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ADVANCEMENTS IN LOCAL DRUG DELIVERY SYSTEMS FOR PERIODONTAL DISEASE MANAGEMENT: CURRENT TRENDS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Periodontal disease is a prevalent inflammatory condition that affects the supporting structures of teeth, leading to progressive tissue destruction and potential tooth loss. Traditional treatment methods such as scaling and root planing (SRP) and systemic antibiotic therapy have limitations, including inadequate drug penetration and antibiotic resistance. Local drug delivery (LDD) systems have emerged as an effective adjunct to conventional therapy by providing targeted and sustained drug release within periodontal pockets. Advances in nanotechnology, biomaterials, hydrogels, and 3D printing have significantly improved the efficacy and longevity of LDD systems. This review explores the evolution of LDD systems, their current applications, and emerging technologies that hold promise for future periodontal disease management.

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INTRODUCTION

Periodontitis is a chronic inflammatory disease triggered by a dysbiotic microbial biofilm that leads to the destruction of the periodontium, including alveolar bone, periodontal ligament, and gingival tissue [1]. Globally, periodontitis affects nearly 50% of adults, making it a significant public health concern [2]. Conventional periodontal treatments involve mechanical debridement through SRP, which is often supplemented with systemic or locally administered antimicrobial agents [3]. However, systemic antibiotics present challenges such as insufficient drug concentration at the target site, potential adverse effects, and the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria [4]. Local drug delivery (LDD) systems have been developed to overcome these challenges by delivering antimicrobial agents directly into the periodontal pocket, ensuring higher drug concentrations with minimal systemic side effects [5]. Recent advancements in LDD systems have incorporated nanotechnology, controlled-release biomaterials, and bioactive scaffolds to enhance drug retention and therapeutic efficacy. This review provides a comprehensive analysis of conventional and emerging LDD strategies for periodontitis management.

Conventional Local Drug Delivery Systems: LDD systems have been widely employed to deliver antimicrobial agents directly to periodontal pockets. These systems include fibers, gels, microparticles, and biodegradable films.

Antimicrobial Fibers and Strips: Fibers and strips are among the earliest LDD systems designed for controlled drug release within periodontal pockets.

Tetracycline fibers: The first FDA-approved LDD system, Tetracycline fibers, made of ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) copolymer impregnated with tetracycline hydrochloride, are an early local drug delivery system (LDDS) for periodontal therapy. They provide sustained drug release over 7–10 days, maintaining high local concentrations to effectively combat periodontal pathogens like *A. actinomycetemcomitans* and *P. gingivalis*. Advantages include targeted antibiotic delivery, reduced systemic side effects, and improved clinical outcomes such as reduced pocket depth and better attachment levels [6]. However, limitations include the need for manual insertion and removal, potential for dislodgment, and patient discomfort. While effective as an adjunct to scaling and root planing (SRP), they have been largely replaced by biodegradable alternatives and advanced drug delivery systems for improved compliance and

efficacy. Minocycline strips: Biodegradable polymeric strips that provide prolonged antimicrobial activity and reduce periodontal pocket depth [7]. These strips are typically made of biodegradable polymers impregnated with minocycline hydrochloride, ensuring a controlled release of the drug over several days. They effectively target periodontal pathogens like Porphyromonas gingivalis and Aggregatibacter actinomycetemcomitans, reducing pocket depth, inflammation, and bacterial load while promoting clinical attachment gain. Compared to older non-resorbable systems, minocycline strips offer better patient compliance as they do not require removal. However, potential drawbacks include localized irritation, allergic reactions, and bacterial resistance with prolonged use. Their ease of application and biodegradability make them a promising adjunct to scaling and root planing (SRP) in periodontal treatment. Despite their effectiveness, fibers and strips require manual placement and may not adhere well to periodontal tissues, limiting their clinical application.

Gels and Varnishes: Gels and varnishes have been developed to improve drug retention and ease of application. Chlorhexidine gels: it is a broad-spectrum antimicrobial agent used in local drug delivery systems (LDDS) for periodontal therapy, offering sustained release within periodontal pockets[8]. Typically formulated with 2.5% chlorhexidine, the gel effectively targets Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria, including Porphyromonas gingivalis and Aggregatibacter actinomycetemcomitans, reducing plaque formation, inflammation, and pocket depth. It is often used as an adjunct to scaling and root planing (SRP), providing prolonged antibacterial action without the risk of antibiotic resistance. Advantages include ease of application, biocompatibility, and broad antimicrobial coverage, but limitations involve temporary staining of teeth, altered taste sensation, and potential local irritation. As a biodegradable formulation, chlorhexidine gel enhances periodontal treatment outcomes while minimizing systemic side effects. Metronidazole and doxycycline gels: these are antimicrobial local drug delivery systems (LDDS) used in periodontal therapy, formulated with biodegradable polymers such as hydroxypropyl methylcellulose (HPMC), chitosan, or polycaprolactone, ensuring sustained drug release within periodontal pockets. Metronidazole, a nitroimidazole derivative, is typically used in 25%–40% concentration, targeting obligate anaerobes like Porphyromonas gingivalis and Prevotella intermedia, while doxycycline, a tetracycline-class antibiotic, is used in 5%–10% concentration, inhibiting protein synthesis of pathogens like Aggregatibacter actinomycetemcomitans[9]. These gels help reduce pocket depth, inflammation, and bacterial load as an adjunct to scaling and root planing (SRP). Advantages include targeted drug delivery, reduced systemic side effects, and improved clinical attachment levels, but concerns involve bacterial resistance, potential allergic reactions, and mild local irritation. Their biodegradability and ease of application make them effective options for enhancing periodontal therapy. However, these formulations often require repeated applications to maintain effective drug concentrations.

Microparticles and Biodegradable Films: Microparticles and biodegradable films offer sustained drug release while being biocompatible.

Polymeric microparticles: Polymeric microparticles are advanced local drug delivery systems (LDDS) designed for sustained and controlled release of antimicrobial agents in periodontal therapy[10]. They are typically formulated using biodegradable polymers such as poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid) (PLGA), chitosan, alginate, or gelatin, which encapsulate antibiotics (e.g., doxycycline, minocycline), antiseptics (e.g., chlorhexidine), or anti-inflammatory agents. These microparticles provide prolonged drug release, improving bioavailability, reducing bacterial load, and enhancing periodontal tissue healing. Their small size allows for deep penetration into periodontal pockets, ensuring effective localized drug action with minimal systemic side effects. Advantages include controlled drug release, better patient compliance, and biodegradability, while limitations involve complex formulation, potential drug burst release, and cost. Polymeric microparticles represent a promising nanomedicine-based approach for improving periodontal therapy outcomes.

Biodegradable films: These films are typically made from biodegradable polymers such as chitosan, collagen, poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid) (PLGA), or polylactic acid (PLA), which gradually degrade after delivering antibiotics (e.g., doxycycline, minocycline, metronidazole) or antiseptics (e.g., chlorhexidine). Placed directly into periodontal pockets, they help reduce bacterial load, decrease inflammation, and promote tissue regeneration without the need for removal. Advantages include sustained drug release, improved patient compliance, and minimal systemic side effects, while challenges involve film adhesion, drug loading capacity, and potential local irritation. Their ability to deliver multiple therapeutic agents makes them a promising tool in periodontal disease management. These systems address the limitations of traditional LDD methods by enhancing drug stability and retention within periodontal pockets.

Advanced Drug Delivery Systems: Innovative LDD approaches have emerged to overcome the limitations of conventional systems, integrating nanotechnology, smart biomaterials, and 3D printing for enhanced periodontal therapy.

Nanotechnology-Based Drug Delivery: Nanotechnology has revolutionized LDD systems by improving drug bioavailability, stability, and targeted delivery.

Polymeric nanoparticles (PNPs): Enhance drug encapsulation, ensuring prolonged release and increased stability [12].Their nanoscale size allows deep penetration into periodontal pockets, improving bacterial eradication, reducing inflammation, and promoting tissue regeneration while minimizing systemic side effects. Advantages include controlled and sustained drug release, enhanced stability, and targeted delivery, but challenges involve complex formulation, potential cytotoxicity, and high production costs. These nanoparticles represent a cutting-edge nanomedicine approach for improving periodontal disease management.

Lipid-based nanoparticles (LNPs): These nanoparticles, including solid lipid nanoparticles (SLNs) and nanostructured lipid carriers (NLCs), are formulated using biocompatible lipids such as phospholipids, triglycerides, and cholesterol derivatives, which encapsulate antibiotics (e.g., doxycycline, minocycline), antiseptics (e.g., chlorhexidine), or anti-inflammatory agents [13]. Their lipophilic nature enhances drug penetration and retention in periodontal pockets, ensuring prolonged antimicrobial action, reduced bacterial resistance, and improved tissue regeneration. Advantages include biodegradability, controlled drug release, and minimal systemic toxicity, while challenges involve stability issues, formulation complexity, and potential drug leakage. Lipid-based nanoparticles represent a promising nanocarrier system for enhancing periodontal disease treatment and regeneration.

Silver nanoparticles (AgNPs): Silver-based nanoparticles are emerging local drug delivery systems (LDDS) in periodontal therapy, known for their potent antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and wound-healing properties[14]. These nanoparticles, typically synthesized using silver salts, plant extracts, or chemical reduction methods, exhibit broad-spectrum antibacterial activity against periodontal pathogens like Porphyromonas gingivalis and Aggregatibacter actinomycetemcomitans. Their nano-size allows deep penetration into periodontal pockets, ensuring sustained bacterial inhibition, biofilm disruption, and reduced inflammation. Advantages include high antimicrobial efficacy, minimal risk of bacterial resistance, and promotion of tissue regeneration, but concerns involve cytotoxicity at higher concentrations, potential toxicity to host cells, and cost of large-scale production. Silver nanoparticles are a promising nanomedicine-based approach for enhancing periodontal therapy outcomes. These nanocarriers allow for precision drug delivery while minimizing systemic toxicity.

Hydrogels and Smart Biomaterials: Hydrogels are hydrophilic polymer networks capable of retaining large amounts of water while facilitating controlled drug release.

Thermosensitive hydrogels: These are innovative local drug delivery systems (LDDS) used in periodontal therapy, designed to undergo a sol-to-gel transition in response to temperature changes. Typically composed of biocompatible polymers like chitosan, Pluronic (Poloxamer), or gelatin, these hydrogels remain liquid at room temperature for easy application and gelate at body temperature, ensuring prolonged drug retention and controlled release. They can encapsulate antibiotics (e.g., doxycycline, minocycline), antiseptics (e.g., chlorhexidine), or growth factors, enhancing antimicrobial action, reducing inflammation, and promoting tissue regeneration. Advantages include improved drug stability, ease of application, and biodegradability, but challenges involve gelation kinetics, potential burst drug release, and formulation complexity. Thermosensitive hydrogels offer a promising, patient-friendly approach for sustained periodontal drug delivery.

Enzyme-responsive hydrogels: these are smart local drug delivery systems (LDDS) used in periodontal therapy, designed to undergo controlled degradation and drug release in response to enzymatic activity in periodontal pockets. These hydrogels are typically formulated with biodegradable polymers such as chitosan, hyaluronic acid, or gelatin, which respond to matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs), lysozymes, or bacterial enzymes present in periodontal disease. They can encapsulate antibiotics (e.g., doxycycline, minocycline), antiseptics (e.g., chlorhexidine), or anti-inflammatory agents, ensuring targeted, sustained drug release, biofilm disruption, and enhanced tissue regeneration. Advantages include site-specific activation, prolonged drug action, and minimal systemic side effects, but challenges involve precise enzyme sensitivity, formulation complexity, and potential variability in enzymatic activity among patients. These hydrogels represent a novel, responsive drug delivery approach for effective periodontal treatment. These advanced biomaterials improve drug retention and ensure sustained antimicrobial activity.

D-Printed Drug Delivery Scaffolds: 3D printing technology has enabled the development of personalized periodontal scaffolds with controlled drug release properties.

Biodegradable 3D scaffolds: These scaffolds are typically made from biocompatible polymers such as chitosan, collagen, poly (lactic-co-glycolic acid) (PLGA), or hydroxyapatite, which degrade naturally over time. They can be loaded with antibiotics (e.g., doxycycline, minocycline), growth factors, or anti-inflammatory agents, ensuring targeted drug delivery, bacterial inhibition, and enhanced periodontal tissue repair. Their porous structure allows for cell infiltration, vascularization, and guided tissue regeneration (GTR). Advantages include controlled drug release, biocompatibility, and structural support for healing, but challenges involve fabrication complexity, mechanical strength, and potential degradation rate variability.

Hybrid scaffolds: it combining antimicrobial agents with bioactive molecules facilitate both infection control and tissue regeneration [18], They can be loaded with antibiotics (e.g., doxycycline, minocycline), growth factors, or stem cells, promoting antimicrobial action, inflammation reduction, and periodontal tissue repair. Their porous architecture facilitates cell adhesion, proliferation, and vascularization, making them ideal for guided tissue regeneration (GTR). Advantages include customizable degradation rates, improved mechanical properties, and targeted drug release, but challenges involve fabrication complexity, cost, and ensuring consistent drug diffusion. Hybrid 3D scaffolds represent a next-generation regenerative platform for periodontal therapy and drug delivery.

3D-printed LDD systems offer precise drug dosing and customizable treatment strategies.

Microneedle and Injectable Systems: Microneedles and injectable hydrogels represent innovative approaches for localized periodontal drug delivery. Microneedle-based drug delivery is a minimally invasive and biodegradable local drug delivery system (LDDS) designed for deep drug diffusion in periodontal therapy [19]. Advantages include painless application, precision, improved bioavailability, and patient compliance, but challenges involve fabrication complexity, cost, and ensuring uniform drug diffusion. This innovative approach offers a promising future for periodontal disease management. Injectable hydrogels are made from biodegradable polymers (chitosan, hyaluronic acid, Pluronic, or gelatin), remain in liquid form during injection and gelate in response to physiological conditions.

They can encapsulate antibiotics (doxycycline, minocycline), antiseptics (chlorhexidine), or growth factors, promoting antimicrobial action, inflammation reduction, and tissue regeneration. Advantages include easy application, deep penetration, prolonged drug retention, and biodegradability, while challenges involve formulation stability, burst drug release, and patient-specific responses [20]. These systems provide a targeted and sustained drug release while reducing the need for surgical interventions.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite significant advancements, LDD systems still face several challenges:

Short retention time: Certain formulations are quickly washed away by saliva and gingival crevicular fluid, reducing efficacy.

Drug degradation: Some antibiotics degrade rapidly within the oral environment.

High production costs: Advanced biomaterials and nanocarriers require expensive manufacturing processes.

Regulatory hurdles: FDA and EMA approval for novel biomaterials and nanocarriers is a complex and time-consuming process. Overcoming these challenges is crucial for the widespread clinical adoption of advanced LDD systems.

Future Perspectives

To address current limitations, future research should focus on:

Personalized drug delivery systems: Tailoring drug formulations based on individual microbiota profiles for optimal treatment efficacy [21]. Multifunctional biomaterials: Developing biodegradable LDD systems that combine antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and regenerative properties [22]. Artificial intelligence (AI)-driven drug delivery: Integrating AI-based monitoring systems to optimize drug release based on real-time periodontal health status [23]. These innovations will pave the way for more effective and personalized periodontal treatments.

CONCLUSION

LDD systems have emerged as a valuable adjunct in periodontal therapy, enhancing treatment efficacy while minimizing systemic side effects. Advances in nanotechnology, biomaterials, and 3D printing have further improved drug delivery efficiency. Despite existing challenges, ongoing research in smart biomaterials and AI-driven drug delivery holds promise for the future of periodontal disease management. Integrating these innovations into clinical practice may revolutionize periodontal therapy, leading to more effective and personalized treatment strategies.

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