. The section also delves into various biomaterials, including natural polymers like collagen and synthetic counterparts like poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid). The scaffold design and fabrication techniques, such as 3D printing and electrospinning, are explored for their role in creating biomimetic structures. It also highlights polymeric nanomaterials for controlled drug delivery, emphasizing nanoparticles, micelles, and theranostic approaches. Polymeric hydrogels play a central role in tissue regeneration, with specific applications in cardiac, bone, and neural tissue engineering. The chapter also addresses immunomodulation, host responses, and biocompatibility to ensure the practicality of polymeric regenerative strategies. The evaluation of the current clinical status, regulatory considerations, and challenges associated with polymeric regenerative approaches is undertaken. The chapter concludes with insights into future perspectives, innovations, and collaborative research opportunities in the dynamic field of polymeric approaches in regenerative medicine. This chapter provides a comprehensive resource for researchers and scientists seeking a deeper understanding of the role of polymeric materials in advancing regenerative therapies.

Keywords: Biomaterials, Drug delivery, Electrospinning technique, Hydrogels, Hybrid polymers, Injectable hydrogels, Modulate immune responses, Microfluidics, Nanofiber-based scaffolds, Nanoparticles, Nanogels, Polymeric micelles, Polymers, Responsive hydrogels, Regenerative medicines, Smart polymers, Scaffolds, Tissue engineering, Wound healing, 3D Printing.

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INTRODUCTION

Considerable investigation into the application of polymers as biomaterials has been conducted throughout the preceding half-century. The diverse chemical configurations and functional groups of these polymers play a crucial role in influencing their morphology and other characteristics, offering precise control over the construction of molecular architectures tailored to specific biomedical applications. Notably, biocompatible polymers have found successful applications in medication delivery systems and prosthetic organs. However, the effectiveness of these applications hinges on the developed molecular architecture's capacity for self-organization and biocompatibility [1].

Biomaterials are referred to as “any synthetic or natural synthetic or natural substance or combination of substances that can be used at any time to partially or completely supplement or replace the function of any organ, tissue or body, to maintain or improve the quality of life of an individual” (American National Institute for Health, standard definition, NIH) [10]. Since it is commonly recognized that extracellular matrix (ECM) allows cells to improve viability or function, biomaterials containing ECM components, in particular, may be helpful in boosting cell act [2].

In this study, the phrases “regenerative medicine” and “tissue engineering”, which are frequently used interchangeably by scientists and physicians, are used interchangeably. The potential for regenerating and replacing damaged organs and tissues serves as the foundation for the promise of regenerative medicine. The field of regenerative medicine has shown promising results in the replacement and regeneration of many tissues and organs, such as the skin, liver, heart, and kidney. It also holds promise for the correction of some congenital defects [3].

In situ ations when the endogenous cells are inadequate or malfunctioning, cell management techniques can aid in the replacement of lost cells in regenerative medicine (*e.g.*, regeneration of nerve tissue). In an attempt to establish a 3D environment that affects the phenotype, architecture, migration, and survival of native cells, as well as cells that have previously been cultivated in the implant, TE blends methods for cell replacement with components of biomaterial scaffolds. Apart from acting as a vehicle for medication delivery, biomaterials can also supply structures for host cell invasion, differentiation, and organization (*e.g.*, controlled release of nanomedicines) [4].

The National Institute for Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering defines TE as "assembling cells, scaffolds, and physiologically active substances to create functional tissues". Assembling functional constructions that repair, preserve, or enhance damaged tissues or whole organs is the goal of tissue engineering [5].

Tissue engineering (TE) integrates bioscaffold methods with biological signals to repair, retain, or improve the structure and function of damaged organs or tissues. By mimicking the structure, content, and characteristics of the extracellular matrix (ECM) *in vivo*, bioscaffolds give cells a niche and expose them to a variety of biological and physicochemical signals. To provide tissues and organs with structural integrity and mechanical support, ECM functions as a biomass network [6].

Significance of Polymeric Materials in Tissue Engineering and Regeneration

To communicate with a biological system, natural, synthetic, or composite polymer structures are known as biomaterials and are produced in accordance with specific guidelines. The biomaterial's vital function is to replicate the extracellular matrix, which cells attach to and orient to form tissue. Collagen, integrated glycosaminoglycans, and elastic fibers make up the majority of the tissue [7].

The utilization of polymers in biomaterial preparation encompasses two primary categories: natural and synthetic polymers. Collagen, a naturally occurring polymer found in human skin, has demonstrated enormous potential in the field of skin regeneration. When administered to severe burn sufferers, a combination of bovine collagen and human autologous keratinocytes and fibroblasts has demonstrated positive outcomes. For the goal of skin regeneration, collagen is also utilized in the form of bilayered synthetic skin [8].

Because natural polymers are less immunogenic and more biocompatible, they have gained popularity. Moreover, natural polysaccharides like alginate, chitosan, chitin, and various gums have been extensively investigated for their potential as biomaterials. However, despite their advantages, natural polymers possess limitations that impact their application as biomaterials. One significant drawback is their propensity for rapid degradation [9].

Synthetic polymers have an advantage over natural polymers in that they may be functionally modified to accommodate the intended biomaterial purpose without compromising the material's essential properties. The most researched synthetic polymers are poly (glycolic acid) (PGA), poly (lactic-co-glycolic acid) (PLGA), poly (ethylene glycol) (PEG), poly (lactic acid/L-lactic acid) (PLA/PLLA), and polyetheretherketone (PEEK) [10].

When implanted *in vivo*, they show regulated disintegration into non-toxic byproducts, allowing for a customized degradation rate. The ability to modify their fundamental building blocks allows the creation of materials with diverse properties, such as uniformity and freedom from immunogenicity. One of their

SUBJECT INDEX

A

Acid(s) 1, 11, 12, 13, 14, 38, 39, 47, 78, 79, 80, 88, 89, 90, 118, 119, 140, 141, 185, 188, 190, 203
 alginic 47, 78, 79
 carboxylic 141
 folic 190
 glucuronic 39, 88
 lactic 12, 89, 141
 methacrylic 38
 polyacrylic 119, 203
 polyglutamic 140
 polyglycolic 89, 118, 203
 polylactic (PLA) 1, 11, 12, 13, 14, 89, 90, 141, 185, 188, 203
 polylactic 1, 12, 89, 118, 141, 185, 203
 polymeric 78
 Agents 46, 83, 98, 102, 128, 129, 185, 189, 207, 208
 antimicrobial 185
 chemotherapeutic 98
 enzymatic debriding 83
 fluorescent 129
 supplying immunomodulatory 207
 Agglutination, erythrocyte 81
 Alginate, calcium 78, 79, 80
 Antibodies 97, 118, 121, 126, 141, 144, 145, 188, 207
 immobilised 126
 monoclonal 207
 Antigen(s) 135, 136, 140, 141, 146, 147, 151, 153, 156, 207, 208
 degradation 135, 156
 -incorporated nanoparticles 151
 -presenting cells (APCs) 135, 136, 140, 141, 146, 147, 151, 153, 156, 207, 208
 transmit tumor 207
 Antigenic peptide 151
 Antimicrobial properties 59, 80
 API 4, 6, 15
 delivery systems 15

transportation 6
 transporters 4
 Artificial 53, 83, 87
 cross-linked polymers are 53
 joints 87
 skin 83, 87
 Autoimmune diseases 152
 Autoimmunity 148
 Automated systems 121

B

Bacterial lipoproteins 145
 Bioprinting 3, 5, 8, 14, 15, 16, 41, 183, 201, 211, 212, 213, 214
 of complicated organs 213
 process 183
 technique 16
 technology 41, 213
 three-dimensional 3
 Blood 62, 185
 coagulation 185
 triglycerides 62
 Bone 28, 182, 200, 203, 204
 regeneration 28, 200, 203, 204
 restoration 182
 Bovine serum albumin (BSA) 117, 152
 iminocarbonate-encapsulated 152
 Branan ferulate polymers 75

C

Cancer 102, 104, 108, 140, 147, 190, 208
 breast 108
 colon 140
 imaging 102
 immunotherapy 104, 147, 208
 lung 108
 ovarian 190
 prostate 108
 Cancer therapy 97, 103, 105
 nanoparticle-based 97

- transform 103, 105
 - Carcinogenicity 209
 - Cardiac tissue engineering 202
 - Cardiomyocytes 42
 - Cardiovascular treatments 4
 - Cell management techniques 170
 - Cerebral tissue 8
 - Chelates, small molecule 129
 - Chemical(s) 37, 44, 82, 87, 172, 189
 - connections 37
 - proton-generating dissociable 189
 - resistance 172
 - stripping processes 87
 - structure of chitosan and chitin 82
 - toxic 44
 - Chitosan 81, 138
 - microspheres 81
 - nanoparticles 138
 - Cholera toxin 145
 - Chronic 125
 - kidney disease (CKD) 125
 - respiratory diseases (CRD) 125
 - Collagenase, bacterial 83
 - Computed tomography (CT) 103, 129, 130, 145, 183
 - COP method 60
 - Copolymer ratio 173
 - COVID-19 136, 137, 147
 - combat 137
 - pandemic 136
 - CRISPR 124
 - /Cas technology 124
 - /Cas13a-based amplification technique 124
 - Critical micelle concentration (CMC) 6, 114, 191
 - Cross 37, 40, 57
 - linked hydrogels 37
 - linking process 37, 40, 57
 - Cross-linking 32, 37, 39, 40, 43, 57, 89, 130, 192
 - chemical 37, 39
 - enzymatic 37
 - thermal 130
 - Cytomegalovirus 136
 - Cytotoxicity tests 139
- D**
- Damage 139, 203
 - cardiac 203
 - spinal cord 139
 - Degradation, microbial 114
 - Delivery systems 47, 48, 135, 136, 138, 144, 145, 147, 150, 156, 190
 - polymer-based 136
 - targeted medication 190
 - transmucosal drug 138
 - Dendritic cells (DCs) 153, 207
 - Diabetic ulcers 59, 60
 - Dialysis treatments 4
 - Diseases 125, 128, 136, 142, 143, 144, 146, 204
 - chronic kidney 125
 - chronic respiratory 125
 - gastrointestinal 146
 - meningococcal 144
 - targeting communicable 136
 - Disorders 2, 17, 49, 103, 106, 107, 126, 152, 207
 - autoimmune 152, 207
 - medical 49, 126
 - neurological 103
 - DNA 2, 34, 57, 77, 127, 140, 141, 176, 185, 188, 190
 - abnormalities 2
 - assembled dendrimer conjugates 190
 - plasmid 176
 - purification 127
 - Drugs 3, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 60, 61, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 104, 128, 138, 188, 189, 190, 191, 194, 202
 - anti-cancer 104
 - anticancer 194
 - antiviral 104
 - chemotherapeutic 97, 188
 - encapsulated 97, 138, 190
 - hydrophilic 189
 - hydrophobic 189, 202
 - macromolecular 128
 - Duplex molecularly imprinted polymer (DMIP) 117
- E**
- ECM 171, 200
 - functions 171
 - hydrogels 200
 - Elastin 175, 180
 - insoluble 175
 - protein 180

Subject Index

Elastolytic matrix metalloproteinases 175
Elastomers, synthetic 178
Electrical conductivity 64, 118
Electrochemical label-free immunosensors 122
Electrodes 53, 121, 199
 ion-selective 121
Electromechanical transduction 181
Electron beams 40, 194
Electrophoresis 124
Electrospinning 169, 179, 184, 185
 faces challenges 185
 system 184
Electrospun 27, 184
 fibers and hydrogels 27
 nanofibers 184
Electrostatic 8, 184, 192
 forces 8, 184, 192
Embryonic stem cells 16
Employing light-sensitive polymers 7
Emulsion stabilization 86
Endocytosis 98, 146, 193
 cholesterol-dependent 146
 receptor-mediated 193
Engineering techniques 202, 206, 211
Environment 14, 17, 53, 61, 64, 118, 170, 175, 192, 197, 204, 209
 biological 204, 209
 dry 53
 moist 64
Environmental 3, 9, 63
 factors 3, 9
 pollution 63
Enzymatic-induced Crosslinking 40
Enzyme(s) 13, 14, 40, 41, 80, 81, 150, 184, 200
 -catalyzed events 200
 gastrointestinal 81
 immobilizing 80
 -mediated biomaterial processes 200
 polymerization 200
Epithelialization 52
Erythrocytes 81

F

Fabric padding absorbent materials 88
Fabrication 14, 15, 17, 26, 27, 36, 41, 140, 141, 169, 183
 process 17

Polymers in Modern Medicine (Part 2) 227

scaffolding 15
 techniques 14, 26, 36, 169, 183
FDA-approved commercial medicines 60
Fibers 27, 78, 88, 89, 90, 171, 184, 185, 202
 bioresorbable 89
 creating nanoscale 184
 elastic 171
 electrospinning 185
 electrospun 27
Fibrous connective tissue 89
Fluorescence 127, 131
 -labeled peptide 131
 microscopy 127
Function 55, 56, 58, 63, 85, 86, 111, 112, 170, 171, 199, 200, 201, 203, 208
 compromised cardiac 203
 immunostimulatory anti-tumor 208

G

Gadgets 12, 16
 fixation 12
 intelligent 16
 therapeutic 16
Gas chromatography 122
Gel 51, 194, 206
 contraction 206
 -forming systems 51
 systems, cross-linked 194
Gelatin 39, 45, 54, 55, 74, 83, 84, 174, 175, 202, 204, 210
 cooling heated 39
 fish 83
 mammalian 83
Gelation, chemical 37
Gels 44, 46, 54, 58, 61, 78, 194, 197, 198, 203, 206, 210, 212
 cross-linked 194
Gene 98, 206
 expression 206
 therapy vectors 98
Glioblastoma 185
Glucose 115
 oxidase 115
Glues, synthetic 57
Gold nanoparticles 96, 115, 188
Growth 39, 183, 185
 hormones 183, 185
 polymerization process 39

H

Healthcare 14, 17, 49, 74, 90, 136
-associated infections (HAIs) 136
gadgets 14
industry 49
management 74, 90
technologies 17
Heart 170, 185, 202, 203, 210, 211
illness 203
issues 202
Heat 3, 145, 148
-killed mycobacteria 148
-labile enterotoxin 145
-sensitive polymer compounds 3
Heavy metal reduction 63
Hemostatic activity 55
Horseradish peroxidase 40
Hybrid polymeric systems 172
Hydrocolloid dressing 59
Hydrogel(s) 3, 29, 62, 176, 197, 198
biodegradability 29
machines 62
pH-dependent 3
pH-responsive 197
thermosensitive 176
three-dimensional photosensitive 198
Hyperthermal treatment 63

I

Imaging 102, 103, 129
technique 103, 129
technology 102
Immune 43, 136, 143, 148, 207, 209
response stimulation 148
system 43, 136, 143, 148, 207, 209
Immunity, adaptive 136
Immunization programs 135
Immunizing neonates 149
Immunological 43, 49, 142, 150, 152, 153, 214
homeostasis 152
responses 43, 49, 142, 150, 153, 214
Inert hydrophilic polymers 193
Infections 51, 62, 135, 136, 138, 142, 143, 144, 147, 203, 207, 208
autoimmune 207
healthcare-associated 136

pneumococcal 144
viral 135, 147
Infectious diseases 135, 136, 138, 147, 149, 156
life-threatening 156
Inflammation 43, 86, 148, 150, 182, 206, 210
prolonged local 148
Inflammatory mediators 146
Influenza 143, 148
vaccinations 148
vaccines 143, 148
Integration 5, 14, 26, 37, 97, 103, 105, 111, 121, 123, 124, 135, 156, 201
digital technology 111
instrument 121
metal 37
Ionic-mediated gelation 39
Ionotropic gelation and polyelectrolyte complexation 42
Ions, transitional metal 81
Irradiation polymerization 40

L

Lab-on-a-chip 111, 112, 123, 124, 131
systems 124
technologies 111, 112, 123, 124, 131
Lipopolysaccharide 153

M

Magnetic 3, 102, 103, 129, 195
forces 3
resonance imaging (MRI) 102, 103, 129, 195
Mechanical properties 55, 75, 117, 183, 201
Medical 15, 103
devices 15
imaging method 103
Mesh dressing 59
Metabolic 56, 213
shock 213
waste 56
Metal-organic framework (MOF) 186
Microenvironment, acidic 198
Microfluidic chips 126, 186
Microscopy, electron 99
Molecular 103, 116
imaging techniques 103
imprinting approach 116

N

Neural 169, 204, 205
 stem cells (NSCs) 204, 205
 tissue engineering 169, 204, 205
 tissue fabrication 205
Neuraminidase 149
Neuromuscular systems 173
Nuclear tomographic imaging 130

P

PET imaging 103
PLGA 140, 151, 153
 microparticles 140, 153
 systems 151
Polydisperse protein 45
Polymer 111, 112, 113, 119, 121
 -based sensors 111, 112, 113, 119
 inclusion membranes (PIMs) 121
Polymeric 27, 30, 34, 39, 63, 103, 104, 106,
 107, 108, 128, 135, 136, 137, 153, 186,
 188, 198
 hydrogel properties 30
 nanomaterials 186
 nanomedicine 103, 104
 nanoparticles 63, 104, 106, 107, 108, 128,
 135, 136, 137, 153, 188
 network 27, 34, 39, 198
Polyurethanes 6, 52
 adhesive 52
 neurological 6
Positron emission tomography (PET) 103,
 129, 130, 203
Pressure-sensitive sensors 6
Principal component analysis (PCA) 121
Processes 35, 36, 37, 48, 49, 52, 56, 59, 79,
 103, 107, 122, 124, 178, 183, 184, 185,
 186, 189, 194, 195
 biodegradation 178
 chemical 37
 electrospinning 184, 185
 filtration 79
 injection 195
 metabolic 103
Pullulan, hydrophobized 193

R

Radio waves 103
Radiotherapy 101
Reactions 2, 6, 16, 37, 43, 44, 56, 57, 78, 182,
 200, 202, 209
 allergic 57
 chemical 6, 37
 immunological 182, 202
Redox 3, 41, 197, 198, 199
 conditions 197
 initiator system 41
 processes 3
 reactivity 199
 response properties 199
Repair, neural 204
Resilin-like protein (RLP) 180
Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) 136, 138,
 149

S

Sandwich-based immunoassay 125
Sensors 28, 53, 62, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117,
 118, 119, 120, 121, 122
 biochemical 28
 chromatic 120
 electrochemical 121
 photolithography-based 122
 plasmon resonance 118
Single photon emission computed tomography
 (SPECT) 129, 130
Skin 52, 53, 205
 fibroblasts 205
 healing 52
 lesions 53
Smartphone-based detection 125, 127
Spectroscopy, surface-enhanced Raman 126
Swelling 35
 capacity 35
 properties 35

T

Techniques 122, 169, 184, 186
 electrospinning 169, 184
 microfabrication 122
 micropatterning 186
Technologies 123, 126, 185, 186

- electrospray 186
- microfluidic 123, 126, 185
- micropatterning 186
- Therapy 2, 4, 18, 97, 101, 104, 186, 206
 - anti-tumor 104
 - gene 97, 101
 - synergistic combination 97
- Tumor 97, 100, 107, 190, 208
 - cells 107, 190, 208
 - growth inhibition 100
 - microenvironment 97, 208

V

- Vaccination(s) 150, 152, 156
 - immunoantigen 152
 - traditional 150
 - systems 156
- Vaccine(s) 135, 136, 137, 138, 142, 143, 144, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 154, 155, 156
 - biosynthetic 143
 - mucosal 150
 - polymeric 151
 - smallpox 143
 - treatment 155

W

- Water 35, 115
 - osmosis 35
 - permeability 115
 - swollen hydrogel film 35
- Wound(s) 59, 60, 88
 - healing procedure 88
 - traumatic 59, 60

X

- X-ray diffraction, employing 124

Y

- Yellow fever 137, 143



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