OPEN ACCESS Freely available online

ISSN: 2167-7956
Journal of Biomolecular Research & Therapeutics

Commentary

Innovative Methods for Therapeutic Applications and the Revolution of RNA

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DESCRIPTION

The field of medicine has always been driven by innovation, with breakthroughs that revolutionize how diseases are treated and managed. In recent years, RNA-based technologies have emerged as impactful in therapeutic applications, having new approaches to treating a wide range of diseases. From gene silencing to vaccine development, RNA has proven to be a versatile and impactful in modern medicine. This article explains innovative methods for therapeutic applications of RNA and the transformative impact these technologies are having on the field of medicine.

RNA is a major molecular intermediary in the flow of genetic information from DNA to proteins. Its role extends beyond mere transcription, as RNA molecules can regulate gene expression, catalyze biochemical reactions, and influence cellular processes. This versatility has led to the development of several RNA-based therapeutic strategies, each leveraging RNA's unique properties to address different medical challenges.

RNA interference (RNAi)

RNA interference (RNAi) is a natural cellular process that regulates gene expression by degrading specific mRNA molecules. This mechanism has been controlled therapeutically to silence genes associated with diseases. RNAi therapies involve the use of small RNA molecules, such as small interfering RNA (siRNA) or short hairpin RNA (shRNA), to target and degrade mRNA transcripts of disease-related genes.

One notable example of RNAi-based therapy is Patisiran, an FDA-approved drug for the treatment of hereditary transthyretin amyloidosis. This drug uses lipid nanoparticles to deliver siRNA Targeting the Transthyretin (*TTR*) gene, which produces a protein that separating and accumulates in tissues, leading to disease. By silencing the *TTR* gene, Patisiran reduces the production of the problematic protein and alleviates symptoms of the disease.

Antisense Oligonucleotides (ASOs)

Antisense Oligonucleotides (ASOs) are short, synthetic RNA or DNA molecules designed to bind to specific mRNA transcripts and modulate their expression. ASOs can function through various mechanisms, including the induction of mRNA degradation or the modulation of splicing events.

Spinraza (nusinersen) is a prominent example of an ASO used to treat Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), a genetic disorder caused by mutations in the *SMN1* gene. Spinraza works by binding to the mRNA of the SMN2 gene, which partially compensates for the defective *SMN1* gene. The ASO promotes the inclusion of exon 7 in the *SMN2* mRNA, resulting in the production of functional SMN protein. This therapy has demonstrated significant improvements in motor function and survival in SMA patients.

mRNA vaccines

The success of mRNA vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the potential of RNA-based technologies for preventing and treating infectious diseases. Unlike traditional vaccines, which use inactivated pathogens to stimulate an immune response, mRNA vaccines work by providing the body's cells with instructions to produce a protein that triggers an immune response.

The COVID-19 vaccines are prime examples of mRNA vaccine technology. These vaccines use mRNA to encode the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, prompting the immune system to recognize and respond to the virus if encountered in the future. The rapid development and efficacy of these vaccines have demonstrated the potential of mRNA technology to address emerging infectious diseases and pave the way for future vaccines against other pathogens.

RNA-based gene editing

RNA-based gene editing technologies, such as CRISPR/Cas systems, have revolutionized the field of genetic engineering.

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Received: 29-Jul-2024, Manuscript No. BOM-24-26752; **Editor assigned:** 01-Aug-2024, PreQC No. BOM-24-26752 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 15-Aug-2024, QC No. BOM-24-26752; **Revised:** 22-Aug-2024, Manuscript No. BOM-24-26752 (R); **Published:** 30-Aug-2024, DOI: 10.35248/2167-7956.24.13.398

Citation: Bruce D (2024). Innovative Methods for Therapeutic Applications and the Revolution of RNA. J Biomol Res Ther. 13:398.

While CRISPR/Cas9 is primarily known for its DNA-editing capabilities, recent advances have expanded its utility to RNA editing.

The CRISPR/Cas13 system, also known as C2c2, is a RNA-targeting CRISPR system that can be programmed to target and modify specific RNA molecules. This technology allows for precise manipulation of RNA transcripts, including the correction of mutations or the modulation of gene expression. CRISPR/Cas13 has potential in preclinical studies for treating genetic disorders, such as cystic fibrosis, by directly targeting and correcting disease-causing mutations in RNA.

CONCLUSION

The revolution of RNA-based therapeutics represents a transformative shift in the field of medicine, offering innovative methods for treating a wide range of diseases. From RNA interference and antisense oligonucleotides to mRNA vaccines and RNA-based gene editing, these technologies are paving the way for new and more effective treatments. While challenges remain, ongoing research and technological advancements are mostly to overcome these obstacles, further unlocking the potential of RNA therapeutics.

As we continue to explore and refine RNA-based technologies, we are moving closer to a future where personalized and precision medicine can address complex medical challenges with greater efficacy and fewer side effects. The ongoing revolution in RNA therapeutics having the potential of advanced in medicine, driven by innovation and a deeper understanding of the molecular mechanisms underlying health and disease.