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Aquasome- A novel carrier system

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Abstract

Aquasomes are three layered self assembling composition with ceramic carbon nanocrystalline particle core coated with glassy cerobiose or degradable calcium phosphate monomer crystalline particle coated with glassy pyridoxil-5-phosphate. Subsequently drug/enzymes covalently bonded to outer coating. Aquasomes are spherical 60–300 nm particles used for drug and antigen delivery. Properties like protection and preservation of fragile biological molecules, conformational integrity, and surface exposure made it as a successful carrier system for bioactive molecules like peptide, protein, hormones, antigens and genes to specific sites. Three types of core materials are mainly used for producing aquasomes: tin oxide, nanocrystalline carbon ceramics (diamonds) and brushite (calcium phosphate dihydrate). Calcium phosphate is the core of interest, owing to its natural presence in the body. Aquasome deliver their content through specific targeting, molecular sheiling and slow sustained release process. Aquasome technology represents a platform system for conformational integrity and biochemical stability of bioactives.

Keywords: Aquasomes, Carrer system

Introduction

Aquasomes are called as “bodies of water”, their water like properties protect and preserve fragile biological molecules, and this property of maintaining conformational integrity as well as high degree of surface exposure are exploited in targeting of bio-active molecules like peptide and protein hormones, antigens and genes to specific sites. These carbohydrate stabilize nanoparticles of ceramic are known as “aquasomes” which was first developed by Nir Kossovsky. The pharmacologically active molecule incorporated by co-polymerization, diffusion or adsorption to carbohydrate surface of pre formed nanoparticles.¹

These three layered structure are self assembled by non-covalent bonds. Principal of “self assembly of macromolecule” is governed by three physiochemical process i.e. 1) interaction between charged group, the interaction of charged group facilitates long range approach of self assembly sub units charge group also plays a role in stabilizing tertiary structures of folded proteins. 2) Hydrogen bonding and dehydration effect, Hydrogen bond helps in base pair matching and stabilization secondary protein structure such as alpha helices and beta sheets. Molecules forming hydrogen bonds are hydrophilic and this confers a significant degree of organization to surrounding water molecules. In case of hydrophobic molecules, which are incapable of forming hydrogen bond, their tendency to repel water helps to organize the moiety to surrounding environment, organized water decreases level of entropy and is thermodynamically unfavorable, the molecule dehydrate and get self assembled. 3) Structural stability of protein in biological environment determined by interaction between charged group and Hydrogen bonds largely external to molecule and by van der waals forces largely internal to molecule, experienced by hydrophobic molecules, responsible for hardness and softness of molecule and maintenance of internal secondary structures, provi des sufficient softness, allows maintenance of conformation during self assembly. Self assembly leads to altered biological activity, van der waals need to be buffered. In aquasomes, sugars help in molecular plasticization.²⁻⁴

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Aquasomes maintains molecular confirmation and optimum pharmacological activity. Normally, active molecules possess following qualities i.e. a unique three-dimensional conformation, a freedom of internal molecular rearrangement induced by molecular interactions and a freedom of bulk movement but proteins undergo irreversible denaturation when desiccated, even unstable in aqueous state. In the aqueous state pH, temperature, solvents, salts cause denaturation. Aquasomes protect bio-actives. Many other carriers like prodrugs and liposomes utilized but these are prone to destructive interactions between drug and carrier in such case aquasomes proof to be worthy carrier, carbohydrate coating prevents destructive denaturing interaction between drug and solid carriers

Role of disaccharides: - Among three layers of aquasomes, carbohydrate fulfills the objective of aquasomes. The hydroxyl groups on oligomer interact with polar and charged groups of proteins, in a same way as with water thus preserve the aqueous structure of proteins on dehydration. These disaccharides rich in hydroxyl group help to replace the water around polar residues in protein, maintaining integrity in absence of water. The free bound mobility associated with a rich hydroxyl component creates unique hydrogen binding substrate that produces a glassy aqueous state.

Formulation of aquasomes⁵

I. Principles of Self Assembly

Self assembly implies that the constituent parts of some final product assume spontaneously prescribed structural orientations in two or three dimensional space. The self assembly of macromolecules in the aqueous environment, either for the purpose of creating smart nanostructure materials or in the course of naturally occurring biochemistry, is governed basically by three physicochemical processes: the interactions of charged groups, dehydration effects and structural stability.

1. Interactions between Charged Groups: The interaction of charged group facilitates long range approach of self assembly sub units charge group also plays a role in stabilizing tertiary structures of folded proteins. The intrinsic chemical groups or adsorbed ions from the biological milieu lend to most biological and synthetic surfaces a charge polarity. Most biochemically relevant molecules, in fact are amphoteric. The interactions of charged groups such as amino-, carboxyl-, sulfate-, and phosphate-groups, facilitate the long range approach of self assembling subunits. The long range interaction of constituent subunits beginning at an intermolecular distance of around 15 nm, is the necessary first phase of self assembly. With hydrophobic structures, long range forces may extend up to 25 nm. Charged groups also play a role in stabilizing tertiary structures of folded proteins.

2. Hydrogen Bonding and Dehydration Effects: Hydrogen bond helps in base pair matching and stabilization secondary protein structure such as alpha helices and beta sheets. Molecules forming hydrogen bonds are hydrophilic and this confers a significant degree of organization to surrounding water molecules. In case of hydrophobic molecules, which are incapable of forming hydrogen bond, their tendency to repel water helps to organize the moiety to surrounding environment, organized water decreases level of entropy and is thermodynamically unfavorable, the molecule dehydrate and get self assembled.

3. Structural Stability: Structural stability of protein in biological environment determined by interaction between charged group and Hydrogen bonds largely external to molecule and by van der Waals forces largely internal to molecule experienced by hydrophobic molecules, responsible for hardness and softness of molecule and maintenance of internal secondary structures, provides sufficient softness, allows maintenance of conformation during self assembly. Self assembly leads to altered biological activity, van der Waals need to be buffered. In aquasomes, sugars help in molecular plasticization. Van der Waals forces, most often experienced by the relatively hydrophobic molecular regions that are shielded from water, play a subtle but critical role in maintaining molecular conformation during self assembly. Van der Waals forces largely internal to the molecule also play a small but measurable role in the interaction of polypeptides with carbohydrates and related polyhydroxyloligomers. When molecules change their shape substantially following an interaction, the energy minima assumed upon conformational denaturation tend to preclude reversal.

Method of Preparation of Aquasomes^{2,5,6}

The general procedure consists of an inorganic core formation, which will be coated with Lactose forming the polyhydroxylated core that finally will be loaded by model drug. By using the principle of self-assembly, the aquasomes are prepared in three steps i.e., preparation of core, coating of core, and immobilization of drug molecule.

1. Preparation of the core: The first step of aquasome preparation is the fabrication of the ceramic core. The process of ceramic core preparation depends on the selection of the materials for core. These ceramic cores can be fabricated by colloidal precipitation and sonication, inverted magnetron sputtering, plasma condensation and other processes. For the core, ceramic materials were widely used because ceramics are structurally the most regular materials known. Being crystalline, the high degree of order in ceramics ensures that any surface modification will have only a limited effect on the nature of the atoms below the surface layer and thus the bulk properties of the ceramic will be preserved. The high degree of order also ensures that the surfaces will exhibit high level of surface energy that will favor the binding of polyhydroxy oligomeric surface film. Two ceramic cores that are most often used are diamond and calcium phosphate.

2. Carbohydrate coatings: The second step involves coating by carbohydrate on the surface of ceramic cores. There are number of processes to enable the carbohydrate (polyhydroxy oligomers) coating to adsorb epitaxially on to the surface of the nano-crystalline ceramic cores. The processes generally entail the addition of polyhydroxy oligomer to a dispersion of meticulously cleaned ceramics in ultra pure water, sonication and then lyophilization to promote the largely irreversible adsorption of carbohydrate on to the ceramic surfaces. Excess and readily desorbing carbohydrate is removed by stir cell ultra-filtration. The commonly used coating materials are cellobiose, citrate, pyridoxal-5-phosphate, sucrose and trehalose.

3. Immobilization of drugs: The surface modified nano-crystalline cores provide the solid phase for the subsequent nondenaturing self assembly for broad range of biochemically active molecules. The drug can be loaded by partial adsorption.

Properties:^{6,7}

- Aquasomes due to their size and structure stability, avoid clearance by reticuloendothelial system or degradation by other environmental challenges.
- In normal system, calcium phosphate is biodegradable. Biodegradation in vivo achieved by monocytes and multicellular cells called osteoclast.
- Two types of phagocytosis reported, either crystals taken up alone and then dissolved in cytoplasm after disappearance of phagosome membrane or dissolution after formation of heterophagosome.
- Aquasomes possess large size and active surface hence can be efficiently loaded with substantial amounts of agents through ionic, non co-valent bonds, van der Waals forces and entropic forces. As solid particles dispersed in aqueous environment, exhibit physical properties of colloids.

Application:³⁻⁷

- 1) Aquasomes as red blood cell substitutes, haemoglobin immobilized on oligomer surface because release of oxygen by haemoglobin is conformationally sensitive. By this toxicity is reduced, haemoglobin concentration of 80% achieved and reported to deliver blood in non linear manner like natural blood cells.
- 2) Aquasomes used as vaccines for delivery of viral antigen i.e. Epstein-Barr and Immune deficiency virus to evoke correct antibody, objective of vaccine therapy must be triggered by conformationally specific target molecules.
- 3) Aquasomes have been used for successful targeted intracellular gene therapy, a five layered composition comprised of ceramic core, polyoxyoligomeric film, therapeutic gene segment, additional carbohydrate film and a targeting layer of conformationally conserved viral membrane protein.

4) Aquasomes for pharmaceuticals delivery i.e. insulin, developed because drug activity is conformationally specific. Bio activity preserved and activity increased to 60% as compared to i.v. administration and toxicity not reported.

5) Aquasomes also used for delivery of enzymes like DNAase and pigments/dyes because enzymes activity fluctuates with molecular conformation and cosmetic properties of pigments are sensitive to molecular conformation.

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