

Extracellular Vesicles as Biological Messengers in Translational Medicine

Mirela Vukovic *

Department of Molecular Cell Biology, Adriatic Biomedical University, Split, Croatia, Europe

DESCRIPTION

Extracellular vesicles have attracted considerable attention in translational medicine because they participate in communication among cells throughout the human body. Nearly every cell releases these microscopic membrane-bound particles into surrounding tissues and body fluids, carrying proteins, lipids, nucleic acids, enzymes, metabolites, and signaling molecules that influence the behavior of neighboring or distant cells [1]. Their natural ability to transfer biological information has encouraged researchers to investigate their involvement in disease development, diagnosis, therapeutic monitoring, and treatment. Translational medicine seeks to convert laboratory observations concerning extracellular vesicles into practical medical applications that improve patient care across numerous clinical specialties.

Interest in extracellular vesicles developed after scientists recognized that cells exchange information through more than direct physical contact or soluble chemical mediators alone. These vesicles provide an additional communication system by enclosing biologically active materials within protective membranes before transporting them through blood, lymphatic fluid, saliva, urine, cerebrospinal fluid, breast milk, and other biological fluids. Once they reach recipient cells, their molecular contents may modify gene expression, protein production, metabolic activity, immune responses, and cellular survival [2]. Understanding these biological interactions has become an active area of investigation within modern biomedical research.

Extracellular vesicles exist in several categories that differ according to their size, origin, and method of formation. Although classification continues evolving as scientific knowledge expands, researchers generally recognize small vesicles generated within intracellular compartments and larger vesicles released directly from the cell membrane [3]. Both groups contain complex molecular cargo reflecting the physiological condition of the cells that produced them. Healthy tissues release vesicles involved in normal biological communication, whereas diseased tissues frequently produce vesicles carrying molecular characteristics associated with pathological processes [4]. This distinction provides valuable opportunities for diagnostic investigation.

Liquid biopsy has expanded rapidly because of developments involving extracellular vesicles and other circulating biological materials [5]. Conventional tissue biopsy remains essential for diagnosis in many situations, yet repeated tissue sampling may be technically difficult or uncomfortable for patients. Blood-based analysis of extracellular vesicles provides an additional source of biological information reflecting disease activity. Researchers continue identifying molecular signatures associated with different cancer types, aiming to improve diagnostic accuracy while reducing the need for repeated invasive procedures.

Regenerative medicine has introduced another important application for extracellular vesicles. Stem cells release vesicles containing biologically active molecules capable of influencing tissue repair, blood vessel formation, cellular survival, and inflammatory regulation. Several laboratory investigations suggest that some beneficial effects traditionally attributed to transplanted stem cells may actually result from vesicle-mediated signaling rather than permanent integration of transplanted cells into damaged tissues [6]. This observation has encouraged scientists to investigate vesicle-based therapeutic strategies that may provide biological activity while avoiding some challenges associated with living cell transplantation.

Metabolic diseases have likewise become an area of growing interest. Obesity, diabetes, fatty liver disease, and metabolic syndrome involve extensive communication among adipose tissue, liver, skeletal muscle, pancreas, and immune cells [7]. Extracellular vesicles participate in these interactions by transferring regulatory molecules affecting insulin sensitivity, lipid metabolism, inflammatory activity, and cellular energy balance. Researchers examine whether changes in circulating vesicle composition may identify early metabolic dysfunction before clinical complications become apparent. Such information could support preventive strategies and more effective disease monitoring.

Respiratory disorders provide another example of the broad biological significance of extracellular vesicles. Airway epithelial cells, immune cells, and vascular tissues release vesicles during respiratory infections, chronic inflammatory diseases, and fibrotic lung disorders [8]. These particles influence inflammatory responses, tissue remodeling, immune

Correspondence to: Mirela Vukovic, Department of Molecular Cell Biology, Adriatic Biomedical University, Split, Croatia, Europe, E-mail: mirela.vukovic@abumedscience.org

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communication, and repair processes within pulmonary tissues. Laboratory analysis may contribute to improved diagnosis while helping clinicians evaluate disease activity during long-term treatment.

Isolation and characterization of extracellular vesicles require specialized laboratory techniques. Differential centrifugation, size exclusion chromatography, ultrafiltration, immunoaffinity separation, and microfluidic technologies represent commonly used methods for obtaining purified vesicle populations from biological samples [9]. Researchers subsequently examine vesicle morphology, concentration, protein composition, nucleic acid content, lipid profiles, and biological activity using advanced analytical instruments. Standardization of laboratory procedures remains essential because methodological differences may influence research findings and clinical interpretation.

Clinical translation requires careful evaluation before extracellular vesicle technologies become routine components of healthcare. Diagnostic assays must demonstrate consistent analytical performance across different laboratories, patient populations, and clinical settings. Researchers also examine biological variability associated with age, sex, environmental influences, medication use, and coexisting illnesses [10]. Regulatory agencies evaluate laboratory methods, manufacturing standards, and clinical evidence to ensure that new diagnostic or therapeutic applications satisfy appropriate safety and performance requirements.

CONCLUSION

Extracellular vesicles continue to strengthen translational medicine by providing insight into cellular communication, disease biology, diagnostic development, regenerative medicine, and therapeutic innovation. Their ability to transport biologically active molecules throughout the body creates valuable opportunities for improving disease detection, monitoring treatment response, and developing new therapeutic

strategies. Continued progress in laboratory technology, computational analysis, clinical investigation, and international scientific cooperation will further clarify their role within modern medicine while supporting practical applications that contribute to improved patient care.

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