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Bioengineering Approaches to Cancer Therapy: Targeted Drug Delivery and Tumour Imaging

James Thomas*

Department of Bioelectronics, Queen Mary University, UK

INTRODUCTION

Cancer remains one of the most formidable challenges in modern medicine, with conventional treatments often causing significant side effects due to their indiscriminate targeting of both healthy and cancerous cells. In recent years, bioengineering has emerged as a promising avenue for improving the efficacy and safety of cancer therapy through targeted drug delivery and tumour imaging. By leveraging principles of biology, materials science, and engineering, bioengineers are developing innovative approaches to selectively target cancer cells while minimizing damage to healthy tissues, offering new hope to patients battling this devastating disease. One of the key strategies in bioengineering cancer therapy is the development of targeted drug delivery systems capable of delivering therapeutic agents specifically to cancer cells while sparing healthy tissues. Conventional chemotherapy drugs, while effective at killing cancer cells, often cause debilitating side effects due to their systemic distribution throughout the body. Targeted drug delivery systems aim to overcome this limitation by encapsulating chemotherapy drugs within nanoparticles or liposomes functionalized with targeting ligands that selectively bind to receptors overexpressed on cancer cells.

DESCRIPTION

Additionally, targeted drug delivery systems can be designed to overcome multidrug resistance mechanisms commonly encountered in cancer treatment, enhancing the effectiveness of chemotherapy drugs. In addition to targeted drug delivery, bioengineering offers innovative approaches to tumour imaging, enabling early detection, accurate diagnosis, and precise monitoring of treatment response. Conventional imaging techniques such as computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging provide valuable anatomical information but often lack the sensitivity and specificity needed for detecting small tumours or monitoring subtle changes in tumour size and morphology. Bioengineered imaging probes, on the other hand, offer the ability to visualize specific molecular targets or biological processes associated with cancer development and progression. For example, molecular imaging techniques such as positron emission tomography and single-photon emission computed tomography utilize radiolabelled tracers that bind to molecular targets overexpressed on cancer cells, allowing for the visualization of tumour-specific biomarkers in vivo. Similarly, optical imaging techniques such as fluorescence imaging and bioluminescence imaging enable real-time visualization of tumour growth and metastasis in preclinical models, offering insights into tumour biology and response to therapy. Moreover, bioengineered imaging probes can be designed to provide functional information about tumour physiology, such as blood flow, oxygenation, and metabolic activity. For example, contrast agents based on nanoparticles or nobodies can be engineered to target specific molecular pathways involved in tumour angiogenesis or hypoxia, providing valuable insights into tumour aggressiveness and response to therapy.

CONCLUSION

Despite the tremendous promise of bioengineering approaches to cancer therapy, several challenges remain to be addressed. These include optimizing the pharmacokinetics and bio distribution of targeted drug delivery systems, improving the specificity and sensitivity of molecular imaging probes, and overcoming physiological barriers such as tumour heterogeneity and the tumour microenvironment. Additionally, regulatory considerations and translational hurdles must be navigated to ensure the safe and effective translation of bioengineered cancer therapies from the laboratory to the clinic. In conclusion, bioengineering offers powerful tools and techniques for improving the effectiveness and safety of cancer therapy through targeted drug delivery and tumour imaging.

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Corresponding author James Thomas, Department of Bioelectronics, Queen Mary University, UK, E-mail: jamesthomas49@gmail.com

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