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Review Article

Nanorobotics in Prosthodontics: Current Concepts, Applications, and Future Perspectives

Dr. Jainey Patel, Dr. Namrta Mahajan, Dr. Jitendra Khetan, Dr. Mitumani Baishya, Dr. Pratik Ghogare, Dr. Toral Ahir

Department of Prosthodontics, NIMS Dental College & Hospital, Jaipur, India

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ABSTRACT

Nanotechnology has emerged as a transformative discipline in modern healthcare, with nanorobotics representing one of its most advanced applications. In dentistry, and particularly in prosthodontics, nanorobotics holds immense promise for improving diagnostic accuracy, material properties, treatment precision, and long-term clinical outcomes. Nanorobots are nanoscale devices capable of sensing, computation, communication, and actuation at the molecular level. Their integration into prosthodontic practice has led to innovations in implant surface modification, denture base materials, tissue engineering, targeted drug delivery, hypersensitivity management, and regenerative therapies. This review article provides a comprehensive overview of nanorobotics, including its historical evolution, principles, manufacturing approaches, working mechanisms, and specific applications in prosthodontics. Advantages, limitations, and challenges related to clinical translation are also discussed. With continued interdisciplinary research and technological advancements, nanorobotics is expected to redefine the future of prosthodontic rehabilitation.

INTRODUCTION

The term *nano* is derived from the Greek word meaning "dwarf" and refers to structures measured in nanometers (10^{-9} meters). Nanotechnology involves the manipulation of matter at atomic and molecular scales to create materials and devices with novel properties. The conceptual foundation of nanotechnology was laid by Richard Feynman in his landmark lecture *"There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom"*, where he envisioned the manipulation of individual atoms to build functional devices.

Nanorobotics is an advanced subfield of nanotechnology that focuses on the design and application of nanoscale machines capable of performing specific tasks. In dentistry, the

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. Jainey Patel
Address: *Department of Prosthodontics, NIMS Dental College & Hospital, Jaipur, India*
Email : jaineypatel30@gmail.com
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emergence of nano dentistry has paved the way for minimally invasive, highly precise, and biologically compatible treatment modalities. Prosthodontics, which aims to restore oral function, esthetics, and comfort, stands to benefit significantly from nanorobotic interventions

Evolution of Nanorobotics

Early advancements in nanotechnology were driven by the development of high-resolution imaging tools such as Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) and Atomic Force Microscopy (AFM). The discovery of carbon nanotubes, quantum dots, fullerenes, and nanodiamonds further expanded the potential of nanoscale engineering.

The concept of autonomous nanorobots capable of navigation, sensing, and task execution was later popularized by Drexler. Subsequent progress in computational modeling, molecular self-assembly, and bioengineering enabled the theoretical and experimental development of medical nanorobots.

Nanorobots: Structure and Components

Nanorobots are nanoscale machines typically composed of:

- Diamondoid or carbon-based structural frameworks
- Nanosensors for chemical and biological detection
- Actuators for controlled movement
- Nanocomputers for data processing and decision-making
- Communication modules using acoustic, optical, or electromagnetic signals

Their surfaces are designed to be ultra-smooth to minimize immunological reactions and protein adsorption.

Manufacturing Approaches

1 Top-down approach

This method involves miniaturization of larger structures using lithography and precision machining techniques.

2 Bottom-up approach

A self-assembly method where molecules organize themselves into functional structures. DNA origami is a notable example, allowing programmable nanostructures to be fabricated with high precision.

Working Mechanism of Nanorobotics

Nanorobots operate by recognizing molecular signals or surface receptors, followed by logical computation and targeted action. Activation may occur in response to:

- pH changes
- Specific protein markers
- Chemical gradients

These properties allow nanorobots to deliver drugs, repair tissues, or modify surfaces selectively without affecting surrounding structures.

According to the article *"Nano Robotic Dentistry – Transforming Fiction into Reality"*, the major applications of nanotechnology and nanorobotics in dentistry are:

Applications of Nanotechnology in Dentistry

1. Nanocomposites

- Used in restorative dentistry.
- Nano-sized filler particles improve:
  - Strength
  - Wear resistance
  - Polishability
  - Esthetics
- Provide smoother surface and better translucency.
- Help in remineralization by releasing calcium and phosphate.
- Used for fabrication of artificial teeth and restorative materials.

2. Nano Diagnosis

- Helps in early detection of oral diseases at molecular and cellular levels.
- Nano devices can identify:
  - Cancer cells
  - Harmful microorganisms
  - Tissue abnormalities
- Improves accuracy and reliability of diagnosis.

3. Digital Dental Imaging

- Nanotechnology improves digital radiography.
- Nanophosphor scintillators:
  - Enhance image quality
  - Reduce radiation exposure to patients.

4. Diagnosis and Treatment of Oral Cancer

- Nano biosensors and Nano Electro Mechanical Systems (NEMS) help detect oral cancer.
- Useful in identifying:
  - Bacteria
  - Viruses
  - Fungi
  - Malignant cells
- Enables early diagnosis and better prognosis.

5. Nano Robotic Dentifrice (Dentifrobots)

- Nano robots incorporated into toothpaste/mouthwash.
- Functions:
  - Remove plaque and calculus
  - Eliminate harmful bacteria
  - Convert debris into harmless substances
  - Maintain oral hygiene continuously.

6. Nano Anaesthesia

- Provides needle-free local anaesthesia.
- Nano robots travel through dentinal tubules to pulp.
- Temporarily block pain transmission during procedures.
- Offers:

- Better patient comfort
- Anxiety-free treatment
- Precise control of anaesthesia.

7. Nano Impression Materials

- Addition of nanofillers to impression materials improves:
- Flow properties
- Hydrophilicity
- Accuracy
- Detail reproduction
- Reduces marginal defects.

8. Orthodontic Treatment

- Orthodontic nanorobots can manipulate periodontal tissues directly.
- Helps in:
- Rapid tooth movement
- Painless orthodontic treatment
- Improved orthodontic wires with high strength and corrosion resistance.

9. Management of Dentinal Hypersensitivity

- Nanorobots selectively occlude dentinal tubules.
- Provides rapid and permanent relief from hypersensitivity.

10. Major Tooth Repair and Replacement

- Nanotechnology aids in:
- Tissue engineering
- Regenerative dentistry
- Biological tooth replacement
- Enables complete restoration of damaged teeth using cellular and mineral components.

11. Preventive and Curative Dentistry

- Nanorobots can:
- Prevent dental caries
- Remove cariogenic bacteria
- Repair tooth defects
- Improve oral health maintenance.

Applications of Nanorobotics in Prosthodontics

1. Dental Implants

Nanocoated implant surfaces enhance osseointegration by promoting osteoblast adhesion, proliferation, and differentiation. Nanostructured titanium surfaces improve bone-implant contact and long-term stability.

2. Denture Base Materials

Incorporation of nanoparticles improves mechanical strength, wear resistance, and antimicrobial properties of denture base resins, reducing biofilm formation and denture stomatitis.

3. Hypersensitivity Management

Nanorobots can selectively occlude dentinal tubules, providing immediate and long-lasting relief from dentin hypersensitivity.

4. Tissue Engineering and Regeneration

Nanorobots facilitate scaffold-guided bone regeneration and targeted growth factor delivery, improving outcomes in maxillofacial prosthetic rehabilitation.

5. Drug Delivery Systems

Targeted drug delivery minimizes systemic side effects while maximizing therapeutic efficacy, particularly in peri-implant infections and inflammatory conditions.

Advantages of Nanorobotics

- High precision and accuracy
- Minimally invasive treatment
- Enhanced biocompatibility
- Targeted therapeutic action
- Improved longevity of prostheses

Limitations and Challenges

- High cost of development
- Ethical and regulatory concerns
- Limited long-term clinical evidence
- Complexity in mass production
- Potential toxicity at higher concentrations

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Nanorobotics is expected to revolutionize prosthodontics by enabling smart prostheses, self-healing materials, accelerated tissue regeneration, and personalized dental care. Integration of artificial intelligence with nanorobotics may further enhance decision-making and autonomous clinical performance.

CONCLUSION

Nanorobotics represents a paradigm shift in prosthodontics, offering innovative solutions to longstanding clinical challenges. While current applications are largely experimental, rapid advancements in nanotechnology and bioengineering suggest that nanorobotic systems will soon become an integral part of prosthodontic practice. Continued research, ethical oversight, and clinical validation are essential for successful translation from laboratory to chairside application.

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