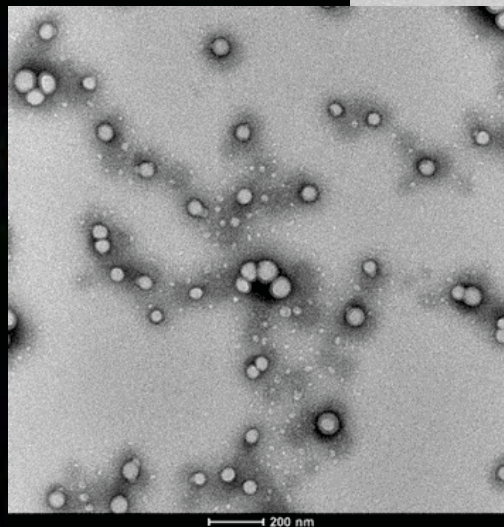
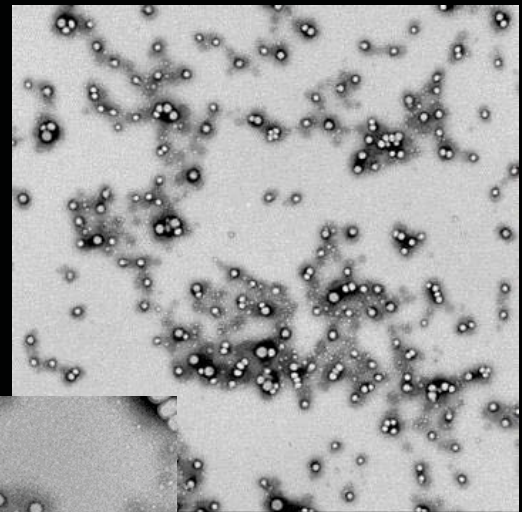


Production and characterization of mPEG-PLGA nanoparticles for Bedaquiline release to fight the multi drug resistance

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**Production and characterization
of mPEG-PLGA nanoparticles for Bedaquiline
release to fight the multi drug resistance**

Master's thesis in Chemical Engineering

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*Volli, e volli sempre,
fortissimamente volli*

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Sommario

Questo lavoro di tesi è parte di un progetto Europeo, Nanotherapeutics for Antibiotic Resistant Emerging Bacterial pathogens (NAREB), il cui scopo è quello di combattere la multi-farmaco resistenza sviluppata da batteri come *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (M. tuberculosis) (MDRTB) e *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) proponendo soluzioni nanotecnologiche quali la progettazione e l'ottimizzazione di diverse nanoformulazioni di antibiotici attualmente in uso e nuovi farmaci antibatterici.

Lo scopo di questo lavoro di tesi è stato la produzione e caratterizzazione di nanoparticelle polimeriche caricate con un nuovo farmaco, commercialmente già disponibile, Bedaquiline (BDQ), attivo contro la tubercolosi e in particolare contro la multi resistenza ai farmaci sviluppata dal batterio della tubercolosi, il *Mycobacterium Tuberculosis*. Le particelle prodotte sono state caratterizzate in termini di rilascio in due diversi mezzi di dissoluzione ed, inoltre, è stato introdotto lo studio di un nuovo approccio per la valutazione del rilascio di farmaco, in particolare si è cercato di ottenere la separazione tra il sistema nanoparticellare e il mezzo complesso di dissoluzione.

La Multi resistenza ai farmaci, meglio conosciuta come MDR, è definita come la resistenza antimicrobica mostrata da alcune specie di microrganismi che hanno sviluppato numerosi meccanismi per vincere l'efficacia dei farmaci attualmente utilizzati per curare malattie come la tubercolosi.

Il farmaco utilizzato in questo studio, che prende il nome di Bedaquiline, è un nuovo composto di natura idrofobica appartenente alla classe delle Diarilchinoline, che inibisce la sub-unità C dell'enzima di sintesi dell'ATP del batterio, inibendo in questo modo anche le cellule batteriche in stato dormiente.

Per raggiungere il sito attivo dell'infezione, nel caso della tubercolosi gli alveoli polmonari, e uccidere tutta la popolazione di batteri nonché quelli mutanti, sono necessarie alte dosi di farmaci o terapie combinate, ma, per raggiungere tale scopo e limitare gli effetti collaterali del

farmaco e la perdita dello stesso nel percorso fino al sito infettivo, sono stati introdotti dei sistemi di trasporto e rilascio nanoparticellari.

In questo lavoro l'attenzione si è focalizzata su nanoparticelle di Methoxy Poly(ethylene glycol)-Poly(lactide-co-glycolide) (mPEG-PLGA) caricate con Bedaquiline.

Il polimero scelto consta di una parte idrofilica che fa da copertura esterna, il PEG, e una parte idrofobica interna, PLGA; che interagisce con il farmaco incapsulato. Il polimero selezionato è stato caratterizzato in termini di struttura molecolare e temperatura di transizione vetrosa. Il metodo utilizzato per la preparazione delle nanoparticelle è quello di singola emulsione con evaporazione del solvente. In particolare sono state preparate particelle al variare del rapporto di alimentazione, farmaco-polimero, e particelle con un rapporto di alimentazione costante ma al variare della concentrazione di surfattante utilizzato. Inoltre sono stati adoperati altri metodi come la nanoprecipitazione e il metodo di emulsione singola con delle variazioni nelle fasi di preparazione per provare ad ottenere un profilo di rilascio meno rapido nelle prime fasi.

Le particelle ottenute sono state caratterizzate in termini di dimensione, potenziale zeta, capacità ed efficienza di incapsulamento, mostrando un potenziale compreso tra ~ -3 e ~ -5 mV e una dimensione inclusa nell'intervallo ~ 170 - ~ 400 nm in funzione del rapporto di alimentazione (farmaco / polimero) ed inoltre un alto valore di efficienza di incapsulamento (90- 100%) è stato ottenuto.

Il rilascio è stato valutato in due diversi mezzi complessi di dissoluzione:

- Roswell Park Memorial Institute (RPMI), usato come modello di dissoluzione per i macrofagi infettati, con l'aggiunta di siero di feto bovino (FBS), per renderlo simile all'ambiente biologico
- Middlebrook 7H9, un brodo arricchito con Albumina destrosio catalasi (ACD) utilizzato per la determinazione minima inibitoria.

I risultati ottenuti per il rilascio nei due mezzi e per le diverse formulazioni di nanoparticelle cariche sono stati confrontati e discussi. In particolare i profili ottenuti mostrano un rapido rilascio iniziale di Bedaquiline nei mezzi nei primi 2-3 giorni, soprattutto in RPMI a causa della elevata quantità di proteine (FBS), seguito da un rilascio lento e continuo fino al 50-60% nel caso di Middlebrooke e un rilascio completo ($\sim 100\%$) nel caso di RPMI negli immediati giorni successivi. La fase rapida iniziale, riscontrata in tutti i casi analizzati, è molto probabilmente dovuta ad un effetto combinato di diffusione e

dilavamento superficiale ed è più pronunciata nelle particelle con dimensione minore, data la più alta superficie specifica. Gli andamenti sono gli stessi per entrambe le concentrazioni di tensioattivo. Inoltre, durante il periodo di rilascio è stato monitorato l'andamento delle dimensioni delle nanoparticelle che hanno mostrato una dimensione stabile con una leggera diminuzione dovuta ad effetti di erosione. I risultati sperimentali mostrano che non c'è un'incidente influenza della concentrazione di surfattante, motivo per cui è consigliato utilizzare una concentrazione più bassa per non coprire completamente la superficie delle nanoparticelle e per non raggiungere valori di concentrazione critica per la formazione di micelle, inoltre i metodi utilizzati per la preparazione delle nanoparticelle non mostrano diversità o vantaggi rispetto al metodo standard, e non sono efficaci per diminuire il rapido rilascio iniziale.

Finora il rilascio è stato valutato guardando al sistema come un unico compartimento, per tentare di studiare il rilascio al netto dell'influenza del mezzo di dissoluzione si è cercato di ottenere la separazione tra i due sistemi, quello nanoparticellare e il mezzo di dissoluzione stesso, utilizzando un sistema di cromatografia basato sulla size exclusion, quindi sul peso molecolare e sulla dimensione delle sostanze iniettate nel macchinario, Äkta Purifier.

Grazie a questo strumento è stato possibile ottenere una separazione con successo, confermata anche da un'analisi successiva per verificare la presenza di proteine, rilevata, come si attendeva, solo nella frazione relativa al mezzo di dissoluzione. Inoltre è stato possibile raccogliere le frazioni in uscita dal sistema per analizzare con diversi metodi di raccolta il quantitativo di farmaco presente nelle due parti. Si è provato a mettere a punto un test di validazione per il recupero completo del materiale in uscita dalla colonna usando dei composti modello fluorescenti.

La separazione tramite Äkta è stata ottenuta con successo ma devono essere ottimizzati i parametri e i metodi di raccolta per determinare il quantitativo di farmaco presente nelle frazioni e per essere sicuri che tutti i componenti della soluzione iniettata, venga completamente eluita dalla colonna.

Abstract

This work is part of the European project, Nanotherapeutics for Antibiotic Resistant Emerging Bacterial pathogens (NAREB), which purpose is to fight against Multi-Drug Resistant Mycobacterium tuberculosis (*M. tuberculosis*) (MDRTB) and Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) proposing nanotechnology solutions to this problem by the design and the optimization of several nanoformulations of current antibiotics and novel antibacterial drugs. The aim of this study was the production and characterization of nanoparticles (NPs) based on Methoxy Poly(ethylene glycol)-Poly(lactide-co-glycolide) (mPEG-PLGA) loaded with Bedaquiline (BDQ). In particular the preparation was developed by the single emulsion solvent evaporation method; the characterization, in terms of release properties, was evaluated by both classic dissolution protocols (in complex dissolution media which show chemical properties more close to biological environments) and a new approach was studied to separate nanoparticulate systems from complex media.

Multiple drug resistance consists in the antimicrobial resistance shown by a species of microorganism that have evolved a multitude of mechanisms to overcome the effectiveness of drugs, thereby surviving exposure to them drugs. In particular, the bacteria that causes TB can develop resistance to the two most powerful antimicrobial drugs used to cure the disease. The World Health Organization estimated a high rate of death and incident cases annually and of which a high percentage is caused by MDR-TB, making it the second largest infectious disease killer.

Bedaquiline, the model compound used in this study, is a new hydrophobic antimicrobial from the class of Diarylquinoline and it is indicated for treating MDR-TB. Bedaquiline inhibits c-subunit of ATP synthase, a vital enzyme for the production of energy. Bedaquiline has shown efficacy towards *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* in active TB infections, as well as inhibiting dormant cells in latent TB infection.

Tuberculosis spreads via aerosols and typically attacks the lungs, so it is necessary to reach the site infection to kill all the bacteria population including the resistant mutant. For this reason, high systemic concentration is required and using polymeric nanocarriers is possible to reach this concentration and to limit side effects.

In this work the chosen copolymer is the Methoxy Poly(ethylene glycol)-Poly(lactide-co-glycolide) (mPEG-PLGA), a diblock copolymer. The hydrophilic PEG block provides a side to graft ligands and ensures long circulating stealth function. The hydrophobic polyester block (PLGA) allows degradation via hydrolysis, whom degradation products are normally eliminated via the metabolic pathway. The polymer was studied for his physical-chemical properties by NMR, GPC and DSC, in order to investigate the molecular structure, composition and size of the polymer, and the glass transition temperature respectively. Antibiotic loaded nanoparticles with Bedaquiline were prepared by the single emulsion solvent evaporation method with two different concentrations of poly(vinyl alcohol)(PVA) as surfactant, in order to stabilize the emulsion. The presence of PVA, at the interface of the organic and the aqueous phases, acts as barrier for the drug diffusion not only during particle formation but also during release from the solidified NPs. The obtained nanoparticles showed similar particle properties, had a zeta potential ranging from ~ -3 to ~ -5 mV and size ranging from ~ 170 to ~ 400 nm depending on the feed ratio (drug/polymer) with high value of encapsulation efficiency (90-100%). The release was evaluated in two different in vitro complex dissolution media:

- Roswell Park Memorial Institute (RPMI), as infected macrophage model, plus 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) to simulate the body condition (biological environment), and
- Albumin Dextrose Catalase (ACD) enriched Middlebrook 7H9 for minimum inhibitory determination.

The amount of Bedaquiline released at appropriate intervals, was quantified by (ultra) LC-QqQ-MS/MS, including a stable isotope labelled internal standard for optimal accuracy. Protein from complex release medium was precipitated with acetone prior to analysis.

The release patterns consisted of an initial high release of Bedaquiline in the media, especially in the RPMI because of the high amount of proteins (FBS), after that, Bedaquiline-loaded nanoparticles in RPMI showed a fast, high, continuous release up to 90-100% within $\sim 1-2$ days. The release profile of NPs suspended in Middlebrook 7H9 only

reached a lag phase after 2-4 days of 50-60% release, followed by a slow, continuous release of Bedaquiline but in this case, it was thus not released completely, as its solubility in the media was not high enough. The fast initial release is due to diffusion and surface run-off of Bedaquiline from the nanoparticles and probably governed by the presence of proteins in the media. For both the concentrations of surfactant the trends were nearly the same. Moreover, during the release period, the size of a population of nanoparticles, kept in the same condition for all the period, was monitored, resulting stable, if not showing a slight decreasing due to the erosion.

Other methods were then used for the preparation of the NPs, such as nanoprecipitation, ion pairing method, the use of FBS before the washing step to try to limit the initial burst release and it was evaluated the pattern release as well. The results are similar to the previous ones for both the media, showing a burst release in the first days, and in particular, the release in the case of nanoprecipitation was the slower and lower one.

In the first part of the study release, the attention was focused only on one compartment (dissolution media) without understanding what happens simultaneously in the complex medium and in the nanoparticles. Therefore, a new way was proposed to study the release of hydrophobic compound in complex media, which enables the analysis of the two separate compartments, dividing the nanoparticulate system from the complex media. In general, it is not possible to perform the release in 100% medium because then it is difficult to separate the released drug from the medium. Hence, the second part of the project was dedicated to the developing of a new method to obtain the separation and the assay of the released drug in the two mentioned fractions.

Using Akta Purifier for the size-exclusion chromatography, it was possible to separate and collect the nanoparticles versus the media and determine the actual drug concentrations. Firstly, different nanoparticulate systems were used with and without the complex medium (FBS) to evaluate the concentration dependency. Consequently in order to obtain a more evident separation between the nanoparticles and the media the autosampler was used to control the injection volume in lower range. To verify the effective separation and to be sure that all the proteins come out completely and are not present in the NPs fraction the Thermo Scientific Micro BCA™ Protein Assay Kit was used,

determining the total protein content of samples in the two fractions. In the end, a quantitative evaluation method for recovery of nanoparticles and medium from the column was set up using labeled liposomes - Rhodamine B to simulate the behavior of the nanoparticles and FITC-BSA for the medium fraction. The values of recovery obtained through the Spectrofluorometric analysis were about 65% for the nanoparticulate system and 100% for the media.

In conclusion, an efficacious formulation/preparation protocol of mPEG-PLGA nanoparticles was developed to achieve nanocarriers with high drug loading and encapsulation efficiency. In particular, it was shown that there is any influence of the surfactant on the release of Bedaquiline so it is preferable to follow the recommendation to keep a low concentration of PVA to avoid the achieving of the critical micelle concentration and especially to be sure that the surfactant does not cover completely the external surface of the nanoparticles.

The techniques adopted in order to limit the initial burst release were not successfully and they have to be optimized.

The separation between the nanoparticulate systems and the complex media was successful and verified with the BCA method. The quantitative valuation of the drug present in the two fractions has to be optimized, as also the validation method for the recovery's evaluation in the two fractions obtained from the used column.

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