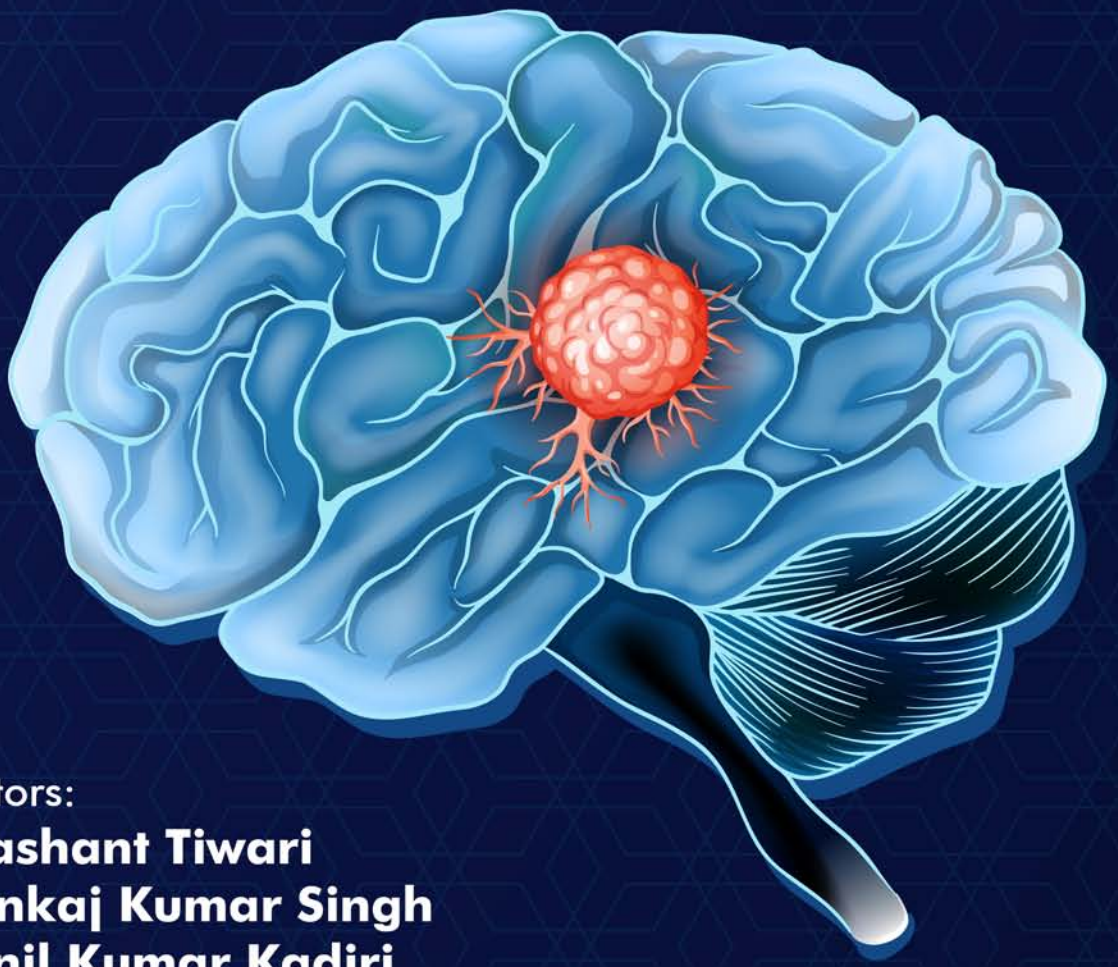
BRAIN TUMOR DRUG DEVELOPMENT

CURRENT ADVANCES AND STRATEGIES | PART 1



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Brain Tumor Drug Development: Current Advances and Strategies

(Part 1)

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Brain Tumor Drug Development: Current Advances and Strategies *(Part 1)*

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ISBN (Online): 979-8-89881-171-6

ISBN (Print): 979-8-89881-172-3

ISBN (Paperback): 979-8-89881-173-0

Published by Bentham Science Publishers Pte. Ltd. Singapore,

in collaboration with Eureka Conferences, USA.

First published in 2025.

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FOREWORD

In recent years, brain tumor research has made remarkable strides, bringing to light new pathways, mechanisms, and potential therapeutic strategies. However, the complexity of the brain and the heterogeneity of brain tumors, particularly glioblastomas, continue to present formidable challenges in developing effective treatments. Against this backdrop, the book "Brain Tumor Drug Development: Current Advances and Strategies (Part 1)," edited by Dr. Prashant Tiwari, Dr. Pankaj Kumar Singh, and Dr. Sunil Kumar Kadiri, emerges as a critical resource for both experienced researchers and new entrants into the field.

The editors, each with extensive expertise in oncology, pharmacology, and drug development, have compiled a remarkable collection of insights that encompass the full spectrum of current advances in brain tumor therapeutics. From the latest molecular and genomic approaches to emerging targeted therapies, this volume encapsulates a dynamic and evolving landscape. The emphasis on precision medicine, immunotherapy, and the repurposing of existing drugs highlights the cutting-edge strategies that are driving the next generation of brain tumor treatments.

In particular, the book addresses some of the most pressing questions facing the field: How can we overcome the blood-brain barrier to deliver effective drugs? What role do molecular biomarkers play in predicting patient outcomes? And how can we harness the immune system to combat tumors that have historically been resistant to conventional treatments?

The editors have ensured that this book not only reflects the state-of-the-art in brain tumor drug development but also points toward the future. By exploring the potential of novel therapeutic agents, innovative delivery systems, and combination treatments, this book provides readers with a comprehensive understanding of the strategies that are being employed to tackle one of the most aggressive forms of cancer.

I hope that this book will inspire and inform the next wave of discoveries, bridging the gap between fundamental research and clinical application. Whether you are a researcher, clinician, or industry professional, Brain Tumor Drug Development: Current Advances and Strategies is an invaluable resource that provides both a broad overview and in-depth discussions of the ongoing efforts to develop effective therapies for brain tumors.

I congratulate the editors and contributors for compiling such a timely and impactful book, and I am confident that it will make a lasting contribution to the field of brain tumor research.

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PREFACE

The development of effective treatments for brain tumors represents one of the most formidable challenges in modern oncology. Brain tumors, particularly glioblastomas, are characterized by their aggressive nature and resistance to conventional therapies. Despite advancements in surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy, the prognosis for patients with brain tumors has remained poor, necessitating novel approaches and a deeper understanding of the underlying biology of these malignancies.

In recent years, research in brain tumor drug development has progressed significantly, driven by advancements in molecular biology, genomics, immunology, and drug delivery systems. New insights into the genetic and molecular makeup of brain tumors, combined with breakthroughs in drug design and delivery, have opened exciting new possibilities for targeting tumors more effectively. However, the journey from bench to bedside remains long and complex, with many scientific, clinical, and regulatory hurdles still to be overcome.

This book, titled Brain Tumor Drug Development: Current Advances and Strategies (Part 1), aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the latest developments in the field, from the discovery of new therapeutic targets to innovative drug delivery systems. It brings together leading experts from various disciplines, each contributing their knowledge and experience in the pursuit of better treatment options for brain tumors. By focusing on current advances and emerging strategies, we hope to shed light on the future directions of brain tumor drug development and inspire further research and collaboration.

This book seeks to highlight both the opportunities and challenges in brain tumor drug development. While we have witnessed remarkable progress in understanding the biology of brain tumors and developing potential therapies, much work remains to be done. The translation of laboratory findings into clinically effective treatments requires ongoing collaboration between researchers, clinicians, pharmaceutical companies, and regulatory bodies.

As editors, we are deeply grateful to the contributors whose expertise and dedication have made this book possible. Their cutting-edge research and forward-thinking approaches represent the best of what the scientific community has to offer in the fight against brain cancer. We also wish to express our appreciation to Bentham Science for supporting this project and facilitating its publication.

We hope that Brain Tumor Drug Development: Current Advances and Strategies (Part 1) will serve as an indispensable resource for researchers, clinicians, and pharmaceutical professionals who are committed to advancing the treatment of brain tumors. By fostering greater understanding and innovation, we believe this book will play a significant role in shaping the future of brain tumor therapeutics and ultimately improve the lives of patients worldwide.

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CHAPTER 1

Current Advances in Drug Development, Design, and Strategies for Brain Tumors

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Abstract: Cancer manifests itself differently in each patient due to various genetic abnormalities that allow cancer to develop in vulnerable cells. The most common method of treating brain tumours is surgery; however, complete removal is challenging due to the tumor's invasiveness and lack of clear boundaries. Effective brain tumor-targeted drug delivery requires careful consideration of numerous factors, including the tumour microenvironment, tumour cells, and the obstacles involved in the process, as brain tumours differ significantly from peripheral tumours owing to their complex oncogenesis. Physiological barriers like the Blood-Brain Tumour Barrier (BBTB) and overexpressed efflux pumps prevent the drugs from penetrating tumours. Optimising the medication distribution volume allows for effective intraventricular infusion by preventing backflow. Research suggests that during interstitial infusion, fluid convection, rather than simple diffusion, maintains a pressure gradient that enhances the distribution of both large and small molecules in cancerous and brain tissues. As nanoparticles can cross the porous blood-brain barrier, this is one potential method of drug delivery to brain tumours. When treating many tumour antigens at once, a vaccine is often the most effective approach. Instead of designing several CAR structures, it is far more practical to include multiple peptides into a vaccine formulation. In recent times, there has been an unexpected rise in the appeal of cell treatments, which now rank as the third most promising experimental treatment strategy for cancer.

Keywords: Brain tumour, Cerebrospinal fluid, Clinical trials, Glioma, Intra-arterial, Intracerebroventricular, Microdialysis, Monoclonal antibody, Nanocarriers, Nanoparticles, Oncogenesis, P-glycoprotein, Prodrugs, Sonoporation, Tumour barrier, Vaccine, Viruses.

INTRODUCTION

Cancer manifests itself differently in each patient due to the numerous genetic abnormalities that enable cancer to develop in vulnerable cells. Over the last

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several decades, growing research indicates that a subtype of cancer cells mimicking normal stem cell characteristics may be responsible for tumor development and heterogeneity, treatment resistance, and recurrence [1].

Many people in the West are concerned about developing a brain tumor, one of the most challenging illnesses to treat. This issue affects about 25% of the population [2]. Despite the fact that there is currently no definitive cure for central nervous system diseases, such as HIV encephalopathy, neurodegenerative disorders, epilepsy, or cerebrovascular disease, research has increasingly focused on brain-targeted therapies [3].

According to the most recent worldwide cancer statistics published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020 [4], brain tumours are responsible for around 1.6% of tumour incidence and 2.5% of tumour deaths. Gliomas account for 30% of all brain tumours and are the most prevalent and invasive kind of the disease. They are characterised by significant invasion, a high recurrence rate, and a poor prognosis [5].

The most common method of treating brain tumours is surgery; however, full removal is challenging due to the tumor's invasiveness and lack of clear boundaries. More than 90% of recurrences occur after surgery [6 - 10]. There has been some encouraging but modest success with more modern glioma therapies, including gene therapy, immunotherapy, and angiogenesis inhibition [11]. Therefore, it is crucial to create drugs for brain tumours that are targeted, effective, and less hazardous.

Glioma infiltration makes it difficult to fully eliminate tissues damaged by pathogens or tumors without impairing normal brain functioning [12, 13], which is one reason why this conventional treatment is associated with a poor prognosis and rapid recurrence.

For a long time, scientists have been working to develop methods for delivering therapeutic drugs to tumor sites while minimizing side effects on healthy brain and peripheral tissues. Over the last few decades, there has been a significant focus on currently available and important drug delivery systems for brain tumors. Effective brain tumor-targeted drug delivery requires careful consideration of numerous factors, including the tumour microenvironment, tumour cells, and the obstacles involved in the process, as brain tumours differ significantly from peripheral tumours owing to their complex oncogenesis. To achieve the targeted treatment using nanocarriers, various targets have been employed. In this chapter, we provide a concise overview of many potential targeted delivery techniques for brain tumours.

CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING DRUGS FOR BRAIN CANCER

Many obstacles exist in therapy for brain cancers compared to peripheral malignancies (Fig. **1**). A counterargument suggests that medications are unable to penetrate tumors due to physiological barriers, such as the blood-brain tumor barrier (BBTB) and overexpressed efflux pumps. There is a significant failure and recurrence rate in brain cancer treatments due to the tumour microenvironment (TME) and cancer stem cells (CSC)-induced heterogeneity, immune evasion, drug resistance, invasion, and infiltration [9]. The majority of tumors exhibit heterogeneity, which is one of the most challenging behaviors in cancer ecosystems. Heterogeneity contributes to tumor resistance, more aggressive metastasis, and recurrence, which are key factors that hinder the long-term effectiveness of solid tumor therapies. Cellular interactions drive heterogeneity, and understanding the mechanisms governing the tumor microenvironment (TME), as well as how distinct cellular subtypes relate to clinical outcomes, will significantly improve current therapeutic strategies. Patients with brain tumors receiving standard treatment have a median survival of approximately 20 months, with survival rates of only 27% at 2 years and 10% at 5 years [14].

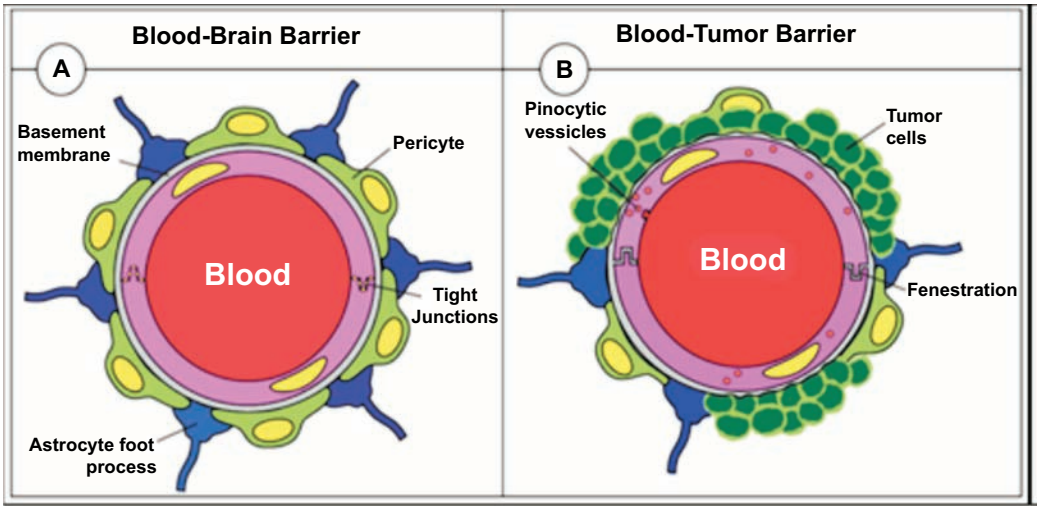

Fig. (1). Diagram showing how BBB and BBTB differ from one another. Blood-brain tumour barrier (BBTB) and blood-brain barrier (BBB).

Barriers to Targeted Drug Delivery Strategies and their Role

Types of gliomas include astrocytomas, oligodendrogliomas, and ependymomas. Tumours that form outside of the blood-brain barrier are called meningiomas. Tumours that expand to cover various areas of the body are called metastases. They typically originate from malignancies of the colon, lung, melanoma, or

CHAPTER 2

LDL Receptors and their Impact in Targeted Therapies for Brain Tumors

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Abstract: Around twenty months is the normal median survival time for those who have been diagnosed with a brain tumor by medical professionals. Brain tumors are responsible for around 1.6% of all known cases of tumors, and they are responsible for 2.5% of the total death rates. Brain tumors present a number of problems that need to be recognized and overcome before they can be properly treated. There are a number of barriers that are present in this scenario. These barriers include the blood-brain tumor barrier (BBTB), the blood-brain barrier (BBB), the presence of efflux pumps, the diversity of tumor cells, antibiotic resistance, the tumor microenvironment (TME), and cancer stem cells (CSCs), which cause immune evasion, as well as the infiltration and invasion of tumor cells. Treatment of brain tumors with receptor-mediated drug delivery systems that make use of targeted nanoparticles (NPs) is one of the most advantageous approaches. This is due to the fact that there is a strong desire to make use of the potential that is offered by these systems. Particularly in the field of medical administration, the emphasis is placed on the utilization of research in order to target particular receptors. A damaged blood-brain barrier is associated with increased levels of expression of low-density lipoprotein receptors, which are commonly referred to as LDLR. These receptors are found in both healthy and diseased brains. The influence of LDLR-mediated therapy in the treatment of brain tumors was the key topic of discussion that we focused on in this chapter.

Keyword: Brain tumor, Low-density lipoprotein receptor, Low-density lipoproteins, Nanoparticles.

INTRODUCTION

Brain Tumor

The phrase "intracranial tumor" is frequently employed when referring to a tumor that involves the brain. The abnormal buildup of tissue that is known as a brain

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tumor is characterised by the fast and uncontrolled proliferation of cells, which appears to be untouched by the regulatory systems that are normally considered to regulate normal cells. When it comes to brain tumors, there are two primary groups that may be distinguished: major and metastatic illnesses. The fact that there have been documented cases of more than 150 different forms of brain tumors is something that should be taken into consideration. Primary tumors are the most common type of tissue that may be found in the brain. Cancers that start in brain tissue or other structures in the body can metastasise to other parts of the brain, a condition known as secondary brain tumors. Primary brain tumors are also referred to as intracranial tumors, which is an alternate word. Primary tumors may be divided into two categories: two types of brain cancers: glial tumors composed of glial cells, and non-glial tumors that develop on or inside brain systems, including blood vessels, glands and nerves. Glial tumors are the more common kind of primary disease. The most common type of neoplasms is known as glial tumors. In addition, primary tumors can be categorised as either potentially useful or potentially harmful, depending on these characteristics. Malignancies that begin in other regions of the body, such as the breast or the lungs, and then metastasise to the brain, generally through the bloodstream, are referred to as metastatic brain tumors. The phrase “metastatic brain tumors” refers to three distinct types of malignancies that have spread to the brain. Malignant tumors are commonly believed to be cancerous and to have metastasised to other organs. It is estimated that each year, around 150,000 people are impacted by metastatic tumors that have spread to the brain. This is responsible for around twenty-five percent of all cancer patients who are impacted by the illness. People who have been diagnosed with lung cancer have a forty percent chance of getting brain tumors that spread to other parts of the body. Current treatment options include surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and targeted therapy, while future approaches are expected to focus on blood-brain barrier disruption, genomic and immune-genomic strategies, gene therapy, advanced immunotherapy, and the integration of AI to overcome existing challenges [1]. Individuals who were diagnosed with these tumors had an extremely poor probability of surviving over the course of history, with the average survival rate being only a few weeks [1 - 4]. Surgery is often used to treat brain tumors; however, the invasive nature of the treatment and the imprecise borders of the tumor pose certain problems that must be overcome in order to achieve complete removal of the tumor. On top of that, the rate of recurrence following surgical intervention is more than ninety percent [5]. Additionally, following surgical excision of the tumor, the current treatment regimen for brain tumors includes a sequential injection of radiation therapy and chemotherapy. The alkylating drug Temozolomide (TMZ) is among the most frequently used chemotherapy treatments for brain tumors. The process of methyl group transfer to the purine bases of DNA is what it uses to carry out its duties,

which ultimately results in the death of cells. The different type of brain tumors is given in Fig. (**1**).

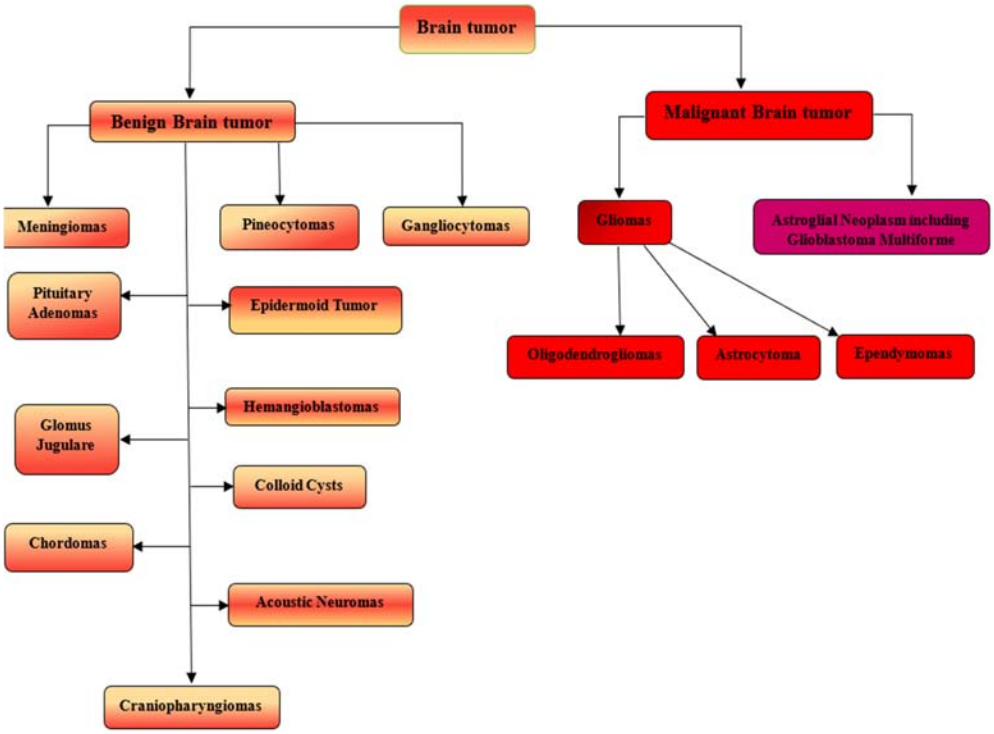

Fig. (1). Various types of brain tumors.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICATIONS FOR THE BRAIN TUMOR

When compared to cancers located in other parts of the body, brain tumors pose a number of significant therapeutic obstacles. There are physiological obstacles that make it difficult for medications to enter the CNS and even more difficult for them to reach the tumor site. Two such barriers are the blood-brain tumor barrier (BBTB) and the blood-brain barrier (BBB), and over-expressed efflux pumps are also present. However, the inherent characteristics of brain tumors, such as their ability to invade and infiltrate surrounding tissues, their high degree of heterogeneity, their drug resistance, and their ability to elude the immune system due to the tumor microenvironment (TME) and cancer stem cells (CSC), further restrict the effectiveness of treatments. As a consequence, this ultimately leads to a high risk of treatment failure and recurrence of the targeted cancer. The survival rate for individuals with brain tumors who are having standard treatment is around

CHAPTER 3

Present Status and Prospects of Drug Delivery Approaches: Managing the Blood-Brain Barrier Treatment in Brain Tumors

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Abstract: Developing effective treatments for CNS disorders remains a formidable challenge due to the existence of multiple physiological barriers, primarily the blood-brain barrier (BBB), which severely restricts medication invasion into the brain and consequently compromises therapeutic efficacy. Effective brain-targeted drug delivery, especially to diseased cells, requires overcoming these barriers to develop promising therapies for brain disorders. Current research focuses on diverse nanocarrier structures and surface-engineered, site-specific novel transporters to improve effectiveness and minimize the untoward effects of brain therapy. These methods aim to bypass the BBB or enhance its permeability, thereby increasing the absorption of medication in the brain. However, the effectiveness of innovative transporter systems is influenced by physiological factors such as Efflux-mediated excretion, Brain protein coating, Persistence, Cytotoxicity of the nanocarriers, and patient-specific factors. Thus, understanding the composition of the brain, the BBB, and related features is crucial for developing effective carrier systems. Additionally, alternative routes like direct nasal-to-brain drug transfer proposal promise revenue to contact the brain without the BBB barrier. This chapter discusses the characteristics of several biological barriers, as well as the BBB and BCSFB (blood-cerebrospinal fluid barrier), in drug treatment and the mechanisms of drug transport that cross the BBB. It additionally explores innovative approaches for brain-targeted drug delivery, as well as dendrimers, nanogels, inorganic nanoparticles, liposomes, polymeric nanoparticles, nanoemulsions, quantum dots, lipidic nanoparticles, and intranasal drug delivery. Features disturbing the drug-targeting efficacy of these innovative transporter systems are also illustrated.

Keywords: Brain, Blood-brain barrier, Drug targeting, Lipid vesicle, Nanoparticle, Pharmacotherapy, Trans nasal medication administration.

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Prashant Tiwari, Pankaj Kumar Singh & Sunil Kumar Kadiri (Eds.)

INTRODUCTION

The treatment of brain tumors is among the most formidable challenges in contemporary medical science [1, 2]. This is mainly due to the existence of a tightly regulated gateway, the blood-brain barrier, which segregates the circulating blood from the brain's extracellular environment. While the BBB is crucial for regulating the brain's internal milieu and protecting it from toxins and pathogens, it also significantly hinders the delivery of therapeutic agents [3, 4]. This dual role of the BBB as both a protector and an obstacle underscores the complexity of developing effective treatments for brain tumors, where the ability to deliver drugs directly to the tumor site within the brain is often severely limited. The BBB is composed of tightly joined endothelial cells, pericytes, astrocyte end-feet, and a basement membrane, all of which work in concert to regulate the passage of substances between the bloodstream and the brain [5, 6]. Tight junctions between endothelial cells restrict the passage of large and hydrophilic molecules, while efflux transporters, such as the P-glycoprotein pump, expel many drugs that manage to enter the endothelial cells [7, 8]. This highly regulated environment ensures the brain’s protection, but also means that many conventional therapeutic agents cannot reach effective concentrations within the brain tissue when administered systemically. The current arsenal against brain tumors includes surgery, radiation, and medications that target cancer cells (chemotherapy) [9]. Surgical resection is often the first line of treatment; however, its success is highly dependent on the tumor’s location and accessibility. Many brain tumors are situated in regions that are difficult to access without risking significant damage to vital brain structures [10, 11]. Radiation therapy is another common treatment that aims to destroy tumor cells with targeted radiation. However, it often cannot completely eradicate the tumor and can cause damage to surrounding healthy brain tissue, leading to long-term cognitive deficits. Chemotherapy, while a mainstay in cancer treatment, faces substantial barriers in treating brain tumors due to the BBB [12, 13]. Most chemotherapeutic agents are unable to cross the BBB in sufficient concentrations to be effective, and those that do often result in systemic toxicity. Given these limitations, innovative drug delivery therapeutic strategies are being developed and optimized to increase the distribution of healing agents beyond the BBB. These advanced approaches can be broadly classified into aggressive and non-aggressive approaches, each offering distinct advantages and facing unique challenges [14, 15]. Fig. (**1**) shows the medication delivery techniques to the CNS.

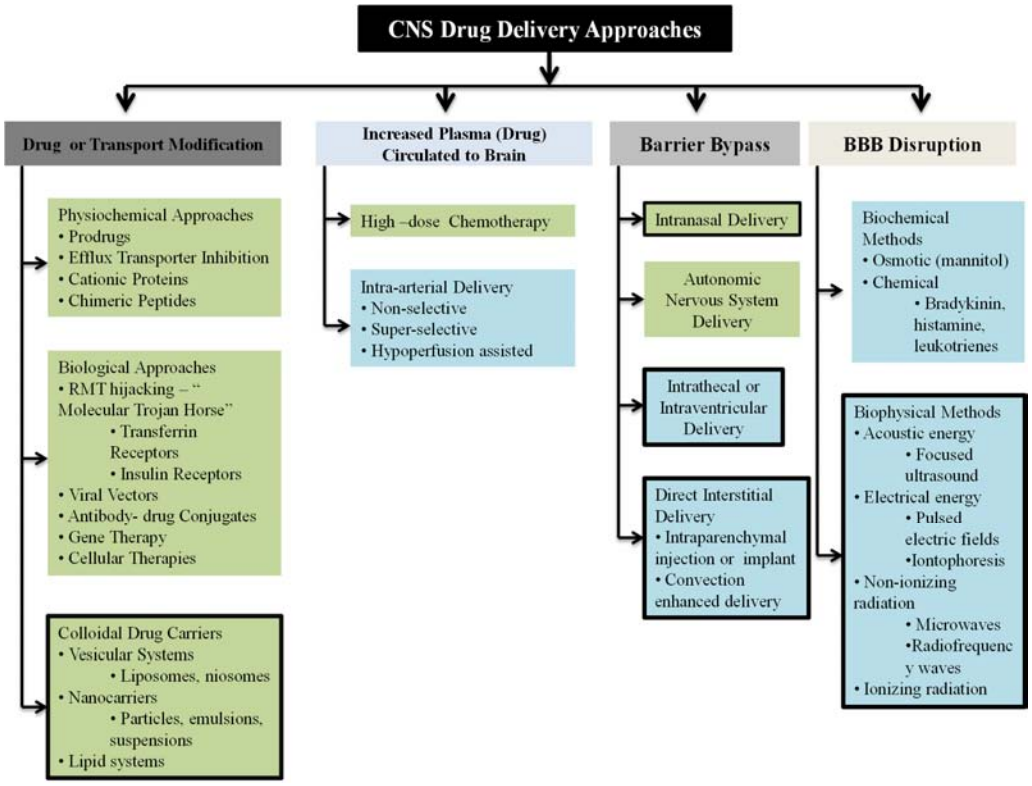

Fig. (1). A comparison of methods for distributing cargoes to the central nervous system (CNS), highlighting non-invasive (green boxes) and invasive (blue boxes) techniques.

One invasive approach is intracerebral implantation, where drug-releasing devices are placed directly into the brain. This method enables localized, high-concentration drug delivery, thereby minimizing systemic exposure and associated side effects. An example of this is the Gliadel® wafer, which releases the chemotherapeutic agent carmustine directly into the tumor resection cavity over time [16, 17]. Another promising invasive technique is CED, or convection-enhanced delivery, which precisely delivers medications within the brain by infusing them through a catheter driven by a pressure gradient. CED allows for the distribution of therapeutic agents over a larger volume and deeper into the brain tissue than would be possible with simple diffusion. Focused ultrasound (FUS) combined with microbubbles is another innovative approach that has shown promise in preclinical studies [16, 18]. This technique temporarily disrupts the BBB at targeted locations, allowing for the enhanced transport of medicines to brain tumors. The application of FUS can be precisely controlled, thereby minimizing damage to healthy brain tissue and improving drug penetration at the tumor site. Non-invasive methods of drug delivery also hold significant promise.

CHAPTER 4

Targeted Drug Delivery: Opportunities and Challenges in Brain Tumour

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Abstract: A promising approach to improving the treatment of brain tumors is the targeted delivery of drugs, which offers opportunities to increase drug efficacy while reducing systemic toxicity. This abstract provides an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of targeted medication delivery for brain tumors. Opportunities include minimising side effects by reducing systemic exposure, improving efficacy by accurately delivering therapeutic drugs to the tumor site, as well as being able to pass across the blood-brain barrier (BBB) to reach the brain tumor. Additionally, combination therapy approaches, and personalized medicine approaches catered to the molecular features of particular tumours are made possible by targeted drug delivery. To fully achieve the potential of targeted drug delivery against brain tumours, some challenges must be overcome. The complex nature and diversity of brain tumours, the BBB's impenetrable barrier, the development of resistance to targeted therapy, and the conversion of preclinical research into clinically effective treatments are some of these difficulties. Collaboration between researchers, physicians, engineers, and regulatory authorities will be necessary to address these issues. To improve the field of targeted drug delivery against brain tumours, novel approaches are required to target specific molecular pathways, get over the blood-brain barrier, and overcome drug resistance mechanisms. In conclusion, targeted drug delivery has great promise for improving patient outcomes and revolutionising the treatment of brain tumours with more research and development.

Keywords: Brain tumor, Blood-brain barrier, Targeted drug delivery.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the most recent worldwide cancer data provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020 [1], brain tumours account for approximately 1.6% of incident cases and 2.5% of deaths from all tumours, respectively. In contrast, China has the highest rates of brain tumour morbidity and death worldwide, with rates as high as 32% and 26%, respectively, and an incidence rate that is still growing for younger people [2]. Gliomas account for approximately 30% of all brain tumours and are the most prevalent and invasive type of brain tumours. They have aggressive invasion, a high recurrence rate, and a poor prognosis.

The preferred course of treatment for brain tumours is surgery; however, its invasive nature and hazy boundaries make it challenging to eradicate the tumour entirely. Furthermore, almost 90% of surgical recurrences occur [3]. Furthermore, radiation and chemotherapy used after surgery are becoming the norm for treating brain tumours. Temozolomide (TMZ), an alkylating agent, acts as a first-line chemotherapeutic medication for brain tumours and introduces a methyl group to DNA purine bases to induce cell death [4]. However, due to its short half-life, the higher dosage has resulted in several side effects, including lymphopenia, neutropenia, and thrombocytopenia.

Furthermore, the deregulation of signalling pathways, DNA repair, autophagy, and other associated mechanisms may cause the tumour cells to develop resistance to TMZ [5]. In addition to TMZ, bevacizumab is a VEGFR inhibitor that the FDA has approved for the treatment of brain tumours. However, the usage of this anti-angiogenesis medication is still debatable because it has not been able to increase patients' overall survival [6]. It is challenging to develop specific therapeutic drugs for the treatment of brain tumours because of their poor efficacy and serious toxic and side effects. Examples of these drugs are nitrosoureas (carmustine, lomustine), anthracyclines (adriamycin), platinums (cisplatin, carboplatin, oxaliplatin), topoisomerase inhibitors (camptothecin, irinotecan, etoposide), integrin receptor inhibitors (cilengitide), EGFR inhibitors (erlotinib, gefitinib, afatinib), and histone deacetylase inhibitors (vorinostat, panobinostat) [7]. Novel treatments for gliomas, including gene therapy, angiogenesis inhibition, and immunotherapy, have shown promise but have had limited success [8 - 13]. Thus, the development of highly effective, low-toxic, and targeted medications for brain tumours is imperative.

OVERVIEW OF TARGETED DRUG DELIVERY IN CANCER TREATMENT

An advanced strategy for enhancing the effectiveness of cancer treatments while reducing adverse effects is targeted medication delivery. By targeting treatment drugs exclusively at cancer cells, this approach protects healthy organs and lowers systemic toxicity. There are two main techniques in use: passive targeting and active targeting. In order to specifically bind to receptors or antigens that are overexpressed on cancer cells, ligands or antibodies that are coupled to the drug delivery system are used in active targeting. By taking advantage of the increased permeability and retention (EPR) effect, which occurs when tumour tissues have leaky vasculature and inadequate lymphatic drainage, nanoparticles can accumulate there. Targeted drug delivery is achieved through a variety of methods, such as the use of nanoparticles (like liposomes, dendrimers, and polymeric nanoparticles), antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs), which combine powerful cytotoxic drugs with monoclonal antibodies specific to cancer cell antigens, and small molecule inhibitors that prevent the growth of cancer cells. By enhancing the delivery of therapeutic drugs to tumour locations, this targeted method reduces side effects associated with traditional chemotherapy and improves treatment results [14 - 17].

Importance of Targeting Tumors Specifically

To improve treatment success and minimise negative side effects, it is imperative that tumours be properly targeted during cancer treatment. Conventional radiation and chemotherapy treatments frequently target both healthy and malignant cells, resulting in severe side effects and substantial toxicity that can negatively influence a patient's quality of life. Targeted medication delivery minimises damage to normal tissues by directing therapeutic chemicals selectively to cancer cells. This reduces side effects, such as nausea, immunological suppression, and hair loss. Due to this accuracy, greater drug concentrations can be administered precisely to the tumour site, enhancing therapy efficacy and potentially improving clinical outcomes. Furthermore, targeted medicines offer a more successful and long-lasting approach to cancer therapy by circumventing the drug resistance mechanisms that frequently arise with conventional treatments [18 - 20].

TUMOUR HETEROGENEITY

In clinical settings, tumours are classified into several categories using histological and genetic analysis. For instance, there are 120 different types of central nervous system cancer [21]. Most significantly, this classification is insufficient to capture the heterogeneous character of intra-tumour cancer cells, which poses a challenge to efforts to develop targeted drugs for treating human

CHAPTER 5

Receptor-Ligand-based Targeting Approaches in Brain Tumors

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Abstract: Brain tumors pose a significant therapeutic challenge due to their heterogeneity, invasive properties, and limited availability of treatment options. Targeted therapies offer a promising approach to address the complexity of brain tumors by selectively inhibiting molecular pathways critical for tumor growth and survival. Among these targeted approaches, receptor-ligand based targeting strategies have emerged as a promising avenue for precision therapy. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of receptor-ligand based targeting approaches for brain tumors, focusing on the molecular interactions between receptors and their cognate ligands, the expression profiles of key receptors in different tumor subtypes, and the development of targeted therapeutics. The diverse range of receptors and ligands is implicated in brain tumor biology. Epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR), vascular endothelial growth factor receptor (VEGFR), and human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2) are important in the context of this discussion.

Additionally, this chapter examines the challenges associated with delivering targeted therapeutics permeating the blood-brain barrier (BBB) and explores innovative strategies to enhance the delivery of drugs to brain tumors. Promising outcomes and areas for further investigation are highlighted based on a review of preclinical and clinical studies that have evaluated the efficacy and safety of receptor-ligand-based targeting approaches. A discussion on the challenges and future directions in this field, including strategies to overcome resistance mechanisms, enhance treatment specificity, and advance personalized medicine approaches, is incorporated. Overall, this chapter offers valuable insights into the current state and future prospects of receptor-ligand-based targeting approaches for brain tumors. This chapter therefore provides a roadmap for the development of innovative and operational therapies in the fight against this disease.

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Keywords: Brain tumor, Clinical studies, Chemotherapy, Drug repurposing, *In-silico* interactions, Multi-target approaches, Malignancy, Preclinical studies, Receptor-ligand interaction, Small molecules, Targeted approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Brain tumors represent a diverse group of neoplasms arising from abnormal growth of cells within the brain and central nervous system (CNS). They pose significant challenges in neuro-oncology due to their heterogeneity, location, and often aggressive nature. Understanding the molecular characteristics of brain tumors is quintessential for the development of effective treatment strategies. Hence, it is noteworthy that targeted therapies have materialized as a favorable approach to address these challenges [1]. Fig. (**1**) illustrates the process of tumorigenesis.

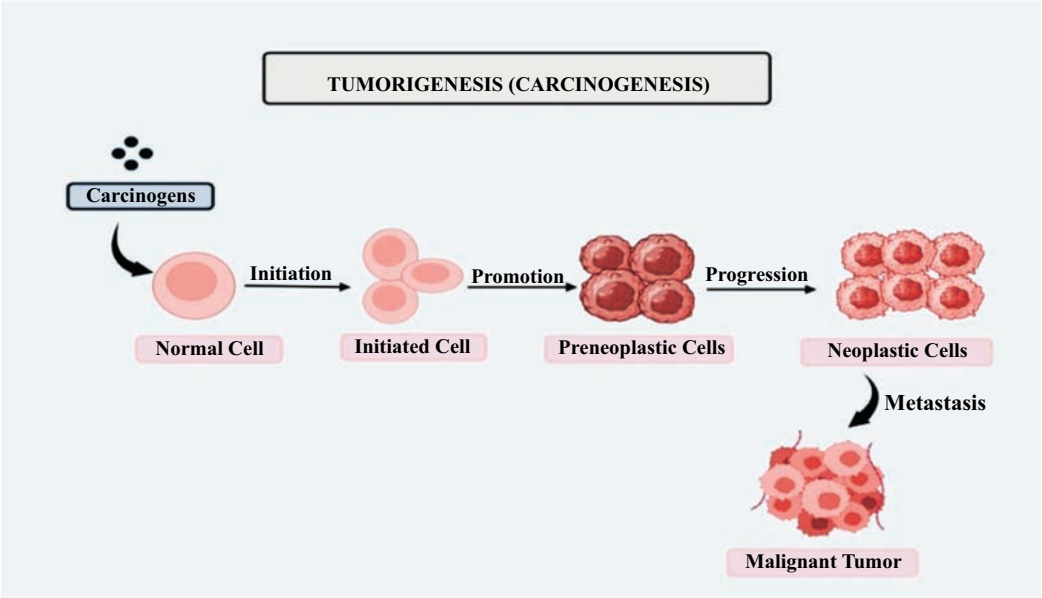

Fig. (1). Brain tumorigenesis.

Brain tumors are relatively rare compared to other cancers, comprising approximately 1.4% of all new cancer cases worldwide. However, they are associated with significant morbidity and mortality, particularly due to their propensity to invade surrounding brain tissue and cause neurological dysfunction.

Primary and secondary can be the two main categories of brain tumors. The origin of primary brain tumors is within the brain or the structures surrounding the brain. Primary brain tumors can be further classified depending on their cell of origin

and histological features. Common primary brain tumors comprise gliomas (*e.g.*, glioblastoma (GBM), astrocytoma, oligodendroglioma), meningiomas, and medulloblastomas. Secondary brain tumors are metastatic tumors, and they arise from cancer cells that have spread (metastasized) to the brain from other parts of the body, such as the lung, breast, or colon.

The classification of brain tumors is evolving with the exploration of their site of origin, the cells involved, the parts of the brain affected, the rate of growth, the age of occurrence, and the grade of the tumors. The latest type of classification, which has been widely used, is based on the genes/proteins/biomarkers involved in the brain tumor [1].

Receptor Expression Profiles in Brain Tumors

The exploration of biomarkers involved in brain tumors has facilitated the nomenclature of the tumors based on the genes/ proteins involved. The information about biomarkers involved in brain tumors serves as the basis for receptor-ligand-based targeting approaches in brain tumors. Diagnostic pathology identifies the receptors overexpressed in the cancer, which may serve as potential targets for treatment [2].

The characterization of tumors based on overexpressed or suppressed biomarkers contributes to their specificity in identification. Some examples are compiled in Table **1**.

Table 1. Examples of tumor nomenclature.

Location	Classification of Tumor	Biomarker Modified
Glial cell	Glioma, glioneuroma, ganglioglioma	*IDH* wild type, *EGFR*
Neuronal cell	Neuroma, astrocytoma, gangliocytoma	*IDH* mutant, *ATRX, TP53*
Ependymal cells	Ependymoma	*NF2, MYCN*
Choroid plexus	Choroid plexus papilloma, carcinoma	*PRKCA*
Embryonal cells	Medulloblastoma, neuroblastoma	*WNT* Activated (CTNNB, APC) and SHH activated (*TP53, PTCH1)*
Pineal gland	Pineocytoma	*SMARCB1* mutant
Cranium and paraspinal nerves	Schwannoma, neurofibroma, perineurioma, paraganglioma	*NF1*
Meninges	Meningioma	*SMARCE1, BAP1, KLF4/TRAF7, TERT, CDKN2A/B, H3K27*
Vascular tissue	Hemangioma, hemangioblastoma	*VEGF*
Skeletal tissue	Rhabdomyosarcoma	*PAX3-FOXO1, PAX7-FOXO1*

CHAPTER 6

Therapeutic Interference and Signaling Pathways in Brain Tumors

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Abstract: Despite their rarity, brain tumors are associated with significant morbidity and mortality across all age groups. Although therapeutic options remain limited, the prognosis for individuals with brain tumors has markedly improved due to advances in immunotherapies, targeted treatments, and a deeper understanding of tumor biology. However, further progress in treating brain tumors such as gliomas, meningiomas, and brain germ cell tumors is hindered by low response rates and predictable drug resistance associated with currently approved therapies. Evidence from previous studies indicates that brain tumors dysregulate several distinct signaling pathways. Importantly, a more comprehensive understanding of the molecular mechanisms driving the malignant behavior of brain tumor cells could facilitate the development of novel targeted therapies. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of the pathophysiology of these tumors is urgently needed, as it holds the potential to significantly enhance therapeutic strategies. Glioblastoma, in particular, is a primary brain tumor characterized by high morbidity and poor responsiveness to conventional treatments. Recently, large-scale genome sequencing initiatives have intensified research efforts, providing new insights into the cellular signaling networks and genomic alterations underlying brain tumor pathogenesis. Current knowledge of molecular markers and tumorigenic pathways may prove instrumental in identifying new therapeutic avenues for brain cancers. Multiple signaling pathways including pRB, p53, NF-κB, RAS/MAPK, STAT3, ZIP3, and WNT are implicated in the development of various brain tumor types. This chapter explores the therapeutic interventions and signaling pathways involved in brain tumor progression.

Keywords: Chemotherapy resistance, Combination therapy, Drug delivery systems, Molecular inhibitors, Nanotechnology in therapy, Targeted therapy.

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INTRODUCTION

Brain and central nervous system (CNS) cancers represent a significant global public health challenge, characterized by high mortality rates, substantial financial burdens on patients and healthcare systems, low survival rates, and profound impacts on patients' quality of life [1]. Although brain tumors are relatively rare, they contribute disproportionately to morbidity and mortality across all age groups. Despite limited treatment options, advances in molecular biology and the development of targeted therapies and immunotherapies have led to notable improvements in patient outcomes [2]. Nevertheless, low therapeutic response rates and pronounced drug resistance remain major obstacles to further progress in brain tumor management [3].

According to data from the U.S. Central Brain Tumor Registry, the incidence of malignant brain tumors declined by approximately 0.8% annually between 2008 and 2017 across all age groups. In contrast, the prevalence of nonmalignant tumors increased during the same period [4, 5]. Globally, brain and CNS cancers were the 12th leading cause of cancer-related deaths in 2020, accounting for 2.5% of all cancer deaths, as reported by the Global Cancer Observatory (GLOBOCAN) [4, 6]. In Iraq, these cancers ranked as the fourth leading cause of death among both genders in 2020 [2]. Furthermore, only 35.1% of brain cancer patients in the United States survived five years following a local-stage diagnosis, despite 76.9% of brain and CNS cancer cases being confirmed between 2012 and 2018 [2, 4]. The incidence of primary brain tumors varies significantly by age, gender, and race. Adults over the age of 20 exhibit a higher occurrence of both malignant and nonmalignant brain tumors, with most histological subtypes being the most prevalent in individuals aged 65 and older. In this age group, malignant tumors were 1.5 to 8 times more frequent, while nonmalignant tumors occurred 2 to 9 times more often. However, in younger patients, the incidence of malignant tumors decreases with age, while nonmalignant tumors increase. Notably, the overall occurrence rate is higher in adults aged 0-4 and 15-19 compared to children aged 5-14 [3, 7].

Primary brain tumors form when neural cells divide uncontrollably in the brain parenchyma [8]. These tumors can be identified based on their location, histological features, or the presence of particular mutations [8]. The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies gliomas, the most prevalent type of primary tumor of the adult brain parenchyma, into four categories ranging from 1 to 4. Grade 4 glioma, known as glioblastoma (GBM), is characterized by an aggressive nature, treatment resistance, and short overall survival of the patients [8].

Meningiomas are the most common primary intracranial tumors in adults; however, the understanding of their carcinogenesis remains limited compared to other intracranial tumors, such as gliomas [9].

Increasing evidence underscores the pivotal roles of growth factors, particularly platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF) and epidermal growth factor (EGF), in initiating the molecular pathways that drive brain tumor development [10]. These growth factors activate critical signaling cascades, including the Ras/mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) and phosphoinositide 3-kinase (PI3K-AKT) pathways, as well as secondary signaling routes such as mTOR and phospholipase C-γ/protein kinase C [9, 11, 12]. Similar to other malignancies, glioblastoma is characterized by disruptions in fundamental biological mechanisms that regulate cell proliferation and survival [13, 14]. The major molecular alterations that are commonly observed in glioblastoma include: Activation of MAPK and RTK/PI3K pathways present in approximately 90% of cases [14]; Inactivation of the p53 tumor suppressor pathway observed in 86% of cases [15]; Inactivation of the RB tumor suppressor pathway found in 79% of cases [16, 17]. Notably, 74% of glioblastomas exhibit concurrent alterations in all three pathways, highlighting the complexity and aggressiveness of this tumor type [18].

To improve preventive and therapeutic strategies, it is essential to increase public awareness of brain and CNS cancers, considering recent estimates of their incidence, mortality, and links to global socioeconomic factors. Estimating the signaling pathways involved in brain tumorigenesis and progression is critical for identifying therapeutic targets and managing brain tumors. This chapter provides an overview of different brain tumors and the signaling pathways driving their progression by regulating cell proliferation and cell cycle.

EPIDEMIOLOGY OF BRAIN TUMORS

As of 2023, more than one million individuals in the United States are living with primary brain tumors. Among these, approximately 72% are classified as benign, while 28% are malignant [18]. The adolescent and young adult (AYA) population in the U.S., defined as individuals aged 15 to 39, comprises over 110 million people, with an estimated 208,620 affected by a primary brain or spinal cord tumor. Meningiomas are the most common form of primary benign or non-malignant brain tumors, accounting for 39.7% of all brain tumors and 55.4% of non-malignant cases. In contrast, glioblastoma represents the most prevalent primary malignant brain tumor, comprising 14.2% of all brain tumors and 50.1% of malignant cases [18]. Malignant brain tumors, commonly referred to as brain cancers, are projected to cause approximately 18,990 deaths in the United States in 2023. Brain cancer ranks as the tenth leading cause of cancer-related mortality

CHAPTER 7

Investigating the Impact of Immunotherapy on Brain Tumors

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Abstract: Immunotherapy has become a viable treatment option for brain tumors, particularly gliomas and brain malignancies that have metastasized. This review examines the clinical outcomes of recent clinical studies and the mechanisms by which immunotherapy improves anti-tumor immune responses. Cancer vaccines, chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy and immune checkpoint inhibitors are important tactics. Immune checkpoint inhibitors strengthen the natural defenses against cancer by blocking proteins that hinder the immune system from attacking cancer cells. Through the modulation of an individual's T cells to target particular cancer antigens, CAR T-cell treatment provides a customized course of treatment. The primary intent of cancer vaccination is to prepare the host immune system for identifying and combating tumor cells. Notwithstanding these developments, problems still exist. For example, the blood-brain barrier limits the amount of medicinal entity that may reach the brain and the tumor's immunosuppressive milieu impairs the activity of immune cells. Combination therapies, which combine immunotherapy with conventional treatments like radiation and chemotherapy, or employ numerous immunotherapeutic drugs, show promise for overcoming these challenges. Approaches to personalized therapy that are adapted to each patient's unique immunologic and genetic profile are also being investigated to increase effectiveness and patient survival. Further research will be needed to optimize these treatments and overcome their current limitations. Immunotherapy possesses the ability to dramatically reinforce outcomes for individuals with brain tumors, which are notoriously difficult to treat, by addressing the particular difficulties that these malignancies present. It has shown promise in ameliorating brain malignancies, particularly glioblastoma (GBM), but identifying biomarkers to predict treatment outcomes remains a significant challenge. Prospective biomarkers, adoptive cell transfer treatment, and novel drug delivery strategies are all being studied in

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current and upcoming clinical trials. There is optimism for improved GBM outcomes with the introduction of novel drugs, such as immune checkpoint inhibitors, chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, oncolytic virotherapy, and vaccination. However, the fruitful utilization of immunotherapies for brain cancers requires the improvement of biopsy collecting methods as well as the development of more practical animal models.

Keywords: Brain tumors, BBB, CAR-T therapy, Immunotherapy.

INTRODUCTION

Although nervous system and brain malignancies account for a very minor percentage of yearly cancer occurrence (1.4%), they account for nearly twice as many cancer deaths (2.7%) [1]. Most malignant brain Tumors are neuroepithelial Tumors, with glioblastoma accounting for 46% of cases. Of these, only 5% of patients remain alive for more than five years [2]. The glaring lack of treatments that can both get past anatomical obstacles and spare sensitive neuronal tissue is the cause of this low survival rate. According to Nabors *et al.* (2015), the healthiest possible surgical excision of brain tumors is the existing strategies of treatment, along with modulated actinotherapy and chemotherapeutic agents [3].

However, because the tumor is in an area of the brain that is sensitive or inoperable, surgical removal is not always feasible [4, 5]. Furthermore, it is difficult to eradicate every cancer cell because the majority of brain tumors have aggressive fronts that extend past the original tumor core and into healthy tissue. Recurrence following surgery is therefore frequent [6]. Additionally, systemic chemotherapy is less effective in treating brain tumors because it cannot fully eradicate resident tumor-renewing populations and is unable to penetrate some brain tumor tissues due to blood-brain barrier's (BBB) transport-restrictive properties, drug adaptive resistance, elevated effective dose necessities, neural tissue sensitivity, and exacerbation of side effects [7, 8]. The influence of ongoing advancements in drug administration and discovery, which have significantly enhanced results for systemic cancers, has been very minimal when it comes to brain Tumors. Although immunotherapies are not now part of the standard of treatment, they may be able to lessen some of the difficulties associated with treating brain Tumors. Although it has proven challenging to target inside the brain, immune system modulations may allow one to take advantage of normal entry points, and memory of the immune system to stop reappearance later a standard therapy regimen may improve the prognosis for brain cancer. One remarkable finding supporting the promise of brain neoplasm immunotherapy is the possibility of marginally improved outcomes for brain Tumors that metastasize and spread into non-neuronal immunity a very uncommon occurrence [9]. Moreover, Volovitz *et al.* demonstrated in immune-compromised animals that

an anti-cancer impact in the brain may be obtained simply by transplanting severe brain cancer into the peripheral [10]. This implies that immune-driven treatments for brain cancer hold considerable promise. Besides the difficulty of designing immunotherapies, the brain presents anatomical and physiological challenges for the effective application of such a therapy in the case of brain neoplasm.

TYPES OF BRAIN TUMORS

Primary and secondary Tumors are the two main classes into which a wide group of neoplasms that make up Central Nervous System (CNS) Tumors can be roughly separated. Primary Tumors, such as gliomas, start from progenitor or mature cells found in the CNS, while secondary neoplasms are found in different regions in the body and proliferate hematogenously to the CNS.

Primary Tumors of CNS

Meningiomas

The most prevalent primary brain tumor, meningiomas, are typically slow-growing, benign neoplasms that originate from the arachnoidal cells of the middle layer of the meninges [11, 12]. Meningiomas are comparatively prevalent, making up as much as 30% of CNS Tumors, and they typically affect middle-aged and older persons. Based on histology, meningiomas are categorised by World Health Organisation (WHO) in classes I through III. Benign meningiomas, or grade I meningiomas, are the most frequent type and have a good prognosis. However, according to Durand *et al.* (2009), meningiomas classified as WHO class II and III are highly severe and have a 78% and 44% 5-year survival rate, respectively [13].

Glioblastoma

According to Louis *et al.* (2016), gliomas, which comprise astrocytomas, oligodendrogliomas, ependymomas, and some uncommon histologies, are the most frequent malignant CNS Tumors [11]. The frequent and dangerous type of astrocytoma is glioblastoma, a grade IV tumor. With an occurrence of 3.2/100,000 and a median age at the time of diagnosis of 64 years, GBM accountable for for 15% of all primary and 45% of malignant primary brain Tumors [11].

Secondary Tumors of CNS (Metastases)

The most prevalent type of brain cancer is metastatic brain tumors, which originate outside the central nervous system (CNS) and reach the brain either through hematogenous spread or direct invasion from adjacent tissues, such as

CHAPTER 8

Pharmacological Modulation of Brain Tumors: Therapeutic Opportunities and Persistent Challenges

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Abstract: Brain tumours are an aggressive and rapidly progressing class of cancers, whose complexity limits effective treatment options. This chapter examines the complexities and hurdles associated with employing pharmacological modulations as a therapeutic approach. Pharmacological modulations are an emerging requirement in tumour management, which calls for improved and innovative strategies. Pharmacological modulations promise to alter the biological environment of tumors, sensitizing, potentiating, and overcoming drug resistance. Sensitisation to increase tumour vulnerability to drugs, potentiation to increase drug efficacy, and overcoming resistance by targeting pathways that stem the tumour proliferation are the main approaches in pharmacological modulation. Targeted therapies, like tyrosine kinase inhibitors, also play a crucial role. This chapter provides a concise overview of primary and metastatic tumors, highlighting the molecular and cellular interactions that influence drug response and the hindrance posed by the heterogeneous barrier, the blood-brain barrier (BBB). Various therapeutic approaches have been discussed, including small-molecule inhibitors, monoclonal antibodies, and innovative ones such as RNA-targeting therapies and nano-oncology. Case studies have been cited to prove that modulation strategies successfully overcome biological hurdles. Prevailing challenges, which almost seem unbeatable, such as the BBB, are discussed in detail, along with approaches to overcome them and enhance drug delivery, including nanoparticle formulations and combination therapies. Pharmacological modulations proved promising results in treating brain tumours despite challenges like the BBB. Continued research and the development of innovative approaches are essential for further progress in brain tumor treatment. Personalized therapies and improved drug delivery systems offer hope for more effective treatment options in the future.

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Keywords: Blood-brain barrier (BBB), Brain tumour, Biomarkers, Monoclonal antibodies and antibody-drug conjugates, Nano-oncology, Pharmacological modulation, PD-1/PD-L1 pathways, RNA-targeting therapies, Tyrosine kinase inhibitors.

INTRODUCTION

Brain tumors are a diverse, complex group of neoplasms with a broad spectrum of over 100 different types that affect the central nervous system [1]. Characterized by their aggressive nature, high-grade gliomas exhibit rapid growth and infiltrative tendencies, posing significant challenges [2]. Despite advancements in surgical techniques and adjuvant therapies, the prognosis for brain tumour patients remains poor, illuminating the pressing demand for a more efficient treatment approach.

A limited understanding of the pathobiology of these neoplasms remains a major challenge in brain tumor research. Although advancements in imaging have enhanced diagnostic accuracy, the development of targeted therapies continues to be hindered by the heterogeneous nature of brain tumours and the protective function of the blood-brain barrier [2, 3]. Furthermore, the tumour microenvironment significantly influences disease progression and treatment resistance, involving a complex interplay between tumour cells and surrounding neural tissues that affects therapeutic outcomes [4].

Treatment strategies are typically determined by tumor type, grade, and location; however, available options remain limited. Surgery is the primary modality; however, complete resection is often unachievable due to the infiltrative nature of most brain tumours. Adjuvant therapies, such as radiation and chemotherapy, are commonly employed; however, their effectiveness is limited by the blood-brain barrier and the development of therapeutic resistance [5].

Current advancements in nanoparticle-mediated drug delivery and immunotherapy are promising, but they face numerous hurdles and are still in their early stages of development. Recent advances in nanoparticle-mediated drug delivery and immunotherapy hold promise, but these approaches are still in the early stages of development and face numerous challenges [6, 7].

Brain tumours are a complex, aggressive, and diverse spectrum of neoplasms that pose significant hurdles due to their infiltrative nature, the blood-brain barrier, and the limited understanding of the brain tumour microenvironment. Although advancements in imaging and the development of novel therapeutics are promising, there is a pressing need for research to improve outcomes for affected patients. An overview of brain tumor classifications is depicted in Fig. (**1**).

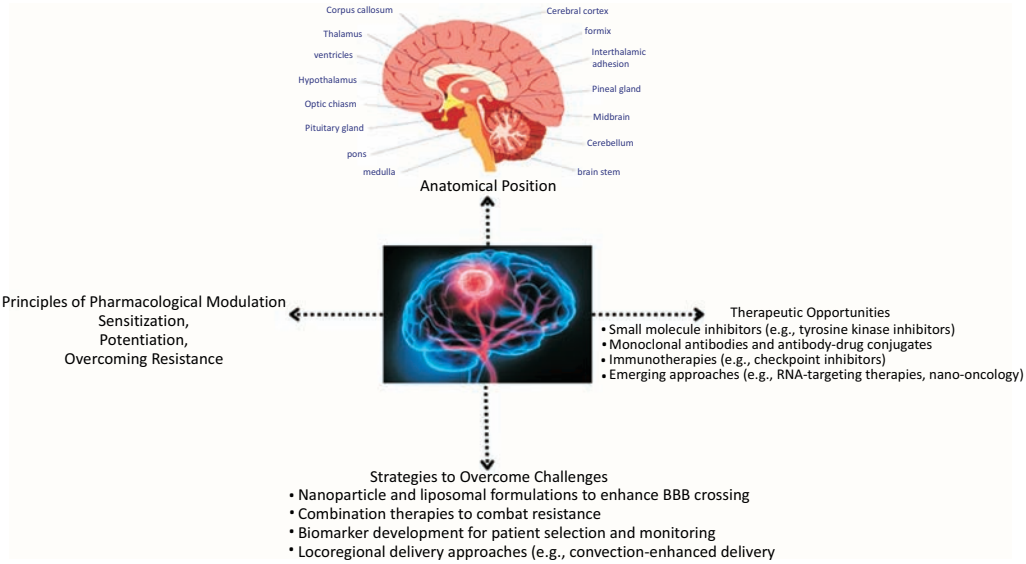

Fig. (1). Summary of brain tumour.

This literature review aims to process the current state of knowledge on pharmacological approaches to brain tumour treatment, highlighting key themes, methodologies, findings, and gaps in the existing research to guide further research in filling those gaps.

Concept of Pharmacological Modulation as a Promising Therapeutic Approach

Pharmacological modulation offers a therapeutic approach for a range of diseases. This strategy involves using drugs to modulate specific biological pathways or processes, thereby restoring normal functioning and improving patient outcomes.

Pharmacological modulation of Fibrinogen levels has been proposed as a therapeutic strategy for cardiovascular disease. Fibrinogen is a protein characterised by its crucial role in blood clotting, whose elevated levels pose an increased cardiovascular risk. A new advancement of oral or long-lasting parental therapies to lower fibrinogen could act as a risk reducer [8]. Autophagy, the process by which cells restore damaged or dysfunctional components, has emerged as a target for pharmacological modulation. Both pharmacological and nutritional autophagy modulators showcase their therapeutic potential in preclinical studies. Hurdles remain in the clinical translation of these findings, including the lack of understanding of how to optimally modulate autophagy in the context of various diseases [9].

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Prashant Tiwari

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Sunil Kumar Kadiri

Dr. Sunil Kumar Kadiri is an experienced pharmaceutical sciences academician and researcher, currently serving as an Associate Professor at Dayananda Sagar University, Bengaluru. With over 18 years in academia, including five years as an Assistant Professor and 12 years as an Associate Professor, he has worked in prominent institutions in Hyderabad and Bengaluru. Dr. Kadiri earned his Ph.D. from JNTU Hyderabad in 2019, holds an M.Pharm in Pharmacology with distinction, and a B.Pharm from RGUHS, Bangalore. His expertise spans teaching, pharmaceutical research, and both pre-clinical and clinical studies. He has published over 80 peer-reviewed articles, many indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, focusing on drug-drug interactions, neuropharmacology, phytopharmacology, and herbal formulations. Additionally, he has authored numerous book chapters and textbooks and holds patents in India and the UK. Active in academia, he regularly participates in seminars and webinars, emphasizing psychopharmacology and public health, contributing significantly to drug development and therapeutic research.