

**DEVELOPMENT OF BIOMIMETIC SCAFFOLDS
TO REGULATE DIABETIC WOUND
MICROENVIRONMENT**

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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI
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by

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Declaration

*The Thesis entitled “**Development of Biomimetic Scaffolds to Regulate Diabetic Wound Microenvironment**” has been carried out under the supervision of Prof. Jayanta Bhattacharyya and Prof. Veena Koul and submitted for the fulfilment of Ph.D. in the Centre for Bio-medical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The research comprises of original work that has not been submitted previously in part or full to this or any University for award of academic degree or diploma.*

I hereby solemnly declare that all information provided in this Thesis are obtained and presented in compliance with the academic rules of ethical conduct.

Ahana Banerjee

Certificate

*This is to certify that the Thesis entitled “**Development of Biomimetic Scaffolds to Regulate Diabetic Wound Microenvironment**” has been carried out by Ms. Ahana Banerjee, a bonafide Ph.D. student at Centre for Bio-medical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The conceptualization, investigations, observations, and conclusions reported in the thesis are based on her original work conducted under our direct supervision. This Thesis, being submitted for the award of Ph.D. degree has not been submitted in part or in full to this or any other University for the award of any degree or diploma.*

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Contents

Acknowledgement	I
List of Abbreviations	IV
Abstract	VI
CHAPTER 1: Introduction and literature survey	1-43
1.1 Wounds	1
1.2 Stages of wound healing	1
1.2.1 Hemostasis	1
1.2.2 Inflammation	2
1.2.3 Proliferation	2
1.2.4 Remodeling	4
1.3 Types of wounds	4
1.3.1 Closed wound	4
1.3.2 Open wound	5
1.3.3 Clean incisional wound	5
1.3.4 Contaminated wound	5
1.3.5 Shearing wound	6
1.3.6 Crushing wound	6
1.3.7 Burn wound	6
1.3.8 Superficial wound	7
1.3.9 Deep dermal wound	7
1.3.10 Full-thickness wound	7

1.3.11 Acute wound	8
1.3.12 Chronic wound	9
1.4 Pathophysiology of diabetic wounds	12
1.5 Treatment of diabetic wounds	14
1.5.1 Dressings in diabetic wound healing	16
1.5.1.1 Tissue-derived scaffold or skin substitutes	17
1.5.1.1.1 Temporary skin substitutes	17
1.5.1.1.2 Permanent skin substitutes	18
1.5.1.1.3 Biological skin substitutes	18
1.5.1.1.4 Synthetic skin substitutes	20
1.5.1.2 Wound covering patches	23
1.5.1.2.1 Low adherent dressings or bandages	24
1.5.1.2.2 Semi-permeable films	24
1.5.1.2.3 Antimicrobial dressings	25
1.5.1.2.4 Hydrocolloid	25
1.5.1.2.5 Foam dressings	25
1.5.1.2.6 Alginate dressings	26
1.5.1.2.3 Hydrogel-based dressings	26
1.5.1.3 Active-component -based systems	27
1.5.1.3.1 Regenerative approaches	27
1.5.1.3.2 Pro-regenerative approaches	28
1.5.1.3.3 growth factor-based approach	29
1.5.1.3.4 Stem cell-based approaches	29
1.5.1.3.5 Exosome-based approaches	31

1.5.1.3.4 Gene-based approaches	32
1.6 Hypothesis leading to present Thesis	34
1.7 References	36
CHAPTER 2: Sequential release of CHX and PDGF-BB from layer-by-layer silk-fibroin-hyaluronic acid scaffold to regulate proinflammatory cytokines, MMP-9, and growth factors and in diabetic wound microenvironment	
2.1 Introduction	44
2.2 Experimental Section	46
2.3 Results	56
2.4 Discussion	78
2.5 Conclusion	86
2.6 References	87
CHAPTER 3: Inhibition of AGE/RAGE signaling regulates chronic diabetic wound microenvironment by restoring macrophage function to induce early healing	
3.1 Introduction	94
3.2 Experimental Section	97
3.3 Results	107
3.4 Discussion	123
3.5 Conclusion	130
3.6 Reference	131
CHAPTER 4: Immunomodulatory effects of engineered M2-derived nano-vesicle grafted self-healing hydrogel in the chronic diabetic wound microenvironment	
4.1 Introduction	138
4.2 Experimental Section	141

4.3 Results	150
4.4 Discussion	164
4.5 Conclusion	169
4.6 Reference	169
Comparison between different developed hydrogels	176
Future scope	177

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*Dedicated to my anchors who let me venture the highest limits of the sky
while keeping me grounded.*

Abbreviations

DM	Diabetes mellitus
GF(s)	Growth factor(s)
PDGF	Platelet derived growth factor
TGF- β 1	Transforming growth factor-beta 1
TGF- α	Transforming growth factor-alpha
TGF- β 3	Transforming growth factor-beta 3
VEGF	Vascular endothelial growth factor
EGF	Epidermal growth factor
bFGF	Basic fibroblast growth factor
HB-EGF	Heparin-binding EGF
IGF	Insulin-like growth factor
FGF-2	Fibroblast growth factor-2
TNF- α	Tumor necrosis factor alpha
PD-ECGF/TP	Platelet derived endothelial cell growth factor/thymidine phosphorylase
CSF	Colony-stimulating factor
GM-CSF	Granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor
ROS	Reactive oxygen species
M1	Proinflammatory macrophages
M2	Anti-inflammatory macrophages
ECM	Extracellular matrix
STSGs	Split-thickness skin grafts
FTSGs	Full-thickness skin grafts
SIS	Small Intestinal Submucosa
EPO	Erythropoietin
CD31	Cluster of differentiation 31
eNOS	Endothelial nitric oxide synthase
PRP	Platelet-rich plasma
TSP	Trisodium phosphate
EPCs	Endothelial progenitor cells
BMMSCs	Bone marrow-derived mesenchymal stem cell
ADSCs	Adipose tissue-derived stem cells
AAV	Adeno-associated viruses
HSV-1	Herpes simplex virus type-1
AGE	Advanced glycation end products
RAGE	Receptor for Advanced glycation end products
NF- κ B	Nuclear factor kappa B
JAK/STAT	Janus kinase-signal transducer and activator of transcription
PPAR- γ	Peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor gamma
SF	Silk fibroin
HA	Hyaluronic acid
CHX	Chlorhexidine
SL-B-L	Layer-by-layer scaffold

PEG	Poly (ethylene glycol)
SF-PEG	PEGylated silk
OHA	Oxidized hyaluronic acid
Ri	RAGE inhibitor
Immune-gel	Immunomodulating hydrogel
Exo	Exosomes
M2Exo	Macrophage 2 derived exosomes
OHA-M2Exo	Macrophage 2 derived exosomes-conjugated oxidized hyaluronic acid
Exo-gel	Exosome-conjugated hydrogel

Abstract

The phases of wound healing generally overlap and occur in a well-orchestrated manner, following the sequential steps of hemostasis, inflammation, proliferation, and remodeling. However, the presence of various pathophysiological conditions like diabetes mellitus (DM), venous insufficiency, thrombocytopenia, ischemia, blood dyscrasias, or pressure ulcers hinders the healing process due to systemic complications giving rise to chronic non-healing wounds.

Despite being etiologically different, all chronic wounds share some basic characteristics or traits in common, like– enhanced pro-inflammatory cytokine levels, unregulated amounts of reactive oxygen species (ROS), proteases, and senescence cells, continued infection, and the presence of dysfunctional and deficient stem cells. Constant infiltration of neutrophils in the wound area increases the concentration of degenerative proteins called matrix metallo-proteinases (MMPs) that disturbs the equilibrium between these proteases and their tissue inhibitors (TIMMP). Unregulated MMP levels in chronic wounds degrade the deposited extracellular matrix (ECM), alter cytokine expression, and reduce proliferative factors that are quintessential for healing. Among all the types of chronic wounds, diabetic wounds are the most difficult to heal as they lead to alteration of the immune system activation being associated with an autoimmune disease.

In hyperglycemic wounds, the residual sugars present in the tissues and circulation react non-enzymatically with the amine residues of proteins, lipids, and nucleic acids in the oxidative environment to form complex structures called advanced glycation end products (AGEs). AGEs bind to their receptor, RAGE, expressed on most immune cells (macrophages, DCs), vascular endothelial cells, and smooth muscle cells, and initiate a cascade of downstream signaling like upregulates ROS generation, overproduction of the transcription factor nuclear factor kappa B

(NF- κ B), activation of the Janus kinase (JAK)-signal transducer and activator of transcription (STAT) pathway, and downregulates the Peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor gamma (PPAR- γ) signaling that has adverse effects on the wound microenvironment. Elevated levels of ROS and other superoxides increase the oxidative stress that disturbs the balance between the levels of systemic oxidants and antioxidants, favoring further AGE generation. Prolonged hyperglycemia, along with AGEs, induces epigenetic alterations via histone methylation and acetylation that increase the inflammatory response by upregulating pro-inflammatory cytokine production. Moreover, AGE/RAGE-induced upregulation of ROS and JAK-STAT signaling together induces dysfunction and apoptosis of endothelial progenitor cells (EPCs), and the activation of NF- κ B enhances the expression of various pro-inflammatory cytokines that prolongs the inflammatory phase. As a result, the microenvironment favors the polarization of macrophages in the M1 or pro-inflammatory subtype and delays the phenotypic switch to alternatively activated M2 subtype that triggers healing. Additionally, oxidative stress, along with hyperglycemia, induces either apoptosis or senescence of endothelial cells, fibroblasts, and keratinocytes, thus, hindering the proliferative and remodeling stage of healing. Taken together, uncontrolled hyperglycemia, oxidative stress, and upregulation of the AGE/RAGE downstream signaling make the diabetes wound microenvironment further complex to address.

To this end, this thesis describes three different hydrogel-based approaches to regulate the chronic wound microenvironment to assist healing-

1. Sequential delivery of CHX and PDGF-BB from layer-by-layer hydrogel-based scaffold:

Here, we designed a layer-by-layer scaffold (S_{L-B-L}) containing an antimicrobial agent and MMP-9 inhibitor, CHX, along with growth factor PDGF-BB to regulate healing of chronic wounds. We found that the initial burst release of CHX from the outermost layer of S_{L-B-L}

controlled the protease-rich environment of the wound bed. Hence, the released PDGF-BB remained active and induced VEGF-A secretion over 21 days *in vivo*, overcoming two significant disadvantages associated with diabetic wound healing.

2. Inhibition of AGE/RAGE signaling to restore macrophage function to assist healing: We delivered RAGE inhibitor Ri loaded in hydrogel (Immuno-gel) containing antimicrobial agent CHX to downregulate AGE/RAGE signaling in wound bed. AGE/RAGE upregulation hinders healing by preventing macrophage polarization from M1 to M2 in chronic wounds. Immuno-gel treatment further increased the M2 population in wound beds of diabetic rats and reduced the number of M1 macrophages making the overall microenvironment pro-healing.
3. Modulating chronic wound microenvironment via engineered M2Exo-conjugated hydrogel: Here, we conjugated M2-derived nanovesicles with a self-healing hydrogel (Exo-gel) and loaded it with both antimicrobial agent CHX and RAGE inhibitor Ri. Detailed studies indicated that Exo-gel induced faster healing in a diabetic rat wound model owing to the synergistic effect of all the components.

सारांश

हेमोस्टेसिस, सूजन, प्रसार और रीमॉडेलिंग के क्रमिक चरणों के बाद, घाव भरने के चरण आम तौर पर ओवरलैप होते हैं और एक अच्छी तरह से ऑर्केस्ट्रेटेड तरीके से होते हैं। हालांकि, मधुमेह मेलेटस (DM), शिरापरक अपर्याप्तता, थ्रोम्बोसाइटोपेनिया, इस्कमिया, रक्त डिस्क्रेसिया, या दबाव अल्सर जैसी विभिन्न पैथोफिजियोलॉजिकल स्थितियों की उपस्थिति प्रणालीगत जटिलताओं के कारण उपचार प्रक्रिया में बाधा डालती है, जो पुरानी गैर-चिकित्सा घावों को जन्म देती है।

एटिऑलॉजिकल रूप से भिन्न होने के बावजूद, सभी पुराने घाव कुछ बुनियादी विशेषताओं या लक्षणों को साझा करते हैं, जैसे- प्रो-इंफ्लेमेटरी साइटोकिन का बढ़ा हुआ स्तर, प्रतिक्रियाशील ऑक्सीजन प्रजातियों (ROS), प्रोटीएज और सेनेसेंस कोशिकाओं की अनियमित मात्रा, निरंतर संक्रमण, और डिसफंक्शनल स्टेम सेल की उपस्थिति। और कमी घाव क्षेत्र में न्यूट्रोफिल के लगातार घुसपैठ से अपक्षयी प्रोटीन की सांद्रता बढ़ जाती है जिसे मैट्रिक्स मेटालो-प्रोटीनिस (MMP) कहा जाता है जो इन प्रोटीएज और उनके ऊतक अवरोधकों (TIMMP) के बीच संतुलन को बिगाड़ देता है। जीर्ण घावों में अनियमित MMP स्तर जमा बाह्य मैट्रिक्स (ECM) को कम करता हैं, साइटोकिन अभिव्यक्ति को बदलते हैं, और रोगनिरोधी कारकों को कम करते हैं जो उपचार के लिए सर्वोत्कृष्ट हैं। सभी प्रकार के पुराने घावों में, मधुमेह के घावों को ठीक करना सबसे कठिन होता है क्योंकि वे एक ऑटोइम्यून बीमारी से जुड़े होने के कारण प्रतिरक्षा प्रणाली की सक्रियता में बदलाव लाते हैं।

हाइपरग्लाइसेमिक घावों में, ऊतकों और संचलन में मौजूद अवशिष्ट शर्करा ऑक्सीडेटिव वातावरण में प्रोटीन, लिपिड और न्यूक्लिक एसिड के अमीन अवशेषों के साथ गैर-एंजाइमिक रूप से प्रतिक्रिया करते हैं, जो उन्नत ग्लाइकेशन एंड प्रोडक्ट्स (AGEs) नामक जटिल संरचनाओं का निर्माण करते हैं। AGEs अपने रिसेप्टर, RAGE से बंधते हैं, जो अधिकांश प्रतिरक्षा कोशिकाओं (मैक्रोफेज, DCs), संवहनी एंडोथेलियल कोशिकाओं और चिकनी मांसपेशियों की कोशिकाओं पर व्यक्त होते हैं, और डाउनस्ट्रीम सिग्नलिंग का एक झरना शुरू करते हैं जैसे ROS पीढ़ी को अपग्रेड करते हैं, प्रतिलेखन कारक परमाणु कारक कप्पा बी का अतिउत्पादन (NF- κ B), जानूस किनेज (JAK)-सिग्नल

ट्रांसड्यूसर और ट्रांसक्रिप्शन (STAT) पाथवे के एक्टिवेटर की सक्रियता, और पेरॉक्सिसोम प्रोलिफ़रेटर-सक्रिय रिसेप्टर गामा (PPAR- γ) सिग्नलिंग को डाउनग्रेड करता है जिसका घाव माइक्रोएन्वायरमेंट पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ता है। ROS और अन्य सुपरऑक्साइड के बढ़े हुए स्तर ऑक्सीडेटिव तनाव को बढ़ाते हैं जो प्रणालीगत ऑक्सीडेंट और एंटीऑक्सीडेंट के स्तर के बीच संतुलन को बिगाड़ता है, जो आगे AGE पीढ़ी के पक्ष में है। लंबे समय तक हाइपरग्लेसेमिया, AGEs के साथ, हिस्टोन मेथिलिकरण और एसिटिलेशन के माध्यम से एपिजेनेटिक परिवर्तन को प्रेरित करता है जो प्रो-इंफ्लेमेटरी साइटोकिन उत्पादन को बढ़ाकर भड़काऊ प्रतिक्रिया को बढ़ाता है। इसके अलावा, ROS और JAK-STAT सिग्नलिंग का AGE/RAGE- प्रेरित अपरेगुलेशन एक साथ एंडोथेलियल पूर्वज कोशिकाओं (EPCs) की शिथिलता और एपोप्टोसिस को प्रेरित करता है, और NF- κ B की सक्रियता विभिन्न प्रो-इंफ्लेमेटरी साइटोकिन्स की अभिव्यक्ति को बढ़ाती है जो भड़काऊ चरण को लम्बा खींचती है। नतीजतन, माइक्रोएन्वायरमेंट M1 या प्रो-इंफ्लेमेटरी सबटाइप में मैक्रोफेज के ध्रुवीकरण का समर्थन करता है और फेनोटाइपिक स्विच को वैकल्पिक रूप से सक्रिय M2 उपप्रकार में देरी करता है जो हीलिंग को ट्रिगर करता है। इसके अतिरिक्त, हाइपरग्लेसेमिया के साथ ऑक्सीडेटिव तनाव, एंडोथेलियल कोशिकाओं, फाइब्रोब्लास्ट्स और केराटिनोसाइट्स के एपोप्टोसिस या जीर्णता को प्रेरित करता है, इस प्रकार, उपचार के प्रसार और रीमॉडेलिंग चरण में बाधा डालता है। एक साथ लिया गया, अनियंत्रित हाइपरग्लेसेमिया, ऑक्सीडेटिव तनाव, और AGE/RAGE डाउनस्ट्रीम सिग्नलिंग का अपरेगुलेशन मधुमेह घाव माइक्रोएन्वायरमेंट को संबोधित करने के लिए और जटिल बनाता है।

यह अंत करने के लिए, यह थीसिस उपचार में सहायता के लिए पुराने घाव सूक्ष्म पर्यावरण को विनियमित करने के लिए तीन अलग-अलग हाइड्रोजेल-आधारित दृष्टिकोणों का वर्णन करती है-

1. परत-दर-परत हाइड्रोजेल-आधारित मचान से CHX और PDGF-BB की अनुक्रमिक डिलीवरी: यहाँ, हमने एक परत-दर-परत मचान (S_{L-B-L}) डिज़ाइन किया है जिसमें एक रोगाणुरोधी एजेंट और MMP-9 अवरोधक, CHX, साथ में है विकास कारक PDGF-BB के साथ पुराने घावों के उपचार को नियंत्रित करने के लिए। हमने पाया कि S_{L-B-L} की सबसे बाहरी परत से CHX के शुरुआती विस्फोट ने घाव के बिस्तर के प्रोटीएज-समृद्ध वातावरण को

नियंत्रित किया। इसलिए, जारी PDGF-BB विवो में 21 दिनों तक सक्रिय और प्रेरित VEGF-A साव बना रहा, जिससे डायबिटिक घाव भरने से जुड़े दो महत्वपूर्ण नुकसानों पर काबू पाया जा सका।

2. उपचार में सहायता के लिए मैक्रोफेज फ़ंक्शन को बहाल करने के लिए AGE/RAGE सिग्नलिंग का निषेध: हमने हाइड्रोजेल (Immuno-gel) में लोड किए गए RAGE इनहिबिटर Ri को एंटीमाइक्रोबियल एजेंट CHX से युक्त किया है ताकि घाव के बिस्तर में AGE/RAGE सिग्नलिंग को कम किया जा सके। AGE/RAGE अपरेगुलेशन पुराने घावों में M1 से M2 तक मैक्रोफेज धुवीकरण को रोककर उपचार में बाधा डालता है। Immuno-gel उपचार ने डायबिटिक चूहों के घाव वाले बिस्तरों में M2 की आबादी को और बढ़ा दिया और M1 मैक्रोफेज की संख्या को कम कर दिया जिससे समग्र माइक्रोएन्वायरमेंट प्रो-हीलिंग हो गया।
3. इंजीनियर्ड M2Exo-संयुग्मित हाइड्रोजेल के माध्यम से जीर्ण घाव माइक्रोएन्वायरमेंट को संशोधित करना: यहां, हमने स्व-चिकित्सा हाइड्रोजेल (Exo-gel) के साथ M2-व्युत्पन्न नैनोवेसिकल्स को संयुग्मित किया और इसे रोगाणुरोधी एजेंट CHX और RAGE अवरोध करनेवाला Ri दोनों के साथ लोड किया। विस्तृत अध्ययनों से संकेत मिलता है कि Exo-gel सभी घटकों के सहक्रियात्मक प्रभाव के कारण डायबिटिक चूहे के घाव के मॉडल में तेजी से उपचार को प्रेरित करता है।