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Targeted Cancer Therapy: The Role of Liposomes in Oncology :A Literature Review.

Katarzyna Rudnicka, Stefan Wyszyński Provincial Specialist Hospital in Lublin, Aleja Kraśnicka 100, 20-718 Lublin, Poland
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6815-6276, katarzyna.rudnicka95@gmail.com

Paulina Lemieszek, Stefan Wyszyński Provincial Specialist Hospital in Lublin, Aleja Kraśnicka 100, 20-718 Lublin, Poland
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6648-7283, paulina.lemieszek13@gmail.com

Martyna Pustelniak, Provincial Combined Hospital in Kielce, Grunwaldzka 45, 25-736 Kielce, Poland
https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5606-0385, martyna.pustelniak@onet.pl

Katarzyna Krukar, Provincial Combined Hospital in Kielce, Grunwaldzka 45, 25-736 Kielce, Poland
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5544-8027, kasiakrukar3@interia.pl

Ilona Sajkiewicz, Stefan Wyszyński Provincial Specialist Hospital in Lublin, Aleja Kraśnicka 100, 20-718 Lublin, Poland
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5954-3594, inasajka@gmail.com

Nadia Miga-Orczykowska, Stefan Wyszyński Provincial Specialist Hospital in Lublin, Aleja Kraśnicka 100, 20-718 Lublin, Poland
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0551-6159, nadmig98@gmail.com

Ilona Jasiuk, Independent Public Clinical Hospital No. 1 in Lublin, Stanisława Staszica 16, 20-400 Lublin, Poland
https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8544-3276, ilona.jasiuk@gmail.com

Justyna Wójtowicz, Stefan Wyszyński Provincial Specialist Hospital in Lublin, Aleja Kraśnicka 100, 20-718 Lublin, Poland
https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6079-9637, wojtowicz.justtyna@gmail.com

Ewa Łukaszewska, VOXEL NZOZ MCD, Paderewskiego 5, 37-100 Łańcut, Poland
https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6065-7213, lukaszewska.ewapaulina@gmail.com

Klaudia Kister, 1st Clinic of Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Early Intervention, Medical University of Lublin, 20-079 Lublin, Poland
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2058-5395, klaudia2178@gmail.com

1. Abstract

Liposomal formulations represent a significant advancement in the field of oncology, providing innovative solutions for the delivery of chemotherapeutic agents. These nanoscale carriers, made of phospholipid bilayers, enhance drug stability and allow for targeted delivery to tumor tissues, thereby improving the therapeutic index of anticancer medications. By altering the pharmacokinetics and biodistribution of these drugs, liposomes help reduce systemic side effects while increasing the concentration of therapeutic agents at the tumor site. Recent developments in liposomal technology have led to the creation of targeted liposomes, which can bind specifically to cancer cells, enhancing treatment accuracy. This review examines the various applications of liposomes in cancer treatment, discusses important clinical trials, identifies challenges in formulation and delivery, and considers future directions for integrating liposomal therapies into routine oncology practice. As ongoing research progresses, liposomes are poised to play a crucial role in advancing cancer treatment strategies and improving patient outcomes. Additionally, we discuss the challenges associated with their clinical translation and future perspectives in optimizing liposome formulations for personalized cancer therapies.

2.Keywords

Liposomes, nanoparticle , cancer, chemotherapy review,

3.Introduction

Cancer is a significant global public health issue, leading to about 10 million deaths annually, according to the World Health Organization in 2021. This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need for effective cancer treatments and innovative therapeutic approaches. Currently, chemotherapy is one of the most prevalent treatments for cancer because of its high efficacy in targeting and killing cancer cells [1]. However, chemotherapy's non-selectivity towards tumor cells and difficulties in achieving efficient drug delivery to the tumor site have imposed significant practical limitations [2]. Healthy cells are often damaged in the process, leading to severe side effects that can diminish the quality of life for patients. Furthermore, multi-drug resistance, where cancer cells evolve to withstand the effects of chemotherapy, is another significant barrier to the success of these treatments [3]. The complexity of the tumor microenvironment, characterized by heterogeneous cell populations and abnormal blood vessels, and individual patient variations add to the challenges in developing effective treatment options [4].

One promising development in this field is the advent of smart nanoparticles. These advanced drug delivery systems represent a significant improvement over conventional nanoparticles. Unlike traditional nanoparticles, smart nanoparticles can be activated by specific stimuli and precisely target specific sites for drug delivery, thereby minimizing damage to healthy cells and enhancing therapeutic outcomes [5]. Upon modification or stimulation by relevant factors, these smart nanoparticles efficiently concentrate at the target location and release their therapeutic payloads, thereby establishing an intelligent treatment mode [6]. This targeted approach not only improves the efficacy of the treatment but also reduces the adverse side effects typically associated with conventional chemotherapy. Additionally, their ability to simultaneously deliver therapeutics and diagnostic agents has significantly advanced the field of theranostics a blend of therapy and diagnostics offering a more integrated approach to cancer treatment.

To fully grasp the concept of smart nanoparticles, it's helpful to consider them from multiple overlapping perspectives. One analogy is to think of a smart nanoparticle as a versatile toolbox. This toolbox can modify the size, shape, surface properties, targeting capabilities, and composition of the nanoparticles in response to both internal and external stimuli

produced by the cell [7]. Depending on the type and application of nanoparticles, we can categorize them based on different types of nanocarriers, stimuli, targeting modifications and payload drugs [8]. Different nanocarriers have unique structures and properties, and appropriate nanocarriers can be selected based on the drug's characteristics and treatment requirements. For instance, micelles are suitable for delivering water-insoluble and amphiphilic drugs due to their core-shell structure that can encapsulate hydrophobic drugs [9]. Liposomes with their phospholipid bilayer, can enhance cellular uptake of various drugs and protect them from degradation in the bloodstream[10]. Other types of nanocarriers include dendrimers, which have a branched structure that allows for multiple drug attachments and polymeric nanoparticles, which can be engineered to degrade at controlled rates, releasing their payload over a prolonged period [11].

Smart nanoparticles built from specific materials and nanocarrier components, can respond to various external and internal stimuli. These stimuli can include enzymes, pH changes, temperature variations, as well as optical and magnetic Fields [12] , for example pH-responsive nanoparticles can release their drug payload in the acidic environment of a tumor, while temperature-sensitive nanoparticles can release drugs when heated. Enzyme-responsive nanoparticles can degrade in the presence of specific enzymes that are overexpressed in tumor tissues, providing a highly targeted delivery mechanism [13]. Another feature of smart nanoparticles is their ability to target tumors by functionalizing their surface with tumor-specific ligands like peptides ,antibodies, aptamers, and transferrin [14]. This targeting mechanism allows nanoparticles to bind specifically to cancer cells, enhancing the concentration of the drug at the tumor site and reducing off-target effects. For example, nanoparticles can be coated with antibodies that recognize and bind to antigens expressed on the surface of cancer cells, ensuring that the therapeutic agents are delivered precisely where they are needed.

Unlike traditional nanoparticles that mainly deliver chemotherapeutic agents, the new generation of smart nanoparticles can carry diverse types of drugs, including small molecules, peptides and proteins, nucleic acids, and even living cells [7]. This versatility allows for the delivery of a wide range of therapeutic agents, enabling combination therapies that can target multiple pathways in cancer cells. For instance, nanoparticles can be designed to co-deliver chemotherapy drugs along with gene therapy agents that silence drug resistance genes, enhancing the overall efficacy of the treatment [15]. Moreover the introduction of computer-aided design for smart nanoparticles, incorporating cutting-edge applications of artificial intelligence (AI), enhances the potential and sophistication of these innovative nanoscale

technologies. AI can be used to optimize nanoparticle design by predicting how different configurations will interact with biological systems, accelerating the development of more effective and personalized cancer therapies[16]. This integration of AI with nanotechnology represents a significant step forward in the development of precision medicine, where treatments can be tailored to the unique characteristics of each patient's cancer.

This review thoroughly examines the diverse nature of smart nanoparticles, comparing them to a multifunctional toolbox with dynamic capabilities. These nanoparticles have the potential to revolutionize drug delivery and cancer treatment, offering a new era of precision medicine where treatments are not only more effective but also less harmful to patients. The boundless potential of smart nanoparticles lies in their ability to be customized for specific therapeutic needs, providing a versatile platform for the next generation of cancer treatments.

4.Purpose

The objective of this systematic review is to explore the different applications of liposomes as nanoscale drug delivery systems for cancer diagnosis and treatment. We will discuss the benefits and recognize the limitations of using liposomes. Additionally, we will consider various mechanisms of action and functionalization approaches.

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5.Material and methods

The review was based on the analysis of materials gathered from databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, books, and other scientific articles. It focused on articles published between 2000 and 2024, using keywords such as "liposome," "nanoparticle," "cancer," "chemotherapy"

6. Description of the state of knowledge

6.1 Nanoparticles for targeted cancer therapy

Given the limitations of current therapeutic options, addressing the challenges of conventional and adjuvant anticancer therapies is crucial [17]. A comprehensive understanding of the tumor microenvironment (TME) is essential for developing more targeted treatments with enhanced specificity and precision in targeting cancer cells [18]. The TME often likened to the "soil" supporting cancer growth, comprises cellular (fibroblasts, immune cells, blood vessels) and

non-cellular (extracellular matrix [ECM]) elements that interact dynamically, remodeling the ECM and influencing cancer progression and metastasis [19]. Cancer-associated fibroblasts (CAFs) play a key role by secreting growth factors, cytokines, and ECM components that support tumor growth, create a niche for cancer cells, and promote angiogenesis, facilitating tumor nutrient and oxygen supply [20].Immune cells within the TME, including tumor-associated macrophages (TAMs) and regulatory T cells (Tregs), exhibit dual roles in either supporting or inhibiting tumor growth; TAMs, for instance often adopt a pro-tumorigenic role by promoting inflammation, tissue remodeling, and immunosuppression, aiding tumor immune evasion [21]. Conversely enhancing immune cell anti-tumor activity is promising in cancer therapy, exemplified by successful immune checkpoint inhibitors [22]. Hypoxic conditions, characterized by low oxygen levels in tumors, activate hypoxia-inducible factors (HIFs), altering gene expression to promote angiogenesis, metabolic adaptation, and invasion [23]. Targeting hypoxic pathways may disrupt these adaptations and hinder tumor progression [24] Furthermore, the ECM, serving as a physical scaffold and biochemical signal provider, influences cancer cell behavior including proliferation, migration, and therapy resistance [25]. Targeting ECM components or remodeling enzymes like matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) holds potential for therapeutic intervention [26]. In conclusion, the TME's complex milieu critically influences cancer development and progression [19]. Understanding and addressing its components and interactions enables the development of precise therapeutic strategies to disrupt supportive networks, enhance immune responses against tumors, and ultimately improve cancer therapy outcomes [19].

Key Characteristics of the Tumor Microenvironment (TME): Hypoxia in tumors results from inadequate blood supply, fostering aggressiveness, treatment resistance, and triggering drug release in TME-responsive systems [23]. Cancer cells' production of lactic acid creates an acidic microenvironment, impacting drug efficacy and enabling pH-responsive drug delivery [25]. Fluctuating glucose levels in tumors due to irregular blood flow and high consumption can be leveraged for developing glucose-responsive drug delivery systems [26].The TME includes stromal components like cancer-associated fibroblasts (CAFs), immune cells (e.g., tumor-associated macrophages [TAMs]) and extracellular matrix components, contributing to tumor growth, immune evasion and therapy resistance, thus becoming targets for enhanced therapeutic efficacy [19].

Harnessing the TME for Drug Delivery: Researchers have engineered TME-responsive delivery systems to selectively release therapeutic agents within tumors by responding to pH changes, redox potential, enzyme activity, and other biochemical signals present in the TME [26]. Examples include pH-sensitive nanoparticles, redox-responsive systems utilizing tumor-specific reducing agents and enzyme-responsive systems activated by overexpressed enzymes like matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) [26].

Targeted Therapies Based on TME Features: In addition to delivery systems exploiting TME features allows targeted therapies such as targeting cell surface receptors overexpressed on tumor cells using antibodies or small molecule conjugates to enhance specificity and therapeutic outcomes. Manipulating immune components within the TME, including augmenting immune cell activation, overcoming immune suppression and targeting immune checkpoints, has emerged as crucial in cancer treatment [22].

Future research aims to refine TME-responsive delivery systems, personalize treatment based on individual TME profiles and integrate multimodal therapies addressing both tumor cells and their microenvironment [18].

6.2 Liposomes for cancer therapy

Liposomes represent a significant advancement compared to traditional drug delivery methods due to their exceptional biological properties. They are remarkably biocompatible, meaning they interact harmoniously with biological systems without causing harmful reactions [27]This biocompatibility, coupled with their low toxicity, positions liposomes as safer alternatives for drug delivery than conventional formulations that may carry higher risks of adverse effects [28].

One of the standout features of liposomes is their versatility in surface modification. Researchers can customize liposomal surfaces with specific molecules or ligands, enhancing their ability to target particular cells or tissues precisely [22]. This targeted delivery capability is crucial in cancer treatment, where minimizing damage to healthy tissues while delivering therapeutic agents directly to cancer cells is paramount[29]

Liposomes also excel in their capacity to encapsulate a wide array of drugs, whether hydrophobic or hydrophilic [30].This flexibility enables the simultaneous delivery of multiple

therapeutic agents, which is advantageous in tackling the complex nature of diseases like cancer that often require a multifaceted treatment approach [31].

Additionally, liposomes provide a shield that protects encapsulated drugs from degradation and elimination by the body's immune system [28]. By prolonging the circulation time of drugs in the bloodstream, liposomes enhance their efficacy while reducing the frequency of administration needed[10].

6.3 Targeting mechanisms in liposomal drug delivery

Liposomes have emerged as versatile and efficient carriers for therapeutic agents, owing to their unique properties that address critical challenges in drug delivery [32]. These lipid-based vesicles offer several advantages over traditional drug delivery systems, including biocompatibility, low toxicit and the ability to encapsulate a wide range of drugs, both hydrophilic and hydrophobic [33]. These characteristics not only protect the encapsulated drugs from degradation and elimination by the body's immune system but also enhance their stability and circulation time in the bloodstream[34] .

One of the pivotal strategies in enhancing the effectiveness of liposomal drug delivery is the development of targeting mechanisms. These strategies can broadly be categorized into passive targeting and active targeting approaches [35].

Passive targeting relies on the Enhanced Permeability and Retention (EPR) effect, which takes advantage of the leaky vasculature and poor lymphatic drainage characteristic of tumors [28]. This phenomenon allows liposomes to accumulate preferentially in tumor tissues, exploiting their size and surface properties for effective drug delivery while minimizing exposure to healthy tissues [31].

Active targeting involves modifying the surface of liposomes with ligands or antibodies that specifically recognize and bind to receptors overexpressed on the surface of cancer cells [36] . This targeted approach enhances the specificity and efficiency of drug delivery by facilitating receptor-mediated endocytosis and intracellular drug release within cancer cells[29]. By directing drugs precisely to the site of action, active targeting reduces systemic side effects and enhances therapeutic outcomes [37].

Another innovative approach in liposomal drug delivery is the development of stimuli-responsive liposomes. These liposomes are designed to release their payload in response to

specific stimuli present in the tumor microenvironment, such as acidic pH, elevated temperature, or increased enzyme activity [38]. For example, thermo-sensitive liposomes undergo a structural change and release drugs upon exposure to mild hyperthermia, which can be induced locally through external sources like focused ultrasound or radiofrequency ablation [34]. This controlled release mechanism ensures that drugs are released precisely where and when they are needed, maximizing therapeutic efficacy while minimizing off-target effects [32].

In addition to targeting and stimuli responsiveness, ongoing research is exploring multifunctional liposomes capable of carrying multiple drugs or diagnostic agents simultaneously [35]. These "theranostic" liposomes hold promise for personalized medicine approaches by combining therapeutic and diagnostic capabilities in a single platform [28].

The continued advancements in liposomal drug delivery systems offer exciting prospects for improving cancer therapy and other medical treatments[36]. By overcoming barriers associated with conventional drug delivery methods, liposomes pave the way for more effective, targeted, and personalized approaches to treating complex diseases like cancer [10]. The ability to tailor liposomal properties for specific therapeutic needs and conditions makes them a powerful tool in the ongoing fight against cancer, offering hope for better treatment outcomes and improved quality of life for patients [32].

6.3.1 Liposomes and the EPR effect. Passive targeting

Liposomes are increasingly recognized as effective carriers for delivering therapeutic agents, especially in cancer treatment, leveraging the Enhanced Permeability and Retention (EPR) effect [10] .This effect exploits unique tumor tissue characteristics allowing liposomes to accumulate at tumor sites and enhance drug delivery efficacy while reducing systemic side effects[36].

Tumor blood vessels exhibit larger gaps between endothelial cells (100-700 nm), facilitating liposome penetration into tumor interstitial spaces, unlike normal tissues where gaps are much smaller (5-10 nm)[39]. Additionally, irregular tumor vessel structures promote further permeability, aiding liposome extravasation[40].

Solid tumors often lack functional lymphatic drainage, prolonging liposome retention within the tumor microenvironment[41]. By encapsulating drugs like chemotherapy agents or imaging

agents, liposomes exploit the EPR effect to achieve higher drug concentrations specifically at tumors[36]. This targeted approach improves treatment efficacy by maximizing drug availability to cancer cells while minimizing systemic exposure to healthy tissues[28].

Passive targeting via the EPR effect complements active targeting (e.g., ligand-modified liposomes) and responsive drug release mechanisms in cancer therapy[42]. This multifaceted strategy highlights liposomal systems' versatility in advancing precision medicine and improving cancer treatment outcomes, aiming to enhance therapeutic effectiveness and reduce side **effects[35].**

6.3.2 Active targeting of liposomes

Nanomedicine has transformed cancer treatment by utilizing passive targeting mechanisms like the Enhanced Permeability and Retention (EPR) effect. This approach capitalizes on unique aspects of tumor tissues, such as their leaky blood vessels and compromised lymphatic drainage, which enable nanocarriers such as liposomes to accumulate specifically in tumors[43].

Despite promising beginnings, many nanomedicines relying on passive targeting face hurdles in clinical settings due to variations in the EPR effect among different tumor types and individuals[44]. This variability can result in inconsistent drug delivery to tumors, limiting treatment efficacy and potentially causing unintended effects in non-targeted areas.

A significant limitation of passive targeting is its dependence solely on tumor tissue characteristics for accumulation. This lack of precision means that while nanocarriers may accumulate in tumors, they could also accumulate in healthy tissues with similar vascular permeability, potentially leading to toxicity[43]. Additionally, some tumors may exhibit a weak EPR effect, further complicating the effectiveness of passive targeting strategies[44].

To address these challenges, active targeting strategies have gained momentum. Active targeting involves modifying nanocarriers, such as liposomes, with specific ligands that recognize and bind to molecular markers overexpressed on cancer cells. These ligands can include monoclonal antibodies, antibody fragments, peptides, or small molecules that selectively interact with receptors or antigens on tumor cell surfaces[45].

Attaching targeting ligands to liposomes creates immunoliposomes, which demonstrate enhanced uptake and internalization by cancer cells compared to non-targeted liposomes. This

targeted approach allows precise delivery of therapeutic agents directly to cancer cells while minimizing exposure to healthy tissues[46].

The choice of targeting ligands is guided by the molecular profile of the tumor environment. For example, certain cancers often exhibit elevated levels of specific proteins such as HER2, EGFR, or transferrin receptors making these proteins ideal targets for antibody-conjugated liposomes[36].

In addition to active targeting, recent advancements have introduced transcytosable nanocarriers as an alternative approach. These nanocarriers are designed to more effectively penetrate barriers within tumor tissues by utilizing various transcytosis mechanisms, including receptor-mediated and fluid-phase transcytosis[28]. This design aims to enhance the distribution and effectiveness of therapeutic payloads within solid tumors.

In conclusion, while passive targeting through the EPR effect remains fundamental in nanomedicine, active targeting strategies offer promising avenues to enhance specificity, improve drug delivery efficiency, and minimize off-target effects. Continuous research and development in targeted delivery systems, including immunoliposomes and transcytosable nanocarriers, are crucial for advancing precision medicine in cancer therapy and translating these innovations into clinical practice[47]. By integrating the strengths of passive and active targeting strategies, researchers strive to maximize therapeutic outcomes while minimizing adverse effects, ultimately improving patient outcomes in cancer treatment.

6.4 Clinical application of liposomes

Liposomal nanomedicines have transformed cancer treatment by leveraging both passive and active targeting mechanisms to deliver therapeutic agents more effectively while minimizing systemic toxicity. The foundation of their effectiveness lies in exploiting the Enhanced Permeability and Retention (EPR) effect, which allows liposomes to accumulate selectively in tumors due to their size and surface characteristics that capitalize on the abnormal vasculature and impaired drainage in tumor tissues [43].

Early studies, such as those by Morgan et al., provided key evidence demonstrating that liposomes labeled with indium 111 could successfully target solid tumors like malignant lymphoma and Kaposi’s sarcoma, validating the feasibility of passive targeting through the

EPR effect [48]. This research laid the groundwork for the development and clinical adoption of liposomal formulations in cancer therapy.

A notable example is Doxil (Caelyx), a PEGylated liposomal formulation of doxorubicin, which received FDA approval in 1995 for treating Kaposi's sarcoma and later for recurrent ovarian cancer [35]. PEGylation enhances liposome circulation in the bloodstream, facilitates accumulation in tumors via the EPR effect, and reduces cardiotoxicity compared to free doxorubicin[36].

Remote loading techniques pioneered by Barenholz have further advanced liposomal drug delivery by achieving high drug-to-lipid ratios and stable drug encapsulation within liposomes. This approach utilizes transmembrane gradients to efficiently load hydrophobic drugs like doxorubicin into the liposomal core, improving drug stability and retention while minimizing systemic side effects[35].

Clinical trials conducted by Gabizon et al. demonstrated that Doxil exhibits reduced clearance rates and a lower volume of distribution compared to free doxorubicin, leading to higher drug concentrations specifically within tumor tissues[28]. This targeted delivery approach not only enhances therapeutic efficacy but also improves patient outcomes by minimizing off-target effects.

In addition to passive targeting, active targeting strategies involve modifying liposomes with targeting ligands such as monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) or peptides that recognize and bind to specific receptors or antigens overexpressed on cancer cells. For example, liposomes conjugated with trastuzumab (Herceptin®) target HER2 receptors in breast cancer cells, enhancing cellular uptake and improving treatment outcomes [49].

Recent advancements include the development of transcytosable liposomes designed to penetrate cellular barriers within tumors more effectively. These nanocarriers utilize various transcytosis mechanisms, such as receptor-mediated and fluid-phase transcytosis, to enhance drug distribution and efficacy in solid tumors [47] .

In conclusion, liposomal nanomedicines represent a pivotal advancement in cancer therapy, offering targeted drug delivery capabilities that enhance efficacy and reduce toxicity compared to conventional treatments. Ongoing research continues to innovate in the

development of novel liposomal formulations and targeting strategies, aiming to further optimize treatment outcomes and expand the application of precision medicine in oncology.

6.5 Toxicology studies of liposomal nanomedicines

Liposomal nanomedicines have greatly advanced cancer treatment by enhancing the delivery and effectiveness of therapeutic agents. While they offer significant benefits in targeting tumors and reducing toxicity, comprehensive toxicology studies are essential to evaluate their safety. These studies examine potential adverse effects on biological systems, ensuring that liposomal formulations are safe for clinical application.

Early toxicology studies, such as those by Morgan et al., highlighted the potential of liposomes to accumulate in areas with increased vascular permeability via the EPR effect. These studies demonstrated that liposomes could selectively target tumor tissues without significant toxicity to healthy organs. However, they also underscored the importance of understanding the long-term effects and distribution of liposomes in the body [48].

Doxorubicin is a commonly used chemotherapy drug with severe cardiotoxic side effects. The development of doxorubicin-loaded liposomes, such as Doxil, aimed to reduce these side effects. Toxicology studies showed that encapsulating doxorubicin in liposomes significantly decreased its cardiotoxicity compared to the free drug. This reduction is due to the altered biodistribution and pharmacokinetics of the liposomal formulation, which minimizes exposure to heart tissue and lowers the incidence of cardiomyopathy[28].

Barenholz's remote loading technique for doxorubicin-loaded liposomes further improved drug retention and stability. Toxicology studies indicated that this method not only enhanced the therapeutic index but also reduced systemic toxicity. The high drug-to-lipid ratio and stable encapsulation ensured controlled release and minimized adverse effects in non-target tissues[35].

While PEGylation of liposomes extends circulation time, it has been linked to hypersensitivity reactions in some patients. Toxicology studies have reported cases of infusion reactions, which are thought to be associated with the rapid administration of PEGylated liposomes. Although generally manageable, these reactions highlight the need for careful monitoring and adjustment of infusion protocols to reduce the risk of immunogenicity and hypersensitivity[50].

The liver and kidneys are vital for metabolizing and excreting liposomal drugs. Toxicology studies have shown that liposomal formulations can cause liver and kidney toxicity in certain cases. These effects are often dose-dependent and related to the accumulation of liposomes in these organs. Regular monitoring of liver and kidney function in patients receiving liposomal therapies is crucial for early detection and management of potential toxicities[36].

Assessing the genotoxic and carcinogenic potential of liposomal formulations is crucial for their long-term safety. Studies generally show that liposomes themselves are not genotoxic or carcinogenic. However, the genotoxicity of the encapsulated drugs must be carefully evaluated. For instance, doxorubicin is known to be genotoxic, and its encapsulation in liposomes does not eliminate this risk. Therefore, the safety profile of both the liposomal carrier and the encapsulated drug must be considered[51].

Recent advancements in liposomal nanomedicines include the development of targeted and transcytosable liposomes. These innovations aim to improve the specificity and effectiveness of liposomal drugs while minimizing systemic toxicity. Toxicology studies of these new formulations are ongoing and essential to establish their safety profiles. These studies focus on understanding the interactions between liposomes and biological systems at the molecular level, evaluating long-term effects, and identifying potential off-target toxicities.

Toxicology studies are vital in the development and clinical application of liposomal nanomedicines. While these formulations offer significant advantages in drug delivery and reducing toxicity, thorough toxicological evaluations are necessary to ensure their safety. Continued research and innovation in this field promise to enhance the therapeutic efficacy and safety of liposomal nanomedicines, ultimately improving patient outcomes in cancer treatment and beyond.

6.6 Cationic liposomes in siRNA delivery and cancer therapy: a promising approach

Cationic liposomes have emerged as powerful tools in the field of molecular medicine, particularly for cancer therapy, gene delivery and RNA interference. These lipid-based nanocarriers are designed to enhance the delivery of therapeutic agents, offering a versatile and efficient means of targeting specific cells and tissues. Their ability to encapsulate and protect nucleic acids such as DNA and RNA from degradation in the bloodstream marks a significant advancement in biomedical science [52].

Cationic liposomes are composed of positively charged lipids, which facilitate their interaction with the negatively charged cell membranes and nucleic acids. This electrostatic interaction is pivotal in forming stable complexes with genetic material, thereby protecting it from enzymatic degradation and facilitating its delivery to the target cells. Cationic liposomes are typically formed by hydrating a thin lipid film composed of cationic lipids, often in combination with neutral lipids. The stability of these liposomes in biological environments is crucial, and this can be enhanced by incorporating polyethylene glycol (PEG) to form PEGylated liposomes, which exhibit prolonged circulation times and reduced immunogenicity [36]. The efficiency of cationic liposomes can be further improved by incorporating targeting ligands such as antibodies, peptides, or small molecules on their surface. These ligands are designed to recognize and bind specific receptors on the target cells, enhancing the selective delivery of the therapeutic payload [10].

Small interfering RNA (siRNA) holds promise for silencing specific genes involved in disease processes. However, delivering siRNA into cells poses significant challenges due to its susceptibility to degradation and poor cellular uptake. Cationic liposomes address these challenges effectively. Encapsulation within cationic liposomes protects siRNA from nucleases in the bloodstream, thereby increasing its stability and half-life . Upon reaching the target site, these liposomes facilitate the cellular uptake of siRNA through endocytosis. Once inside the cell, siRNA is released from the liposome and incorporated into the RNA-induced silencing complex (RISC), where it guides the degradation of complementary mRNA, effectively silencing the target gene [53]. This mechanism is crucial for applications in treating genetic disorders, cancers, and viral infections [54].

Gene therapy involves inserting genetic material into cells to treat or prevent illnesses. Cationic liposomes offer a non-viral, biocompatible alternative for gene delivery. The success of gene therapy depends on the efficient delivery and expression of the therapeutic gene within the target cells. Cationic liposomes enhance transfection efficiency by ensuring that the genetic material is effectively delivered to and expressed in the target cells [55]. Liposome-mediated gene therapy is being explored for a variety of conditions, including inherited genetic disorders, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers [56]. For example, in CAR T-cell therapy, cationic liposomes are used to deliver the CAR gene into T-cells, which are then reintroduced into the patient to target and destroy cancer cells [57].

Recent studies have demonstrated the significant impact of liposome-based delivery systems in cancer immunotherapy, particularly in CAR T-cell therapy. This therapy involves the genetic modification of a patient's T-cells to produce a CAR that specifically targets cancer cells. The use of liposomes to encapsulate adenovirus in CAR T-cell therapy has shown substantial improvements in the delivery and efficacy of the therapy. This results in reduced tumor sizes and increased anti-cancer immunity[58] . Lipid nanovesicle systems have been developed to specifically target tumors with immunotherapy medicines, further enhancing the effectiveness of CAR T-cell therapy. These systems demonstrate the potential to improve the precision and effectiveness of cancer treatments[59].

The ongoing research and development in the field of cationic liposomes are paving the way for more advanced and effective therapies. Continuous improvements in liposome formulations are aimed at enhancing stability, targeting capability, and delivery efficiency. Innovations such as multi-functional liposomes that combine therapeutic and diagnostic functions (theranostics) are also being explored . The translation of liposome-based therapies from the laboratory to the clinic involves rigorous testing to ensure safety, efficacy, and scalability [52],[60] Collaborative efforts between researchers, clinicians, and regulatory bodies are essential to overcome the challenges in clinical translation [61]. The integration of liposome-based delivery systems into personalized medicine approaches holds great promise. By tailoring therapies to the genetic and molecular profile of individual patients, it is possible to achieve more precise and effective treatments with fewer side effects [62].

Cationic liposomes represent a versatile and powerful tool in the field of molecular medicine, particularly for the delivery of siRNA and gene therapy. Their ability to protect and deliver nucleic acids to specific cells enhances the efficacy of therapeutic interventions and opens new possibilities for treating a wide range of diseases [63]. As research continues to advance, the strategic use of cationic liposomes is poised to play a pivotal role in the future of personalized and targeted medicine, ultimately improving patient outcomes and revolutionizing cancer therapy and beyond[63].

7. Conclusion

Liposomes represent a major advancement in drug delivery particularly
in cancer treatment, due to their outstanding biocompatibility,
flexibility and capacity to enhance therapeutic efficacy while

minimizing toxicity. Their ability to be customized for targeted delivery, along with their capability to encapsulate a diverse range of drugs and protect them from degradation, makes them a superior alternative to conventional drug delivery systems.

The development of liposomal formulations, such as Doxil, has demonstrated significant improvements in drug delivery by effectively targeting tumors through both passive and active mechanisms. The Enhanced Permeability and Retention (EPR) effect and innovations in remote loading techniques have further optimized the performance of these nanomedicines, resulting in better therapeutic outcomes and reduced side effects.

Ongoing research continues to advance liposomal technology, with new developments aimed at overcoming cellular barriers and enhancing the precision of drug delivery. As these technologies evolve, they have the potential to transform cancer therapy and expand the scope of precision medicine.The integration of liposomal nanomedicines into clinical practice represents a significant advancement towards achieving more effective and safer cancer treatments.

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investigation, Ilona Jasiuk, Martyna Pustelnik, Katarzyna Krukar, Nadia Miga -Orczykowska; resources, Klaudia Kister, Ewa Łukaszewska, Nadia Miga-Orczykowska; data curation, Ilona Sajkiewicz, Paulina Lemieszek, Ewa Łukaszewska, Justyna Wójtowicz; writing - rough preparation, Justyna Wójtowicz, Ilona Jasiuk; writing - review and editing, Katarzyna Rudnicka ,Paulina Lemieszek, Klaudia Kister, Ilona Jasiuk, Katarzyna Krukar, Martyna Pustelniak;

visualization, Katarzyna Rudnicka, Ilona Sajkiewicz, Nadia Miga-Orczykowska.; supervision, Ewa Łukaszewska, Katarzyna Krukar,Martyna Pustelniak Paulina Lemieszek; project administration, Katarzyna Rudnicka

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