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Inhalation Drug Delivery

Techniques and Products

Editors: **Paolo Colombo, Daniela Traini**
and **Francesca Buttini**

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Techniques and Products

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A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

 **POSTGRADUATE
PHARMACY
SERIES**
<http://www.u-l-l-a.org/>

This edition first published 2013. © 2013 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd

Wiley-Blackwell is an imprint of John Wiley & Sons, formed by the merger of Wiley's global Scientific, Technical and Medical business with Blackwell Publishing.

Registered office: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex,
PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial offices: 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Colombo, Paolo, 1944-

Inhalation drug delivery : techniques and products / Paolo Colombo, Daniela Traini, and Francesca Buttini.
p. ; cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Summary: "Provides students and those in industry with concise clear guide to the essential fundamentals in inhalation drug delivery"—Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-1-118-35412-4 (hardback)

I. Traini, Daniela. II. Buttini, Francesca. III. Title.

[DNLM: 1. Administration, Inhalation. 2. Drug Delivery Systems—methods. WB 342]
615'.6—dc23

2012028075

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Set in 10.5/13pt Times-Roman by Thomson Digital, Noida, India.

First Impression 2013

Contents

List of contributors	xi
Series foreword	xiii
Preface	xv
1 Inhalation drug delivery	1
<i>Daniela Traini</i>	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Brief review of the respiratory system and its physiology	1
1.3 Deposition and the fate of particles in the respiratory tract	3
1.4 Deposition mechanisms	4
1.5 Parameters influencing particle deposition	6
1.6 The clearance of deposited particles	7
1.7 Airways geometry and humidity	7
1.8 Lung clearance mechanisms	8
1.9 Local and systemic drug delivery	10
1.10 Conclusion	11
References	11
2 Inhalation and nasal products	15
<i>Daniela Traini and Paul M. Young</i>	
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Dry powder inhalers (DPIs)	15
2.3 Liquid and propellant-based inhalers	18
2.3.1 Pressurized metered-dose inhalers (pMDIs)	18
2.3.2 Nebulizers	22
2.4 Nasal formulations	23
2.4.1 Nasal physiology	24
2.4.2 Delivery issues and concerns	25
2.4.3 Strategy for enhanced nasal delivery	26
2.4.4 Marketed nasal products	26
2.4.5 Pharmaceutical development studies for nasal products	26
2.5 Conclusion	27
References	29

3	Formulation of inhalation medicines	31
	<i>Daniela Traini and Paul M. Young</i>	
3.1	Introduction	31
3.2	Pressurized metered-dose inhaler (pMDI) formulation	31
3.2.1	<i>Suspension technology</i>	33
3.2.2	<i>Solution technology</i>	35
3.3	Dry powder inhaler (DPI) formulation	36
3.3.1	<i>Carrier technology</i>	37
3.3.2	<i>Agglomerate technology</i>	42
3.4	Conclusion	43
	References	43
4	Novel particle production technologies for inhalation products	47
	<i>Hak-Kim Chan and Philip Chi Lip Kwok</i>	
4.1	Introduction	47
4.2	Conventional crystallization and milling	47
4.3	Specialized milling	48
4.3.1	<i>Fluid-energy milling at elevated humidity</i>	48
4.3.2	<i>Wet-milling nanotechnology</i>	49
4.4	Solvent precipitation	49
4.4.1	<i>Sono-crystallization</i>	50
4.4.2	<i>Microprecipitation by opposing liquid jets and tangential liquid jets</i>	52
4.4.3	<i>High-gravity controlled precipitation</i>	52
4.5	Spray-drying and related droplet evaporation methods	54
4.5.1	<i>Spray-drying</i>	54
4.5.2	<i>Controlled evaporation of droplets</i>	57
4.5.3	<i>Evaporation of low-boiling-point solutions</i>	57
4.5.4	<i>Spray freeze-drying</i>	57
4.6	Supercritical fluid (SCF) technology	58
4.7	Conclusion	59
	Acknowledgements	59
	References	59
5	Methods for understanding, controlling, predicting, and improving drug product performance	63
	<i>David A.V. Morton</i>	
5.1	Introduction	63
5.1.1	<i>The complexities and challenges of aerosol performance</i>	63
5.1.2	<i>Understanding powder/particle characteristics: implications for aerosol product performance</i>	65
5.1.3	<i>Liquid systems</i>	66
5.1.4	<i>Summary</i>	67

5.2	Particle sizing	68
5.2.1	<i>Sieve analysis</i>	68
5.2.2	<i>Image analysis</i>	68
5.2.3	<i>Light scatter</i>	69
5.2.4	<i>Time-of-flight</i>	70
5.2.5	<i>Other methods</i>	70
5.3	Powder and particulate characterization systems	71
5.3.1	<i>Introduction</i>	71
5.3.2	<i>Powder cohesion and adhesion</i>	72
5.3.3	<i>Microscopic material characterization</i>	73
5.3.4	<i>Methods for studying bulk powders</i>	78
5.4	Practical issues in process control	80
5.4.1	<i>Common primary and secondary processing methods and issues arising for control</i>	80
5.5	Biopharmaceutical powder stability	81
5.6	Liquids: solutions and suspensions	82
5.6.1	<i>Liquid formulation stability</i>	83
5.7	Conclusion	84
	References	85

6 Aerodynamic assessment for inhalation products: fundamentals and current pharmacopoeial methods **91**

Francesca Buttini, Gaia Colombo, Philip Chi Lip Kwok, and Wong Tin Wui

6.1	Introduction	91
6.2	Impactor/impinger design	92
6.3	Aerodynamic assessment	94
6.4	Inertial impaction and cut-off diameter	97
6.5	Pharmacopoeial procedure	98
6.5.1	<i>The duration of in vivo inspiration needed for 4 L</i>	99
6.5.2	<i>Setting flow rate, Q, to give a pressure drop of 4 kPa</i>	99
6.5.3	<i>Flow-rate stability</i>	100
6.6	Cascade impactor: general set-up and operation	100
6.7	Impactor/impinger characteristics	102
6.7.1	<i>Twin-stage impinger (or glass impinger, apparatus A)</i>	102
6.7.2	<i>Multistage liquid impinger (MSLI)</i>	103
6.7.3	<i>Andersen cascade impactor (ACI)</i>	105
6.7.4	<i>Next-generation impactor (NGI)</i>	107
6.8	Data analysis	109
6.9	Cleaning instructions for impactors	111
6.10	Test limitations	112
6.11	Future considerations	112
6.11.1	<i>Electrical low-pressure impactor (ELPI)</i>	113
	References	116

7	Proteins, peptides, and controlled-release formulations for inhalation	121
	<i>Philip Chi Lip Kwok, Rania Osama Salama, and Hak-Kim Chan</i>	
7.1	Proteins and peptides for inhalation	121
7.1.1	Stability of proteins	123
7.1.2	Nebulizers and the AERx pulmonary delivery system	124
7.1.3	Metered-dose inhalers (MDIs)	124
7.1.4	Dry powder inhalers (DPIs)	125
7.2	Controlled-release formulations for inhalation	127
7.2.1	Challenges facing controlled-release inhalation therapy	128
7.2.2	Production of inhalable controlled-release formulations	129
	References	134
8	Pharmaceutical development studies for inhalation products	145
	<i>Gaia Colombo, Chiara Parlati, and Paola Russo</i>	
8.1	Introduction	145
8.2	Pharmaceutical development studies for inhalation products	148
8.2.1	Studies demonstrating product performance with respect to formulation, delivery device, and their combination	150
8.2.2	Studies demonstrating product performance in the hands of the patient (handling, use, storage)	160
8.2.3	Additional studies demonstrating specific development requirements	163
8.3	Conclusion	165
	Acknowledgements	165
	References	166
9	Quality of inhalation products: specifications	169
	<i>Paolo Colombo, Francesca Buttini, and Wong Tin Wui</i>	
9.1	Introduction	169
9.2	Inhalation-product specifications	171
9.2.1	Description	171
9.2.2	Identification	171
9.2.3	Drug content	172
9.2.4	Impurities and degradation products	173
9.2.5	Preservative content	173
9.2.6	Microbial limits	173
9.2.7	Sterility	174
9.2.8	Delivered-dose uniformity	174
9.2.9	Content uniformity/uniformity of dosage units	176
9.2.10	Mean delivered dose	176
9.2.11	Number of actuations per container	176
9.2.12	Fine-particle mass	177

9.2.13	<i>Spray pattern and plume geometry</i>	178
9.2.14	<i>Leak rate</i>	179
9.2.15	<i>Moisture content</i>	179
9.2.16	<i>Leachables</i>	180
9.2.17	<i>pH</i>	180
9.2.18	<i>Osmolality</i>	180
9.2.19	<i>Extraneous particles</i>	181
9.3	<i>Additional quality aspects</i>	181
9.3.1	<i>Drug substances</i>	181
9.3.2	<i>Excipients</i>	182
9.3.3	<i>Container closure systems</i>	183
9.3.4	<i>Inhalation-product stability</i>	184
9.3.5	<i>Package inserts and labels</i>	185
9.3.6	<i>Clinical/bioequivalence requirements</i>	185
	<i>References</i>	189

Index**191**

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Preface

This book aims to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of the processes and mechanisms involved in inhalation drug delivery, with a strong focus on inhalation products and specific equipment and techniques used in laboratories today. It will accurately reflect the current state of our knowledge in the field of inhalation and will provide a good basis for the development of this knowledge. Theory will be covered, providing balanced new perspectives by drawing on research from a variety of fields and from industrial experience.

This book is intended as an aid to those studying pharmacy, pharmaceutical science and technology, or related subjects, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Students will benefit from the concise presentation of a great deal of relevant information, and will find this book an invaluable tool for understanding the field of inhaled pharmaceutical aerosols.

1

Inhalation drug delivery

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1.1 Introduction

The lung offers a unique and challenging route for drug delivery for the treatment of local respiratory and systemic diseases. Advances in drug formulation and inhalation device design are creating new opportunities for inhaled drug delivery as an alternative to oral and parenteral delivery methods. Nebulizers, pressurized metered-dose inhalers (pMDIs), and dry powder inhalers (DPIs) have each found a niche in the quest for optimal treatment and convenient use. While nebulizers have evolved relatively independently of the drug formulations they deliver, the current generation of pMDIs and DPIs have been developed or tailored for the specific pharmaceutical being delivered, resulting in improved performance. However, the process of delivering drugs to the lung is not simple and is related to many factors associated with the inhaled product and the patient. This chapter will briefly review the anatomy and physiology of the lungs and the various parameters that influence drug deposition.

1.2 Brief review of the respiratory system and its physiology

The respiratory tract comprises the conducting and the respiratory regions. The conducting region essentially consists of the nasal cavity, nasopharynx, bronchi, and bronchioles. Airways distal to the bronchioles and the alveoli constitute the respiratory region, where rapid solute exchange takes place. According to Wiebel's tracheobronchial classification [1], the conducting airways comprise the first 16

generations, and generations 17–23 include the respiratory bronchioles, the alveolar ducts, and the alveolar sacs.

The respiratory system is made up of a gas-exchanging organ (the lungs) and a pump that ventilates it. The pump consists of: the chest wall; the respiratory muscles, which increase and decrease the size of the thoracic cavity; the areas in the brain that control the muscles; and the tracts and nerves that connect the brain to the muscles. At rest, a normal human breathes 12–15 times a minute. About 500 mL of air per breath, or 6–8 L/min, is inspired and expired. This air mixes with the gas in the alveoli, and, by simple diffusion, O_2 enters the blood in the pulmonary capillaries, while CO_2 enters the alveoli. In this manner, 250 mL of O_2 enters the body per minute and 200 mL of CO_2 is excreted.

Anatomically, the respiratory system is divided into the upper and lower respiratory tract. The upper respiratory tract consists of the nose, pharynx, and larynx. The lower respiratory tract consists of the trachea, bronchial tree, and lungs. The human respiratory tract is made up of a series of bifurcating airways, starting at the oropharynx and finishing at the alveolar sacs. The airway anatomy consists of the oro, nasopharynx, larynx, trachea, two main bronchi, five lobar bronchi (three on the right, two on the left), and 15–20 dichotomous branchings of the bronchi and bronchioles down to the level of the terminal bronchioles and the alveoli. A schematic diagram of the human respiratory tract is given in Figure 1.1.

After passing through the nasal passages and pharynx, where it is warmed and takes up water vapor, the inspired air passes down the trachea and through the bronchioles, respiratory bronchioles, and alveolar ducts to the alveoli. The portion of the airways that participates in gas exchange with the pulmonary capillary blood consists of the respiratory bronchioles and the alveoli themselves. The alveoli act as the primary gas-exchange units of the lung, especially as the gas–blood barrier

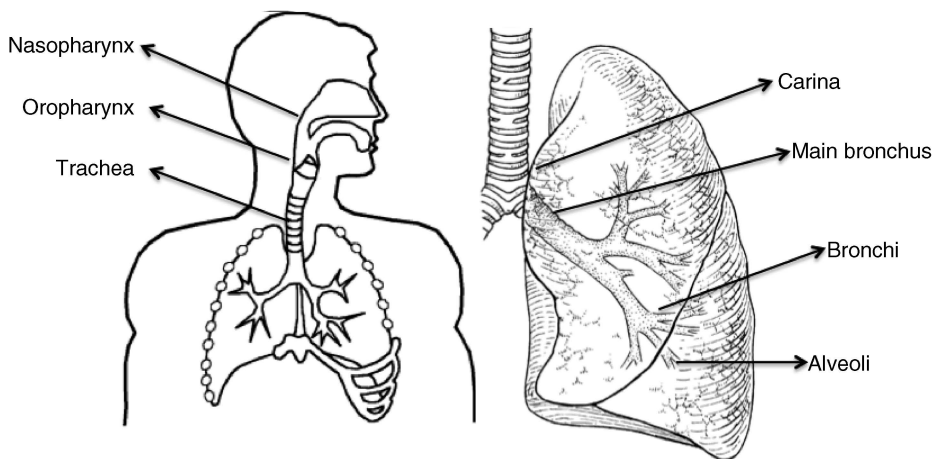


Figure 1.1 Diagrammatic representation of the structure of the human lung and airway

between the alveolar space and the pulmonary capillaries is extremely thin, allowing rapid gas exchange.

Between the trachea and the alveolar sacs, the airways divide 23 times. These multiple divisions greatly increase the total cross-sectional area of the airways, from 2.5 cm^2 in the trachea to $11\,800 \text{ cm}^2$ in the alveoli [2].

Consequently, the velocity of airflow in the small airways declines to very low values. Oxygen can subsequently diffuse via the alveolar epithelium (a thin interstitial space) and the capillary endothelium. In simple terms, this provides a high surface area, low surface fluid coverage, thin diffusion layer, and sluggish cell surface clearance by macrophages. These properties provide an alternative delivery system to the more conventional gastrointestinal, nasal, buccal, or transdermal delivery routes [2]. Details of the anatomy and physiology of the respiratory tract are given in many texts; the reader is referred to Moren et al. [3] or a basic anatomy text [4].

1.3 Deposition and the fate of particles in the respiratory tract

The main factors here are the properties of the aerosol particles (particle size, aerodynamic diameter) and the mode of inspiration (breath volumes, flow rate) [5]. The most important parameter defining the site of deposition of aerosol drugs within the respiratory tract is the particle characteristics of the aerosol.

Most therapeutic aerosols are almost always heterodisperse, consisting of a wide range of particle sizes and described by the log-normal distribution with the log of the particle diameters plotted against particle number, surface area, or volume (mass) on a linear or probability scale and expressed as absolute values or cumulative percentage. Since delivered dose is very important when studying medical aerosols, particle number may be misleading, as smaller particles contain less drug than larger ones. Particle size is defined from this distribution by several parameters. The mass median aerodynamic diameter (MMAD) of an aerosol refers to the particle diameter that has 50% of the aerosol mass residing above and 50% below it. Strict control of MMAD of the particles ensures reproducibility of aerosol deposition and retention within desired regions of the respiratory tract. MMAD is read from the cumulative distribution curve at the 50% point. Geometric standard deviation (GSD) is a measure of the variability of the particle diameters within the aerosol and is calculated from the ratio of the particle diameter at the 84.1% point on the cumulative distribution curve to the MMAD. For a log-normal distribution, the GSD is the same for the number, surface area, or mass distributions. A GSD of 1 indicates a monodisperse aerosol, while a GSD of >1.2 indicates a heterodisperse aerosol.

The aerodynamic diameter relates the particle to the diameter of a sphere of unit density that has the same settling velocity as the particle of interest, regardless of its

shape or density. Good distribution throughout the lung requires particles with an aerodynamic diameter between 1 and 5 μm , and thus most inhaled products are formulated with a high proportion of drug in this size range [6]. In order to target the alveolar region specifically, the aerosol droplet diameter should not be more than 3 μm . Particles with diameters that are greater than 6 μm are deposited in the oropharynx, whereas smaller particles ($<1\ \mu\text{m}$) are exhaled during normal tidal breathing. Particles $<2.5\ \mu\text{m}$ are deposited mainly in the alveoli, where they can exert no pharmacodynamic effect and are rapidly absorbed, increasing the risk of systemic adverse events. This size range was confirmed for mild asthmatics, for whom the particle size of choice should be around 2.8 μm [7].

1.4 Deposition mechanisms

As illustrated in Figure 1.2 (data from [8]), the deposition fractions of particles with different diameters in selected regions of the respiratory tract (laryngeal, upper and lower bronchial, alveolar) have been plotted as a function of particle size for particles of unit density (i.e. normalized aerodynamic diameter).

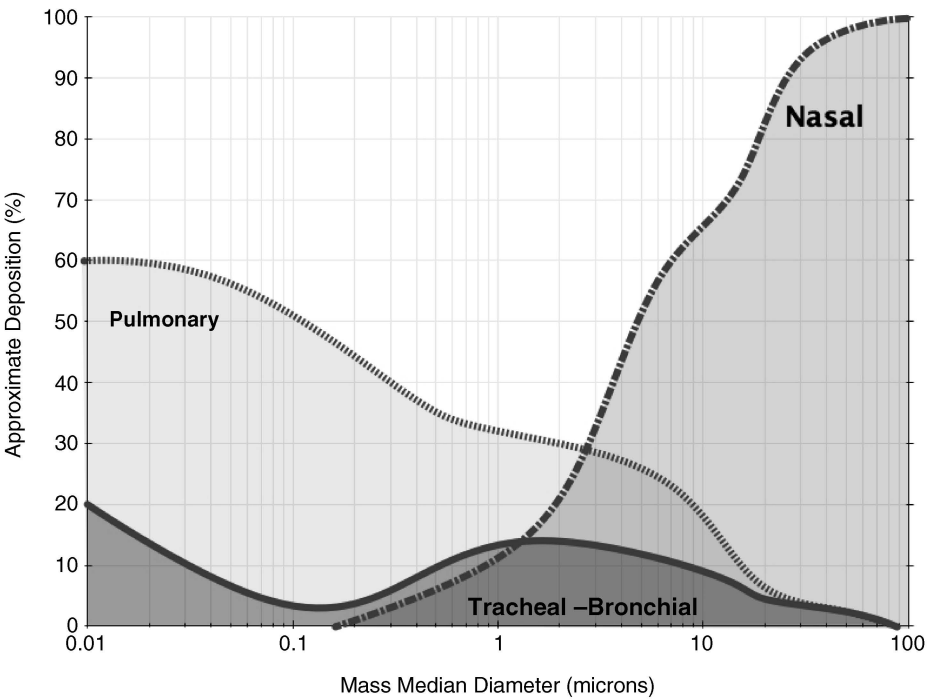


Figure 1.2 Deposition efficiency in the respiratory system as a function of the particle size