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Commentary Article

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Natural Product-Derived Compounds as Lead Structures for Antiviral Drug Development

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DESCRIPTION

The advent of novel viral infections and the growing issue of therapy resistance have fueled an increased search for potent antiviral medications in recent decades. Natural products have traditionally been a significant source of lead structures for drug discovery due to their wide range of chemical diversity and biological activity. These substances, which come from microorganisms, plants and marine life, provide special scaffolding that can be modified for better antiviral activity. Compounds produced from natural products continue to be essential in the creation of novel antiviral medications as research advances, providing hope for a more successful fight against viral infections. The enormous structural diversity found in natural products is a result of organisms' evolutionary adaptability to their environments. Numerous chemical classes, each with unique biological functions, such as terpenoids, polyphenols, alkaloids and flavonoids, are included in this variety. These compounds are great prospects for the creation of antiviral drugs because of their complexity, which frequently offers several points of contact with viral targets.

Natural products have the benefit of interfering with different stages of the viral life cycle. As an example, some naturally occurring substances can prevent viruses from entering host cells, stop them from replicating, or obstruct the production of viral proteins. By hitting many targets at once, the virus would have to change more than once to avoid the drug's effects, which lowers the chance of resistance developing. The flavonoid quercetin, which has shown broad-spectrum antiviral activity against influenza, herpes simplex virus and dengue virus and the alkaloid berberine, which inhibits the reproduction of the hepatitis C virus, are two examples of natural compounds having strong antiviral

properties. The extraction, isolation, structural elucidation and optimization phases are commonly involved in the development of antiviral medicines derived from natural materials. First, a variety of *in vitro* and *in vivo* experiments are used to screen crude extracts from natural sources for antiviral activity. Following the identification of active molecules, these are isolated and Mass Spectrometry (MS) and Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) spectroscopy are used to determine their chemical structures. In order to improve their potency, selectivity and pharmacokinetic qualities, these lead molecules are subsequently structurally modified. Many compounds derived from natural products have made it through this pipeline and are now licensed for use as antiviral medications in clinical settings. The sesquiterpene lactone artemisinin, which was extracted from the plant Artemisia annua, is one well-known instance. The hepatitis B and C viruses, as well as the cytomegalovirus, have been proven to be susceptible to the antiviral effects of artemisinin and its derivatives, which were initially created as an antimalarial medication. Vidarabine, a marine-derived molecule that was one of the first antiviral medications authorized for the treatment of herpes simplex virus infections, is another example. Vidarabine is an analog of adenosine that was isolated from the sponge Tethya crypta.

The development of natural product-derived antivirals is beset with difficulties, even if some of them have shown promise. The diversity and unpredictability of natural sources provide a number of obstacles, including difficulties in isolating and reproducing active molecules. Furthermore, large-scale synthesis and optimization may be hampered by the structural complexity of natural compounds. A multidisciplinary strategy integrating synthetic biology, natural product chemistry and modern drug delivery technologies is frequently needed to overcome these obstacles. To completely comprehend the antiviral potential of natural compounds, extensive bioactivity screening and mechanistic investigations are necessary, which presents another difficulty. Advanced computational tools in conjunction with high-throughput screening technologies help accelerate the identification of potential lead compounds. Furthermore, figuring out how these substances work is essential to maximizing their benefits and reducing any possible negative effects. A comprehensive comprehension of viral biology and the host-pathogen interactions that serve as the foundation for viral infections is necessary for this. It is anticipated that new antiviral lead compounds will be discovered through the investigation of neglected natural sources including extremophiles and deep-sea creatures. In order to survive in harsh conditions, these organisms have developed special metabolic pathways, which have led to the synthesis of novel bioactive substances with possible medicinal uses. The identification and advancement of these promising antivirals derived from natural products require cooperation between government, business and academic institutions.