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Solid Lipid Nanoparticles: A Potential Carrier for Transdermal Drug Delivery

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ABSTRACT

Transdermal delivery constitutes one of the most important routes for novel drug delivery system. Significant resistant nature of skin is the main trouble for successful drug delivery to deep skin layers for systemic absorption. Several approaches including physical, chemical and novel formulation techniques have been explored for safe and effective drug delivery across the skin barrier. Among them, potential lipid-based carrier solid lipid nanoparticles have gained a unique position for transdermal delivery of drugs due to the presence of high amount of epidermal lipids as the chief component of the penetration barrier of the skin. Skin-carrier interaction involves attachment of these carriers to skin with a view to permit the exchange of lipid between the outermost layers of the stratum corneum. This review specifically focuses on the hurdles of transdermal drug delivery, the need of novel carriers for transdermal delivery with special emphasis on role of solid lipid nanoparticles suggesting this lipid carrier a potential moiety for drug delivery through the skin.

1. INTRODUCTION

Transdermal delivery constitutes one of the most important routes for the novel delivery system. Transdermal route is emerging as an extensively accepted route of drug administration due to its ability to apply the drug to the site of action without rupturing the skin membrane (Sampath et al., 2010). Transdermal drug delivery system makes available the drugs through the skin portal to systemic circulation at a predetermined rate and maintains clinically the effective concentrations over a prolonged period of time.

The main merits of transdermal delivery are non-invasiveness, sustained release, self-administration, and enhancement of therapeutic efficacy and specificity to the target site (Liuzzi et al., 2016).

However targeted delivery of drug molecules to the skin is still a most challenging area of research in pharmaceutical development. The main hurdle in the way is barrier property of skin (Foldvari et al., 2010). Its notable barrier properties are due in large part to the stratum corneum, which represents the thin outer layer of the epidermis. In contrast to other tissues in the body, the stratum corneum consists of corneocytes (composed primarily of aggregated keratin filaments encased in a cornified envelope) that are surrounded by an extracellular milieu of lipids organized as multiple lamellar bilayers. These structured lipids avoid extreme loss of water from the body and likewise block access of most topically applied drugs, except those that are lipid-soluble and of low molecular weight. This poses a significant challenge to administering medications via the skin either for local cutaneous effects or as systemic therapy following their entry into superficial dermal capillaries (Gupta 2014, Manikandan et al., 2014).

Many approaches have been investigated to defeat this hurdle including physical methods of interruption and externally applied forces (e.g., iontophoresis, microneedles and phonophoresis), chemical disruption (e.g., permeation enhancers), novel formulations (e.g., nanoparticles, liposome etc), and a combination of these approaches (Charoenputtakun et al., 2015).

Among this, novel formulation based approach has become an important area of pharmaceutical research for transdermal drug delivery. Further lipid-based novel carriers present a unique position for transdermal drug delivery as lipids display exceptional properties in terms of safety,

biocompatibility, and physical stability. Numerous lipid based systems such as liposomes, transferosomes, niosomes, ethosomes, virosomes, phytosomes, cubosomes, solid lipid nanoparticles, nanostructured lipid carriers etc have been investigated successfully for transdermal delivery of drugs (Singh et al., 2015).

Solid Lipid Nanoparticles (SLNs) have materialized as an alternative to other novel delivery approaches as they present various advantages such as the feasibility of incorporation of lipophilic and hydrophilic drugs, improved physical stability, low cost compared to liposomes and ease of scale-up and manufacturing (Pradhan et al., 2013). Moreover, the potential of SLNs in epidermal targeting, follicular delivery, controlled drug delivery, increased skin hydration due to greater occlusivity and photostability improvement of active pharmaceutical ingredients has been very well established (Rawat et al., 2008, Sathali et al., 2012; Pradhan et al., 2013). Solid lipid nanoparticles are colloidal carrier systems composed of a high melting point lipid/s as a solid core coated by surfactants. The term lipid in a broader sense includes triglycerides, partial glycerides, fatty acids, hard fats and waxes. A clear advantage of SLNs is the fact that the lipid matrix is made from physiological lipids which decrease the danger of acute and chronic toxicity (Pradhan et al, 2015a).

Present review article focuses on the benefits and need of transdermal drug delivery system, hurdles in transdermal drug delivery and necessity of novel drug delivery carrier especially focusing on the solid lipid nanoparticles as an efficient carrier for drug delivery to the skin.

2. Benefits of transdermal drug delivery

Transdermal delivery offers various advantages over other routes such as hypodermic injections, which are painful, generate dangerous medical waste and pose the risk of disease transmission by needle re-use. Furthermore, as compared with the oral route, it is used when there is a significant first-pass effect of the liver that can prematurely metabolize drugs. In addition, transdermal systems are non-invasive and can be self-administered. They can provide prolonged drug release of about a week. (Prausnitz and Langer, 2008; Kogan and Garti, 2006).

Various other advantages of transdermal drug delivery have been discussed below:

- Avoids vagaries associated with gastrointestinal absorption due to pH, enzymatic activity, drug-food interactions etc.
- Substitutes oral administration when the route is unsuitable as in case of vomiting, diarrhea.
- Avoids hepatic “first pass” effect.
- Avoid the risks and inconveniences of parenteral therapy.
- Reduces daily dosing, thus, improving patient compliance.
- They also improve patient compliance and the systems are generally inexpensive.
- Offers controlled the release of the drug into the patient, it enables a steady blood-level profile, resulting in reduced systemic side effects and, sometimes, improved efficacy over other dosage forms.
- Extend the activity of drugs having short plasma half-life through the reservoir of drug present in the therapeutic delivery system and its controlled release characteristics.
- Rapid termination of drug effect by removal of drug application from the surface of the skin.
- Rapid identification of the medication in emergencies. (e.g. Non-responsive, unconscious, or comatose patient.) Elimination of the hazards and difficulties of I.V. infusions or I.M. injections.
- Enhance therapeutic efficacy, reduced side effects due to optimization of the blood concentration-time profile and elimination of pulse entry of drugs into the systemic circulation.
- Provide predictable activity over extended duration of time and ability to approximate zero-order kinetics
- Offers improved control of the drug concentrations with small therapeutic indices.
- Minimize inter and intra-patient variation.
- Provide suitability for self-administration.

3. Need of novel drug delivery system for drug delivery to skin

Field of pharmaceutical science has been mounting progressively over the time, and presently it has become precious in helping to keep us healthy and avert disease. In the past few decades, extensive interest has been focused on the development of transdermal delivery of drugs because

of a number of advantages offered by this route. Skin is the largest body organ covering a surface of about 2m and gaining about one-third of the blood circulating through the body. Topical drug delivery means the application of drug to skin for localized effect and in transdermal drug delivery system (TDDS) skin is used as a potential route for the delivery of systemic action of drugs (Rawat et al., 2016). TDDS offers a number of advantages like longer duration of action, flexibility in dosing, reduced side effects, uniform plasma levels, high patient compliance etc. But at the same time, it also bears some drawbacks like possibility of local irritation effect, erythema, itching, and most important is the low permeability of drugs in the stratum corneum. In addition stratum corneum behaves as a tough natural barrier (Manosroi *et al.*, 2012). This limits the route to transport drugs with a low octanol–water partition coefficient of 1 to 3, molecular weight of less than 500 Da and a melting point of less than 200 °C.

Nanotechnology has established a widespread exploration as the nanocarriers are able to fluidize the stratum corneum as a function of shape, size, surface charges, and hydrophilicity–lipophilicity balance, during drug delivery across the skin barrier (Wong 2016). Many physical, chemical and novel formulation techniques like iontophoresis, electroporation, sonophoresis, microneedle, magnetophoresis, thermophoresis, skin abrasion, use of penetration enhancers, pro-drugs, salt formation, liposome, transferosomes, niosomes, ethosomes, virosomes, phytosomes, cubosomes, solid lipid nanoparticles, nanostructured lipid carriers etc. has been investigated to evade this barrier (Barry 2001; Benson 2005, Singh et al., 2014).

Among this novel formulation technique is most promising for drug delivery through the skin. These novel delivery carriers bear great potential for dermal delivery. The novel carriers can be broadly classified into polymer based and lipid-based delivery carriers. However, lipid-based novel carriers gain unique position, especially for drug delivery to skin as lipids, display exceptional properties in terms of safety, biocompatibility, physical stability, efficacy, economic constituents, ease of preparation, scale-up, better entrapment of lipid soluble drugs, prolonged drug release and flexibility of formulation (Pradhan et al., 2016).

Furthermore, epidermal lipids exist in great homology with synthetic lipid. Thus lipid-based carriers mean an alternative to assist dermal penetration. They attach themselves onto the skin surface; facilitate adhesiveness and permits lipid exchange between the lipid-based carriers and the outermost layers of skin (Kakadia and Conway 2015).

Till date numerous polymeric and lipid-based carriers including, liposome, transferosomes, niosomes, ethosomes, virosomes, phytosomes, cubosomes, solid lipid nanoparticles, nanostructured lipid carriers etc. have been used successfully for safe and effective transdermal delivery of drugs. Various novel carriers used for transdermal delivery of drug has been enlisted in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Various novel carriers used for transdermal delivery of drug

| Delivery carrier | Drug | Disease/Disorder | Remark | Reference |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Polymeric carriers | | | | |
| Microsphere | Propranolol hydrochloride | Hypertension | Completely controlled drug release was observed | Thacharodi and Rao 1995 |
| Polymeric nanoparticle | Rabeprazole | Ulcer | Enhanced skin permeability and controlled drug release was observed | Ahmed and El-Say 2014 |
| | Betamethasone propionate | Skin inflammation | Prolonged drug release, enhanced stability and drug was observed. | Silva et al., 2015 |
| Dendrimers | Indomethacin | Inflammation | Enhanced drug activity of developed system as compared to the pure drug suspension was reported. | Chauhan et al., 2003 |
| Lipid based carriers | | | | |
| Liposome | Propranolol hydrochloride | Hypertension | Increased drug concentration in skin with about 74 folds as compared to plain propranolol gel | Guan et al., 2015 |

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|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ethosome | Clotrimazole | Candidiasis | Enhanced drug permeation across skin | Rahul et al., 2012 |
| | Psoralen | Psoriasis | Improved dermal and transdermal delivery of psoralen with increased biocompatibility | Zhang et al., 2014 |
| | Methotrexate | Psoriasis | Enhanced skin permeation was observed | Dubey et al., 2007. |
| Transferosomes | Insulin | Diabetes | Prolonged hypoglycemic activity over 24 h after transdermal administration was observed | Malakar el al., 2012 |
| | Pentoxifylline | Chronic occlusive arterial diseases | Enhanced bioavailability and sustained drug release was observed | Shuwaili et al., 2016 |
| Solid lipid nano particles | Fluocinolone acetonide | Psoriasis | Enhanced skin permeation and prolonged drug release was observed | Pradhan et al., 2015a |
| | Naproxen | Inflammation | Increased concentration of naproxen in the skin layer with less systemic absorption was found. | Akbari et al., 20116 |
| Nanostructured lipid carriers | Fluocinolone acetonide | Psoriasis | Enhanced skin permeation and prolonged drug release was observed | Pradhan et al., 2015b |
| | Lansoprazole | Gastric ulcer | Drug accumulation in the skin with continuous drug penetration drug concentration for at least 24 hours was reported | Lin and Duh 2016 |

4. Solid lipid nanoparticles for transdermal drug delivery

Solid Lipid Nanoparticles (SLNs), which were first mentioned in 1991, are colloidal carriers developed as an alternative system to the existing traditional carriers (emulsions, liposomes and polymeric nanoparticles). They are a new generation of submicron-sized lipid emulsions where the liquid lipid (oil) has been substituted by a solid lipid (Mehnert and Mäder, 2001).

They may increase the solubility and bioavailability of active pharmaceutical ingredients (API), guard these compounds from external objects such as light or oxygen thereby facilitating drug targeting (Müller *et al.*, 2000). Other advantages include the simple and scalable manufacturing processes such as microemulsion technique, high-pressure homogenization, and ultrasonication, their non-toxicity and biocompatibility as SLNs are constituted from GRAS (generally recognized as safe) ingredient, ability to modify drug release at the site of action (Bunjes 2010)

Solid lipid nanoparticles are at the forefront of the rapidly developing field of nanotechnology with several potential applications in drug delivery, clinical medicine, and research, as well as in other varied sciences. Due to their unique size-dependent properties, lipid nanoparticles offer the possibility to develop new therapeutics. The ability to incorporate drugs into nano-carriers offers a new prototype in drug delivery that could be used for secondary and tertiary levels of drug targeting (Cavalli *et al.*, 2000).

SLNs are composed of physiological lipid dispersed in an aqueous medium containing emulsifier exhibiting an average particle size in the nanometer range and epidermal lipids are found in great homology with synthetic lipid. SLNs mean an option to facilitate dermal penetration. In addition nano size range provides a high specific surface area for drug absorption through the skin thereby providing greater efficacy as a delivery system (Lauterbach and Müller-Goymann, 2015)

They are also able to attach themselves on to the skin surface, promoting adhesiveness and increasing hydration, even realizing lipid exchange between the lipid-based carriers and the outermost layers of skin. Several researchers have been carried out for safe and effective transdermal delivery of skin through solid lipid nanoparticles.

In this context **Verma *et al.*, 2013** developed SLN of piroxicam for transdermal delivery of drug for the effective management of rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis. They developed SLN using

solvent emulsification-diffusion method and performed *in vitro* release of piroxicam from SLNs in the phosphate buffer of pH 7.4. They reported a biphasic release pattern with an initial burst & prolonged release. Conclusively they demonstrated that piroxicam loaded SLNs based hydrogel formulation SLNs-C8H had the accumulative amount of piroxicam in skins & should a significant skin targeting effect.

Elnaggar et al., 2011 developed SLN of sildenafil citrate for transdermal permeation of drug for the effective management of erectile dysfunction. They developed SLNs using high-pressure homogenization method. They reported that SLNs have successfully improved stratum corneum transdermal permeation via human skin with promising implication for shorter onset & longer duration of drug action.

In another study **Praveen et al., 2013** developed SLN for transdermal drug delivery for effective management of anti-inflammatory activity. They developed SLNs using melt emulsion sonication & low-temperature solidification method. Further, they performed *in vitro* drug release by using acetate synthetic membrane. Overall they concluded that it would be advantageous for controlled transdermal delivery of drug.

Akbari et al., 2016 developed naproxen loaded solid lipid nanoparticles (Nap-SLNs) by the ultrasonication method to improve its skin permeation and examined the effect of Hydrophilic-lipophilic balance (HLB) changes on nanoparticles properties. They reported that the amount of naproxen noticed in the receptor chamber at all the sampling times for the reference formulation (naproxen solution containing all surfactants at pH 7.4) was higher as compared to Nap-SLN8 formulation. Further, Nap-SLN8 exhibited increased concentration of naproxen in the skin layer with less systemic absorption. The overall finding suggested that majority of drug in Nap-SLN8 retained in the skin which in turn reduces the side effect resulted from systemic drug absorption. In addition, enhanced concentration of the drug at the site was also observed.

Ghanbarzadeh et al., 2015 developed hydroquinone (HQ) loaded SLNs to overcome the problems associated with HQ such as drug instability due to rapid oxidation, insufficient skin penetration, and severe systemic side effects. These results indicated the better HQ localization in the skin and its lower systemic absorption. They suggested that, SLNs to be a promising drug carrier for dermal administration of HQ in the treatment of hyperpigmentation due to suitable

HQ loading value, enhanced stability against oxidation and suitable skin penetration in addition to reduced systemic absorption.

Apart from the above discussed findings, numerous researches which suggest SLNs to be a potential carrier for transdermal delivery have been presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: Various SLNs used in the transdermal delivery of drug

| Drug | Preparation method of SLNs | Diseases/Disorders | Remark | Reference |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Meloxicam | Microemulsion method | Pain and inflammation | Noticeable anti-inflammatory activity with excellent skin tolerability was achieved | Khurana <i>et al.</i> , 2013 |
| Safranal | Ultrasound and high-pressure homogenization (HPH) methods | Sunburn | Enhanced sunscreen and moisturizing activity was observed | Khameneh <i>et al.</i> , 2015 |
| Grisofulvin | Hot micro-emulsion method | Fungal infection | Enhanced skin permeation was observed | Aggrawal and Gondi, 2013 |
| Aconitine | Micro-emulsion method | Fever and pain | Enhanced drug permeability and reduce administration time was reported | Zhanng <i>et al.</i> , 2015 |
| Isotretinoin | Hot homogenization method | Psoriasis | Significantly improved skin targeting effect and good stability | Liu <i>et al.</i> , 2007 |
| Quercetin | Homogenization and ultra- | Skin cancer | Enhanced permeation of drug loaded SLNs | Han <i>et al.</i> , 2014 |

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | sonication method | | as compared to quercetin dissolved in propylene glycol | |
| Terbinafine | Solvent-injection method | Candidiasis | Reduced fungal burden of <i>Candida albicans</i> in rats as compared to commercial product | Vaghasiya <i>et al.</i> , 2013 |
| Acyclovir | High pressure homogenization method | Fungal infection | Two times more skin accumulation of drug loaded SLNs formulation than marketed acyclovir gel cream | Gide <i>et al.</i> , 2013 |
| Halobetasol propionate | Solvent injection method | psoriasis | HP-SLN exhibited controlled drug release with enhanced skin targeting with no skin irritation. | Bikkad <i>et al.</i> , 2014 |
| Clobetasol propionate | High-pressure homogenization | Psoriasis and other skin inflammation | Noticeable improvement in therapeutic response with 1.9 fold improvement in inflammation and 1.2 fold improvement in itching against marketed formulation | Kalariya <i>et al.</i> , 2005 |
| Flucanazole | Solvent diffusion method | Cutaneous candidiasis | Enhanced dermal localization of drug was reported | Gupta <i>et al.</i> , 2013 |

5. CONCLUSION

The transdermal drug delivery system encourages drug absorption via the skin. This offers many advantages over conventional administration routes such as oral or intravenous administration for systemic and local drug delivery with easy administration. It is patient friendly and reduces the patient inconvenience caused by intravenous administration. In addition it minimizes drug loss from pass effect of the liver thereby delivering therapeutic drugs at a controlled rate. But natural barrier property of skin is main hurdle in development of transdermal drug delivery system. However overcoming the skin barrier, including the stratum corneum and epidermal layer, success could be achieved in this area. Though chemical and physical techniques already exist, they possess certain unavoidable limitations such as need high doses or high potency to exert efficiency which results in irritation, causes harm to skin and trim downs the skin barrier function. Consequently, a nanoparticle delivery system is gaining increased attention as a transdermal drug delivery carrier.

In this context solid lipid nanoparticles have materialized as a versatile novel approach transdermal delivery of drugs drug. SLNs link the merits of lipid emulsion and polymeric nanoparticle systems while overcoming the sequential and in vivo stability issues that discourage the conventional as well as polymeric nanoparticles drug delivery approaches. The potential of SLNs as resourceful carrier for dermal and transdermal delivery for the treatment of various diseases like hypertension, diabetes, gastric ulcer, psoriasis, candidiasis etc. have been reported by numerous researchers. Conclusively SLNs are very complex systems with clear advantages having great potential for drug delivery through skin. In future work needs to be done to understand the structure, dynamics and toxicity issues of SLN to explore its usefulness for in vivo point.

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