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Development of Dual-Target Ligands for the Treatment of Neurodegenerative Diseases

Marlene Greene*

Department of Clinical Medicine, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Commentary

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***For Correspondence:**
Marlene Greene, Department of Clinical Medicine, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

E-mail: green134@gmail.com

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DESCRIPTION

Neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and Huntington's disease, pose significant challenges in modern medicine due to their complex origins and progressive nature. These disorders are characterized by the gradual loss of neurons and synaptic connections in the central nervous system, leading to debilitating cognitive and motor impairments. Current therapeutic strategies often focus on symptomatic relief rather than addressing the underlying disease mechanisms, highlighting the urgent need for innovative treatments that can modify disease progression. Dual-target ligands represent a promising approach in drug discovery for neurodegenerative diseases, aiming to simultaneously modulate multiple pathological pathways implicated in disease pathogenesis. By targeting two or more specific molecular targets involved in neuro inflammation, protein aggregation, oxidative stress, or neurotransmitter dysfunction, these ligands provide potential synergistic effects and enhanced therapeutic efficacy compared to single-target therapies. This multidimensional strategy not only prevents the heterogeneous nature of neurodegenerative diseases but also aligns with the concept of precision medicine, adapting treatments to individual disease profiles and patient needs. The development of dual-target ligands requires a deep understanding of disease biology, pharmacological mechanisms, and medicinal chemistry principles to design molecules capable of crossing the blood-brain barrier, engaging multiple targets selectively, and achieving optimal therapeutic outcomes. This review explores recent advancements, challenges, and future perspectives in the development of dual-target ligands for neurodegenerative diseases, emphasizing their potential to transform the treatment landscape and improve patient outcomes. The development of dual-target ligands for neurodegenerative diseases

represents a paradigm shift in therapeutic approaches, aiming to address the multifaceted pathophysiology of these complex disorders.

Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, is characterized by the accumulation of β-amyloid plaques and tau neurofibrillary tangles, along with neuroinflammation and synaptic dysfunction. Dual-target ligands designed for Alzheimer's disease often combine agents targeting β-amyloid aggregation (e.g., β-secretase inhibitors or amyloid-binding agents) with neuroprotective agents that mitigate oxidative stress or enhance synaptic function (e.g., antioxidants or cholinesterase inhibitors). This synergistic approach aims to reduce pathological protein aggregation while promoting neuronal survival and function, potentially slowing disease progression and improving cognitive outcomes. In Parkinson's disease, dopaminergic neuron degeneration in the substantia nigra is accompanied by α-synuclein aggregation, neuroinflammation, and mitochondrial dysfunction. Dual-target ligands for Parkinson's disease may combine agents targeting α-synuclein aggregation (e.g., α-synuclein inhibitors or modulators) with neuroprotective agents that enhance mitochondrial function or reduce oxidative stress (e.g., mitochondrial enhancers or antioxidants). By addressing multiple disease mechanisms simultaneously, these ligands aim to preserve dopaminergic neurons, maintain motor function, and reduce disease progression more effectively than single-target therapies. Huntington's disease is characterized by CAG repeat expansions in the huntingtin gene, leading to mutant huntingtin protein aggregation, excitotoxicity, and mitochondrial dysfunction. Dual-target ligands for Huntington's disease may target mutant huntingtin protein aggregation (e.g., gene silencing agents or protein aggregation inhibitors) alongside agents that enhance mitochondrial function or modulate neurotransmitter systems (e.g., mitochondrial regulators or neurotransmitter modulators). This integrated approach aims to reduce mutant huntingtin toxicity while promoting neuronal survival and maintaining cognitive function, providing potential benefits in disease modification and symptom management. The development of dual-target ligands involves several key considerations in medicinal chemistry and pharmacology. Structure-activity relationship studies optimize ligand structures for potency, selectivity, and pharmacokinetic properties, ensuring effective target engagement and favorable drug-like characteristics. Computational modeling and virtual screening techniques aid in the design and prediction of ligand interactions with target proteins, guiding rational drug design and optimization processes. Pharmacokinetic studies evaluate ligand Absorption, Distribution, Metabolism, and Excretion (ADME) properties, including blood-brain barrier permeability, to ensure adequate brain exposure and therapeutic efficacy. Preclinical efficacy and safety assessments in disease models provide major validation of dual-target ligands' therapeutic potential, informing clinical development strategies and dose optimization for human trials.

CONCLUSION

The development of dual-target ligands represents a promising strategy in the pursuit of effective treatments for neurodegenerative diseases. By simultaneously targeting multiple pathological pathways implicated in disease progression, these ligands offer potential synergistic effects and enhanced therapeutic efficacy compared to single-target therapies. Advances in medicinal chemistry, pharmacology, and neuroscience have enabled the design and optimization of dual-target ligands capable of modulating complex disease mechanisms while minimizing off-target effects and maximizing therapeutic benefits. However, challenges such as target validation, pharmacokinetic

optimization, and translational barriers from preclinical to clinical stages remain significant barriers in the development of dual-target therapies. Ultimately, the continued exploration and development of dual-target ligands for transforming the treatment landscape of neurodegenerative diseases.