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Recent Advances in 3D Bioprinting and Biofabrication

Fariha Javaid[1*], Malik Hammad Ul Hassan[3], Eman Naveed Butt[2], Fariha Shafique[2], Abdul Hassan Khan[4] and Rabia Pervaiz[2]

[1]School of Biochemistry and Biotechnology, University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
[2]Department of Biotechnology, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
[3]Department of Science, The City College of New York, New York, United States
[4]Department of Pharmaceutics, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan

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***Corresponding Author:**
Fariha Javaid
School of Biochemistry and Biotechnology, University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
javaid.fariha@hotmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Biomedical technology has gone beyond the limit due to the 3D bioprinting and biofabrication, to create a new regenerative medicine. To explore the advancements in biomedical technology through 3D bioprinting and biofabrication, with a focus on their applications in regenerative medicine and the development of functional tissue and organ constructs. This paper reviewed key bioprinting technologies, bioink components, and advanced biofabrication strategies including nanomaterials and organoid-based methods. The review highlights tissue engineering potential and challenges in biofabrication, emphasizing emerging solutions like 4D bioprinting, organ-on-chip systems, and AI integration. Translating bioprinting advances into clinical therapies demands interdisciplinary collaboration and integration of emerging technologies to overcome current barriers.

INTRODUCTION

The exponential growth of medical technology has pushed and pulled the industry into the development of tools and applications not previously available before. 3D bioprinting and biofabrication are the stand-out sectors, which unlike other medical procedures, have the potential to upend the patients' health care system by driving solutions to the most challenging problems, i.e., the scarcity of organs, damage to the tissues, and finally, the drug production bottleneck [1]. 3D bioprinting is an advanced additive manufacturing technique that precisely layers bioinks comprising living cells and biomaterials to create functional, customized biological structures [2]. At the same time, the technological process of biofabrication encompasses those ways and means that lead to the production of cells and tissues. For instance, the use of cells that can replicate themselves, scaffold-based fabrication, and the use of organ-on-chip systems are some of the methods by which something like biofabrication takes place. The main objective of the biofabrication process is to engineer the living systems in an ordered way and within the construct in a way suitable for the particular requirements such as restoration, replacement, or enhancement [3]. 3D bioprinting was first reported in the literature in the 2000s when the technology was used to deposit cells precisely. Currently, the field is characterized by a good trend and is driven by the combination of many technologies and associated sciences such as materials science, microengineering,

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cellular biology, and digital design. At present, 3D bioprinting is not only a concept, it is a dynamic component of the process of regenerative medicine and pharmaceutics, the clinical safety testing of some products, and particularly space biology, with its RandD cycle [4]. The impressive steps that have been made in biomedicine are largely indebted to breakthroughs in fields such as 3D bioprinting and biofabrication that have been made in materials science, robotics, Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) that support it. The new trends depict the fact that the systems may become complex and that the human factor is no longer needed except in the case of some systems, as things that were once just figments of the imagination have now become possible such as multi-material bioprinters that are capable of creating tissues with numerous cell types as well as vascular networks and AI algorithms that manage to make the printer at the same time optimise the parameters of the print and maintain in real-time cell viability and the fidelity of the structure [5]. As technology becomes more sophisticated and printer and fabrication materials advance, it reveals to us that we are one step nearer to the big accomplishment: changing the situation where we only need the machines instead of the organs. Although there are still quite a number of issues in the spheres of science, technology, ethics, and legislation, the trend is unstoppable. 3D bioprinting and biofabrication is the area that not only changes how doctors treat patients but also changes the understanding of life [3]. Among the core technologies used in 3D bioprinting are different printing procedures, materials used, and their different application scopes. Inkjet bioprinting, laser-assisted bioprinting, microextrusion bioprinting, and stereolithography-based bioprinting are the four most prominent of them. Each technology greatly affects the formation and structure of living cells and biomaterials in the 3D biological constructions [5]. Inkjet bioprinting is one of the oldest methods in bioprinting, and it is referred to as a biological application. It uses the action of ejecting bioink droplets directly to a substrate [6]. On the other hand, Laser-Assisted Bioprinting (LAB) is a method that mimics the working principle of an inkjet printer [7]. The high cell viability that LAB continues to offer is due to its gentle, non-contact nature. However, LAB is very complex and expensive and it must be under a strict alignment and calibration regime. The need for laser-based equipment is limiting for its availability and expandability, particularly in the case of large-volume tissue fabrication. Even so, LAB plays an irreplaceable part in scientific research that requires extreme precision to get the bioinks moving and is very delicate and sensitive, such as the printing of vascular networks or neural tissues [8, 9]. The stereolithography (SLA)-based bioprinting technique also offers very precise printing. In this instance, the process of photopolymerization is instrumental in the solidification of the bioink through the use of light, typically ultraviolet (UV) or visible light. geometries [10]. For example in Digital Light Processing (DLP), the method displays the complete image of a single layer of the image at once to quicken the process, by forming an image of the layer with directed light. Comparison of different types of bioprinter is shown in table 1 [11].

Table 1: Types of Advanced Bioprinting Techniques

Technology	Resolution	Bioink Viscosity	Cell Viability	Cost	Best For
Inkjet	High	Low	Moderate	Low	Patterning, Drug Screening
Laser-Assisted	Very High	High	High	High	Vascular Structures, Precise Tissues
Micro-extrusion	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	Large, Load-Bearing Tissues
Stereo-lithography	Very High	Low-Medium	Moderate-High	Moderate-High	Microstructures, Scaffold Fabrication

Bioinks: The Living "Ink" Behind Bioprinting

In the world of 3D bioprinting, bioinks are the essential players having a central part in converting digitalized print designs into living, functional biological materials [12, 13].

Non-Natural vs. Synthetic Bioinks

The classification of bioinks may be done in a general way into natural and synthetic types, and each of these types has its advantages as well as problems [14].

Table 2: Comparison of Natural Bioinks and Synthetic Bioinks

Property	Natural Bioinks	Synthetic Bioinks
Source	Biologically derived (e.g., collagen, gelatin)	Engineered materials (e.g., PEG, PLGA)
Biocompatibility	High	Variable (require functionalization)
Mechanical Strength	Low	High (tunable)
Cell adhesion	Excellent	Poor without modifications
Reproducibility	Low (batch variability)	High
Customized potential	Limited	High

New Trends in Bioink Development

The field of bioink development has been experiencing rapid advancements with a number of novel tendencies that can elevate the standards of not just technical but also biological beauty [15].

Biofabrication Strategies and Techniques

Biofabrication is a process that uses cells, biomaterials, and bioactive molecules to create a biologically functional product in a more precise way [16]. Illustration of components of bioink is represented in Figure 1.

Scaffold-Based vs. Scaffold-Free Approaches

The first and most significant choice one has to make in biofabrication is whether they should proceed with scaffold-based or scaffold-free methods. First, we can speak about the former which are the scaffold-based methods and imply using materials that are bioabsorbable and which act as the structure that the cells can adhere to

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and which also controls the growth and establishes the tissue[15, 16].

Self-Assembly and Cell-Sheet Engineering

The method is a great scaffold-free process which involves the use of cells that are able to organize themselves into specific forms just by the help of cell-to-cell communication and mechanical interactions [17, 18]. Cell-sheet engineering, on the other hand, is a highly clever approach to the task of forming 3D tissue[19].

Layer-by-Layer Fabrication

Layer-By-Layer (LbL) fabrication is the basis of 3D bioprinting and implies the successive application of cell-laden bioinks or biomaterials to produce tissue constructs from the ground up[20].

Organoid and Spheroid-Based Methods

Organoid and spheroid-based biofabrication, which is now just emerging, represents a change in paradigm, moving to more biomimetic and functionally relevant tissue models [21, 22].

Vascularization and Multicellular Complexity

The most difficult problem in 3D bioprinting and biofabrication which people are struggling to meet is the perfect vascularization and the inclusion of several cell types in a single tissue[23].

Challenges in Vascular Network Printing

Human vascular system is extremely complex and comprises large arteries, small arterioles, and microcapillaries that penetrate each tissue [24]. Furthermore, the vascular channels that are printed should be easily connected to the vascular system of the patient after the implant[25].

Bioprinting Vessels and Microcapillaries

For all the challenges presented here, the world of researchers has come up with a variety of approaches which can be considered breakthroughs in the sphere of the bioprinting of blood vessels and biological microorganisms [23]. The other ways that are available include the use of coaxial extrusion in which bioink containing endothelial cells is co-extruded with a protecting layer to form directly tubular tissue structures that are vasculature[26].

Integrating Multiple Cell Types and Tissues

Biological tissues, as part of their nature, are heterogeneous because they contain different cell types that perform specific functions[27].

Integration of 4D Bioprinting

3D bioprinting is an area of research that is constantly developing. Today, scientists are looking into the next step in the bioprinting process, which is 4D bioprinting[28].

What is 4D Bioprinting?

4D bioprinting describes the production of vibrant constructs that can change their 3D status according to a timing schedule when having contact with a selected group of items such as temperature, pH, light, water, or enzymatic energy[29].

Time-Responsive and Stimuli-Sensitive Bioinks

The driving force of 4D bioprinting is the materials that are time responsive to the triggers bioinks. These are intelligent materials to where some sort of external factors apply for a specific attribute of the substance to be modified. This one alters mechanically, while another one swells, contracts etc. [6]. Some 4D bioinks are also designed in such a way that they can communicate with the cells in a biologically smart way, where they may release the growth factors or change stiffness as cells divide and differentiate[19].

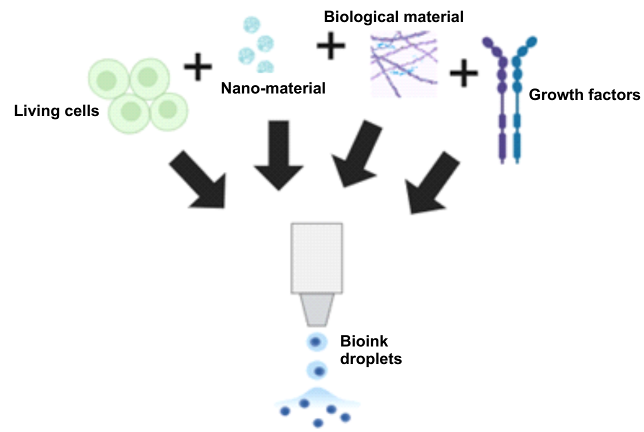

Figure 1: Breakdown of Components of Bioink

Applications in Dynamic Tissue Structures

4D bioprinting has a huge array of potential applications, especially in areas where innovative, smart, interactive tissues are required [30]. Furthermore, the new application of 4D bioprinted tissues is seen in organ-on-chip technologies and drug screening platforms, where the tissues can be stimulated dynamically to mimic temperature changes, come up with predetermined responses and maintain the self of the tissue under pressure, i.e., barrier integrity[31].

Microfluidics and Organ-on-Chip Technology

Microfluidics and organ-on-chip technology are the driving forces behind the convergence of bioengineering, medicine, and bioprinting[32].

Role in Drug Testing and Disease Modeling

One of the biggest breakthrough in the application of organ-on-chip devices is their role in the reduction or replacement of animal experiments conducted in the development of new drugs [33]. Furthermore, these research tools provide a great potential for the study of complex and highly prevalent diseases, such as cancer, neurodegeneration, and cardiovascular diseases, in a more controlled and adjustable environment[34].

Combining 3D Bioprinting with Microfluidic Chips

The congruence of 3D bioprinting with microfluidic systems demonstrates a quantum leap in the field of biofabrication [35]. One scenario is the bio-printing of endothelial cells within micro-scale channels, which not only enables the creation of a realistic vascular network but also avoids the growth of non-targeted tissues[36].

Realistic Physiological Environments

Organ-on-chip systems have the aim of imitating the mechanical stimulation that is found in organs besides static tissue models, and those examples are included, stretching (Physiologically speaking, lungs), electrical stimulation(Physiologically speaking, the heart), and cyclic pressure(Physiologically speaking, vascular systems)[28].

Artificial Intelligence and Computational Modeling

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and computational modeling are rapidly changing the face of bioprinting, thus offering predictive analytics, automation, and real-time adaptiveness. With 3D and 4D bioprinting technologies reaching a certain level of sophistication, the necessity to handle, interpret, and optimize the vast amount of data in the biofabrication process also increases. AI is actually a certain bioprinting process that provides it with the possibility to quickly, rightly, and precisely carry out the tasks[37].

AI for Optimizing Printability and Cell Viability

Bioprinting is about correlation of material properties, biological parameters, and environmental conditions to actualize the concept[38]. What's more, profound learning software is enabled to instantly examine the imaging data as soon as printing is in progress, and regulate the proper alignment and structure of layers[39].

Predictive Tissue Growth Models

Simulation of the experimental condition reveals how cells will go through the stages of proliferation, differentiation, migration, and organization from simple tissue constructions to mature structures[40].

Artificial Intelligence for Real-Time Error Correction

In the highest level of bioprinting technology, AI also takes part in the building of the systems. The AI-driven system integrates into the machine to track the printing process to monitor the process in real-time [41]. The feedback from high-resolution cameras and sensors gets processed by neural networks which will automatically identify any deviations from the desired printed images [42]. This live feedback loop also not only enhances the success chances of the printing but also assures the reproducibility of the bioprinted tissues' high quality[43].

Challenges and future prospects

Despite the significant impact that 3D bioprinting and biofabrication can have on the industry, the field still faces a lot of difficulties, which impede the full-fledged clinical translation [20]. The factors that are currently limiting the print resolution in the technologies, together with the problems in the attachment of the smaller vessels and the creation of the larger tissue with the vascular hierarchy, are now beyond the scope of the solution [44]. The other part of the issue comes from a situation of the need for a bioink that addresses multiple cell types in a spatial manner as they are in the natural tissues but is also at least a step further in terms of the processing of the biosystem [45]. In addition to the above, the ability of 4D bioprinting where the constructs exhibit self-adaptive and regenerative behavior when subjected to environmental changes will create new opportunities in the biomedical field[46].

CONCLUSION

3D bioprinting and biofabrication have significantly advanced regenerative medicine by addressing critical healthcare challenges like organ shortages and tissue damage. Despite progress, hurdles remain in vascularization, multicellular integration, and long-term biocompatibility. Emerging technologies like 4D bioprinting, organ-on-chip systems, and AI are paving the way for smarter, patient-specific tissue engineering solutions.

Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: FJ
Methodology: MHUH
Formal analysis: ENB
Writing, review and editing: FS, AHK, RP

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

All the authors declare no conflict of interest.

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