



Collagen –A Bounteous Animal Protein For The New Era Of Wound Treatment

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ABSTRACT

The whole animal kingdom is bestowed with a protein named as collagen. With human ingenuity this abundant protein is made into well organized, three dimensional scaffolds those are nontoxic, biodegradable and biocompatible on exogenous usage. These facets make the collagen as the key material for the new era of wound treatment. This article reviews about the various sources [such as animals and birds], reconstituted forms [such as sponges, films, membranes, injectable and hydrogels]and different uses of the collagen. Moreover, the way of extraction of collagen from animal sources and commercially available collagen based products are delineated.

Key words: Collagen, Biodegradable, Biocompatible, Scaffold, Wound treatment.

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INTRODUCTION

Wound healing is a dynamic, complex and well-orchestrated physiological process which involves a series of cellular, molecular and biochemical events that are necessary to restore the structural and functional integrity of damaged tissues following injury. In chronic wounds, the normal sequence of healing events is impaired due to defective remodelling of the extracellular matrix [ECM], failure of re-epithelialisation and prolonged persistence of inflammation. Collagen is the triple helix protein molecule present abundantly in ECM and connective tissues of animals[1]. Since 1881, collagen is used as the biomaterial[2].About 25-30% of total protein content of animal body is made up of collagen[3]. Fibroblast of connective tissue is the major source of collagen formation [4-5]. Collagen is the key for ECM to maintain its biological and structural integrity. The cellular behaviour and functions are taken care by this dynamic and flexible material, which has constant remodelling property [6]. Collagen is inherited with properties like biodegradability, nontoxicity, biocompatibility and weak antigenicity [7], so it is the predominant biomaterial used for soft tissue regeneration.

The Collagen

Collagen molecule comprises of right handed triple helix arrangement of three polypeptide chain [8-9]. This triple helix structure has three chains of which two are identical [α 1] and third one differs from others [α 2]. Each chain comprises of 1050 amino acid, approximately of 300nm long. Every third amino acid position is occupied by the glycine [Gly] to make this structure highly stable. Xaa-Yaa-Gly, this repeating unit is most commonly noticed in the triple helix structure. Emil Fischer identified [2S] – proline[Pro][10] 92S, 4R] - 4- hydroxyproline[Hyp][11] occupies the Xaa and Yaaposition, so Pro-Hyp-Gly is the most common triplet seen in the collagen structure [12].

As on date 29 different collagen types are discovered [type 29th is the collagen containing Von willebrand factor type A dominant][13].All of them has thetriple helix structure [14]. Among the 29 types type I-V are the most common, in that type I constitutes about 90% of totalcollagen content of the body [15].Collagen has high tensile strength, protects skin from toxins and pathogens [16] and causes quick healing of the

damaged blood vessels, bones and maintain their structural integrity [17]. Each type of collagen has their own location in the body of animals, Table 1. [18].

SOURCES OF COLLAGEN

Collagen can be extracted from tissue of any animals, even the extinct dinosaurs [19-20], but the most common sources are bovine tendons and skins, intestine, skin and bladder mucosa of porcine, sometimes from other animals also [21]. Bovine is the major collagen source but this can be complicated by disease transmission [e.g., BSE, TSE, FMD, etc.] and allergic reactions [7,22]. Porcine collagen is another important source, it shows minimal allergic reactions but the risk of pathogen transmission is noted. This potential risk can be minimized by the use of other important newly identified marine source, which is the area of interest for many researchers now [23-25].

Marine collagen has ample advantages over collagens obtained from other sources, Table - 2. [18]. Marine sources include fishes, sponges, jellyfishes, sea urchin, octopus, squids, cuttlefish, sea anemone, prawn and starfishes [26- 29]. Scales, fins, skin and bones of salt and fresh water fishes are the main parts considered for collagen extraction, this can reduce the environmental pollution because they are the main waste products coming from the fish industries [30,31]. Type I collagen is obtained from the skin of *Gadus morhua*, Silver carp [*Hypophthalmich thysmolitrix*], Japanese sea-bass, chub mackerel, bullhead shark, sole fish and bones of *Thunnus obesus*, skipjack tuna, Japanese sea-bass, ayu, yellow sea bream, Horse mackerel and fin of Japanese sea-bass and scales of *Pargus major*, *Oreochromis niloticus*, carp. Other mammalian sources include kangaroo tail, duck feet, rat tail tendon, equine tendon [32], alligator bone and skin, sheep skin, frog skin and birds feet. Heterogeneous expression of collagen in mammalian, yeast and insect cells proved as a better alternative source without any risk of pathogen transmission and allergic reactions [33]. Expression of recombinant type - I collagen from *Pichia pastoris* yeast is used for collagen film formation [34].

STEPS FOR GETTING COLLAGEN FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

Basic steps involved in extracting collagen from various sources are delineated below; complete analysis [Amino acid analysis, denaturation temperature analysis, X-ray diffraction analysis and electrophoresis] for physical and chemical properties of obtained collagen has to be done [35]. Extraction of collagen includes dialysis with acetic acid or disodium hydrogen phosphate.

Covalent cross links are the sole reason for the proteolytic resistant and high tensile strength of collagen [36]. Such linkages can be disintegrated during extraction procedures or during formation of reconstituted forms of collagen e.g., collagen films, membranes, hydrogels, injectable and sponges. Hence generating new cross links are important to preserve the properties of collagen. Various methods can be employed for the cross-linkage formation, which needs different materials, Table 4.

COLLAGEN BASED BIOMATERIALS

Collagen is widely used for skin tissue engineering as coating materials and it is known to be one of the most promising biomaterials for diverse applications. Two main categories of collagen based biomaterials are available; one is decellularized collagen matrices and another one is refined scaffolds. Decellularized collagen materials retain ECM structure and original tissue properties. They are prepared by physical [snap or high pressure freezing], chemical [acid or alkali treatment] and enzymatic [trypsin digestion] methods [47]. Scaffolds are prepared by extraction, purification and collagen polymerization processes.

RECONSTITUTED FORMS OF COLLAGEN

Collagen Sponges

Cow, horses and pigs are the main sources of the collagen sponges. These collagen sponges have the properties like exudate absorption, smooth adherence to wound surface, maintenance of moist environment and protect wound from mechanical damage and microbial infection [48]. Sponges lead to intense infiltration of neutrophils that can lead to quick healing of burn wounds [49]. Collagen sponges are the vehicle for delivery of drugs, growth factors like fibroblast growth factor [FGF] [50], platelet derived growth factors [PDGF] [51] to the wound bed to promote quick repair of 'hard-to-heal' wounds. Sponges can also transport antimicrobials like gentamicin, cefataxim, fusidic acid, clindamycin or vancomycin effectively [99.9%] to the wound surface *in vitro* [52,53]. Sponges can act as the template for the growth of cells, so they are used in cell culture as well [54, 55].

Injectable collagen solutions

Collagen in injectable form are used to treat the dermatological defects. The slow delivery of local anaesthetics and central analgesics can be achieved when they are formulated with the collagen [56]. This property is due to high binding efficiency of the drug to the collagen or high micro viscosity of the

collagen which reduces the rate of diffusion. The collagen solutions containing FGF and transforming growth factor [TGF] are used for the effective treatment of intestinal wounds in porcine model [57]. This suggests that collagens can also act as a suitable delivery moiety.

Collagen Hydrogels.

Hydrogel formulations have large uniform surface area those can be used for delivery of growth hormone and insulin in effective manner [58]. Gel loaded with chondrocytes is useful for treatment with cartilage defects [59].

Collagen films and membranes.

Collagen films are about 0.1-0.5 mm thickness, which are made from collagen solutions. They are used as wound-barriers and also help in slow release of drugs [60]. Collagen membranes are used for tissue regeneration and wound dressing; it allows addition of many pharmaceutical products and growth hormone for their sustained release in the wound surface [61].

Table 1: Common types of collagen and their location in body

COLLAGEN TYPE	LOCATION
Type I	Skin, bone, teeth, tendon, ligament, vascular ligature, organs [mainly in organic parts of bone]
Type II	Eye and Cartilage [mainly in cartilages]
Type III	Reticular fibres, skin, muscles, blood vessels [mainly in reticular fibres]
Type IV	Basement membrane and basal lamina
Type V	Hair, cell surface and placenta

Table 2: Advantages of marine source over land animal source.

ADVANTAGES OF MARINE SOURCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High collagen content • Eco- friendly • No pathogen transmission [like BSE, TSE, FMD, etc.] • Greater absorption due to lower body temperature than land animals. • Lower molecular weight facilitates greater absorption. • Presence of spare amount of toxins and biological contamination. • Reduced inflammatory response and low immunogenicity. • Metabolically compatible.

Table 3: Steps in extracting collagen.

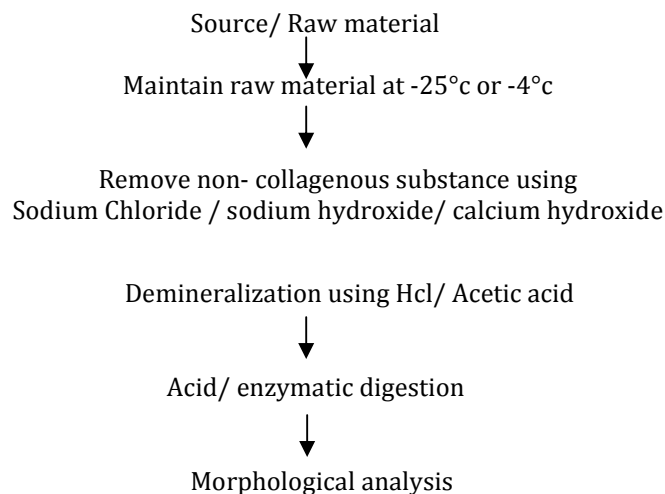


Table 4: Different types of cross linking techniques and materials used.

CROSSLINKING METHOD	MATERIALS USED	REFERENCES
Chemical method	Formaldehyde	37
	Glutaraldehyde	38,39
	Carbodiimides	40,41
	Polyepoxy compounds	42
	Acyl azides	43
	Hexamethylenediisocyanate	44
Physical method	Ultraviolet light @ 254nm and dehydrothermal treatment	45
Enzymatic method	Transglutaminase	46

Table 5: Currently available animal source collagen products [list is not exhaustive].

PRODUCT NAME	SOURCE
Permacol®	Porcine dermis
Interga®	Bovine tendon / Synthetic polysiloxane
Puracol	Bovine collagen
Oasis®	Porcine small intestine submucosa
Catrix®	Bovine collagen [powder]
Cellerate®	Bovine collagen
Collieva®	Bovine collagen
Medifil®	Bovine collagen
Decutastar®	Equine collagen
Mediskin	Porcine dermis
EZ- Derm®	Aldehyde linked porcine dermis

COLLAGEN IN WOUND DRESSING

Porcine collagen and polyglutamic acid are used as a novel surgical adhesive because of their physical properties [62]. Collagen has inherent biocompatibility and low antigenicity with most of the body tissues, these properties make them more suitable for treating 'hard-to-heal' wounds. Collagen facilitates the wound healing by up regulation of fibroblast production, inhibits or deactivates of Matrix Metalloproteases [MMP] and by preservation of macrophages, leukocytes, fibroblast and epithelial cells from damage. They also conserve the micro environment of the wound and aid in uptake of fibronectin [63]. Reconstituted type I collagen can also be used directly for replacement of damaged skin due to its mechanical strength and biocompatibility [64]. As a mile stone in the collagen therapy, collagen mimetic peptides are identified and made into large polypeptide chains which are used to treat chronic wounds which show lesser allergic reactions [65].

COLLAGEN IN VARIOUS INDUSTRIES.

Collagen paved a new scientific way in many industries like pharmaceutical, biomedical, medical and tissue engineering. Type I collagen is the gold standard for many field to make their products of high aesthetic value. In the veterinary field, collagen therapy for wounds gained more importance during these years because of their biochemical nature. Many number of commercial collagen products are available [63], which are listed below, Table 4. Any product that uses collagen may act as reservoir to increase the contact time with host, reversible binding with drugs such that they are released in delayed mode and reduce the likelihood of systemic toxicity.

CONCLUSION

Collagen, a unique animal protein has many compatible properties with the body tissue on their exogenous administration, so it thrown the colourful lights in veterinary and medical field to treat the ailing patients. Collagen not only involved in wound healing but also helps in targeted drug and hormone delivery to the wound surface. Development of newer collagen products like sponges, injectable, films, membranes, hydrogels and collagen mimetic peptides had generated newer therapeutic option for the wound care. Exploring more of marine sources for collagen will provide more of economically reliable collagen products. Collagen created tremendous change in the wound therapy during this era.

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