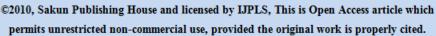**International Journal of Pharmacy & Life Sciences**

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A review on Study of Nano-sponges

Vishaka Ramkrushna Nagare[1*], Pranjali V. Shinde[1], Anuja B. Bahirat[1], Akansha D. Punekar[1] and Aaditi S. Punekar[2]

1, SND College of Pharmacy, Babhulgaon, Yeola, Maharashtra, India

2, Matoshri Institute of Pharmacy, Eklahare, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Abstract

Nano sponges, a class of nanomaterials, have garnered significant attention due to their unique structural and functional properties. These nanostructured materials consist of porous networks with high surface area-to-volume ratios, making them ideal candidates for various applications ranging from environmental remediation to drug delivery systems. The synthesis of nano sponges typically involves methods such as templating, self-assembly, or emulsion techniques, allowing for precise control over their size, shape, and porosity. Their ability to encapsulate and release substances, such as drugs or pollutants, in a controlled manner highlights their potential in biomedical and environmental fields. This abstract explores the fundamental characteristics, synthesis methods, and potential applications of nano sponges, emphasizing their role as versatile and promising nanomaterials in modern science and technology.

Nano sponges are a class of nanomaterials characterized by their highly porous structures and large surface area-to-volume ratios. This unique architecture imparts exceptional properties, including high adsorption capacities, tunable pore sizes, and versatile surface functionalities. The synthesis of nano sponges employs various techniques such as template-assisted methods, self-assembly processes, and emulsion-based approaches, enabling precise control over their physical and chemical properties. These nanomaterials find applications across diverse fields, including environmental remediation, catalysis, sensing, and biomedicine. In environmental contexts, nano sponges are utilized for the removal of pollutants from water and air, while in biomedicine, they serve as drug delivery vehicles capable of targeted and controlled release. This abstract provides an overview of the synthesis strategies, structural characteristics, and wide-ranging applications of nano sponges, highlighting their potential as multifunctional materials 1n contemporary research and technology.

Keywords: Nanoscale materials, Surface functionalization, Biocompatibility, Targeted therapy, Nanoengineering, Polymers, etc.

Introduction

An introduction to nano sponges could begin by defining them as innovative nanoscale materials designed with a porous structure resembling a sponge. These materials have garnered significant interest in scientific and medical research due to their unique properties and potential applications.

*Corresponding Author
E.mail: nagarevishakha2508@gmail.com

Nano sponges are adept at absorbing and delivering substances, making them promising candidates for targeted drug delivery systems, environmental remediation, and beyond. This introduction sets the stage for exploring their structure, synthesis methods, applications, and the impact they may have on various fields of science and technology. Nano sponges represent a cutting-edge advancement in nanotechnology, characterized by their intricate porous structure at the nanoscale level.[1] These structures can be tailored with precise control over pore size, surface chemistry, and composition, allowing for highly specialized functionalities. The synthesis of nano sponges typically involves techniques such as template synthesis, self-assembly, or nanolithography, enabling scientists to engineer these materials with tailored properties suited for specific applications. Their porous nature endows them with exceptional surface area and high absorption capacity, making them ideal candidates for applications ranging from drug delivery to environmental remediation. In drug delivery, nano sponges offer a promising solution for enhancing the stability, solubility, and targeted release of pharmaceuticals.[2] They can encapsulate drugs within their porous matrices, protecting them from degradation and facilitating controlled release at desired locations within the body. This targeted delivery approach minimizes systemic side effects and enhances therapeutic efficacy. Moreover, nano sponges have demonstrated potential in environmental applications, such as wastewater treatment and pollutant removal. Their ability to adsorb contaminants from water or air showcases their versatility and environmental sustainability. As research continues to advance, nano sponges hold promise for revolutionizing various industries and addressing complex challenges in medicine, environmental science, and beyond. Their multifaceted applications underscore their significance in the evolving landscape of nanotechnology and materials science.

The salient features of nano sponges include:

1. Porous Structure: Nano sponges are characterized by their highly porous structure at the nanoscale, which provides them with an exceptionally large surface area per unit volume. This feature is crucial for their high absorption capacity and efficient interaction with substances.

2. Versatile Composition: They can be composed of diverse materials such as polymers, metals, metal oxides, or carbon-based materials.[3] This versatility allows for tailoring their physical and chemical properties to suit specific applications.

3. High Absorption Capacity: Due to their porous nature, nano sponges exhibit a high absorption capacity for gases, liquids, or dissolved substances. This property makes them valuable for applications in drug delivery, environmental remediation, and sensing.

4. Controlled Release: Nano sponges can encapsulate and release substances in a controlled manner. This capability is particularly advantageous in drug delivery systems where sustained or targeted release of pharmaceuticals is desired.

5. Biocompatibility: Many nano sponge materials are biocompatible and non-toxic, which is essential for their biomedical applications. This feature ensures minimal adverse effects when used in contact with biological systems.

6. Enhanced Stability: Nano sponges can improve the stability and solubility of encapsulated substances, protecting them from degradation or premature release until reaching the target site.

7. Targeted Delivery: They enable targeted delivery of drugs or therapeutic agents to specific tissues or cells, minimizing systemic side effects and improving therapeutic outcomes.

8. Environmental Applications: Nano sponges are effective in environmental applications such as water purification and pollutant removal, owing to their ability to adsorb contaminants from aqueous solutions or gases.

9. Scalability: The synthesis methods for nano sponges are often scalable, allowing for potential commercialization and large-scale production.[4]

10. Integration with Other Technologies: Nano sponges can be integrated with other nanotechnologies or functionalized with biomolecules, nanoparticles, or dyes to enhance their performance and expand their applications.

Nano sponges can be prepared using a variety of materials depending on the desired properties and applications. Some common materials used in nano sponge preparation include:

Materials used in nano-sponges preparation:

1. Polymers: Polymers such as polymeric micelles, dendrimers, cyclodextrins, and synthetic polymers like poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid) (PLGA), polyethylene glycol (PEG), and polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) are widely used. These polymers offer versatility in terms of structure, stability, and biocompatibility, making them suitable for drug delivery systems.

2. Inorganic Nanoparticles: Materials like silica (SiO_2), metal oxides (e.g., titanium dioxide, iron oxide), and quantum dots are used for their unique physical and chemical properties. Inorganic nanoparticles can enhance absorption capacity and stability, and they are often used in environmental applications and sensing.

3. Carbon-based Materials: Carbon nanotubes, graphene, and carbon nanofibers are used due to their high surface area, mechanical strength, and electrical conductivity. These materials find applications in energy storage, sensors, and biomedical devices.

4. Natural Polymers: Biopolymers such as chitosan, cellulose, alginate, and proteins (e.g., albumin, gelatin) are employed for their biocompatibility, biodegradability, and low toxicity. They are commonly used in biomedical applications, including drug delivery and tissue engineering.[5]

5. Metal-Organic Frameworks (MOFs): MOFs are crystalline materials composed of metal ions or clusters coordinated with organic ligands. They offer high surface area, tunable pore sizes, and customizable properties suitable for gas storage, separation, and catalysis.

6. Lipids and Liposomes: Lipid-based materials, including liposomes and lipid nanoparticles, are utilized for drug delivery due to their ability to encapsulate hydrophobic and hydrophilic drugs and their biocompatibility.

7. Hybrid Materials: Combinations of different types of materials (e.g., polymer-inorganic hybrids) can be used to combine the advantages of each material type, such as improved stability, controlled release, or enhanced absorption capacity.[6]

Methods of preparation:

1. Solvent Evaporation Method:
   This method involves dissolving both the polymer and the active ingredient (e.g., drug) in a suitable organic solvent.

Proces The solution is then emulsified (often with a surfactant) and stirred to ensure homogeneity. Subsequently, the solvent is evaporated under reduced pressure or at elevated temperatures to form nano sponges encapsulating the active ingredient.

2. Emulsion Solvent Evaporation Method:
   Similar to the solvent evaporation method but involves the preparation of an oil-in-water (o/w) emulsion.

   Process: The active ingredient and polymer are dissolved in an organic solvent to form an oil phase, which is then emulsified into an aqueous phase containing a surfactant.

3. Supercritical Fluid Technology:
This method utilizes supercritical carbon dioxide (CO_2) as a solvent to dissolve the polymer and active ingredient.

   Process: The mixture is processed under supercritical conditions (high pressure and temperature), allowing for precise control over particle size and morphology. Upon depressurization, nano sponges are formed.

4. Nanoprecipitation Method:
   In this method, the polymer and active ingredient are dissolved in a miscible solvent mixture (e.g., water-miscible organic solvent and water).

   Process: Rapid mixing of the solvent mixture with an aqueous phase leads to precipitation of nano-sized particles due to the reduced solubility of the polymer and active ingredient in the aqueous p

5. Template Synthesis:
   This method involves using a sacrificial template (e.g., silica nanoparticles, micelles) to create pores within the nano sponge structure.

   Process: The polymer is deposited or polymerized around the template, which is subsequently removed by dissolution or calcination, leaving behind a porous nano sponge structure.

6. Electrospinning:
   Electrospinning is used to produce nanofibrous structures from polymer solutions or melts.[9]

   Process: By applying high voltage to a polymer solution or melt, a charged jet is formed that solidifies into nano-sized fibers upon deposition onto a collector.

Steps for Nano Sponge Preparation Using Ultrasound:

1. Selection of Materials:
- Choose suitable polymers and active ingredients (if applicable) based on the desired properties and applications of the nano sponges.

2. Preparation of Solution:
- Dissolve the polymer and, if needed, the active ingredient in a suitable solvent. The solvent should be chosen based on the solubility of the polymer and the compatibility with ultrasound waves.[10]

3. Setup for Sonication:
- Place the prepared solution in a suitable container or vessel that allows efficient transmission of ultrasound waves. Ensure the container material is compatible with ultrasound (e.g., glass, stainless steel).

4. Sonication Process:
- Sonication Parameters: Set the ultrasound frequency typically between 20 kHz to several MHz, depending on the equipment and desired particle size.
- Time and Power: Determine the appropriate sonication time and power intensity. This can vary based on the volume of solution, desired particle size, and specific equipment used.
- Temperature Control: Monitor and control the temperature during sonication to prevent overheating, which can affect the stability and properties of the nano sponges.

5. Formation of Nano Sponges:
- During sonication, the high-frequency ultrasound waves cause rapid formation and collapse of cavitation bubbles in the liquid medium. This phenomenon generates localized heating, high pressures, and microjets, which can break down the polymer solution into nano-sized particles or induce phase separation leading to nano sponge formation.

6. Post-Sonication Processing:
- After completing the sonication process, allow the solution to cool down to room temperature.[11]
- If necessary, remove the solvent by evaporation or precipitation techniques to obtain solid nano sponge particles.

7. Characterization:
- Characterize the synthesized nano sponges using techniques such as dynamic light scattering (DLS), scanning electron microscopy (SEM), transmission electron microscopy (TEM), Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), and X-ray diffraction (XRD) to evaluate particle size, morphology, structure, and chemical composition.

8. Application-Specific Modification (if applicable):
- Functionalize the nano sponges with targeting ligands, surface modifiers, or encapsulate bioactive molecules for specific applications like drug delivery.

Considerations:
- Safety: Follow safety protocols for handling ultrasound equipment and organic solvents.
- Optimization: Adjust sonication parameters (frequency, time, power) based on experimental results to optimize particle size, distribution, and properties.
- Scalability: Consider scalability of the ultrasound method for industrial production, ensuring reproducibility and cost-effectiveness.

Using ultrasound for nano sponge preparation offers a versatile approach to produce nano-sized materials with controlled properties, suitable for various biomedical, environmental, and technological applications.[12]

Factors affecting nano-sponges preparation
Material-Related Factors:
1. Choice of Polymer:
- Different polymers have varying solubility characteristics, which impact their suitability for nano sponge formation using different methods (e.g., solvent evaporation, nanoprecipitation).
- Polymer properties such as molecular weight, hydrophobicity/hydrophilicity balance, and biodegradability affect the stability, loading capacity, and release kinetics of nano sponges.[13]

2. Active Ingredient or Cargo:
- The nature and properties of the active ingredient (e.g., drug, dye, catalyst) influence the compatibility with the polymer matrix and the method of encapsulation.
- Solubility, stability, and bioavailability of the cargo within the nano sponge structure are critical for drug delivery applications.

3. Surfactants and Stabilizers:
- Surfactants and stabilizers used during formulation can affect particle size, stability, and dispersion of nano sponges. They play a role in preventing aggregation and controlling morphology during synthesis.

4. Pore Forming Agents or Templates:
 - Use of pore-forming agents or templates (e.g., sacrificial templates like silica nanoparticles) can influence the porosity and surface area of nano sponges. These agents facilitate the creation of uniform pores within the nanostructure, enhancing absorption and loading capacity.

Process-Related Factors:

1. Synthesis Method:
 - The choice of synthesis method (e.g., solvent evaporation, emulsion methods, supercritical fluid technology, ultrasound-assisted methods) affects particle size, morphology, and distribution of nano sponges.[14]
 - Each method offers specific advantages (e.g., scalability, control over particle size) and considerations (e.g., solvent compatibility, energy requirements) that impact the final product.

2. Sonication Parameters:
 - When ultrasound is used, parameters such as frequency, power intensity, and duration of sonication influence the formation and characteristics of nano sponges.
 - Optimizing these parameters is crucial to achieve desired particle size, stability, and encapsulation efficiency.

3. Temperature and pH:
 - Reaction temperature and pH during synthesis can affect the stability of polymers, solubility of active ingredients, and interactions between components.
 - Controlling these parameters ensures reproducibility and desired properties of nano sponges.[15]

4. Solvent Selection and Solvent Evaporation:
 - Choice of solvent impacts polymer solubility, nanoparticle morphology, and final nano sponge characteristics (e.g., porosity, drug release profile).
 - Proper solvent evaporation techniques (e.g., controlled rate, vacuum-assisted evaporation) are critical to prevent aggregation and ensure uniform particle distribution.

Environmental and External Factors:

1. Scale-Up Considerations:
 - Factors such as scalability, reproducibility, and cost-effectiveness of synthesis methods influence industrial production of nano sponges.
 - Process optimization and adaptation for large-scale manufacturing are essential considerations.

2. Regulatory Requirements:
 - Compliance with regulatory standards (e.g., FDA regulations for pharmaceutical applications) influences formulation design, safety, and efficacy testing of nano sponges.

3. Environmental Impact:
 - Considerations for solvent usage, waste disposal, and sustainability are increasingly important in nano sponge preparation methods.

Nano sponges, owing to their unique properties and versatility, find applications across various fields. Here are some notable applications:

Biomedical Applications:

1. Drug Delivery Systems:
 - Nano sponges can encapsulate drugs, proteins, or genetic material, protecting them from degradation and enabling controlled release at targeted sites.
 - They enhance drug stability, bioavailability, and therapeutic efficacy while reducing side effects.

2. Cancer Therapy:
 - Targeted delivery of chemotherapeutic agents using nano sponges helps minimize systemic toxicity and improve tumor-specific accumulation.
 - They can be functionalized to actively target cancer cells or tissues.

3. Wound Healing:
 - Nano sponges loaded with growth factors or antimicrobial agents promote wound healing by providing sustained release and localized therapy.

4. Vaccines:
 - Nano sponges can enhance vaccine efficacy by stabilizing antigens, improving antigen presentation, and promoting controlled release for sustained immune response.

Environmental Applications:

1. Water Treatment:
 - Nano sponges can remove pollutants, heavy metals, and organic contaminants from water through adsorption processes.
 - They contribute to environmental remediation efforts by improving water quality and safety.

2. Air Purification:
 - Nano sponges functionalized with adsorbent materials can capture harmful gases, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and particulate matter from air pollutants.

Industrial and Technological Applications:

1. Catalysis:
- Nano sponge materials serve as efficient catalyst supports due to their high surface area and tailored surface properties.
- They enhance reaction rates, selectivity, and stability in various catalytic processes.

2. Energy Storage:
- Nano sponges based on carbon nanomaterials or metal oxides are used in energy storage devices such as supercapacitors and batteries.
- They improve electrode performance by providing high surface area and facilitating ion transport.

Other Applications:

1. Sensing and Detection:
- Nano sponges functionalized with sensing molecules or nanoparticles enable sensitive detection of biomolecules, toxins, or environmental pollutants.

2. Cosmetics and Personal Care:
- Nano sponges stabilize and deliver active ingredients in skincare products, enhancing their efficacy and skin penetration.

3. Food and Agriculture:
- Nano sponges can be used for controlled release of nutrients, pesticides, or growth regulators in agriculture, improving crop yield and reducing environmental impact.[16]

Future Directions:
Research continues to explore novel applications and refine nano sponge technologies to address emerging challenges in healthcare, environment, and industry. Advances in material science, nanotechnology, and biomedical engineering will likely expand the scope and impact of nano sponges in diverse fields, contributing to sustainable development and improved quality of life.

Conclusion
In conclusion, nano sponges represent a remarkable class of nanomaterials with wide-ranging applications across biomedical, environmental, industrial, and technological fields. Their unique porous structure, high surface area, and customizable properties make them versatile platforms for innovation and solution-oriented approaches to complex challenges. In biomedicine, nano sponges excel as advanced drug delivery systems, enhancing therapeutic efficacy while minimizing side effects through targeted and controlled release of pharmaceuticals. They hold promise in cancer therapy, wound healing, and vaccine development, contributing to personalized medicine and improved patient outcomes. Environmental applications leverage nano sponges' ability to adsorb pollutants from water and air, addressing critical issues in water purification and air quality management. Their efficiency in removing contaminants underscores their potential in sustainable environmental remediation strategies.

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