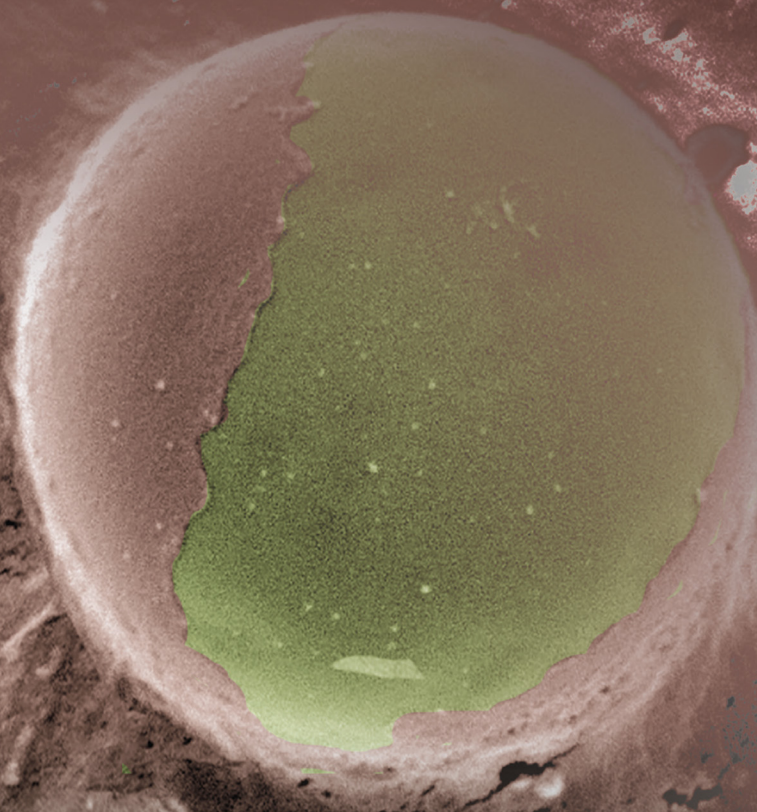


Drug Delivery Across Physiological Barriers

edited by
Silvia Muro



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Contents

Preface xiii

SECTION A PHYSIOLOGICAL BARRIERS CONTROLLING PENETRATION AND TRANSPORT OF SUBSTANCES IN THE BODY

1	Structure and Function of Epithelial and Endothelial Barriers	3
	<i>Michael Koval</i>	
1.1	Introduction	4
1.2	Measuring Barrier Function	6
1.3	Epithelial Polarity	7
1.4	Adherens Junctions	11
1.5	Tight Junction Composition	12
	1.5.1 Claudins	13
	1.5.2 Tight Junction Scaffold Proteins	16
	1.5.3 Marvel Domain Containing Proteins	19
	1.5.4 Junctional Adhesion Molecule A	20
1.6	Transcellular Transport	21
	1.6.1 Plasma Membrane Channels	21
	1.6.2 Vesicle-Mediated Transport	22
1.7	Unique Features of Endothelial Barriers	22
1.8	Targeting Junction Proteins	24
	1.8.1 Virus Coat Proteins	24
	1.8.2 Clostridium Perfringens Enterotoxin	25
	1.8.3 Claudin Extracellular Loop Peptides	26
1.9	Conclusions and Perspectives	27
2	Plasma Membrane as a Semipermeable Barrier	41
	<i>Guido Li Volsi</i>	
2.1	Introduction	42
2.2	Membrane Permeability and Transport	43

2.3	Ion and Molecule Channels	45
2.3.1	Ligand-Gated Ion Channels	46
2.3.2	Voltage-Gated Ion Channels (i_V^\pm)	47
2.3.3	Mechanosensitive Ion Channels	48
2.3.4	Phosphorylation-Gated Ion Channels	48
2.3.5	Light-Gated Ion Channels	49
2.4	Equilibrium and Diffusion Potentials	49
2.5	Membrane and Action Potentials	51
2.5.1	Membrane Potential	51
2.5.2	Action Potential	53
2.6	Endocytosis and Exocytosis	54
2.6.1	Endocytosis	54
2.6.1.1	Receptor-mediated endocytosis	55
2.6.1.2	Non-clathrin and non-caveolar endocytosis	57
2.6.2	Exocytosis	58
2.7	Conclusions and Perspectives	59
3	Biology and Regulation of Protein Sorting and Vesicular Transport	65
	<i>Ian H. Mather</i>	
3.1	Major Traffic Routes	66
3.2	Formation and Targeting of Vesicles	67
3.2.1	Formation of Cargo-Filled Transport Vesicles	67
3.2.2	Vesicle Transport and Tethering	68
3.2.3	Vesicle Fusion at the Acceptor Compartment	69
3.2.4	Traffic Control by Rab GTPases	70
3.2.5	Vesicles or Tubules?	71
3.3	Secretory Pathway	72
3.3.1	Endoplasmic Reticulum	72
3.3.2	ER-Golgi Interface	77
3.3.3	Traffic through Golgi Complex	83
3.3.4	Sorting in TGN	84
3.3.5	Exocytosis	87
3.4	Drug Delivery and Membrane Traffic	88

4 Intracellular Transport: Learning from Pathogens	97
<i>Lali K. Medina-Kauwe</i>	
4.1 Introduction	97
4.2 Pathogens Clash with the Classic Route	101
4.2.1 Adenovirus	102
4.2.2 Listeria	106
4.3 Retrograde Trafficking: Toxins Going Retro	107
4.4 Caveolae Cave in to SV40	110
4.5 Conclusions and Perspectives	112
SECTION B STRATEGIES FOR DRUG PENETRATION ACROSS TISSUE COMPARTMENTS	
5 Drug Transport across Skin	131
<i>Renata Vidor Contri, Tatiele Katzer, Silvia S. Guterres, and Adriana R. Pohlmann</i>	
5.1 Introduction	132
5.2 Factors Influencing Transport Across Skin	134
5.3 Determining Drug Transport Across Skin	137
5.4 Modifying Drug Transport Across Skin	138
5.4.1 Penetration Enhancers	139
5.4.2 Physical Methods	141
5.4.3 Composite Nanoparticles Based on Lipids and/or Polymers	144
5.4.3.1 Lipid nanoparticles and nanoemulsions	144
5.4.3.2 Polymeric and hybrid nanoparticles	146
5.5 Conclusions and Perspectives	148
6 Mucosal Barriers	155
<i>Michelle R. Dawson and Deepraj Ghosh</i>	
6.1 Introduction	155
6.2 Mucus Structure	157
6.3 Mucus Viscoelasticity	161
6.4 Particle Transport in Mucus	164
6.4.1 Multiple Particle Tracking in Mucus	165
6.5 Mucoadhesive Particles	167

6.6	Mucus-Penetrating Nanoparticles	169
6.7	Mucolytic Agents	172
6.8	Conclusions and Perspectives	173
7	Transport of Therapeutics across Gastrointestinal Epithelium	181
	<i>Frederic Lagarce and Emilie Roger</i>	
7.1	Introduction	182
7.2	Physiological Features of GI Tract Related to Drug Absorption	183
7.2.1	Chemical Barriers to Drug Absorption	183
	7.2.1.1 pH, solubility, and absorption	183
	7.2.1.2 Enzymes and other chemical interactions in small intestine	186
7.2.2	Physical Barriers to Drug Absorption: Mucus	187
7.2.3	Biological Barriers to Drug Absorption	188
	7.2.3.1 Transport across cell membrane	188
	7.2.3.2 Efflux pumps as a barrier to intestinal absorption	189
7.3	Drug Delivery Solutions for Drug Bioavailability Enhancement	191
7.3.1	Drug Delivery Solutions to Improve Drug Solubility	191
	7.3.1.1 Modification of chemical form: salt form, amorphous form, prodrug	193
	7.3.1.2 Modification of physical form: particles size reduction	194
	7.3.1.3 Solid dispersion	195
	7.3.1.4 Cyclodextrin complexes	196
	7.3.1.5 Lipid formulations	197
7.3.2	Drug Delivery Solutions to Improve Drug Permeability	199
	7.3.2.1 Drug delivery systems to improve GI stability	200
	7.3.2.2 Drug delivery systems to diffuse across mucus	200
	7.3.2.3 Drug delivery systems to improve intestinal permeability	201
7.4	Conclusions and Perspectives	203

8	Crossing the Endothelial Barrier	209
	<i>Bhawani Aryasomayajula, Shravan Kumar Sriraman, and Vladimir P. Torchilin</i>	
8.1	Introduction	209
8.2	Endothelial Structural Elements	211
8.2.1	Glycocalyx	212
8.2.2	Cytoskeleton	213
8.2.3	Endothelial Junctions	214
8.3	Endothelial Permeability and Transport of Substances Across the Barrier	215
8.3.1	Paracellular Pathway	216
8.3.1.1	Mediators affecting endothelial permeability	217
8.3.1.2	Mediators that enhance endothelial barriers	218
8.3.2	Transcellular Pathway	219
8.3.2.1	Role of caveolae in transcytosis	220
8.3.2.2	Role of clathrin in endocytosis	220
8.3.2.3	Role of vesiculo–vacuolar organelles in transcytosis	221
8.4	Recent Advances in Drug Delivery with a Focus on Overcoming the Challenges in Crossing the Endothelial Barrier	221
8.4.1	Formulation-Based Approaches	223
8.4.2	Temporary Disruption of the Barrier	224
8.4.3	Physiology-Based Approaches	225
8.4.3.1	Receptor-mediated transcytosis	225
8.4.3.2	Adsorptive-mediated transcytosis	226
8.4.3.3	Transporter-facilitated transport	226
8.5	What to Expect in the Coming Years: Challenges and Expectations	227
9	Nanoparticle-Based Drug Delivery to Solid Tumors	239
	<i>Sara A. Abouelmagd and Yoon Yeo</i>	
9.1	Introduction	239
9.2	Factors Affecting Effectiveness of NP Drug Delivery Systems	241

9.2.1	Biocompatibility	241
9.2.2	Particle Size	242
9.2.3	Particle Shape	243
9.2.4	Particle Surface Charge	244
9.2.5	Circulation Half-Life	244
9.2.6	Tumor Retention and Cellular Uptake	245
9.2.7	Drug Release	246
9.3	Remaining Challenges in NP Development	246
9.3.1	Tumor Physiology	246
9.3.2	Formulation Challenges	249
	9.3.2.1 PEG dilemma	249
	9.3.2.2 Maintaining particle size	250
	9.3.2.3 Controlling drug release	251
9.4	Conclusions and Perspectives	254

**SECTION C DRUG TRANSPORT INTO CELLS AND SUBSEQUENT
INTRACELLULAR TRAFFICKING**

10	Membrane Lipids and Drug Transport	271
	<i>Vinod Labhasetwar</i>	
10.1	Introduction	271
10.2	Membrane Lipids	272
10.3	Models Used for Biophysical Interaction Studies	273
10.4	Drug–Lipid Interactions	274
10.5	Significance of Biophysical Interactions with Nanomaterials	277
	10.5.1 Effect of Size and Charge of Nanoparticles on Biophysical Interactions	278
	10.5.2 Effect of Molecular Structure of Cationic Surfactant on Biophysical Interactions of Surface-Modified Nanoparticles	279
	10.5.3 Peptide-Modified Nanoparticles and Biophysical Interactions with Model Membrane	280
10.6	Specificity of Biophysical Interactions with Cancer Cell Membrane Lipids versus Normal Cell Lipids	282
10.7	Conclusions and Perspectives	283

11 Drug Delivery Systems that Fuse with Plasmalemma	291
<i>Muriel Blanzat, Marie-Pierre Rols, and Justin Teissié</i>	
11.1 Introduction	291
11.2 Physical Description of Bilayer Fusion	292
11.2.1 Contact of Membranes	293
11.2.2 Merging of Membranes	294
11.3 Biological Vectors that Fuse with Plasmalemma	297
11.3.1 Fusion Occurring during Viral Infection	297
11.3.2 Fusion Occurring during Intracellular Events	298
11.3.3 Application to Controlled Delivery	299
11.4 Membrane Fusion Induced by Physical Methods	300
11.4.1 Ultrasound	300
11.4.2 Osmotic Shock	300
11.4.3 Laser Light Processes	301
11.4.4 Electrical Methods	301
11.5 Synthetic Vectors that Fuse with Plasmalemma	302
11.5.1 Membrane Fusion Induced by Fusogenic Agents	302
11.5.2 Drug Delivery Systems that Undergo Spontaneous Membrane Fusion	303
11.5.2.1 pH-sensitive vesicles	304
11.5.2.2 Cationic/catanionic vesicles	304
11.5.2.3 Programmable fusogenic vesicles	305
11.6 Conclusions and Perspectives	306
12 Endocytosis and the Endolysosomal Route in Drug Delivery	313
<i>Jeff Rappaport, Iason Papademetriou, and Silvia Muro</i>	
12.1 Introduction	314
12.2 Endocytosis	316
12.3 Endosomes and Lysosomes as Obstacles or Advantages to Drug Delivery	320
12.4 Manipulating Endocytosis and Intracellular Trafficking	322
12.4.1 The Targeting Moiety	322
12.4.2 Valency	323
12.4.3 Receptor Epitope	325
12.4.4 Geometry and Other Physical Parameters	325

12.4.5	Pharmacological Agents	326
12.5	Lysosomes as Therapeutic Targets	327
12.6	Conclusions and Perspectives	331
13	Endolysosomal Escape into Cytosol	341
	<i>Manju Saraswathy and David Oupický</i>	
13.1	Introduction	341
13.2	Importance of Endosomal Escape of Nanocarriers	342
13.3	Endosomal Escape Strategies	343
13.3.1	Proton Sponge Effect	344
13.3.2	Photochemical Disruption of Endosomal Membrane	347
13.3.3	Temperature-Triggered Endosomal Escape	349
13.3.4	Endosomal Escape by Membrane-Active Peptides	350
13.3.5	Endosomal Escape by Lipid-Mediated Mechanisms	354
13.4	Conclusions and Perspectives	357
14	Intracellular Transport to Mitochondria and Other Organelles	367
	<i>Gerard G. M. D'Souza, Paul H. Nguyen, and Volkmar Weissig</i>	
14.1	Introduction	367
14.2	Major Concepts of Subcellular Drug Transport	369
14.2.1	Partition/Charge-Mediated Passive Mechanisms	370
14.2.2	Chaperone/Transporter-Mediated Active Mechanisms	371
14.3	Major Concepts of Organelle-Specific Drug Delivery	372
14.3.1	Direct Molecular Modification	372
14.3.2	Carrier-Mediated Delivery	375
14.4	Conclusions and Perspectives	380

Preface

Optimal drug delivery in the body is paramount to maximizing the therapeutic efficiency of pharmaceutical compounds while minimizing their potential toxicity. In this regard, numerous advances in the last decades have rendered considerable improvement in drug delivery strategies, thereby increasing the bioavailability of therapeutic agents. These systems help solubilize pharmaceutical drugs, protect them from premature degradation, control their circulation, target them to sites of disease, and optimize their release rate. In addition, for most therapeutics, access to their targets of intervention requires penetration across body compartments, extracellular matrices, cellular linings, and/or different intracellular environments. Therefore, the design of strategies capable of improving transport of pharmaceuticals through these physiological barriers has become an imperative yet a challenging need in the quest for better therapeutics. This book aims at providing an overview of current advances in the field of drug delivery from the perspective of transport across the said physiological barriers. This is pursued by discussing fundamental knowledge pertaining to the biological function and natural mechanisms regulating these barriers, as well as by focusing on drug delivery strategies that facilitate transport of drugs and their carriers at the tissue, cell, and subcell levels.

With this in mind, the book has been divided into three independent yet complementary sections. **Section A** covers the background biological information regarding the structure, function, and regulation of constituents of the said physiological barriers, offering the reader an overview of the challenges and opportunities they pose. Within this section **Chapter 1** introduces the concept of cellular barriers or linings, which arise as a result of the

physiological need to develop selective compartments within the body. They are established by epithelial or endothelial cells, which strongly adhere to each other, forming polarized linings that separate apical and basolateral compartments, such as those which coat hollow organs, glands, blood vessels, etc. These cellular linings most often act as barriers to passive transport of substances between the compartments they separate, regulating passage in a minutely controlled manner. From a drug delivery perspective, they regulate absorption or penetration of therapeutics across the inner layers of the skin, the gastrointestinal wall, passage from the bloodstream into subjacent tissues, etc., which pertains to drug access from the administration point to the intended body compartment. Subsequently, **Chapter 2** covers fundamental aspects of the cellular plasma membrane. This is important because, once in the appropriate body compartment, penetration into cells of the affected tissues requires passage through the plasmalemma that separates and permits communication between the intracellular environment and the extracellular milieu. The composition and regulation of this semipermeable barrier are described, including passive and active mechanisms of transport involving diffusion, ion and molecule channels, endocytosis, or exocytosis. Further, **Chapter 3** touches upon subcellular organization and offers a detailed overview of the biological mechanisms by which macromolecules (e.g., proteins, lipids, etc.) are naturally sorted and trafficked to their final subcellular destinations with exquisite precision. The cellular machinery, signaling cascades, and pathways employed in these events are finding valuable translational applications in the field of drug delivery. To end this section, **Chapter 4** discusses how pathogens have evolved remarkable means to overcome all these physiological barriers in order to infect their hosts. A main focus is paid to how such invasive bacteria and viruses gain access inside cells of the body, for example, by recognition and binding to particular cell-surface markers leading to endocytic uptake, disruption of the plasmalemma or the membrane of endolysosomal vesicles, hijacking the cytoskeleton and molecular elements promoting vesicular fusion or fission, etc. Mimicking such strategies and pathways established by nature is becoming a main practice in order to advance drug delivery.