The Effects and Current Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine Polysaccharides on Cardiovascular Diseases

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Abstract: Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) pose a significant threat to human health. Polysaccharides are high molecular weight compounds composed of multiple monosaccharides linked by glycosidic bonds. indicates research Current that plant-derived polysaccharides exhibit a range of bioactive properties, such as antiviral, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, lipid-lowering, anti-angiogenic effects. immune function activation, gut microbiota regulation, hypoglycemic, and anti-tumor activities, while demonstrating minimal toxic side effects. They play a crucial role in prevention and treatment the of cardiovascular diseases, with potential to improve conditions like myocardial fibrosis, myocardial infarction, atherosclerosis, and hypertension. This study reviews the effects and current developments of Traditional Chinese Medicine polysaccharides in the context of cardiovascular disease prevention and treatment, offering valuable insights for future research and application in this field.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese Medicine Polysaccharides; Cardiovascular Diseases; Mechanism of Action; Current Development Trends

1. Introduction

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) pose a significant threat to human health. In China, the current number of individuals suffering from cardiovascular diseases is staggering, with 330 million affected by various conditions such as 13 million cases of stroke, 11.39 million cases of coronary heart disease, 8.9 million cases of heart failure, 5 million cases of pulmonary heart disease, 4.87 million cases of atrial fibrillation, 2.5 million cases of rheumatic heart disease, and 45.3 million cases of peripheral arterial disease, as well as

245 million cases of hypertension [1]. Polysaccharides, naturally occurring high molecular weight polymers, are composed of ten or more monosaccharides linked by glycosidic bonds. They are widely present in animals, plants, and microorganisms [2]. Research has revealed that traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides can ameliorate various cardiovascular diseases, including ischemia-reperfusion myocardial injury, myocardial infarction, atherosclerosis, and myocardial hypertrophy [3]. The identified protective mechanisms involve the activation or inhibition of multiple signaling pathways such as NF-kB, PI3K/Akt, endoplasmic reticulum stress, and Nrf2, thereby exerting protective effects against oxidative stress, inflammation, endoplasmic reticulum stress, cellular apoptosis, and regulation of energy metabolism imbalance in cardiovascular diseases [4]. This study provides an analytical study of the effects and current developments traditional Chinese medicine of polysaccharides in the context of cardiovascular diseases, aiming to offer valuable insights for the future prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases using traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides.

2. Preventive and Therapeutic Effects of Traditional Chinese Medicine Polysaccharides on Myocardial Fibrosis

Myocardial fibrosis, a significant pathological process in cardiovascular diseases typically induced by inflammation and excessive expansion, leads to the activation of myofibroblasts and excessive accumulation of collagen I, III, and IV in the extracellular matrix [5-7]. Mitochondrial dysfunction and oxidative stress reactions promote the fibrotic process [8]. Mitochondria serve as the hub for organismal energy metabolism, and their malfunction leads to disruptions in myocardial cell energy metabolism, resulting in fibrosis and arrhythmias [9]. Research has demonstrated that ginseng polysaccharides can protect myocardial cells by regulating mitochondrial apoptosis [10]. Studies by Ma et al. [11] have revealed that red ginseng polysaccharides (RGP) can regulate and alleviate oxidative stress reactions in vivo in small coronary atherosclerotic heart disease (CHD) mice, improving myocardial fibrosis by modulating the SIRT1/PGC1a signaling myocardial pathway and regulating mitochondrial energy metabolism. Lycium barbarum polysaccharide (LBP), a major active component of Lycium barbarum, demonstrates significant therapeutic efficacy in treating hypertension, atherosclerosis, and other cardiovascular diseases [12]. Research by Ma et al. [13] has shown that Ningxia Lycium barbarum polysaccharides can TGF-β1-stimulated effectively inhibit activation of CFs, reduce the mRNA expression of fibrosis transcription factors such as Snail, Twist, and S100A4. consequently causing a down-regulation of myocardial fibrosis-related genes including Smad2, p-Smad2, Smad3, p-Smad3, and Smad4 protein expression levels. Studies indicate that astragalus polysaccharides (APS), one of the primary active components of the traditional Chinese medicine Astragalus, primarily composed of two polysaccharides, APSI and APSII [14]. APS enhances the survival rate of myocardial cells, inhibits myocardial cell apoptosis, and exerts a certain protective effect on myocardial cells subjected hypoxia/reoxygenation injury to [15]. Research by Zhu et al. [16] suggests that APS has a certain preventive and therapeutic effect on isoproterenol (ISO)-induced myocardial fibrosis, with its mechanism associated with the inhibition of the TGF-B1/Smads pathway. Studies have reported that Angelica sinensis polysaccharide, through the inhibition of the MAPK/NF-ĸB pathway, reduces the generation of high levels of inflammatory factors such as TNF- α , IL-1 β , and IL-6 after myocardial infarction [17], thus alleviating the inflammatory response and delaying the myocardial fibrotic process. Sugarcane leaf polysaccharide promotes the expression of vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) in the myocardial tissue surrounding the infarcted area, exhibiting a certain protective effect on ischemic myocardium. In addition, studies on

the pharmacological effects of sugarcane leaf polysaccharides demonstrate its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant. and free radical scavenging properties [18]. Research by Liu et al. [19] has revealed that sugarcane leaf polysaccharides can alleviate interstitial fibrosis in the border zone of the infarcted myocardium in rats after myocardial infarction, and its mechanism is associated with the inhibition of the expression of the pro-fibrotic genes TGF- β 1 and NF κ -B mRNA, and down-regulation of pERK1/2/ERK1/2 protein expression levels. Chitosan is a natural polysaccharide that, as a biomaterial base, possesses sufficient mechanical stability to stimulate the natural collagen fiber structure, inducing pluripotent stem cells and mesenchymal stem cells to differentiate into myocardial cells, thereby being employed in cardiac tissue engineering for the repair of damaged cardiac tissue [20]. In conclusion, traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides demonstrate potential protective effects on myocardial fibrosis through the modulation of multiple signaling pathways, the alleviation of inflammatory responses, and the inhibition of oxidative stress.

3. The Effects of Traditional Chinese Medicine Polysaccharides in Coronary Heart Disease

Coronary heart disease, with atherosclerosis of the coronary arteries as its pathological basis, remains the leading cause of cardiovascular mortality. Atherosclerosis is a complex inflammatory process mediated by lipids and cholesterol in the arterial vessel walls. Due to inadequate blood supply and reduced vascular compliance, the vessel walls gradually narrow, leading to cardiovascular diseases. Peng et al. [21] isolated homogeneous polysaccharides from kelp, known as laminarin-derived homogeneous polysaccharides (LJP12). LJP12 has been shown to dose-dependently inhibit the formation of atherosclerotic plaques and reduce blood lipid levels induced by a high-fat cholesterol diet (HFD). Long-term oral administration of LJP12 prevents the occurrence of atherosclerosis by inhibiting inflammation mediated by the NF-kB/MAPKs pathway. Wan et al. [10] established a coronary heart disease model in rats by feeding them a high-fat diet. They found that ginseng polysaccharides can significantly

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reduce mitochondrial calcium (Ca²⁺) levels and increase succinate dehydrogenase (SDH) thereby improving the body's activity. antioxidant capacity. Ginseng polysaccharides also enhance antioxidant levels in coronary heart disease rats by improving levels of malondialdehyde (MDA), glutathione peroxidase (GSH-Px), and superoxide dismutase (SOD). Additionally, increasing concentrations of ginseng polysaccharides significantly reduce the expression levels of Fas, FASL, Bcl-2, and Bax genes in rats. Li et al. [22] demonstrated that dendrobium polysaccharides have significant scavenging effects on DPPH· and ·OH radicals, indicating good in vitro antioxidant capability. This offers a potential reference for the development of atherosclerosis drugs against and cardiovascular diseases. Astragalus polysaccharides can upregulate cholesterol a-hydroxylase and low-density lipoprotein receptor expression in the liver, leading to reduced total cholesterol and triglycerides in the liver. Studies have shown that after intervention with astragalus polysaccharides for three months in a mouse model of atherosclerosis, there was a 45.8% reduction in total cholesterol, a 30% reduction in triglycerides, and a 47.4% reduction in low-density lipoprotein-cholesterol complexes. Astragalus polysaccharides participate in regulating the progression of atherosclerotic lesions by promoting cholesterol metabolism transport [23] Musa balbisiana and polysaccharides effectively reduce excessive proliferation of vascular smooth muscle cells (VSMCs) by downregulating the expression of sterol regulatory element-binding proteins (SREBPs) cholesterol and suppressing overproduction. Musa balbisiana polysaccharides have a positive significance in regulating cholesterol metabolism disorders and controlling atherosclerosis [24]. japonicus-derived Ophiopogon fructooligosaccharides have been found to have anti-myocardial ischemia effects [25,26] Allium macrostemon (AMB) and allium chinensis (ACGD) crude polysaccharides have in vivo anti-atherosclerotic and lipid-lowering These crude polysaccharides activities. blood lipid levels, significantly reduce improve the morphology and arrangement of myocardial cells, and alleviate the development of myocardial fibrosis. They also

show visual improvements in the affected areas of the aorta and aortic valve [27]. Traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides have various mechanisms of action, including antioxidative, anti-inflammatory, anti-myocardial ischemia, lipid-lowering, and regulation of cholesterol metabolism disorders. These mechanisms play a preventive and adjuvant therapeutic role in coronary heart disease.

4. The Effects of Traditional Chinese Medicine Polysaccharides on Hypertension Vascular remodeling stands as a significant contributor to hypertension, as the excessive proliferation of smooth muscle cells leads to a reduction in vessel lumen diameter and an increase in vessel wall thickness, constituting the fundamental pathogenic mechanism of [28]. Polysaccharides with hypertension antihypertensive properties have been widely sourced, including those extracted from aquatic plants (such as brown algae, kelp, seaweed, red algae, and sea sedge) and terrestrial plants (cactus fruit, Gastrodia, astragalus, and Lycium barbarum), microbial polysaccharides extracted from fungi (such as pleurotus nebrodensis, Cordyceps sinensis) and bacteria (such as Lactobacillus kefiranofaciens). well as animal as polysaccharides (oysters and squid skin). Ulva polysaccharides have been shown to reduce systolic and diastolic blood pressure by 19% and 39% respectively in Wistar male rats [39]. Studies by Gong et al. [30,31] have shown that polysaccharides from Dictyophora indusiata meet the oral administration requirements for antihypertensive drugs and significantly reduce blood pressure in SD rats, dogs, and spontaneously hypertensive rats (SHR). Polysaccharides from corn stigma (PCS), a water-soluble extract from corn silk with a content of 4%, reduce high-salt-induced hypertension by lowering vascular oxidative stress reactions, enhancing antioxidant capacity, and subsequently influencing vascular contractile function [32]. Polysaccharides from Dendrobium officinale significantly reduce blood pressure in SHR rats, with effects comparable to those of the Western medicine Amlodipine [33]. Plantain seed crude polysaccharides lower blood pressure in hypertensive patients by promoting the growth of intestinal bifidobacteria and

bacteroides, thereby improving gut microbiota Salvia miltiorrhiza polysaccharides [34]. exhibit significant antihypertensive activity by modulating the expression of the COX-2 gene to reduce blood pressure [35]. Oyster polysaccharides also have a marked effect on reducing both systolic and diastolic blood pressure in hypertensive model rats through gastric administration with [36], antihypertensive efficacy comparable to Captopril [37]. Grifola frondosa polysaccharides possess good blood pressure-lowering effects and show some restorative action on damage caused by [38]. hypertension Cactus fruit polysaccharides (CPFP) predominantly exert a dose-dependent antihypertensive effect in SHR. While its antihypertensive effect is not as rapid as that of captopril, it features an overall mild and long-lasting effect without any apparent drug tolerance, with no significant impact on heart rate, thus ensuring a safe and reliable antihypertensive effect [39]. CPFP achieves the alleviation of hypertension by reducing the expression of proliferating cell nuclear antigen (Ki-67) and basic fibroblast growth factor (bFGF) to mitigate the abnormal proliferation of vascular smooth muscle cells [40]. Cordyceps sinensis polysaccharides significantly downregulate the protein expression of hepatic smooth muscle actin, TGF-β1, TBR-I, p-Smad2, p-Smad3, and TIMP2, indicating that Cordyceps sinensis polysaccharides mitigate hypertension by TGF-β/Smads regulating the signaling pathway [41]. Furthermore, brown algae sulfated polysaccharides, marine sulfated polysaccharides (AHD), and Gastrodia polysaccharides can reduce blood pressure levels by promoting nitric oxide (NO) generation and lowering the levels of ET and Ang-II in the body [42]. Due to the diverse and intricate pathogenesis of etiology hypertension and the difficulty of achieving significant therapeutic effects with single-target antihypertensive drugs, polysaccharides, owing to their abundant sources, diverse activities, and low toxicity, have played a positive role in hypertension prevention and treatment, holding potential for development as antihypertensive drugs.

5. The Effects of Traditional Chinese Medicine Polysaccharides on

Cardiomyopathy

Myocardial hypertrophy is an adaptive response of the heart to various injurious stimuli, characterized by increased synthesis of myocardial cell proteins, enlargement of myocardial cell volume, and concurrent proliferation and fibrosis of cardiac interstitial cells [43]. Astragalus polysaccharides can improve isoproterenol-induced myocardial hypertrophy and myocardial cell apoptosis, potentially by protecting the heart through the modulation of protein expression related to cellular apoptosis, including bcl-2, bax, and caspase-3 [44]. Hedysarum polybotys polysaccharides have an ameliorating effect on isoproterenol-induced myocardial hypertrophy in mice, which is associated with the enhancement of PI3K/Akt signaling pathway activity [45]. Poria cocos polysaccharides can inhibit the occurrence and development of myocardial hypertrophy in rats, improve the hemodynamics of myocardial hypertrophy rats, enhance myocardial contractile function, improve myocardial diastolic function, and cardiac output in myocardial increase hypertrophy rats [46]. Ginseng polysaccharides have the ability to effectively inhibit myocardial hypertrophy in AAC rats and improve their energy metabolism, thereby enhancing mitochondrial vitality [47]. Astragalus polysaccharides improve pressure overload-induced myocardial hypertrophy in mice by modulating the ROS/Akt signaling pathway [48].

6. Conclusion

In recent years, extensive attention has been given to the research regarding the protective effects of traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides in cardiovascular health. Currently, some of these polysaccharides have been developed into medications for the treatment of cardiovascular diseases. Clinical practice has demonstrated the favorable efficacy of these medications in lowering blood pressure, improving myocardial ischemia, and exhibiting minimal side effects. As research into traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides deepens, their protective effects on the cardiovascular system continue to be revealed, offering the promise of better strategies for the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases in the future.

While traditional Chinese medicine

polysaccharides have made significant strides the prevention and treatment in of cardiovascular diseases, they still face numerous challenges. Firstly, the diverse and complex composition of traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides necessitates further in-depth research into their exact mechanisms of action. Secondly, there is an urgent need to address how to enhance the bioavailability and stability of these polysaccharides. Finally, the future direction of research also involves optimizing the application of traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides in clinical practice to achieve personalized therapy.

In conclusion, traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides, as a class of natural drug components with broad prospects for application, merit in-depth research and development for their role in the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. With the continuous advancement of science and technology, as well as the accumulation of clinical applications, it is believed that traditional Chinese medicine polysaccharides will bring about new breakthroughs and hope for the treatment and prevention of cardiovascular diseases.

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