Formulation and Evaluation of Clarithromycin Microspheres for Eradication of Helicobacter pylori

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The objective of the study was to develop a stomach-specific drug delivery system for controlled release of clarithromycin for eradication of Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori). Floating-bioadhesive microspheres of clarithromycin (FBMC) were prepared by emulsification-solvent evaporation method using ethylcellulose as matrix polymer and Carbopol 934P as mucoadhesive polymer. The prepared microspheres were subjected to evaluation for particle size, incorporation efficiency, in vitro buoyancy, in vitro mucoadhesion and in vitro drug release characteristics. The prepared microspheres showed a strong mucoadhesive property with good buoyancy. The formulation variables like polymer concentration and drug concentration influenced the in vitro drug release significantly in simulated gastric fluid (pH 2.0). The in vivo H. pylori clearance efficiency of prepared FBMC in reference to clarithromycin suspension following repeated oral administration to H. pylori infected Mongolian gerbils was examined by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique and by a microbial culture method. The FBMC showed a significant anti-H. pylori effect in the in vivo gerbil model. It was also noted that the required amount of clarithromycin for eradication of H. pylori was significantly less in FBMC than from corresponding clarithromycin suspension. The results further substantiated that FBMC improved the gastric stability of clarithromycin (due to entrapment within the microsphere) and eradicated H. pylori from the gastrointestinal tract more effectively than clarithromycin suspension because of the prolonged gastrointestinal residence time of the formulation.

Key words clarithromycin; microspheres; Helicobacter pylori; carbopol; ethylcellulose

Marshall and Warren discovered Helicobacter pylori, which is now recognized as a major gastric pathogen with worldwide distribution. H. pylori is a prevalent human-specific pathogen and a causative agent in chronic active gastritis, duodenal ulcers, and gastric adenocarcinoma. Even though the microorganism is susceptible to many antimicrobial agents in vitro, clinical trials with a single antimicrobial agent have resulted in a low eradication rate of H. pylori. This is because of the low concentration of the antibiotic reaching the bacteria under the mucosa; instability of the drug in the low pH of gastric fluid, and the short residence time of the antibiotic in the stomach. Therefore, eradicating H. pylori is a prerequisite for curing a gastric or peptic ulcer and preventing a recurrence. Triple therapy consisting of combined use of antibiotics, such as amoxicillin, clarithromycin/metronidazole, and a proton pump inhibitor gives a high eradication rate, and is now frequently used for clinical treatment of H. pylori associated gastroduodenal disease. However, eradication is not always successful and harmful side effects, cost of therapy, and the lack of willingness to take many different drug products are the major drawbacks of the therapy.

Other than the multi-antibiotic therapy, other strategies that can completely eradicate H. pylori from the stomach have been examined. One way to improve the efficacy in eradicating the infection is to deliver the antibiotic locally in the stomach by increasing residence time of antibiotics at infected site. Another way is to improve the stability of antibiotics in gastric environment. The antibiotics with better stability and longer residence time will allow more of the antibiotic to penetrate through the gastric mucus layer to act effectively on H. pylori. Gastroretentive drug delivery systems like floating and bioadhesive system would improve the therapeutic effect of antimicrobial drugs. Research into gastroretentive drug delivery systems has resulted in the development of several approaches including the use of tablets-in-capsule, floating systems in situ gelling systems, mucoadhesive tablet, pH-sensitive excipient composition mucoadhesive microspheres etc., which were able to reside in the gastrointestinal tract for an extended period of time for a more effective H. pylori eradication. Mucoadhesive drug carriers may prolong the residence time in the gastrointestinal tract (GI) tract because they can adhere to the mucus surface, resulting in a effective localized drug concentration. Among several mucoadhesive polymers, Carbopol usually has strong mucoadhesive properties and is known to be biocompatible and nontoxic. Multiple unit gastroretentive dosage forms, like floating microspheres or microcapsules, can be distributed widely throughout the GI tract, providing the possibility of achieving a longer lasting and more reliable release of drugs. Clarithromycin is a macrolide, orally absorbed, broad-spectrum antibiotic. It is widely used in a standard eradication treatment of H. pylori infection combined with a second antibiotic and an acid-suppressing agent. Clarithromycin has highest rate of eradication of H. pylori in monotherapy in vivo and hence was selected as a model drug in this study. In order to improve the efficacy of anti-H. pylori clarithromycin, we propose a new concept based on both floating and bioadhesive system with site-specific drug delivery of clarithromycin using calcium carbonate as gas forming agent. This stomach-specific delivery system would increase the gastric residence time, de-
crease the diffusion distance, and allow more of the antibiotic to penetrate through the gastric mucus layer and act locally at the infectious site benefits and also minimize the resistance problems associated with systemic administration of antibiotics. The main purpose of this study was to develop clarithromycin floating-mucoadhesive microspheres and to evaluate the effectiveness of the microspheres for *H. pylori* eradication therapy in Mongolian gerbil animal model.

**Experimental**

Clarithromycin was gifted by Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd. (New Delhi, India) and Carbopol 934P and ethylcellulose were gifted by Micro Labs Ltd. (Hosur, India). Modified Skirrow’s medium, Brucella broth, and fetal calf serum (FCS) were purchased from Himedia (Mumbai, India). Agarose was purchased from FMC BioProducts (Rockland, U.S.A.) and Taq DNA polymerase was purchased from Takara Shuzo, Otsu and Shiga, Japan. All other reagents were of analytical grade.

**Animals**

Six-week-old male specific pathogen free Mongolian gerbils (body weight 50–60 g) were purchased from Central Drug Research Institute (Lucknow, India) and were maintained under standard laboratory conditions (room temperature, 23±2°C; relative humidity, 55±5%; 12/12 h light/dark cycle) with free access to a commercial rodent diet and tap water.

**Methods. Preparation Floating-Mucoadhesive Microspheres**

The Clarithromycin floating-mucoadhesive microspheres were prepared by emulsification and solvent evaporation method, reported in the literature with little modification. Briefly, different concentrations of ethylcellulose solution were prepared by dissolving different amount of ethylcellulose in 50 ml of acetone with stirring. Then different concentrations of carbopol 934P, clarithromycin and calcium carbonate were added to the polymer solution under continuous stirring and the mixture was blended for 24 h. Then the suspension was slowly added into 200 ml of light liquid paraffin containing 2.0% 80% R.H. and temperature of 25°C. The formed microspheres were washed with petroleum ether and dried at room temperature.

**Morphology and Particle Size Analysis**

The shape and surface morphology of various batches of microspheres prepared, were determined by scanning electron microscopy (SEM-JEOL Model 8404, Japan at magnification 500×). Particle size was determined using an optical microscope (Olympus, NewDelhi, India) fitted with a stage and an ocular micrometer.

**Drug Release Determination of Drug Encapsulation Efficiency**

To determine the total drug content of microspheres a known amount of microspheres were ground to fine powder. Accurately weighed (50 mg) grounded powder of microspheres were soaked in 50 ml of distilled water and sonicated using probe sonicator (UP 400 s, Dr. Hielscher GmbH, Germany) for 2 h. The whole solution was centrifuged at 10,000 rpm for 20 min. The supernatant was filtrated through a 0.45 μm syringe filter then analyzed for clarithromycin content by reversed-phase high performance liquid chromatography (RP-HPLC) method using a mobile phase consisting of acetonitrile-aqueous 0.05 m phosphate buffer solution of pH 4.0 (40:60 v/v). The apparatus used for HPLC analysis was an Agilent 1100 quaternary pump, with a variable wavelength detector, thermostatted autosampler and column thermostat. A Hypersil ODS C18 column (250 mm×4.6 mm ID, 5 μm, Thermo, U.K.) was fitted with a Phenomenex guard column packed with octadecyl C18 (Phenomenex, U.S.A.). The column temperature was maintained at 40°C and flow rate of 1 ml/min. The detection was done on UV detector at 210 nm.

**Measurement of Drug Release**

To determine the incorporation efficiency the following formula was used:

\[
\text{incorporation efficiency} = \frac{a}{b} 
\]

where ‘a’ is the theoretical drug content and ‘b’ is the drug entrapped.

**Measurement of in Vitro Bioadhesion**

In vitro bioadhesion (in triplicate) was determined by following a previously reported method. The stomachs of the over night fasted rats were removed and cut into pieces 2 cm long and 1 cm wide and were rinsed with 2 ml of physiological saline and 50 mg of microspheres were placed uniformly on the surface of the stomach mucosa. The mucosa with microspheres were placed in a humidity temperature control cabinet (Narang Scientific works Pvt. Ltd., NewDelhi, India) at 80% R.H. and temperature of 25±0.5°C to allow hydration of microspheres for 20 min. The mucosal lumen was rinsed with HCl-physiological saline at angle of 45°. The washings were dried at 60°C in a hot air oven. The ratio of adhered and applied microspheres were computed as percent bioadhesion.

**In Vitro Buoyancy Studies**

The in vitro floating study was determined using USP dissolution apparatus II having 900 ml of simulated gastric fluid (SGF, pH 2.0). The medium temperature was kept at 37°C. The floating mucoadhesive microspheres (400 mg) were spread over the surface of the dissolution medium and medium was agitated by paddle at 100 rpm. After agitation the microspheres that floated or coated over the surface of the medium and those that settled down at bottom of the flask were recovered separately and dried. The floating percentage of floating was determined by following equation:

\[
\text{buoyancy (}) = \frac{(\text{weight of microspheres floated on medium})}{(\text{weight of microspheres floated in medium + weight of microspheres settled at bottom of flask})} \times 100
\]

**Measurement of in Vitro Drug Release**

Drug release from mucoadhesive microspheres of clarithromycin was determined by reported method using USP dissolution test apparatus I (USP 24) with stirrer at 100 rpm. Nine hundred milliliters of 0.1 N HCl (pH 2.0) was used as the dissolution medium and the temperature was maintained at 37±0.2°C. Samples were taken at appropriate time intervals and replaced with an equal volume of fresh dissolution medium. The withdrawn samples were filtered through 0.45 μm syringe filter and neutralized with NaOH solution (0.01 M) to adjust the pH to 3.5. Each sample to approximately 5.0 in order to prevent the further degradation of drug before being analyzed by RP-HPLC as described above. These experiments were conducted in triplicate.

**Degradation of Clarithromycin in simulated gastric fluid (SGF) pH 2.0**

The degradation rate of the antimicrobial agents at pH 2.0 was examined by reported method with slight modification. A known amount of clarithromycin was added to the medium, which was preheated at 37±0.2°C, to make a final concentration of 100 μg/ml. An aliquot of the medium was withdrawn at predetermined time intervals and neutralized with a NaOH solution before being quantified by HPLC. The concentrations of the parent drug remaining were analyzed by RP-HPLC assay. The degradation of clarithromycin was assumed to follow pseudo-first order kinetics, which is described by the following equation:

\[
C = C_0 e^{-kt}
\]

in which C is the concentration of clarithromycin remaining at time t, C<sub>0</sub> is the initial concentration of clarithromycin, and k is the pseudo-first order degradation rate constant. The half-life (t<sub>1/2</sub>) of clarithromycin was determined from the pseudo-first order degradation rate constant.

**Stability of Clarithromycin in Microspheres in SGF pH 2.0**

Fifty milligrams of mucoadhesive microspheres were suspended in 30 ml of SGF pH 2.0 in four graduated centrifuge tube with lid. The tube was then placed in an ultrasonic vibrator and agitated at a speed of 100 rpm at 37±1°C for 1, 2, 4 and 6 h, respectively. The whole samples were withdrawn at different time interval and neutralized with NaOH solution (0.05 M) to adjust the pH of sample to approximately 5.0 in order to prevent further degradation of drug. The samples were taken out at different time intervals and microspheres were collected separately by filtration. The drug content of the filtrate (amount of clarithromycin released from microspheres) and microspheres (amount clarithromycin entrapped in microspheres) were determined separately by HPLC method as described earlier.

**In Vivo H. pylori Clearance Study**

The bacterial strain used in this study was originally isolated from a human patient (age 50 years) with gastritic ulcer in SSG hospital, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India. Six animals in each group were assigned to 9 groups and were inoculated with 1 ml of culture broth via intragastric gavage after fasting for 24 h. Each dose contained 10<sup>7</sup>CFU of *H. pylori*. The protocol of the study was approved by Institutional Animals Ethical Committee of the Department. Fourteen days after infection, clarithromycin was orally administered once a day for 3 consecutive days at a dose of 3, 30, 60 and 90 mg/kg in the form of either floating-mucoadhesive microspheres or clarithromycin suspension (clarithromycin was dispersed well in 0.5% w/v of methylcellulose solution). Placebo floating mucoadhesive microspheres were used as a control, were administered in the same manner.

**Microbial Culture Method**

One day after administration of the final dose the Mongolian gerbils were sacrificed and the stomachs were removed. Each stomach was homogenized with Brucella broth (3 ml/stomach), and serial dilutions were plated on modified Skirrow’s medium. The agar plates were incubated for 4 d at 37°C under microaerobic conditions in GasPak (BD Diagnostic Systems, Sparks, MD, U.S.A.). The viable cell counts for the bacteria were determined by counting the number of colonies on the plates.
each stomach were calculated by counting the number of colonies on the agar plates. The colonies were identified as *H. pylori* by morphology and urease activity.\(^{25}\) The number of colonies per plate was counted and expressed as log CFU per gastric wall. The advantage of this evaluation method is that errors caused by sampling site variation can be avoided because the whole stomach is used to determine the bacterial cell count.

**Isolation of DNA** The DNA of *H. pylori* was isolated as described by Kusuhara et al.\(^{26}\) The gastric tissue was collected by centrifugation from 1 ml of homogenates from each gerbil stomach. The tissue was suspended in 500 μl of Tris ethylene diamine tetra acetate, pH 8.0 (TE) containing 100 mM NaCl and 100 g/ml egg white lysozyme, and incubated at room temperature for 10 min. Sodium dodecyl sulfate was added at a final concentration of 0.1%, and the mixture was incubated at 60 °C for 10 min. DNA was then extracted in an equal volume of phenol : chloroform (1 : 1), and precipitated at 20 °C for 2 h in the presence of 300 mM sodium acetate and two volumes of absolute ethanol. The precipitated DNA was collected by centrifugation and allowed to air dry. The pellet was then dissolved in 50 μl of TE.

**Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Amplification of the 16S ribosomal RNA (rRNA) Gene of H. pylori** The PCR analysis was done as described previously with the *H. pylori*-specific primer.\(^{11–13}\) The reaction mixture contained 5 μl of 10×PCR buffer (500 mM KCl, 100 mM Tris–HCl, 15 mM MgCl\(_2\)), 4 μl of deoxynucleotide solution (2.5 mM each dATP, dCTP, dGTP, and dTTP), 0.5 μl of each primer (50 μM), 1.25 U Taq DNA polymerase, and 50 μl of DNA in a final volume of 50 μl. DNA from the homogenates of each gerbil stomach was serially diluted tenfold in sterile water, and 1 μl of each diluted sample was used in one assay. Each reaction tube was then placed in a thermal cycler (Perkin-Elmer 9600; Perkin-Elmer, Emeryville, CA, U.S.A.). The following conditions were used for the amplification, denaturation at 94 °C for 30 s; anealing at 56 °C for 30 s; and extension at 72 °C for 1 min. A total of 34 cycles were performed, followed by an extension step at 72 °C for 7.0 min. The PCR product (501 bp) was separated by electrophoresis through a 2% gel containing ethidium bromide, and visualized with a UV light source. The PCR product from gel was photographed by alpha imager.

**Statistics** The difference between the control-treated and the clarithromycin-treated groups in bacterial counts of gastric wall were statistically analyzed by one-way analysis of variance with post-test Dunnett’s multiple comparison test. Statistically significant differences between groups were defined as \(p<0.05\).

**Results and Discussion**

**Morphological Properties and Size of Microspheres**

The scanning electron micrograph (SEM) of the microspheres obtained is shown in Fig. 1a. The results of SEM revealed that prepared floating-bioadhesive microspheres were discrete and spherical in shape with a rough outer surface because of the surface-associated drug (Fig. 1b). The surface-associated drug adsorbed on the surface of the microspheres might give a burst release and help enhance the clarithromycin concentration for the effective *H. pylori* clearance shortly after oral administration. The results Table 2 indicated that as the amount of ethyl cellulose in the microspheres was increased, the particle size also proportionally increased. Decreasing the ethyl cellulose polymer concentration below 2.5% w/v resulted in clumping of microspheres. Whereas high ethyl cellulose concentration (at above 15% w/v) resulted in formation of large discrete microspheres with size above 400 μm. This could be attributed to an increase in the relative viscosity at higher concentration of polymer and formation of larger particles during emulsification. There was a marginal increase in mean diameter of microspheres with increasing concentrations of carbopol and drug loading (Table 2). The mean diameter of the microspheres was found to be in the range of 85.74 to 129.72 μm. All formulations showed good flowability, as represented in terms of angle of repose (from range of 32.10—35.45). The relative density of the microspheres indicates that microspheres have good packability and these micromeric properties suggest that microspheres could be easily handled.

**Incorporation Efficiency of Microspheres** The effect of various formulation parameters on the incorporation efficiency of the prepared microspheres are shown in Table 2. The incorporation efficiency of the prepared microspheres varied from 48.35% for batch FBMC5 to 78.25% for batch FBMC4. The incorporation efficiency increased progressively with increasing both ethyl cellulose and carbopol concentration. Similarly, the incorporation efficiency was increased proportionally with drug concentration. An increase in the concentration of ethyl cellulose from 2.5 to 15% w/v resulted in the formation of larger microspheres thus entrapping more amount of the drug. Similarly, an increase in concentration of carbopol resulted in the formation of larger mi-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Batch code</th>
<th>Ethyl cellulose (% w/v)</th>
<th>Carbopol 934 P (% w/v)</th>
<th>Clarithromycin (% w/v)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FBMC1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC4</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC10</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the formulations containing 1.5% w/v of calcium carbonate as floating agent.

Fig. 1. SEM Photograph of Prepared Floating-Bioadhesive Microspheres (a) Drug loaded microspheres, (b) morphological surface of microspheres.

\[\text{FBMC1} = 5.0 \text{~Ethyl cellulose (w/v)}\]
\[\text{FBMC2} = 5.0 \text{~Carbopol 934 P (w/v)}\]
\[\text{FBMC3} = 10.0 \text{~Clarithromycin (w/v)}\]
crospheres. Increase in clarithromycin loading above 10% w/v caused a marginal decrease in the incorporation efficiency suggesting that quantity of ethyl cellulose becomes insufficient to entrap the drug.

Bioadhesivity The study of in vitro bioadhesion revealed that all the batches of prepared microspheres had good bioadhesive property ranging from 79.37 to 93.24%. On increasing the polymer (carbopol) concentration, the bioadhesive property of the microspheres also increased as shown in Table 2. The formulation FBMC7 showed the highest bioadhesive property (93.24%). These studies suggest that the spherical matrix of microspheres can interact with mucosubstrate on the surface of the stomach, and adhere to mucosa more strongly and could stay in stomach for prolong period for more effective H. pylori clearance.

In Vitro Buoyancy Efficiency The floating ability of the prepared formulations was evaluated in SGF (pH 2.0). The time the formulation took to emerge on the medium surface (floating lag time) and the percentage of the microspheres that floated on the dissolution medium surface were evaluated and are shown in Table 2. Upon contact with an acidic medium the formulations swells and provides a gel barrier at the surface of the formulation. The calcium carbonate effervesced, releasing carbon dioxide and the released carbon dioxide is entrapped in the gel network producing buoyant formulation for prolonged periods. We observed that all the microsphere ascended to the upper one-third of the dissolution vessel within a short time, and remained floating until the completion of drug release. The buoyancy lag time for this system was in the range of 5—15 min. The in vitro floating test clearly showed that most of the microspheres floated for around 20 h. The microspheres with the higher concentration of polymer were more floatable than those with lower concentrations of polymer. This may be attributed to a decrease in density of microspheres with an increase in polymer concentration (Table 2).

In Vitro Drug Release The effect of ethyl cellulose concentration on clarithromycin release from different batches of microspheres is shown in Fig. 2. A significant (p<0.01) decrease in the rate and extent of drug release was observed with the increase in polymer concentration in microspheres and could be attributed to increase in the density of the polymer matrix and also increase in the diffusional path length which the drug molecules have to traverse. Similarly, Fig. 3 indicates the effect of carbopol concentration on release properties of clarithromycin from microspheres. An increase in carbopol concentration caused retardation in drug release from the microspheres because of an increase in the viscosity of polymer solution and formation larger size microspheres.

The release of clarithromycin from these batches were
characterized by an initial phase of high release (burst effect) followed by a second phase of moderate release. This bi-phasic pattern of release is a characteristic feature of matrix diffusion kinetics.\textsuperscript{11,27} The initial burst effect was considerably reduced with increase in polymer concentration. The fact that an increase in polymer concentration resulted in better incorporation efficiency could be the reason for the observed decrease in burst effect since the amount of surface associated drug decreases with an increase in incorporation efficiency. The results shown in Fig. 4 indicated that rate and extent of drug release was significantly \( p<0.05 \) increased from the microspheres with increasing the concentration of clarithromycin. Ethyl cellulose is insoluble at pH 2.0 whereas the solubility of clarithromycin is pH dependent \( i.e., \) it dissolves at a lower pH below 3.0.\textsuperscript{28} The initial burst effect was always higher for batches (FBMC10 and FBMC9) containing higher concentration of drug. This is probably due to higher solubility of drug in low pH of dissolution medium.

The release data obtained were evaluated kinetically by zero order, first order and Higuchi model.\textsuperscript{29} According to the determination coefficients \( (r^2) \) release data was best characterized by Higuchi model suggesting a similarity to release from a matrix \[ \text{[Higuchi]}. \] The linear regression analysis is summarized in Table 3. The examination of coefficient of determination \( (r^2) \) values indicated that drug release followed the diffusion control mechanism from the microspheres. Further, to understand the drug release mechanism, the data were fitted to Peppas exponential model\textsuperscript{30} \( M_t/M_{\infty} = K^n \), where \( M_t/M_{\infty} \) is fraction of drug released after time \( t \) and \( K \) is kinetic constant and \( n \) is release exponent which characterizes the drug transport mechanism. Values for release exponent \( n \) are listed in Table 3. The values of \( n \) were in the range of 0.4225—0.6945, which was further indicative of the drug release following a diffusion control mechanism.

**Stability of Clarithromycin in Floating-Bioadhesive Microspheres** Most of present studies on gastroretentive formulations containing antibiotics for anti-\( H. \) pylori therapy are focused on prolonging the gastric retarding time. The stability of antibiotics in acidic medium was neglected. In fact, number of antibiotics, such as erythromycin, was reported with strong in vitro \( H. \) pylori clearance effect but with poor in vivo result. The one of the reasons was due to their instability in acidic medium and poor bioavailability at local site of infection. Clarithromycin was also reported to be unstable in mediums with low pH.\textsuperscript{31,32} To act effectively against \( H. \) pylori in the stomach, the released clarithromycin has to remain stable in the harsh acidic environment of the gastric lumen. The degradation rate constant and the degradation half life of the clarithromycin in SGF pH 2.0 were found to be 0.4521 h\(^{-1} \) and 1.53 h respectively. The stability of clarithromycin from floating-bioadhesive microspheres was determined in SGF pH 2.0 and shown in Fig. 5. The percentage of main peak area of clarithromycin on HPLC spectrum was calculated for both amount of clarithromycin, which is released from microspheres and amount of clarithromycin, which is retained in the microspheres at 1, 2, 4 and 6 h time interval after suspending the microspheres in SGF pH 2.0. The percentage of main peak of clarithromycin on HPLC spectrum was 85.23, 77.56, 66.45 and 54.45 respectively at 1, 2, 4 and 6 h time intervals after being suspended in SGF pH 2.0. The main stable in the harsh acidic environment of the gastric lumen. The degradation rate constant and the degradation half life of the clarithromycin in SGF pH 2.0 were found to be 0.4521 h\(^{-1} \) and 1.53 h respectively. The stability of clarithromycin from floating-bioadhesive microspheres was determined in SGF pH 2.0 and shown in Fig. 5. The percentage of main peak area of clarithromycin on HPLC spectrum was calculated for both amount of clarithromycin, which is released from microspheres and amount of clarithromycin, which is retained in the microspheres at 1, 2, 4 and 6 h time interval after suspending the microspheres in SGF pH 2.0. The percentage of main peak of clarithromycin (Clarithromycin released from microspheres) at 1, 2, 4 and 6 h time interval were reduced to 63.12, 35.42, 14.23 and 6.56 respectively. On other hand the percentage of main peak area of clarithromycin (Clarithromycin retained in microspheres) were 85.23, 77.56, 66.45 and 54.45 respectively at 1, 2, 4 and 6 h time intervals after being suspended in SGF pH 2.0 medium. The clarithromycin, which is entrapped in the microspheres, were significantly more stable than that released from microspheres. The result indicated that microspheres

Table 3. In Vitro Drug Release Kinetic of Floating-Bioadhesive Microspheres of Clarithromycin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Batch Code</th>
<th>Drug release kinetic, correlation coefficients ( (r^2) )</th>
<th>Release exponent ( (n) )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zero order</td>
<td>First order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC1</td>
<td>0.7621</td>
<td>0.9507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC2</td>
<td>0.8202</td>
<td>0.9715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC3</td>
<td>0.8770</td>
<td>0.9823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC4</td>
<td>0.9212</td>
<td>0.9771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC5</td>
<td>0.7855</td>
<td>0.9651</td>
</tr>
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<td>FBMC6</td>
<td>0.8669</td>
<td>0.9831</td>
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<td>FBMC7</td>
<td>0.7855</td>
<td>0.9651</td>
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<td>FBMC8</td>
<td>0.8125</td>
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<td>FBMC9</td>
<td>0.8369</td>
<td>0.9708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBMC10</td>
<td>0.9507</td>
<td>0.9715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) By regression analysis. b) By following peppas equation.
could help protect clarithromycin from degrading in gastric acid and it may improve the therapeutic efficiency of the clarithromycin in the treatment of *H. pylori* infection.

**In Vivo H. pylori Clearance Efficiency**  
*In vivo* *H. pylori* clearance study of prepared FBMC was carried out with an animal model-mongolian gerbils infected with human *H. pylori*. The mean bacterial count in gerbil's stomach after oral administration of the both clarithromycin suspension and FBMC under fed condition at doses of 3, 30, 60 and 90 mg/kg once daily for three consecutive days in *H. pylori* infected gerbil's stomach are presented in Table 4. In the control group receiving no drug, around $10^{1.45}$ CFU/organism were considered to be $10^{1.45}$ to calculate the mean. Values are means±S.E. **(both significant level in reference to control).**

![Fig. 6](image)

**Table 4. Effect of Repetitive Administration of Clarithromycin Floating–Bioadhesive Microspheres and Clarithromycin Suspension against Gastric Infection Caused by *H. pylori* in Mongolian Gerbils**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formulations</th>
<th>Dose (mg/kg)</th>
<th>Clearance rate (no. of gerbils cleared infection/total no. (%)</th>
<th>Bacterial recovery (log CFU/stomach)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placebo (Control)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0/0 (0)</td>
<td>7.86±0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarithromycin suspension</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0/0 (0)</td>
<td>7.55±0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1/0 (17)</td>
<td>6.95±0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2/0 (33)</td>
<td>4.59±0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4/0 (66)</td>
<td>2.72±0.74**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarithromycin floating-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2/0 (33)</td>
<td>4.68±0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bioadhesive microspheres (FBMC)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5/0 (83)</td>
<td>2.35±0.57**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6/0 (100)</td>
<td>ND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9/0 (100)</td>
<td>ND</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FBMC, Floating-mucoadhesive microspheres of clarithromycin. CFU, colony-forming unit, ND, not detected.  

**a**) Drugs were administered once daily for 3 d as clarithromycin.  

**b**) Bacterial cell counts less than $10^{1.45}$ CFU were considered to be $10^{1.45}$ to calculate the mean. Values are means±S.E., **(p<0.01)** (both significant level in reference to control).

Results clearly indicates that due to stomach specific delivery of clarithromycin from FBMC, it is equally effective at much lower dose than the clarithromycin suspension.

The *H. pylori* therapy with FBMC at clarithromycin doses of 60 and 90 mg/kg, the bacteria were completely cleared in gerbil’s stomachs and no bacterial colony was detected in the original dilution from all gastric sample from these groups indicating 100% clearance rate and 83% of inhibition was obtained with FBMC at clarithromycin dose of 30 mg/kg. This is because of the longer residence time of FBMC in the stomach, which enabled high concentration of clarithromycin to reach the bacteria underlying the gastric mucosal layer. The effect of the therapy was further confirmed by PCR technique, which has the propensity to detect bacteria more sensitively than microbial culture method. The PCR sample of DNA band was clearly detectable at a concentration of $10^5$ dilution of the original DNA extract (Fig. 6a) from the clarithromycin suspension (all dose level) treated group and control group. On the other hand the PCR sample was barely detectable in the original DNA extract at clarithromycin dose of 3 and 30 mg/kg and was undetectable in the original DNA extract at clarithromycin dose of 60 and 90 mg/kg from the FBMC treated group (Fig. 6b). This study clearly demonstrates that, as expected the prepared floating-bioadhesive microspheres of clarithromycin could stay in the gastrointestinal tract for a longer period of time and could keep the entrapped clarithromycin stable in gastric surrounding. This result also indicates clearly that clarithromycin administered in the form of FBMC more effectively clears *H. pylori* from gerbils stomach than clarithromycin administered in the form of a suspension. Further, FBMC may provide therapeutic concentration at a much lower dose, which may significantly reduce the adverse effects.

**Conclusion**

*In vitro* buoyancy and *in vitro* mucoadhesive studies clearly indicates that the prepared formulations possess both floating and bioadhesive properties. These properties enable the microspheres to adhere to the gastric mucosal surface and...
stay in stomach for prolonged periods and could ensure the stability of clarithromycin in gastric environment, which eventually resulted in better eradication of *H. pylori* than the conventional suspension. FBMC can be used as a stomach site-specific drug delivery system of clarithromycin for treatment of peptic ulcer disease caused by *H. pylori* and FBMC may provide therapeutic concentration at a much lower dose, also may reduce the adverse effects.

**Acknowledgement**

The authors would like to acknowledge Dr. Gopalanath (Microbiology Lab, Institute of Medical Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India) for providing *H. pylori* strains and facilities for in vivo studies. P. S. Rajinikanth would like to thank to University Grants Commission, New Delhi, India, for providing Senior Research Fellowship for the duration of this work.

**References**