

Innovations

Review article

The Clinical Benefits of Triclosan in Dentistry

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Abstract

Triclosan (TCS), the antimicrobial agent is incorporated into various healthcare products like dentifrices, mouthwash, hand soaps and antiseptics. In dentistry, triclosan is recommended to prevent caries, periodontal diseases, peri-implantitis and halitosis. TCS has short physiological half-life and it is rapidly absorbed, metabolized, and eliminated from the body. TCS is metabolized by phase II enzymes to glucuronide and sulfate conjugates. TCS blocks the active site of enoyl reductase enzyme in bacteria and thereby inhibits bacterial growth. TCS has prominent anti-inflammatory properties which account for its anti-gingivitis action. Triclosan-containing dentifrice may be beneficial for the modulation of osteo-immunoinflammatory response around implants by reducing the levels of RANKL/OPG, which could represent a method to prevent peri-implant mucositis. Research indicated that overuse of triclosan may contribute to the development of resistant microbes. The present review about TCS highlights the dental uses of triclosan, its antimicrobial resistance, safety, adverse effects and toxicity.

Keywords: 1. Antigingivitis, 2. Dentifrices, 3. Dental caries, 4. Mouthwash, 5. Triclosan

Introduction

Triclosan (TCS), 5-chloro-2-(2,4-dichlorophenoxy) phenol is a synthetic, organic, nonionic, white powder that possesses functional groups for both phenol and ether. It is a broad-spectrum antimicrobial agent and hence gained vast popularity in various healthcare products. Triclosan is regulated by both the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).¹ Triclosan is taken into account as an over-the-counter medicine to be used in hand soaps, toothpaste, deodorants, detergent, antiseptics for wound care and medical devices. TCS is used as an active ingredient in oral hygiene products in Europe and United States since 1980s and 1990s respectively.^{2,3} In dentistry, triclosan is recommended to prevent caries, gingivitis, halitosis and is also used in sutures to prevent intraoral infections after surgical procedures.

Pharmacokinetics

TCS has short physiological half-life and it is rapidly absorbed, metabolized, and eliminated from the body.⁴TCS reaches the circulation by rapid absorption through the skin and mucous membranes of the oral cavity and alimentary tract. Plasma levels of TCS increase rapidly following the use of TCS incorporated mouth rinses or dentifrices. After swallowing a single oral dose of 4 mg of triclosan mouthwash, plasma TCS levels reach a maximum concentration within 1 to 3 hours. The terminal plasma half-life after oral exposure was 21 hours.⁵ Oral rinsing with 15 ml of 0.03% TCS incorporated mouth rinse for 30 seconds twice daily resulted in total mean plasma levels of 0.26–0.33 Mm.⁶

On exposure to mouthrinse containing 0.03% triclosan, the average daily oral retention of triclosan was calculated to be 0.660 mg, which is 7.33% of the TCS dose applied. Dental plaque contained approximately 20.5–46.4 microgram of TCS per gram of plaque collected. Interestingly, few studies reported the retention of TCS in the oral mucosa and it was 4–13% with 0.03% TCS⁶ mouth rinse and 25% with 0.2% TCS-containing toothpaste.⁷ Dentifrices that contain 0.3% TCS, possibly leads to even higher oral retention.

TCS is extensively distributed in tissues and crosses the blood–brain barrier to reach the brain.⁸ Triclosan has been detected in human breast milk, blood, and urine samples. Liver has been reported to have the highest concentration of TCS when various samples were analyzed after exposure to TCS. The next organ with highest concentration is adipose tissue followed by the brain with the lowest TCS concentration⁸.

Metabolism of triclosan

TCS gets metabolized in the liver primarily by however a small amount of TCS was metabolized in skin. TCS is metabolized by phase II enzymes to glucuronide and sulfate conjugates. Glucuronate conjugation predominates in humans and the mean plasma concentration for TCS-glucuronide was 220–300 μM and for TCS-sulfate was 0.028–0.062 μM after 21 days of using an oral rinse containing 4.5 mg TCS.⁹ A decrease in TCS cytotoxicity with a rise in glucuronidation and sulfonation metabolism of TCS was reported.¹⁰ induces cytochrome P450 in rat hepatic microsomes, the enzymes responsible for its metabolism.¹¹ These hydrophilic conjugates of TCS reduce the bioaccumulation of TCS.

The primary mode of elimination of TCS is urinary excretion and fecal elimination is the secondary route.¹² The median excretion half-life is 11 hours after oral intake.

Mechanism of action

Triclosan is operative against both gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria. The primary site of triclosan's antimicrobial action is the bacterial cytoplasmic membrane.² TCS blocks lipid biosynthesis in bacteria by inhibiting the active site of enoyl reductase enzyme (ENR). This is a key enzyme required for synthesizing fatty acids to build bacterial cell membranes. As a result, cell membranes are not properly produced and bacterial proliferation stops. Therefore, only a small TCS dose is required to inhibit bacterial growth.¹³

A single molecule of triclosan can permanently disable an ENR molecule, and hence even small dose of TCS effectively hinders bacterial growth. Triclosan impairs essential amino acid uptake at bacteriostatic concentrations whereas it damages the cytoplasmic membrane and causes leakage of cellular contents at bactericidal concentrations.

Antimicrobial resistance

Research indicated that overuse of triclosan may contribute to the development of resistant microbes.¹⁴ The mechanism of microbial resistance to TCS can be attributed to: (1) overproduction of targets/amplification or (2) modification of target.² Interestingly, the bacterial gene that produces ENR can mutate, giving rise to triclosan-resistant strains of bacteria. The membrane impermeability and efflux mechanisms account for the insusceptibility of *E. coli* isolates to TCS.¹⁵ Additionally, overexpression of the TCS target enzyme enoyl reductase in *E. coli* can be attributed to the resistance. TCS exposure resulted in induction of expression of an efflux pump in *P. aeruginosa* leading to high-level resistance to TCS and ciprofloxacin. The nonsusceptibility of enoyl reductase and outer membrane permeability barrier are the factors attributed to the intrinsic resistance of *P. aeruginosa* to TCS.^{16,17} TCS resistance in laboratory experiments has revealed changes in antibiotic susceptibility, however, comprehensive environmental investigations have not yet clearly established any relationship between TCS usage and antibiotic resistance.

Anti-inflammatory properties

TCS is a modulator of both immune and inflammatory reactions and data from in vitro and in vivo studies indicated that TCS is an immunosuppressive agent. The anti-inflammatory properties of TCS were very well established in in vitro studies. TCS was also shown to suppress a wider range of inflammatory mediators including IL-1 β -induced prostaglandin I₂ (PGI₂), arachidonic acid, cyclooxygenase-1 and 2, tumor necrosis factor (TNF) α -induced PGE₂, phospholipase A₂ (PLA₂).^{18,19} Multiple inflammatory mediators induced by lipopolysaccharide like IL-1 & IL-6, interferons (IFN), and colony stimulating factor 2 were also inhibited by TCS.¹³

Mustafa et al. identified IL-1 β , IFN γ , major histocompatibility complex (MHC) class II, and PGE synthase- 1, as targets of TCS in human gingival fibroblasts.²⁰ Moreover, in primary human oral epithelial cells, TCS attenuated LPS-induced cytokine response including IL-8, IL-1 α , and TNF α and also exhibits antimicrobial response, which was mediated through microRNA (miRNA) regulation of the toll-like receptor (TLR) pathway.²¹ TCS stimulated miR146a and inhibited miR155s and thereby abrogated LPS-induced TLR response. TCS reduces the capacity of natural killer lymphocytes to lyse chronic myelogenous leukemia K562 cells.²²

An in vitro study reported that when IL-1 β was increased to 200 pg/ml from 50 pg/ml, 1 μ g/ml of TCS blocked a significant elevation in PGE₂.²³ In another study, triclosan was shown to inhibit TNF-induced PGE₂ production.²⁴ TCS inhibited the MHC in macrophages, as well as hindered the production and secretion of proteases by human bone and fibroblastic cells when stimulated by IL-1 β or TNF- α . In whole blood leukocytes, TCS downregulated the expression of NF- κ B-inducing kinase and C-jun, which was responsible for the overall blunted inflammatory response to LPS.²⁵

Safety

The approved concentration of TCS for topical administration and use in oral medications is 0.3 % (w/w) and 0.03 % (w/w) respectively. Triclosan at concentrations of 0.2% to 2% has antimicrobial activity and is incorporated into soaps and other consumer goods. As per FDA recommendation, up to 1% TCS is permitted for use in antiseptic washes and surgical hand scrubs.²

Dental uses

DeSalva, Kong Lin reviewed the toxicological information on triclosan and reported that it can be safely utilised in oral products.²⁶ TCS is incorporated into oral products as it is active against most of the oral bacteria and has a good record of safe use in consumer products. Studies demonstrated that the combined effect of fluoride dentifrice containing triclosan and the polyvinylmethyl ether/maleic acid (PVM/MA) copolymer had a greater uptake of TCS by enamel and buccal epithelial cells than from a dentifrice containing triclosan alone.

Colgate Total Toothpaste is one of the commercially available toothpastes and its antigingivitis effect results from the combined antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties of triclosan.²⁷ TCS, when applied intracrevicularly, improved clinical parameters of gingivitis.²⁸ Data revealed that the use of triclosan/copolymer-toothpaste significantly slowed the progression of periodontitis in patients with cardiovascular disease but that it had limited influence on key subgingival periodontal pathogens in these cohorts suggesting that the clinical efficacy may be the result of a local anti-inflammatory effect.²⁹ In a 6-month study with the application of 0.3% triclosan/2% copolymer twice a day, a reduction in plaque deposition and bleeding as well as over a 90% reduction in anaerobic bacteria such as *Aggregatibacter actinomycetemcomitans*, *Fusobacterium nucleatum*, and *Porphyromonas gingivalis* in the gingival pockets around the implants was observed.³⁰

There are numerous trials that studied the effects of triclosan dentifrice on plaque control, anti-gingivitis action, dental caries, oral malodor, plaque microflora, stain removal and periodontitis. The oral health benefits following the use of 0.3% triclosan and 2.0% PVM/MA copolymer in a fluoride base dentifrice in comparison to a placebo dentifrice has been assessed in several clinical trials (Table 1)

The combination of chitosan/collagen (1:1 v/v) and 0.1% triclosan as matrix exhibited the highest antimicrobial effect against *S. aureus*. Moreover, cytotoxicity was absent at 24-h incubation with fibroblast cells.⁷⁴ It can be potentially used to prevent infections and avoid antibiotic therapy after dental extraction and needs to be validated in clinical trials.

TCS in resin composites

The resin composites incorporated with triclosan methacrylate could greatly reduce the bacterial adhesion of *S. mutans* and biofilm formation. There is no cytotoxic effect with the use of this resin. The surface hardness and roughness of this experimental composite before and after brushing, was not significantly affected.⁷⁵ Sorption, solubility and diametral tensile strength of the material were maintained, hence it is a promising dental resin with intrinsic antibacterial action.⁷⁶ This resin composite might prevent the secondary caries along the margins of the restorations; however, should be clarified in vivo experiments for clinical application in the future.

Triclosan in Nanodentistry

In an attempt to obtain a novel drug delivery system, Pinon-segundo et al developed triclosan-loaded nanoparticles by the process of emulsification-diffusion. Intrapocket drug delivery of TCS nanoparticles were able to reduce gingival inflammation for the treatment of periodontal disease.⁷⁷ Chitosan based nanogel system with triclosan and flurbiprofen had anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory activity and it was observed

that it had excellent therapeutic outcomes on experimental periodontitis in rats.⁷⁷Triclosan when encapsulated into the dendrimer results in its solubilization and slow release of the drug with improved efficacy. Halloysite nanotubes which delivers bioactive components has been tried as drug delivery system with triclosan in dental resins for restoration.^{78,79}

TCS in intracanal medication

The minimum bactericidal concentrations (MBC) of triclosan and triclosan with Gantrez® against *P. intermedia*, *F. nucleatum*, *A. naeslundii*, *P. gingivalis*, and *E. faecalis* were determined by Nudera et al.⁸⁰The MBC of triclosan was found to be between 12 and 94 g/ml whereas it ranged from 0.3 to 10.4 g/ml for Gantrez®. Gantrez® increases the triclosan's bactericidal activity and was found to be effective against the five endodontic pathogens studied. TCS with or without the addition of the copolymer Gantrez might emerge as a valuable antimicrobial agent for use in endodontic treatment as an irrigating solution or intracanal medication.

TCS in sutures

Triclosan coated antibacterial sutures are effective against periopathogens like *S. mutans*, *F. nucleatum*, *A. actinomycetemcomitans*, *P. intermedia*, and *P. gingivalis*. Triclosan is effective in significantly reducing the bacterial adherence to suture material which can decrease the intraoral infection and morbidity.⁸¹Triclosan-coated suture showed substantial reduction in biofilm formation in comparison to plain uncoated suture. This effect of triclosan has been confirmed in a meta-analysis which has demonstrated that triclosan-coated sutures significantly reduced the risk of site specific infection in clean and contaminated surgery. Interestingly, triclosan-coated Vicryl sutures did not decrease the incidence of surgical site infection in dental implant surgery.⁸²Further TCS coated sutures need to be assessed for their cost effectiveness of implementing the use of these sutures.

TCS in peri-implantitis

The regular use of triclosan-containing dentifrice improved dental implant maintenance by reducing dental plaque and peri-implant bleeding.⁸³It was found to be effective at decreasing the clinical signs of inflammation of peri-implant mucositis.⁸⁴Studies have demonstrated the favorable value of triclosan/ fluoride toothpaste in the decline of bleeding around both teeth and implants when compared to fluoride dentifrices in non-smokers.^{83,84}Riberio et al indicated that there was an up-regulation of IL-10, an anti-inflammatory biomarker in peri-implant fluid when implant sites in non-smokers.⁸⁵

Triclosan dentifrice modulates the host response by inhibiting proinflammatory local mediators such as IFN- γ , IL-6, PGE2 and IL-1 β involved in peri-implant lesions.²⁵Data from investigations performed in non-smokers, showed that OPG was significantly increased in triclosan-treated implants. Osteoclastogenesis inhibitory factor such as bone morphogenetic protein BMP2 and BMP6 were up-regulated by triclosan treatment,²⁵ reinforcing the hypothesis that triclosan may interfere with the levels of specific osteo-inflammatory mediators. A triclosan-containing dentifrice may be beneficial for the modulation of osteo-immunoinflammatory response around implants in smokers, by reducing the levels of RANKL/OPG, which could represent a method to prevent peri-implant mucositis.⁸⁵

Toxicity

There is a hypothesis that TCS induces the production of chloroform, a known human carcinogen. However, when toothpaste containing TCS is used, studies showed that there was no measurable quantities of

chloroform formed.⁸⁶A correlation between increased ROS and elevated TCS concentrations in human urine samples indicated that TCS enhanced ROS production in humans.⁸⁷TCS elevated proinflammatory cytokine expression of TNF- α and IL-6 in mouse liver.⁸⁸ Certain in vitro studies suggested that TCS promotes cancer⁸⁹In mouse liver, TCS enhanced hepatocyte proliferation and reactive oxygen species (ROS) production thereby acting as a liver tumor promoter.⁹⁰TCS seems to be more cytotoxic to prostate cancer compared to nonmalignant cells.⁹²Conversely, data from other studies suggested that TCS may inhibit cancer development.^{90,91}

Adverse effects

Triclosan affect hormones like testosterone and estrogen, and may also affect thyroid system, which regulates weight and metabolism. TCS has been regarded as an endocrine disruptor in animal studies and has shown to cause antibiotic cross-resistance.⁹²The continuous use of a 0.3% triclosan toothpaste over 4 years does not have any detectable effect on thyroid function in a subset of Cardiovascular and Periodontal study population.The study emphasizes that 0.3% triclosan in toothpaste is safe and free of significant thyroid adverse effects.⁹³

Bhargava and Leonard reviewed a study where 1200 human subjects participated and used toothpaste and mouth rinse/slurries containing triclosan at 0.06% to 0.6%.The blood chemistry and hematology analyses of the participants exhibited no local or systemic effects after 1 to 12 weeks of use.^{94,95}

Ban of Triclosan

Several European countries have issued national consumer advisories for the use of triclosan.In December 2017, the FDA issued a final rule regarding certain OTC health-care antiseptic products including TCS.Minnesota has banned sale of TCS incorporated soaps in 2014. Canada is in the process of banning TCS from 2015. Asian countries like Korea and Japan restrict the use of triclosan in cosmetics TCS still remains in many consumer products, including popular toothpaste. A Cochrane review study demonstrated the clear benefits of triclosan toothpaste with no serious safety concerns after three years of usage of triclosan dentifrice.⁹⁶

Degradation of Triclosan

The occurrence of triclosan in the environment has raised a great concern as triclosan is a weak endocrine disrupting compound and can be potentially transformed into more toxic chlorinated compounds in the environment such as chlorodioxins, chlorophenol and chloroform through photo-degradation or reaction with oxidants.⁹⁷It is difficult to apply physical/chemical methods for TCS removal in large-scale natural environments.Many microbes, such as a wastewater enrichment consortium, wastewater microorganisms and soil microorganisms have proven to be effective for the biodegradation of TCS. TCS can be cometabolically degraded by several oxygenase-expressing aerobic bacteria.⁹⁸Some of the triclosan degradation methods are sonochemical, photoelectrocatalytic, oxidative and electro-fenton degradation.⁹⁹

Conclusion

TCS incorporated oral products effectively prevents many oral and periodontal diseases. The potential benefits of triclosan in dentifrice seems to outweigh the risk involved. TCS should be used judiciously to patients when indicated. In humans, TCS does not seem to affect thyroid function or carries cross antibiotic resistance. More research is required in search of an effective biomaterial for biodegradation of TCS to minimize adverse effects on the environment.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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TABLES

Table 1. Oral health benefits of triclosan dentifrice

Effects	Clinical trials	Duration of study	Parameters/ Indices	Effect of triclosan vs Placebo
Plaque control	13 independent and double-blind ³¹⁻⁴⁶	6 months	Quigley-Hein Plaque Index	26% efficacy
			Plaque Severity Index	48% efficacy
Anti-gingivitis	13 independent and double-blind ³¹⁻⁴⁶	6 months	The Löe-Silness Gingivitis Index	25% efficacy
			Gingivitis Severity Index.	59% efficacy
Anti-calculus	6 independent and double-blind ⁴⁴⁻⁴⁹	2-6 months	Volpe-Manhold Calculus Index	40% efficacy
Stain removal and	5 independent and	6 weeks to 6	Lobene Stain index	Stain area 44% to 50% and

whitening	double-blind ^{50-53,34}	months		Stain Intensity 45% to 49% lower than placebo
Anticaries efficacy	4 independent and double-blind ⁵⁴⁻⁵⁷	30 to 36 months	DFT and DFS scores	statistically "at least as good as the placebo dentifrice
Oral malodour	4 independent and double-blind ⁵⁸⁻⁶¹	12 hours	Total and VSC-producing bacteria counts	TCS reduces the number of oral bacteria as well as VSC-producing bacteria.
Periodontitis	7 independent and double-blind ⁶²⁻⁶⁸	24-36 months	attachment loss, bleeding on probing.	TCS significantly reduced attachment loss, bleeding on probing, and the recurrence of periodontal disease
Microflora associated with dental plaque	five independent and double-blind ⁶⁹⁻⁷³	6-12 months	Development of pathogenic, opportunistic, or resistant oral microorganisms	No development of pathogenic, opportunistic, or resistant oral microorganisms with TCS use