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Advancements in Periodontal Regeneration: Modern Approaches

Ali Abid[1], Kobeleva Anastasia[2], Zagidullin Salavat[3], Kalitin Nikita[4], Sovetnikov Egor[5], Iskhakov Zemfir[5], Erina Darya[6], Muldarova Lidia[7], Shaposhnikova Anna[6], Xue Lilu[8]

[1] Harbin Medical University, China

[2] V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University, Russian Federation

[3] Kazan State Medical University, Russian Federation

[4] Russian University of Medicine, Russian Federation

[5] Izhevsk State Medical Academy, Russian Federation

[6] Russian University of Medicine, Russian Federation

[7] The Pavlov First Saint Petersburg State Medical University, Russian Federation

[8] State Key Laboratory of Rare Earth Resource Utilization, Changchun Institute of Applied Chemistry, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Changchun, Jilin, 130022 P. R. China

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ABSTRACT:

Periodontal regeneration represents a significant frontier in modern dentistry, aiming to restore the structure and function of tissues lost due to periodontitis. Recent advances in tissue engineering, biomaterials, and molecular biology have introduced novel strategies that go beyond conventional therapies. Innovations such as growth factor delivery, stem cell-based therapies, and the application of biomimetic scaffolds have demonstrated promising outcomes in both preclinical and clinical settings. Moreover, the integration of nanotechnology and gene therapy has opened new horizons for precision regenerative techniques. This review presents a comprehensive overview of modern approaches in periodontal regeneration, highlighting their biological rationale, clinical potential, and future directions. Challenges in translational research and personalized therapy are also discussed to offer insight into the evolving landscape of periodontal medicine.

1. Introduction

1.1. Epidemiology and Burden of Periodontitis

Periodontitis is a multifactorial, chronic inflammatory disease characterized by the progressive destruction of periodontal ligament, alveolar bone, and connective tissue attachment, ultimately leading to tooth loss if untreated. Globally, it affects over 700 million people, making it the sixth most prevalent human disease [1]. Severe periodontitis affects approximately 10–15% of the population and is considered the primary cause of tooth loss in adults over the age of 40 [2,3]. Its impact is not limited to oral health—periodontitis has been increasingly recognized as a systemic inflammatory burden, contributing to the pathophysiology of cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes mellitus, chronic kidney disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease [4,5].

The economic implications of periodontal disease are substantial. In Europe alone, the estimated annual cost of managing periodontal conditions exceeds €150 billion, factoring in both direct healthcare expenditures and productivity loss [6]. In the United States, periodontitis-related treatment and its consequences cost the healthcare system billions annually, underscoring the urgency of improved diagnostic and therapeutic strategies [7]. The chronic nature of the disease, coupled with its high recurrence rate and slow

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response to conventional therapy, highlights the necessity for biologically oriented regenerative modalities [8].

1.2. Limitations of Conventional Therapies

Conventional periodontal therapy focuses on infection control and mechanical debridement to arrest disease progression. While non-surgical interventions such as scaling and root planing remain the gold standard for early-stage periodontitis, they are limited in their capacity to regenerate lost periodontal tissues, particularly in deep infrabony or furcation defects [9]. Surgical interventions, including open flap debridement and resective osseous surgery, provide access for more thorough decontamination but are often associated with post-treatment recession and limited regenerative outcomes [10].

Guided tissue regeneration (GTR), the first attempt to biologically direct periodontal repair, utilizes barrier membranes to favor selective repopulation by periodontal ligament and bone-forming cells. Although GTR has demonstrated clinical benefits, especially in Class II furcation and three-wall defects, its efficacy remains inconsistent and heavily reliant on defect anatomy, membrane stability, and patient compliance [11,12]. Additionally, autologous bone grafts, allografts, and xenografts have been widely applied, yet they are often associated with unpredictable outcomes and limited integration into host tissue [13]. Thus, despite decades of clinical application, conventional periodontal therapy has not been able to fully reconstruct the periodontium in a manner that recapitulates its native architecture and functionality [14].

1.3. Objectives and Scope of the Review

In light of these limitations, contemporary periodontal science has shifted toward regenerative approaches that integrate principles of tissue engineering, stem cell biology, biomaterials science, and molecular signaling. The goal is not merely to stop disease progression but to bioengineer a structurally and functionally complete periodontium capable of withstanding physiological forces and microbial challenge [15,16].

This review aims to critically evaluate the latest advancements in periodontal regenerative therapies, including the use of growth factors (e.g., PDGF, BMPs, FGF-2), mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), cell-free extracellular vesicles, smart biomaterials, and gene-editing platforms. We will discuss the cellular and molecular mechanisms underpinning these technologies, their current clinical translation, and the challenges they face in achieving reproducible, long-term outcomes [17,18]. Additionally, the review will explore future directions in precision periodontology, including the integration of omics-based diagnostics, 3D bioprinting, and patient-specific regenerative protocols tailored to individual risk profiles [19,20].

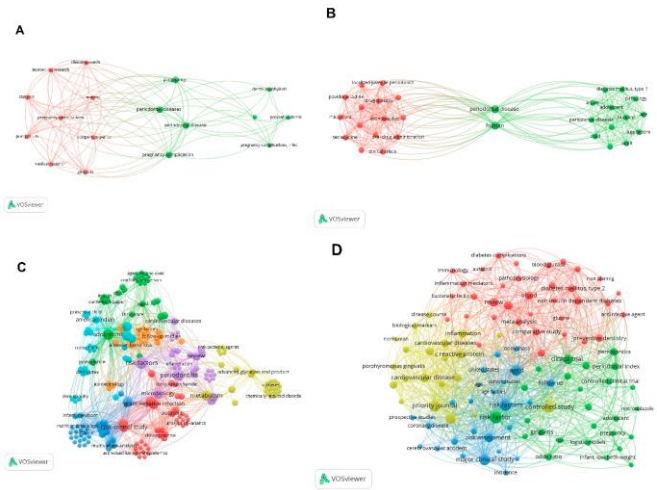

Figure 1. Temporal Evolution of Research Trends in Periodontology and Related Systemic Conditions from the 1960s to 2010s

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Figure 1 visualizes the bibliometric distribution and interconnection of keywords extracted from scientific publications on periodontology and its systemic associations over five distinct decades, using VOSviewer. In panel **A**, corresponding to the 1960s, the visualization reveals a sparse and relatively isolated network, primarily focused on clinical research, periodontitis, and pregnancy-related complications. This reflects the nascent stage of the field and limited integration with broader medical concerns.

Panel **B**, representing the 1980s, shows an increase in the complexity and connectivity of the network. Keywords such as "drug interaction," "localized juvenile periodontitis," and "diabetes mellitus type 1" begin to emerge more prominently, indicating growing interdisciplinary interest, particularly in pharmacology and metabolic diseases.

In **Panel C**, covering the 1990s, the network becomes more dense and diversified. Clusters reveal strong co-occurrence between terms like "cardiovascular diseases," "risk factors," and "periodontitis," suggesting a shift toward systemic implications of periodontal inflammation. The presence of terms like "case-control study" and "meta-analysis" also reflects the maturation of research methodologies during this period.

Finally, **Panel D**, encompassing the 2000s to 2010s, presents an intricate and robust network structure. High-frequency keywords such as "C-reactive protein," "inflammation," "diabetes mellitus type 2," and "coronary disease" illustrate the establishment of periodontal disease as a significant factor in systemic inflammatory burden. This period also marks the rise of evidence-based dentistry, with a substantial number of randomized clinical trials and controlled cohort studies shaping the research landscape.

Collectively, the figure underscores the progressive enrichment and interdisciplinary expansion of periodontal research, evolving from isolated dental conditions to a central component of systemic disease models. It illustrates not only the historical trajectory of scientific focus but also the integration of oral health into the broader context of chronic systemic disease management.

2. Biological Principles of Periodontal Regeneration

2.1. Cellular and Molecular Components of Periodontal Healing

Periodontal tissue regeneration relies on the orchestrated interaction of various cell types, including periodontal ligament (PDL) fibroblasts, osteoblasts, cementoblasts, and endothelial cells, each playing a crucial role in restoring structural integrity and function of the periodontium [21]. These cells are regulated by a complex network of signaling molecules and extracellular matrix (ECM) interactions that guide proliferation, migration, and differentiation [22].

Among these, PDL cells have a unique regenerative capacity, being capable of differentiating into osteogenic and cementogenic lineages under appropriate environmental stimuli [23]. Moreover, bone marrow-derived mesenchymal stem cells (BM-MSCs) and dental pulp stem cells (DPSCs) have demonstrated promising potential in promoting alveolar bone regeneration in preclinical models [24]. The use of induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) is also emerging as a future direction for generating patient-specific regenerative cells, although challenges related to epigenetic memory and tumorigenicity remain [25].

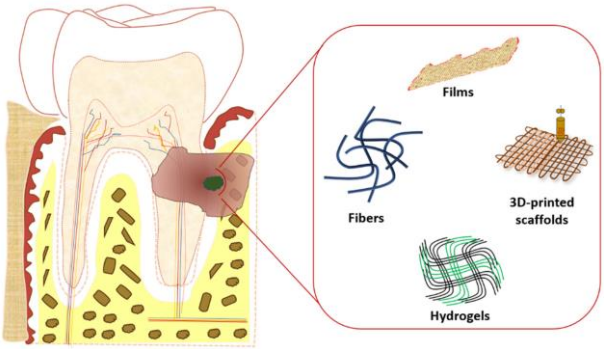

Figure 2. Biomaterial-Based Scaffolding Strategies in Periodontal Regeneration

Figure 2 presents a schematic visualization of current biomaterial-based strategies utilized in periodontal regeneration. The illustration depicts a cross-sectional view of a periodontally affected tooth, emphasizing the spatial distribution of structural and inflammatory changes within the periodontium. Adjacent to the pathological site, the enlarged section introduces the principal scaffold systems currently applied in

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regenerative therapy: films, fibers, hydrogels, and 3D-printed scaffolds.

These biomaterial platforms have emerged as pivotal components of modern periodontal regenerative approaches, offering mechanical support, bioactivity, and spatial guidance for cellular and tissue growth. Films are often used as barriers to protect the regenerating site and as reservoirs for controlled drug delivery. Fibrous scaffolds, particularly those fabricated via electrospinning, are designed to mimic the architecture of the extracellular matrix, enhancing cellular infiltration and tissue integration. Hydrogels provide a highly hydrated environment favorable for encapsulating bioactive agents, growth factors, or stem cells, facilitating controlled release and cellular recruitment. Among the most advanced systems, 3D-printed scaffolds enable the fabrication of patient-specific constructs with precise architectural features, allowing for coordinated regeneration of alveolar bone, periodontal ligament, and cementum.

Together, these scaffolds represent an essential shift toward biofunctional materials that do not merely fill tissue voids but actively contribute to the biological orchestration of periodontal repair. Their integration into clinical and experimental workflows is reshaping the therapeutic landscape of periodontology, enabling more predictable and long-lasting treatment outcomes.

2.2. Growth Factors and Signaling Pathways

The use of growth factors to enhance periodontal regeneration has been extensively investigated. Platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF), transforming growth factor-β (TGF-β), bone morphogenetic proteins (BMPs), and fibroblast growth factor-2 (FGF-2) are among the most studied signaling molecules, each exerting specific effects on cellular proliferation, chemotaxis, and matrix synthesis [26,27].

For example, PDGF-BB has been shown to accelerate angiogenesis and fibroblast proliferation, while BMP-2 promotes osteogenic differentiation and bone matrix deposition [28]. These growth factors act through intracellular signaling cascades such as the MAPK, PI3K/Akt, and Smad pathways, which regulate transcriptional programs crucial for tissue regeneration [29].

Recombinant human growth factors (rhGFs) have been incorporated into scaffolds or applied directly to periodontal defects. Despite promising preclinical results, the clinical translation of growth factor-based therapies has been hampered by their short half-life, dose sensitivity, and potential for ectopic mineralization [30].

2.3. Inflammation and Immune Modulation

Inflammation is a double-edged sword in periodontal healing—it is necessary for tissue clearance and repair initiation but, if uncontrolled, can lead to fibrosis or further destruction of the periodontium [31]. Macrophages play a central role in this balance, with M1-like phenotypes contributing to pro-inflammatory responses and M2-like subsets promoting resolution and tissue regeneration [32].

Recent strategies aim to modulate the inflammatory microenvironment by delivering immunomodulatory molecules or by using cells preconditioned to promote anti-inflammatory effects. For instance, MSCs can exert immunosuppressive actions through paracrine signaling, including the secretion of IL-10 and TGF-β, which aid in transitioning the healing response from an inflammatory to a reparative phase [33,34].

The understanding of the immune-regenerative interface is expanding rapidly, offering new avenues for targeted therapies that synergize immune regulation with tissue repair [35].

3. Tissue Engineering Strategies in Periodontal Regeneration

3.1. Scaffolds for Guided Tissue Regeneration (GTR)

A foundational concept in periodontal regenerative therapy is the use of scaffolds to guide tissue growth and compartmentalize healing. These biomaterials serve as a physical framework to support cell attachment, migration, and ECM deposition while maintaining space for tissue ingrowth [36]. The ideal scaffold should be biocompatible, bioresorbable, and mechanically stable, and should allow vascular infiltration and controlled biodegradation in sync with tissue remodeling [37].

Traditional membranes used in GTR include non-resorbable materials such as expanded

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polytetrafluoroethylene (ePTFE) and resorbable collagen-based barriers. Recent developments in nanofiber technology and 3D printing have led to the creation of sophisticated, multilayered scaffolds with compartmentalized functions for bone, PDL, and cementum regeneration [38,39].

3.2. Functionalized and Bioactive Scaffolds

To enhance biological performance, scaffolds are increasingly being functionalized with bioactive molecules, including growth factors, antimicrobial agents, and peptides that mimic ECM components [40]. Incorporation of RGD peptides (arginine-glycine-aspartic acid) or other integrin-binding domains enhances cell adhesion and proliferation on synthetic matrices [41].

Moreover, controlled delivery of therapeutic agents from scaffolds is being achieved through smart hydrogels and microsphere-embedded constructs. These systems can release growth factors such as rhPDGF or BMP-2 in a temporally and spatially controlled manner, improving regenerative outcomes while minimizing systemic exposure and side effects [42,43].

Bioactive glasses, calcium phosphates, and graphene-based materials are also under exploration for their ability to promote osteoconductivity and angiogenesis in periodontal defects [44].

3.3. Cell-Based Constructs and Bioprinting

Cell-laden scaffolds represent the convergence of stem cell therapy and biomaterial science. Constructs seeded with autologous MSCs, periodontal ligament stem cells (PDLSCs), or iPSC-derived progenitors have shown promising results in regenerating complex periodontal structures in animal models [45].

Bioprinting technologies, including inkjet and extrusion-based printing, enable precise spatial distribution of cells, growth factors, and biomaterials to recapitulate the native architecture of the periodontium [46]. Although still largely experimental, such approaches could pave the way for patient-specific, anatomically tailored periodontal grafts in the future [47].

However, challenges related to cell viability during printing, vascularization of constructs, and immunogenicity must be overcome before these technologies reach clinical translation [48].

4. Emerging Biological Therapies

4.1. Gene Therapy in Periodontal Regeneration

Gene therapy has emerged as a promising strategy for enhancing regenerative outcomes by delivering specific genetic material to modulate cellular behavior directly at the periodontal defect site [49]. Viral and non-viral vectors have been employed to introduce genes encoding growth factors such as BMPs, PDGF-BB, and VEGF, leading to localized and sustained expression that promotes osteogenesis and angiogenesis [50].

Recent advancements in CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing offer precise genome manipulation to upregulate osteogenic genes or silence inflammatory mediators implicated in periodontitis-associated bone loss [51]. While still in preclinical stages, gene editing strategies open new frontiers for personalized, long-term regenerative approaches [52].

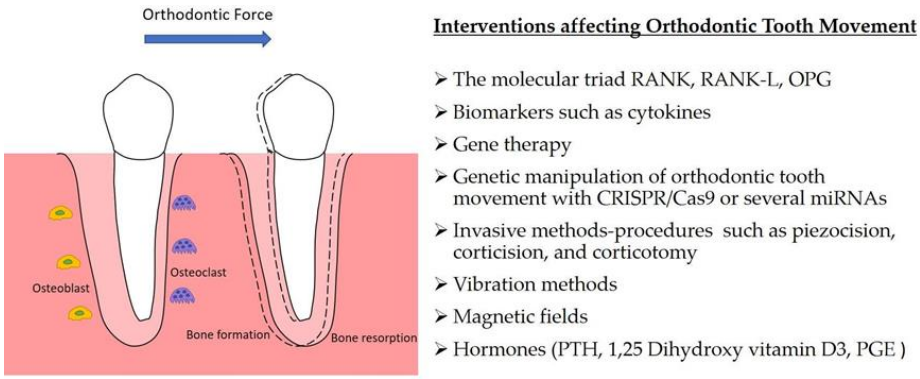

Figure 3. Orthodontic force-induced bone remodeling and therapeutic interventions to modulate tooth movement.

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The diagram illustrates the biological basis of orthodontic tooth movement, characterized by bone resorption on the pressure side and bone formation on the tension side. Interventions include modulation of the RANK/RANKL/OPG pathway, application of cytokines and hormones, as well as advanced techniques such as CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing, vibration therapy, magnetic fields, and piezocision. These approaches aim to accelerate or fine-tune bone remodeling during orthodontic or periodontal therapy.

4.2. RNA-Based Therapeutics

Short interfering RNA (siRNA) and microRNA (miRNA) technologies are gaining attention for their ability to regulate post-transcriptional gene expression. Delivery of miRNAs involved in osteogenesis, such as miR-21, miR-26a, and miR-200, has demonstrated promising results in promoting differentiation of periodontal ligament cells and inhibiting pro-inflammatory pathways [53,54].

Lipid nanoparticles, dendrimers, and hydrogel-based carriers are being used for the controlled release and stabilization of these RNA molecules in the hostile inflammatory environment of periodontal defects [55].

4.3. Immunomodulatory Approaches

Given the chronic inflammatory nature of periodontitis, immunomodulation plays a central role in facilitating regeneration. Biological agents such as monoclonal antibodies against TNF-α or IL-1β, and small molecule inhibitors of NF-κB, have been tested for their potential to reduce inflammation and create a permissive environment for healing [56].

Furthermore, emerging immunotherapeutic strategies aim to reprogram macrophage polarization from the pro-inflammatory M1 to the regenerative M2 phenotype, thereby enhancing resolution of inflammation and promoting matrix remodeling [57,58].

4.4. Exosome-Based Therapy

Extracellular vesicles, particularly exosomes derived from stem cells (e.g., MSCs and PDLSCs), are attracting considerable interest due to their paracrine regenerative capabilities [59]. These nano-sized vesicles contain a cargo of proteins, RNAs, and lipids that modulate recipient cell behavior, promoting angiogenesis, osteogenesis, and immune regulation [60].

Several studies have shown that application of stem cell-derived exosomes can significantly improve alveolar bone regeneration and reduce inflammatory cell infiltration in animal models of periodontal disease [61,62].

5. Clinical Advances and Translational Perspectives

5.1. Biomaterials in Clinical Periodontal Regeneration

The clinical use of advanced biomaterials has revolutionized periodontal regeneration. Biomaterials such as enamel matrix derivatives (EMD), platelet-rich fibrin (PRF), and bioactive ceramics are widely used in guided tissue regeneration (GTR) procedures to enhance cell attachment, migration, and differentiation [63,64]. These materials provide a biocompatible scaffold for tissue growth and often contain biologically active molecules that modulate local healing responses [65].

Biofunctionalized membranes loaded with growth factors or antibiotics are being investigated to improve outcomes in periodontally compromised patients, especially those with systemic conditions like diabetes mellitus [66].

5.2. Cell-Based Therapies in Human Trials

Clinical trials have demonstrated the potential of mesenchymal stem cell (MSC)-based therapies for regenerating periodontal tissues. Autologous and allogeneic MSCs derived from bone marrow, periodontal ligament, or gingiva have shown safety and efficacy in improving clinical attachment level (CAL) and bone fill in intrabony defects [67,68].

Studies have reported that stem cell sheets or cell-scaffold complexes can enhance integration and vascularization, resulting in better clinical and radiographic outcomes compared to conventional therapies [69]. However, standardization of isolation, expansion, and delivery methods remains a major barrier for widespread application [70].

5.3. Translational Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite promising preclinical and early clinical data, several challenges hinder the translation of regenerative

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therapies into routine clinical use. These include variability in patient responses, lack of long-term follow-up data, regulatory constraints, and high production costs of biologics and stem cell-based products [71,72].

To overcome these barriers, ongoing research is focusing on combining multiple strategies—such as gene therapy with biomaterials or stem cells with growth factors—in a synergistic manner. Personalized medicine approaches using patient-specific genomic, transcriptomic, and proteomic data may also help tailor regenerative protocols for optimal outcomes [73,74].

In parallel, advances in imaging and digital planning are allowing precise evaluation of periodontal defects and monitoring of healing responses, enhancing clinical decision-making and patient care [75].

6. Future Directions and Innovations

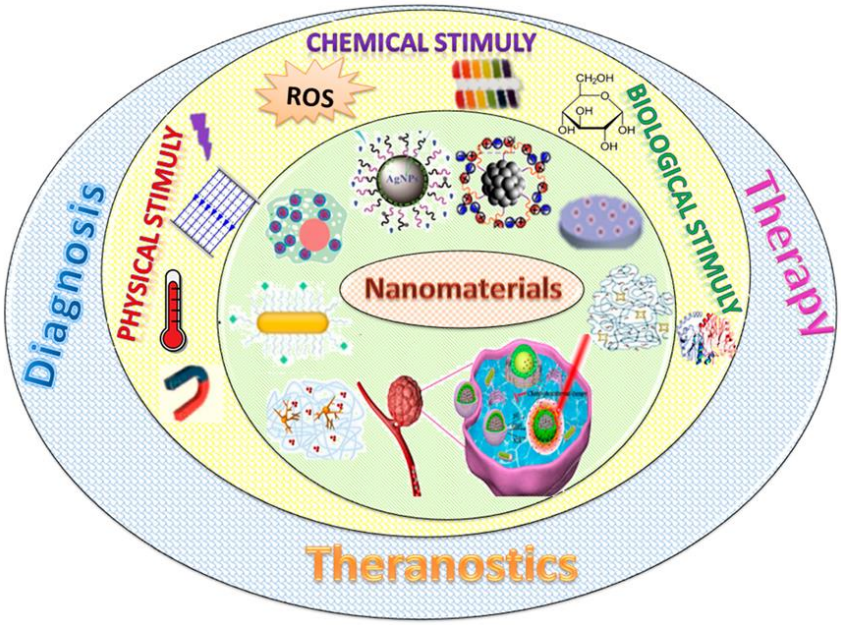

Figure 4. Multifunctional Nanomaterial-Based Theranostic Platforms for Periodontal Applications

This figure presents a comprehensive schematic representation of theranostic systems based on nanomaterials, illustrating their dual capability to simultaneously perform diagnostic and therapeutic functions in a synergistic manner. Positioned at the intersection of precision medicine and material science, these multifunctional platforms leverage a diverse array of physicochemical and biological stimuli to enhance both the specificity and efficacy of periodontal treatment modalities.

Within the central core of the illustration, various nanomaterials—including liposomes, dendrimers, metallic nanoparticles, polymeric micelles, and hybrid nanosystems—are shown as the primary agents of action. These carriers can be precisely engineered to respond to specific triggers present in the inflammatory or infected periodontal microenvironment. Surrounding this core, the diagram highlights the types of external and internal stimuli that can activate these systems:

Physical stimuli, such as temperature changes, magnetic fields, and ultrasound, enable remote control over the activation and release profiles of encapsulated agents.

Chemical stimuli, including pH variations and oxidative stress (e.g., ROS), allow site-specific drug release in the acidic and reactive environment of periodontal lesions.

Biological stimuli, such as enzyme levels or receptor-ligand interactions, provide molecular-level precision in targeting diseased tissues while sparing healthy cells.

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The integration of diagnostic imaging agents—like contrast agents for MRI or fluorophores for near-infrared imaging—within these nanoplatforms enables real-time monitoring of therapeutic progress and biomarker expression. This dual function supports the paradigm of **theranostics**, which seeks not only to treat, but also to dynamically track disease progression and response to therapy.

In periodontal regeneration, such platforms hold great promise for improving tissue specificity, reducing systemic side effects, enhancing cellular uptake, and accelerating wound healing. Additionally, by enabling **personalized treatment** strategies based on molecular profiling of the patient's pathology, these systems represent a frontier in precision periodontics and regenerative medicine.

This visualization underscores the potential of nanomedicine to transform classical periodontal therapy into a high-precision, data-driven clinical model that is responsive, adaptable, and significantly more effective in chronic inflammatory environments such as periodontitis.

6.1. Smart Biomaterials and Responsive Systems

The next generation of biomaterials is expected to be "smart" — capable of responding to the dynamic periodontal microenvironment. These materials can release bioactive agents in a controlled manner in response to stimuli such as pH, enzymatic activity, or mechanical stress [76]. For instance, pH-responsive hydrogels can release anti-inflammatory agents during active inflammation and growth factors during the healing phase, allowing temporal control of regeneration processes [77].

Additionally, nanostructured materials with surface modifications can enhance cellular interactions, promote angiogenesis, and mimic the native extracellular matrix, further improving integration and functionality in periodontal tissues [78].

6.2. Gene and RNA-Based Therapeutics

Emerging gene therapy strategies aim to locally deliver genes encoding regenerative growth factors (e.g., BMPs, PDGF) or anti-inflammatory cytokines using viral or non-viral vectors [79]. CRISPR/Cas9-based gene editing offers the potential to correct genetic deficiencies that impair tissue regeneration or modulate host response pathways involved in periodontitis [80].

Furthermore, RNA-based approaches such as small interfering RNA (siRNA) and microRNA (miRNA) mimics or inhibitors are being explored to silence genes that inhibit healing or promote tissue destruction [81]. These therapies could be incorporated into scaffolds or nanoparticles for localized, targeted delivery.

6.3. Organoids and 3D Bioprinting

Organoids and tissue-engineered periodontal models are being developed to better understand disease mechanisms and test regenerative therapies ex vivo. These systems recapitulate the complex architecture of periodontal tissues and provide valuable platforms for drug screening and mechanistic studies [82].

3D bioprinting technology allows precise fabrication of multi-layered scaffolds that mimic the periodontal complex (bone, ligament, cementum), enabling spatial control of cell placement and material composition [83]. This technology holds promise for custom-designed regenerative constructs tailored to individual defect morphology.

6.4. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technologies

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) algorithms are increasingly being used to predict disease progression, treatment outcomes, and personalize regenerative protocols [84]. AI can integrate clinical, radiographic, and molecular data to support evidence-based decision-making.

Digital tools such as cone-beam computed tomography (CBCT), intraoral scanning, and computer-aided design/manufacturing (CAD/CAM) facilitate precise diagnosis, planning, and execution of regenerative procedures [85].

Conclusion

Periodontal regeneration has evolved from traditional mechanical and surgical methods to a sophisticated interdisciplinary field that integrates advances in molecular biology, material science, biotechnology, and digital innovation. Despite considerable challenges in fully restoring the intricate architecture and function of the periodontium, modern strategies offer promising

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avenues to address both hard and soft tissue loss associated with periodontitis.

Key advancements include the development of bioactive scaffolds, cell-based therapies, and gene/RNA-targeted approaches that aim to modulate the host response, stimulate tissue regeneration, and restore immune balance. Biomimetic and smart materials now allow more dynamic interactions with the local microenvironment, while growth factor delivery systems and stem cell-based platforms continue to show encouraging results in both preclinical and clinical settings.

The integration of nanotechnology, 3D bioprinting, and AI-powered diagnostics has further personalized and refined regenerative therapies, enabling a more patient-specific approach to treatment planning. These tools not only improve precision and predictability but also contribute to the development of customized biomaterials and digitally fabricated scaffolds that better mimic the natural periodontium.

Nonetheless, translating laboratory innovations into standardized clinical practice requires overcoming several hurdles. These include the need for long-term clinical trials, regulatory approvals, manufacturing scalability, and cost-effectiveness. Ethical considerations in the application of genetic and stem cell-based therapies must also be carefully navigated.

In summary, the future of periodontal regeneration lies in the convergence of biology-driven innovation and technology-enabled precision medicine. As research progresses, a multidisciplinary and translational approach will be essential to unlock the full therapeutic potential of emerging regenerative strategies and bring meaningful improvements to patient outcomes.

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