IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 3, February 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

Advances in Nanotechnology-Based Externally Triggered Transdermal Therapeutic Systems for Antipsychotic Drug Delivery

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Abstract: *Antipsychotic therapy remains the cornerstone for the management of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, schizoaffective disorders, and other psychotic illnesses. Conventional oral and parenteral administration of antipsychotic agents is associated with numerous limitations including poor patient compliance, extensive first-pass metabolism, fluctuating plasma concentrations, systemic side effects, and reduced bioavailability. Nanotechnology-based externally triggered transdermal therapeutic systems have emerged as a promising alternative approach for controlled and targeted delivery of antipsychotic medications. These systems utilize nanocarriers such as liposomes, solid lipid nanoparticles, nano emulsions, polymeric nanoparticles, dendrimers, micelles, and nanogels combined with external triggering stimuli including ultrasound, iontophoresis, magnetic fields, heat, light, and electrical stimulation to enhance drug permeation through the stratum corneum.*

The present review discusses recent advances in nanotechnology-assisted externally triggered transdermal drug delivery systems for antipsychotic agents. The mechanisms of skin permeation, advantages of nano formulations, different triggering strategies, formulation approaches, characterization techniques, therapeutic outcomes, and future perspectives are critically analyzed. Additionally, the review highlights challenges associated with toxicity, skin irritation, large-scale manufacturing, regulatory approval, and clinical translation. The integration of nanotechnology with externally controlled transdermal systems may revolutionize antipsychotic therapy by improving patient adherence, minimizing adverse effects, and enabling personalized medicine...

Keywords: Nanotechnology, Transdermal drug delivery, Antipsychotic drugs, Externally triggered systems

I. INTRODUCTION

Psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder affect millions of individuals worldwide and contribute significantly to global disability and socioeconomic burden. Antipsychotic drugs including risperidone, olanzapine, haloperidol, quetiapine, clozapine, aripiprazole, and paliperidone are widely prescribed for long-term management of psychotic disorders. However, conventional oral administration of antipsychotic medications often results in poor therapeutic efficacy due to limited bioavailability, hepatic first-pass metabolism, gastrointestinal degradation, and non-compliance associated with frequent dosing and adverse effects (Patel et al., 2012).

Transdermal drug delivery systems have gained considerable attention because they bypass hepatic metabolism, provide sustained release, reduce dosing frequency, and improve patient compliance. Nevertheless, the outermost layer of skin, the stratum corneum, acts as a formidable barrier that limits penetration of most therapeutic molecules, particularly antipsychotic drugs with high molecular weight and lipophilicity (Prausnitz & Langer, 2018).

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Recent advancements in nanotechnology have enabled the development of sophisticated nanocarriers capable of enhancing drug permeation across biological membranes. In addition, externally triggered systems employing ultrasound, magnetic fields, thermal energy, electric current, and light irradiation have significantly improved controlled drug release and skin penetration. Combining nanotechnology with externally triggered transdermal approaches offers an innovative platform for efficient antipsychotic delivery.

This review summarizes the current advances in nanotechnology-based externally triggered transdermal therapeutic systems for antipsychotic drug delivery, emphasizing formulation strategies, mechanisms, clinical potential, limitations, and future perspectives.

NEED FOR ADVANCED TRANSDERMAL ANTIPSYCHOTIC DELIVERY

I. Limitations of Conventional Antipsychotic Therapy

Conventional oral and injectable antipsychotic formulations exhibit several drawbacks:

Extensive hepatic first-pass metabolism
Poor bioavailability
Frequent dosing requirements
Extrapyramidal side effects
Weight gain and metabolic disorders
Sedation and cognitive impairment
Poor patient adherence
Plasma concentration fluctuations

Long-acting injectable formulations partially improve compliance but are associated with pain, local irritation, and high healthcare costs.

II. Advantages of Transdermal Therapeutic Systems

Transdermal systems offer several advantages:

Avoidance of gastrointestinal degradation
Bypass of hepatic first-pass metabolism
Sustained and controlled drug release
Improved patient compliance
Reduced systemic toxicity
Non-invasive administration
Easy termination of therapy
Enhanced therapeutic efficacy

III. Skin Structure and Barriers to Drug Delivery

Human skin consists of three primary layers:

Epidermis
Dermis
Hypodermis

The stratum corneum is the principal barrier to transdermal drug transport. Drug permeation occurs through:

Intercellular pathway
Transcellular pathway
Appendageal pathway

Factors affecting transdermal permeation include molecular weight, lipophilicity, melting point, skin hydration, and formulation characteristics.

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NANOTECHNOLOGY-BASED CARRIERS FOR ANTIPSYCHOTIC DELIVERY

Nanocarriers improve transdermal permeation by increasing drug solubility, protecting drugs from degradation, and enhancing penetration.

Table 1. Nanocarriers Used in Antipsychotic Transdermal Delivery

Nanocarrier Type	Characteristics	Advantages	Examples of Antipsychotic Drugs
Liposomes	Phospholipid vesicles	Biocompatibility, enhanced penetration	Risperidone, Olanzapine
Solid Lipid Nanoparticles	Solid lipid matrix	Sustained release, stability	Haloperidol
Nano emulsions	Oil-water dispersions	Improved solubility	Clozapine
Polymeric Nanoparticles	Biodegradable polymers	Controlled release	Quetiapine
Dendrimers	Branched polymers	High drug loading	Aripiprazole
Nanogels	Hydrogel nanoparticles	Responsive release	Paliperidone
Micelles	Amphiphilic assemblies	Solubilization of hydrophobic drugs	Olanzapine

EXTERNALLY TRIGGERED TRANSDERMAL THERAPEUTIC SYSTEMS

Externally triggered systems use external energy sources to facilitate drug release and skin permeation.

I. Ultrasound-Triggered Systems

Ultrasound-mediated transdermal delivery, also known as sonophoresis, enhances skin permeability through cavitation and thermal effects. Ultrasound waves disrupt lipid bilayers in the stratum corneum, enabling improved drug penetration.

Advantages

Increased skin permeability
Enhanced nanoparticle penetration
Non-invasive and reversible
Controlled drug release

Applications in Antipsychotic Delivery

Ultrasound-triggered nano formulations have demonstrated improved transdermal transport of risperidone and olanzapine in experimental studies.

II. Iontophoretic Systems

Iontophoresis uses low electric current to drive charged drug molecules across the skin.

Mechanisms

Electro repulsion
Electroosmosis
Enhanced skin permeability

Benefits

Precise dose control
Improved penetration of hydrophilic drugs
Reduced systemic toxicity

Polymeric nanoparticles integrated with iontophoresis have shown enhanced permeation of haloperidol and risperidone.

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III. Magnetically Triggered Systems

Magnetic nanoparticles respond to external magnetic fields to facilitate targeted and controlled drug release.

Advantages

Site-specific delivery
Controlled release kinetics
Reduced off-target effects

Superparamagnetic iron oxide nanoparticles have shown promising results in enhancing transdermal transport of psychotropic agents.

IV. Thermoresponsive Systems

Thermal-triggered systems utilize heat-sensitive polymers or nanogels that alter their structure in response to temperature changes.

Advantages

Controlled release
Improved skin permeation
Minimal invasiveness

Thermosensitive liposomes have been explored for controlled release of atypical antipsychotics.

V. Light-Triggered Systems

Photothermal and photo responsive nanoparticles release drugs upon light irradiation.

Mechanisms

Photothermal conversion
Structural disruption of nanoparticles
Reactive oxygen-mediated release

Gold nanoparticles and graphene-based nanocomposites have been studied for externally controlled transdermal drug release.

VI. Microneedle-Assisted Systems

Microneedles create microscopic pores in the skin without causing pain.

Types of Microneedles

Solid microneedles
Hollow microneedles
Dissolving microneedles
Hydrogel-forming microneedles

Microneedle-assisted nanocarrier systems significantly improve delivery of poorly permeable antipsychotic agents.

MECHANISMS OF NANOTECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED TRANSDERMAL DRUG DELIVERY

Nanocarriers enhance skin permeation through multiple mechanisms:

Disruption of stratum corneum lipids
Increased skin hydration
Enhanced follicular transport
Improved drug partitioning
Controlled and sustained release
Increased residence time

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Table 2. External Triggers and Their Mechanisms

Trigger Type	Mechanism	Advantages	Limitations
Ultrasound	Cavitation and thermal effects	Deep penetration	Possible tissue heating
Iontophoresis	Electric current-driven transport	Dose precision	Skin irritation
Magnetic Field	Magnetic guidance	Targeted delivery	High equipment cost
Heat	Thermally induced permeability	Controlled release	Risk of burns
Light	Photothermal activation	Spatial control	Limited tissue penetration
Microneedles	Physical pore formation	Rapid permeation	Manufacturing complexity

NANOFORMULATIONS OF COMMON ANTIPSYCHOTIC DRUGS

1. Risperidone Nano formulations

Risperidone-loaded liposomes and solid lipid nanoparticles have demonstrated enhanced skin permeation and prolonged release profiles.

2. Olanzapine Nano formulations

Olanzapine nano emulsions and polymeric nanoparticles exhibit improved bioavailability and reduced dosing frequency.

3. Haloperidol Nano formulations

Haloperidol-loaded nanostructured lipid carriers have shown improved therapeutic efficacy and reduced extrapyramidal symptoms.

4. Clozapine Nano formulations

Nanoencapsulation of clozapine enhances stability and minimizes systemic toxicity.

Table 3. Nanotechnology-Based Formulations of Antipsychotic Drugs

Drug	Nano formulation	Trigger Mechanism	Major Outcome
Risperidone	Liposomes	Ultrasound	Enhanced permeation
Olanzapine	Nano emulsion	Heat	Sustained release
Haloperidol	Solid lipid nanoparticles	Iontophoresis	Improved bioavailability
Clozapine	Polymeric nanoparticles	Microneedles	Reduced toxicity
Aripiprazole	Nanogels	Light	Controlled release
Quetiapine	Dendrimers	Magnetic field	Targeted delivery

CHARACTERIZATION TECHNIQUES FOR NANO-TRANSDERMAL SYSTEMS

Comprehensive characterization is essential for ensuring safety, efficacy, and reproducibility.

I. Common Characterization Parameters

Particle size analysis
Zeta potential determination
Entrapment efficiency
Drug loading capacity
Morphological evaluation
In vitro release studies
Ex vivo permeation studies
Stability analysis
Skin irritation testing

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Table 4. Characterization Methods

Parameter	Technique
Particle Size	Dynamic Light Scattering
Morphology	Transmission Electron Microscopy
Surface Charge	Zeta Potential Analysis
Thermal Behavior	Differential Scanning Calorimetry
Crystallinity	X-ray Diffraction
Drug Release	Franz Diffusion Cell
Skin Permeation	Confocal Laser Scanning Microscopy

THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS OF EXTERNALLY TRIGGERED NANO-TRANSDERMAL SYSTEMS

1. Improved Patient Compliance

Non-invasive transdermal systems reduce the need for frequent oral dosing and painful injections.

2. Controlled Drug Release

External triggers allow precise modulation of drug release kinetics.

3. Reduced Adverse Effects

Localized and controlled delivery reduces systemic exposure and associated side effects.

4. Enhanced Bioavailability

Nanocarriers improve drug solubility and penetration through biological barriers.

5. Personalized Therapy

Externally controlled systems facilitate individualized dosing regimens.

II. CONCLUSION

Nanotechnology-based externally triggered transdermal therapeutic systems represent a transformative strategy for antipsychotic drug delivery. The combination of advanced nanocarriers with external stimuli such as ultrasound, iontophoresis, magnetic fields, light, and thermal activation significantly enhances drug permeation, controlled release, and therapeutic efficacy. These systems address major limitations associated with conventional antipsychotic therapy, including poor bioavailability, adverse effects, and non-compliance. Although several challenges related to toxicity, regulatory approval, and large-scale production remain unresolved, ongoing research continues to improve the safety and effectiveness of these technologies. Future advancements in smart nanomaterials and wearable transdermal devices may revolutionize psychiatric treatment and enable patient-centered precision medicine.

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