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Elucidating the Role of Exosomal miRNAs in Cardiovascular Diseases: Potential Biomarkers and Therapeutic Targets

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Introduction

Cardiovascular diseases remain the leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Despite advances in diagnostic and therapeutic strategies, the early detection and effective treatment of CVDs remain challenging. Recent research has increasingly focused on the role of exosomes, small extracellular vesicles, as novel mediators of intercellular communication in various physiological and pathological processes. Exosomes carry a rich cargo of biomolecules, including microRNAs (miRNAs), which are small non-coding RNAs that regulate gene expression post-transcriptionally. Emerging evidence suggests that exosomal miRNAs play a crucial role in the pathogenesis of CVDs by influencing key biological processes such as inflammation, fibrosis, apoptosis, and angiogenesis. This review aims to elucidate the role of exosomal miRNAs in CVDs, highlighting their potential as biomarkers for early diagnosis and prognosis, as well as their promise as therapeutic targets [1].

Description

Exosomes are nano-sized vesicles, typically ranging from 30 to 150 nm in diameter, secreted by various cell types into the extracellular environment. They facilitate the transfer of proteins, lipids, and nucleic acids, including miRNAs, between cells, thereby modulating recipient cell function. In the context of cardiovascular health, exosomal miRNAs have been implicated in regulating diverse cellular processes critical to the maintenance of cardiovascular homeostasis and the development of disease. For instance, miRNAs such as miR-1, miR-133, and miR-499, which are enriched in cardiac tissue, have been shown to influence cardiac hypertrophy, myocardial infarction, and heart failure [2]. Moreover, exosomal miRNAs derived from endothelial cells, smooth muscle cells, and cardiac fibroblasts contribute to vascular remodeling, atherosclerosis, and cardiac fibrosis. MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are short, non-coding RNAs, approximately 22 nucleotides long, that regulate gene expression by binding to complementary sequences on target messenger RNAs (mRNAs), leading to mRNA degradation or inhibition of translation. Within exosomes, miRNAs are selectively packaged and protected from degradation, ensuring their stability in the extracellular environment. The biogenesis of exosomal miRNAs involves the incorporation of specific miRNAs into MVBs, a process regulated by cellular machinery that recognizes miRNA motifs or sequences [3].

In cardiovascular contexts, exosomal miRNAs are released from various cell types, including cardiomyocytes, endothelial cells, smooth muscle cells, and cardiac fibroblasts. These miRNAs can modulate key cellular processes such as inflammation, fibrosis, apoptosis, and angiogenesis, all of which are crucial in the development and progression of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs). Certain miRNAs, such as miR-1 and miR-133, are known to regulate cardiac hypertrophy and apoptosis. Altered levels of these miRNAs in exosomes can contribute to maladaptive cardiac remodeling and heart failure. Following MI, exosomal miRNAs like miR-21 and miR-499 are involved in the regulation of cell death, inflammation, and fibrosis. These miRNAs can influence the repair and remodeling processes in the myocardium [4].

Exosomal miRNAs from endothelial cells and macrophages, such as miR-92a and miR-146a, play roles in endothelial dysfunction and inflammatory responses, critical steps in atherogenesis.miRNAs like miR-145 and miR-143, found in exosomes from vascular smooth muscle cells, are involved in the regulation of vascular tone and structure, impacting diseases such as hypertension and restenosis after angioplasty. Synthetic miRNA mimics can be used to restore the function of beneficial miRNAs, while antagomirs or miRNA sponges can inhibit the function of harmful miRNAs.Exosomes can be engineered to carry specific miRNAs or miRNA inhibitors, providing targeted delivery to affected tissues. This approach minimizes off-target effects and enhances therapeutic efficacy [5].

Conclusion

The burgeoning field of exosomal miRNA research holds significant promise for transforming the landscape of cardiovascular diagnostics and therapeutics. Exosomal miRNAs, with their dual role as biomarkers and modulators of disease, offer a unique opportunity to enhance early detection, improve prognostic accuracy, and develop innovative treatment strategies for CVDs. Future research should focus on validating the clinical utility of exosomal miRNAs in larger, diverse cohorts and refining delivery mechanisms for therapeutic applications. By advancing our understanding of exosomal miRNA biology, we can unlock new avenues for combating the global burden of cardiovascular diseases.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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