

Liquid Biopsies in Cancer Diagnosis

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Abstract

Over many years, the concept of precision medicine has dramatically renewed the sphere of clinical oncology; the advent of patient-tailor-made therapies has appreciably stepped forward all measurable outcomes. Liquid biopsy is a modern method that commences unexpected perspectives. It includes the detection and isolation of circulating tumor cells, circulating tumor DNA and exosomes, as a supply of genomic and proteomic records in patients with most cancers. Many technical hurdles had been resolved to newly advanced techniques and subsequent-generation sequencing analyses, permitting a wide software of liquid biopsy in a huge variety of settings. Initially correlated to analysis, liquid biopsy facts at the moment are being studied for cancer analysis, with a bit of luck consisting of screenings, and most significantly for the prediction of reaction or resistance to given remedies. In specific, the identification of particular mutations in genes can be useful resources in therapeutic choices, both in the appropriateness of remedy and within the superior identity of secondary resistance, aiming to early diagnose disease progression. Still, the utility is far from fact however ongoing research is leading the manner to a new era in oncology. The main aim of this study is to assess the importance of liquid biopsy in cancer diagnosis.

Keywords: *Liquid biopsy, cancer, exosomes, circulating tumor cells, circulating tumor DNA, oncology.*

Introduction

Liquid biopsy is the sampling and analysis of nonsolid biological tissue, primarily blood¹. It is a test done on a sample of blood to look for cancer cells from a tumor that might be circulating in blood or pieces of DNA from tumor cells that are in the blood. It is used to assist cancers at an early stage². It will also be used to assist plan treatment or discover how the treatment is running or if cancer has come back¹. Being able to take more than one sample of blood over time, may additionally assist medical doctors to apprehend what kind of molecular changes are taking place in a tumor³.

Liquid biopsy is an easy and non-invasive opportunity for surgical biopsies which allows doctors to find information about tumors via a simple blood pattern⁴. Traces of cancer's DNA inside the blood can deliver clues about which remedies are most possible to work for affected people². A liquid biopsy takes a look that can locate epidermal increase component receptor gene mutations, which occur in 10-35 % sufferers with non-small lung cancers, will assist to pick out the proper treatment for the affected person at the right time⁵. Much of early research on liquid biopsies has been in lung, breast, and prostate cancers however this generation is predicted to affect all forms of cancer³. Oxidative stress plays an important role in the pathogenesis of various diseases especially in chronic liver disease⁶. Hepatic fibrosis is considered to be the major issue in liver diseases⁷. The non-invasive nature of liquid biopsies, which require 5 milliliters of blood, means they're a lot easier to tolerate and the method is quicker than a surgical biopsy⁸.

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Tolerability and comfort are the main raise for sufferers³. The biggest advantage lies inside the ability of liquid biopsies to locate sickness development or remedy resistance long earlier than it would cause clinical signs and symptoms or seen on imaging scans^{4,9}. Most cancers have a couple of genetic mutations and they'll now not have the equal ones in all parts of the most cancers¹. The tissue samples eliminated for biopsy won't show all mutations whereas liquid biopsies offer a stepped forward danger of detecting those genetic modifications⁵“Liquid biopsies might be a -changer in cancer diagnosis,” stated Miro Venturi.“In terms of affected person acceptability and sickness control, the blessings of non-invasive, quick, and without difficulty repeatable exams are clear¹⁰. And inside the long term, liquid biopsies might also in the long run be used to capture symptoms of most cancers early, earlier than symptoms arise¹¹. This could make a big distinction in the way we recognize and deal with cancer¹². There is increased mortality with cancer because of the toxic side effects of cancer chemotherapy and radiation therapy¹³. So medicinal plants are used as a substitute for conventional drugs because of their increasing demand for plant-based natural products. *Caralluma fimbriata* which is found in dry regions of Tamil Nadu has been known for its anticancer activities with no adverse effects^{13,14}. It is also used against human colon cancer cells¹³. *Azadirachta indica* also has various medicinal properties¹⁵. Recent studies use herbal medicine as potent anticancer drug candidates¹⁶. Coumarin plays an important role in the drug discovery process and is also used to treat cancer¹⁷. *Acacia catechu* is known for its hypoglycemic, free radical scavenging and antioxidant properties. In this study, it has been used against SCC-25 human oral squamous carcinoma cell line¹⁸.

Liquid Biopsy- Investigating Tumor

Cancer is one of the main causes of death, with 9.6 million cancer deaths in the world³. Hepatocellular carcinoma is the second most common cancer and is associated with increased mortality in the last two decades¹⁹. The improvement of technology has led to the sphere of precision oncology, which accommodates treatment regimens to the molecular traits of every patient's tumor²⁰. The modern widespread genetic profiling of tumors commonly involves the usage of tissue biopsies. Despite their invasive nature, tissue biopsies

are associated with many barriers, inclusive of patient chance, sample coaching, sensitivity and accuracy, procedural expenses, and invasiveness²¹. This makes the manner incompatible for clinical longitudinal tracking²². Furthermore, a significant dilemma of tissue biopsies is that they fail to seize intratumoral and anti-metastatic genetic heterogeneity, impacting the accuracy²³.

Liquid biopsies have an excellent capacity to triumph over these existing sampling barriers. Such biopsies comprise the sampling and analysis of liquid organic sources, usually blood, for cancer analysis, screening, and prognosis¹². The ‘tumor circle’, described because the subset of circulating additives is derived from cancer tissue and may be immediately or circuitously used as a source of most cancers biomarkers in liquid biopsies²⁴. These components encompass circulating tumor proteins, circulating tumor nucleic acids (ctDNA and ctRNA), CTCs, EVs, and TEPs²³. Liquid biopsies present numerous advantages over conventional tissue biopsies), and technological improvements in sample isolation²⁵. The first critical milestone in this subject was reached in 2016 with the FDA approval of the first companion diagnostic test for lung cancer primarily based on the ctDNA content of a liquid biopsy.

OTHER METHODS OF CANCER DIAGNOSIS

There are various methods of a cancer diagnosis. Cancer detection often involves radiological imaging. Imaging is used to check the spread of cancer and prognosis of treatment, and to monitor cancer oncological imaging is more varied and accurate²⁶. Different imaging techniques aim to find the most suitable treatment option for each patient. Imaging techniques are often used in combination to obtain sufficient information²⁷. These include computed tomography, Magnetic Resonance Imaging, Ultrasonic endoscopic examination, mammography, and isotopic diagnosis²⁸.

Laboratory tests are carried out when it is suspected that a patient has cancer. Normally blood samples are taken for monitoring blood counting²⁶. Genetic testing can be useful in connection with certain cases of cancer¹². A final diagnosis of cancer is based on an examination of tissues or cells under microscopic by a pathologist¹².

CIRCULATING TUMOR DNA

CtDNA comprises the fraction of circulating cellular- DNA originating from cancer cells. These consist of brief nucleosome-related fragments and longer fragments encapsulated inside EVs³. The mechanism of ctDNA encompasses apoptosis, necrosis, lysis of CTCs, and lively secretion from the tumor²⁹. The proof of the suitability of ctDNA as a cancer biomarker came with the identity of KRAS gene mutations in ctDNA from the blood of patients with pancreatic cancer¹.

Both qualitative and quantitative data may be acquired from ctDNA evaluation. Quantitative information may be received from the measurement of the mutant allele fraction and is a reflection of the tumor³⁰. It finds application inside the detection of minimal residual ailment (MRD) and occult metastases and within the monitoring of treatment response and therapeutic effectiveness²). The detection of ctDNA after treatment is an excessive-sensitivity and excessive-specificity predictor of relapse. Qualitative records can be sourced via the profiling of mutations, amplifications, deletions, and translocations in ctDNA allowing the identification of genetic alterations associated with the reaction, as a result assisting selection-making for customized control^{30,31}. Other qualitative data obtained through ctDNA evaluation includes an assessment of methylation popularity²⁹.

CIRCULATING TUMOR CELLS

CTCs are tumor cells that are indifferent from one tumor and can be found in the peripheral blood of sufferers³². Their presence is thought to be fundamental to the development of metastasis. CTCs present systemically via energetic intravasation, with the epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition as a fundamental step or through passive shedding from the primary tumor³³. This latter mechanism is supported through the presence of CTC aggregates or circulating tumor microemboli inside the blood³².

The records acquired from CTCs are quantitative as well as phenotypic through single-cell genomics or proteomic profiling³⁴. CTCs have superpotential as tools for the analysis, tracking, prognosis, and prediction of reaction to remedy, and also for the discovery of novel drug objectives. The best records available from CTCs

are their variety, which is a prognostic predictor for many cancers, which includes metastatic breast, colon, and prostate cancer³⁵. The power of CTC counts as a criterion for the choice of first-line treatment in metastatic breast cancers is currently being investigated³⁶.

Despite numerous analytical systems and technology to be had for CTC analysis, their translation into medical practice is restricted by means of their isolation from the blood³⁷. Challenges consist of their extreme rarity, fragility, and physical and phenotypic heterogeneity³⁰. Each of these options has advantages and drawbacks, and best their mixture can support a comprehensive characterization³⁸.

EXTRACELLULAR VESICLES

Extracellular vesicles are membranous particles released from all cellular types underneath physiological and pathological conditions, in addition to following distinct forms of stimuli, inclusive of proteases, ADP, thrombin, inflammatory cytokines, increase factors, biomechanical shear and pressure inducers, and apoptotic indicators^{3,5}. They can be observed in almost every physical fluid, especially blood³. EVs had been diagnosed as essential mediators of intercellular communication, regulating and collaborating in a plethora of physiological and pathological procedures, such as cancer. Based on their biogenesis, content, and secretory pathways, EVs may be divided into two large classes: exosomes and microvesicles⁵.

The suitability of EVs as cancer biomarkers lies within the reality that the molecular cargoes they create can be considered a cell of origin³⁹. The advantages of EVs are many²². EVs are usually produced and launched in abundant portions and in greater amounts compared with CTCs⁴⁰. Similar to ctDNA and CTCs, EVs can be a supply of quantitative and qualitative information. Quantitative facts comprising EV can detect the presence of malignant sickness and tumor burden⁴¹. For instance, circulating exosome tiers are elevated in breast and pancreatic cancer and the number of circulating microparticles is higher in patients with a couple of myelomas as compared with healthful people⁴².

SEQUENCING TECHNIQUES

Next-Generation Sequencing

There are various sequencing techniques in liquid biopsy. NGS has emerged beyond the decade as a primary method for sequencing DNA and acquiring genetic statistics²⁵. NGS is primarily based on the analysis of several hundreds of thousands of DNA sequences in parallel observed by either series alignment to a reference genome. Despite its excessive sensitivity and specificity, NGS indicates a random error charge between 0.1% and 1% depending on the carried out platform making the detection of ctDNA through uncommon mutations in the general ctDNA^{43,44}. According to this remark, many protocols have been changed to enhance and extend the detection of uncommon mutations²⁵.

PCR based methods

PCR represents a rapid and cheap approach for the amplification of nucleic acid. Polymerase Chain Reaction is used to make billions of copies of specific DNA samples. PCR can determine gene duplication or deletion²⁵. Furthermore, melting curve analysis immediately after PCR can identify small mutations, down to single changes. These techniques are becoming easier and faster and can be multiplexed⁴⁵. Real-time PCR methods are favorable options for the analysis of cancer markers⁴³. PCR looks for changes in genes or chromosomes, which may help find and diagnose a genetic condition or disease such as cancer⁴³. The AS-PCR is commonly used in medical settings to stumble on single nucleotide variation (SNV) or small insertion/deletion in formalin-constant, paraffin-embedded tumor tissues. Overall, PCR based assays is a promising device for detecting mutations as a low-cost powerful may be feasible in ordinary medical exercise⁴⁶.

Methylation Sequencing

DNA methylation plays an important role in regulating normal development and carcinogenesis. The current understanding of biological roles of DNA methylation is limited to its role in the regulation of gene transcription, genomic imprinting, X chromosome inactivation⁴⁴. In the past 2 decades, a large number of changes have been identified⁴⁷. These alterations fall into two main categories, namely hypermethylation of tumor suppressor genes and hypomethylation of oncogenes respectively⁴⁴. The development of DNA methylation markers for cancer detection holds the promise of being accurate, sensitive, cost-effective for risk assessment,

early diagnosis, and prognosis.⁴³

ADVANTAGES

Liquid biopsy has numerous advantages. It is substantially less invasive while compared to tissue biopsy. Test results are generally available a great deal earlier than standard tissue biopsy⁴⁸. Test results are generally available a great deal earlier than standard tissue biopsy²¹. Using a liquid biopsy, it is feasible to make an early diagnosis. Liquid biopsy can be used to estimate a threat for metastatic relapse progression. Liquid biopsy may additionally permit for stratification and real-time monitoring of treatment options²⁸. It can be able to higher perceive therapeutic goals. The ease and frequency of a liquid biopsy test give bones over tissue biopsy⁴. The test may be easily repeated and used often as essential to monitor a patient 's development. Liquid biopsy is commonly much less expensive to carry out than tissue biopsy³.

CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

Initial Diagnosis

Liquid biopsy at initial diagnosis may be beneficial for prognostications¹². Another capacity benefit of liquid biopsy over strong tumor biopsy is that, is unresectable cancers^{21,49}. There can be inadequate tissue available form this aspirate of DNA sequencing and liquid biopsy has a non-invasive supply of DNA available.²⁸ Regardless it might be imprudent to use mutation detected in liquid biopsies for choosing the first-line remedy unless the frequency of a mutant allele is excessive enough to warrant the entire self-being that mutation is likely to be derived from the tumor itself²¹.

After Surgery

Liquid biopsy taken after surgical treatment is promising in this context¹. There is already research displaying that sufferers who have circulating tumor DNA or CTCs following surgery are likely to relapse. In the present state, the sensitivity for detecting disease is far from 100%. A negative test should therefore be considered as another feature⁵⁰.

After additional therapies

Liquid biopsy is able to detect easily recurrence prior to tumors becoming radiographically or clinically

apparent, potentially giving clinicians a larger window of opportunity during which treatment regimen could be altered²⁸. Once a patient relapses, a liquid biopsy may reveal new mutations not present in the primary tumor that could guide choice for second-line therapy⁵¹

Screening the cancer

Using liquid biopsies before cancer is clinically detected is discussed last because it is the most difficult application, but also has the greatest potential to reduce morbidity and mortality from cancer⁵². Cost and specificity are less of an issue, sensitivity is more important, as patients untreated on the basis of false-negative tests are likely to die⁸. Much controversy around screening tests is based on relatively low positive predictive values². A related problem is an overdiagnosis, detection of cancers that are indolent and never would cause morbidity or mortality if they remain undetected.¹

LIMITATION

Liquid biopsy is not considered a popular procedure although there is increasing use of these assays, tissue biopsy remains widespread for affirmation and analysis of sickness, such as numerous cancers and for detection of characteristics of sickness.³² At present liquid, the biopsy is not used as a substitute for tissue biopsy.⁵³ More assistance for scientific utility is needed. There is presently, no longer a widespread usage of liquid biopsy taking a loop in clinical networks. More variation in scientific trials is required on the cost of liquid biopsies in medical Settings to support the clinical utility of tests²². The studies are needed to assess the test's accuracy, and its ability to identify various tumor types. Test sensitivity challenges still exist⁵². It is also given that circulating tumor cells or DNA are relatively rare compared to the number of hematological molecules found in blood samples, there are challenges to test 's detection ability.⁴⁴

THE FUTURE SCOPE

During the past decade, liquid biopsy has received tremendous attention²⁸. But yet the technique is not a standard tool in the clinical oncologist arsenal⁵⁴. One often misunderstood, but critical point is that screening tests do not detect cancers that are very early⁸. All they

do is detect cancer earlier than they could be detected. Therapeutics require biomarkers, to stratify responders from non-responders, thereby treating patients most likely to benefit and preventing unnecessary harm to unnecessary patients³. Liquid biopsy is likely to provide such markers for any type of cancer¹. The method of balancing current, intolerable under diagnosis, with potential overdiagnosis is a challenge that further research will hopefully solve. However, a solution to this problem will be possible if reliable early diagnostic tests for major cancer are developed and used⁵⁵. Nanotechnology has also emerged as a promising tool in the treatment and management of cancers⁵⁶. Nanotechnology is also known for its role in target-specific delivery of drugs⁵⁷. Selenium nanoparticles have a vital prospect in the field of medicine and are used as anti-cancer agents⁵⁸. Zinc oxide nanoparticles synthesized from *Mangifera indica* has been known for its antioxidant activity and cytotoxic effects on lung cancer⁵⁹. Antibacterial properties of nanoparticles were evaluated⁶⁰. Green synthetic methods of nanoparticles are simple, non-invasive, and eco-friendly⁶¹. Further studies can be done to evaluate the importance of nanotechnology in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. With rapidly advancing technology and with accelerating interest in liquid biopsy from both academia and industry, looking forward to the day when liquid biopsy that detects cancer becomes a routine part of preventive medicine⁵⁴.

Conclusion

Liquid biopsy has a powerful role in helping patients to get the right treatment. Molecular analysis of cancer is required to optimize patient treatment. New methods such as next-generation show immense promise for the future. Liquid biopsy is coming of age and will change practice, it will enable oncologists to use drugs intelligently to combat the change in individual cancer as they happen the elegant and powerful technique, fulfill the promise of becoming rapid, reliable, and non-invasive decision-making tools.

Acknowledgement: The authors like to thank the editors and authors of the journal, which was the source for the scientific compilation of this review article.

Conflict of Interest : No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Source of Funding : Self

Ethical Clearance: Not Required

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