How monoclonal antibodies work: Mechanisms, applications, and future prospects.

Lingwen Xiang*

Center of Translational Medicine, Zibo Central Hospital Affiliated to Binzhou Medical University, China

Introduction

Monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) have revolutionized medicine, offering precise and effective treatments for various diseases, including cancer, autoimmune disorders, and infectious diseases. These laboratory-engineered molecules mimic the immune system's natural defense mechanisms, providing targeted therapy with fewer side effects than traditional treatments [1].

This article explores the mechanisms of monoclonal antibodies, their diverse applications, and future developments that will further enhance their therapeutic potential. Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-produced molecules designed to recognize and bind to a specific antigen. Unlike polyclonal antibodies, which are produced from different immune cells and target multiple epitopes, mAbs are derived from a single clone of B cells and target a single epitope, ensuring high specificity [2].

The development of mAbs involves several key steps: A target antigen (e.g., a cancer cell marker) is chosen. B cells from an immunized animal are fused with myeloma cells to create hybridomas, which continuously produce antibodies. The most effective hybridoma is selected and cloned [3].

Antibodies are produced in bioreactors and purified for medical use. Monoclonal antibodies exert their effects through various mechanisms: mAbs bind to pathogens or toxins, preventing their interaction with host cells. Example: Palivizumab neutralizes respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) [4].

Some mAbs block receptors on cells, inhibiting disease processes. Example: Cetuximab blocks the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) in cancer. mAbs tag infected or cancerous cells for destruction by immune cells. Example: Rituximab (anti-CD20) in lymphoma [5].

Some mAbs trigger the complement system, leading to cell lysis. Example: Alemtuzumab in leukemia. Checkpoint inhibitors restore T-cell activity against cancer. Example: Pembrolizumab (anti-PD-1). Monoclonal antibodies have transformed oncology by targeting cancer-specific markers: Trastuzumab binds HER2, blocking growth signals [6].

Rituximab (CD20), Daratumumab (CD38) for multiple myeloma. Nivolumab (PD-1), Ipilimumab (CTLA-4) enhance anti-tumor immunity. mAbs help modulate overactive immune responses in conditions like: Adalimumab (TNF-α inhibitor) reduces inflammation [7].

Ocrelizumab (anti-CD20) targets B cells. Infliximab suppresses inflammation in Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. Monoclonal antibodies are valuable in combating infectious diseases: Casirivimab and Imdevimab neutralize SARS-CoV-2 [8].

Broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs) target conserved viral regions. Inmazeb (three-antibody cocktail) improves survival. Monoclonal antibodies help prevent organ rejection: Reduces T-cell activation in kidney transplants. Induces immunosuppression for graft survival [9].

Emerging applications of mAbs in neurology include: Aducanumab targets amyloid plaques. Erenumab blocks CGRP receptors. Simultaneously target two antigens, improving efficacy. Link cytotoxic drugs to mAbs for targeted chemotherapy. Precision medicine ensures patients receive the most effective mAb therapy [10].

Conclusion

Monoclonal antibodies have revolutionized medicine by providing highly targeted therapies with improved efficacy and safety. Their applications span cancer, autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases, and neurological disorders. Advances in engineering, personalized medicine, and cost reduction will further expand their impact, making monoclonal antibodies a cornerstone of modern therapeutics.

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***Correspondence to:** Lingwen Xiang, Center of Translational Medicine, Zibo Central Hospital Affiliated to Binzhou Medical University, China. E-mail: l.xiang@bjmu.edu.cn

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