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### THE PROSPECTS OF MEDICAL APPLICATION OF METAL-BASED NANOPARTICLES AND NANOMATERIALS

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*Current studies, dedicated to metallic (gold, silver, iron, and copper) nanomaterials are reviewed in this paper. These metals own unique physical and chemical properties which determine their application. The medical application of metallic nanomaterials includes therapy and prophylaxis of diseases, development of new drugs and improvement of conventional ones, nanodiagnostics. Nevertheless some aspects concerning the introduction of the nanometals into medical practice need further profound research.*

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**Key words:** nanotechnology, nanomedicine, nanopharmacology, metallic nanoparticles, nanomaterials.

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**Introduction.** The evolving of nanotechnology generated different nanoscale-sized materials and metal-based ones are one of the most interesting and promising among them. Nowadays thousands of articles in various specialized journals all-over the world are published and dedicated to different metallic nanomaterials. The unique physical (e. g. plasmonic resonance, fluorescent enhancement) and chemical (e. g. catalytic activity enhancement) properties of nanometals are as a result of high quantity of surface situated atoms and high area/volume relation. Metal nanoparticles found their application in engineering, chemistry, biology, medicine. The medical applications of metal nanomaterials (nanoparticles, nanocomposites, nanocoatings) may be divided as follows:

- therapy (e. g. photothermal cancer treatment using nanogold [72], or using cytotoxic effect of iron-based nanomaterials [56]);
- specific detection of biomolecules and drugs, nanodiagnostics [52, 77];
- prophylaxis (e. g. antimicrobial silver nanocoating on catheters for prevention of infections [144]);
- creating new drugs and medicinal products or improvement of conventional ones [21, 76, 129].

Nevertheless, some fields of using nanometals (controllable commercial synthesis, toxicological properties, safety for environment, and ethical issues) are still requiring further profound research. The aim of this review article is to focus on the most studied metal nanoparticles (gold, silver, iron, copper), their potential use in medicine.

**Nanogold.** In biomedical researches most often used types of gold nanoparticles (AuNPs) are nanorods, nanospheres and nanoshells [31, 72, 142]. Nanotubes, nanoparticles with irregular form and nanocoatings are used less frequently.

Intensive researches in nanomedicine have formed a distinguished direction – **nanodiagnostics**. Nanodiagnostics – is an application of nanotechnology and nanomaterials in clinical diagnostics [77]. According to the classification of [16] diagnostics, based on gold nanoparticles, may be divided into three approaches:

1. *Utilization of the AuNPs color change upon aggregation.* The best characterized example being AuNPs functionalized with ssDNA capable of specifically hybridizing

to a complementary target for the detection of specific nucleic acid sequences in biological samples [141].

2. *Use of AuNPs as a core/seed that can be tailored with a wide variety of surface functionalities to provide highly selective nanoproboscopes for diagnosis (e. g. electrochemical immunosensors).* An integrated automatic electrochemical immunosensor array has been designed for the simultaneous detection of type-5 hepatitis virus antigens (i. e. hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, hepatitis D, and hepatitis E) [148]. Initially, type-5 hepatitis virus antibodies were immobilized onto a self-made electrochemical sensor array using nanogold particles and protein A as matrices. The detection is based on the potential change before and after the antigen-antibody interaction by using a 2-electrode system. The developed immunosensor array allows simultaneous determination of type-5 hepatitis virus antigens in 5 min. The detection limit of the sensor array was  $< \text{or} = 1 \text{ ng/mL}$ . Based on gold label silver stain and coupled with multiplex asymmetric polymerase chain reaction analysis, the visual DNA microarray for simultaneous, sensitive, and specific detection of human immunodeficiency virus type-1 and *Treponema pallidum* was developed [149].

An electrochemical impedimetric immunosensor was developed for ultrasensitive determination of insulin-like growth factor-1 based on immobilization of a specific monoclonal antibody on AuNPs modified gold electrode [131]. Nanogold in size of 10 nm was used to label goat anti-human IgG to obtain an immunonanogold probe for IgG [150].

3. *Use of AuNPs in electrochemical methods, associated with metal deposition for signal amplification.* A sandwich-type electrochemical immunosensor with enhanced sensitivity was designed for detection of alpha-fetoprotein (marker of hepatocarcinoma) in biological fluids by using nanogold-enclosed titania nanoparticle-labeled secondary antibody on a gold-silver-graphene (AuAgGP) hybrid nanosheet-functionalized glassy carbon electrode [145]. The presence of the AuAgGP nanosheets enhanced the immobilized amount of biomolecules and improved the electrochemical properties of the immunosensor.

AuNPs are also used in **pharmacotherapy of diseases**. Photothermal therapy – is a method of treatment, grounded on a phenomenon of surface plasmon resonance. AuNPs absorb near-infrared light and convert its energy into local heat. This process is accompanied by destruction and bubbles formation [121]. AuNPs linked to antibodies can selectively destroy the target-cells under influence of Ti:Sapphire laser. Gold nanoparticles conjugated to anti-epidermal growth factor receptor monoclonal antibodies specifically and homogeneously bind to the surface of cancer cells with 600 % greater affinity than to noncancerous cells [78]. Intravenous administration of AuNPs enhanced radiation therapy when treating the radiation resistant and highly aggressive mouse head and neck squamous cell carcinoma model [66]. AuNPs thus offer a novel class of selective photothermal agents using mostly for treatment of superficial tumors (e. g. squamous-cell carcinoma) [50, 71]. Another important area of photothermal therapy application – is treatment of infections caused by multiresistant strains of microorganisms. For example, gold nanorods that have been covalently linked to primary antibodies destroyed the pathogenic Gram-negative bacterium, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* [121].

Nanogold is used in **drugs detection** in biological objects. E. E. Ferapontova et al. [52] designed a biosensor for detection of the bronchodilator theophylline in serum. The 5'-disulfide-functionalized end of the RNA aptamer sequence was immobilized on a gold electrode, and the 3'-amino-functionalized end was conjugated with a ferrocene redox probe. Upon binding of theophylline the aptamer switches conformation from an open unfolded state to a closed hairpin-type, resulting in the increased electron-transfer efficiency. Theophylline is detected with high selectivity in the presence of caffeine and theobromine. S. Y. Hou et al. [68] developed a dot-blot gold nanoparticle immunoassay to detect target molecules, such as dioxin, digoxin and mercury salts.

Gold nanoparticles are used in **cytological and cytogenetic studies** to get clear images of cell structures and investigate their functions. In research of K. Oyelere et

al. [123] gold nanorods covalently conjugated with a nuclear localization signal peptide were incubated with an immortalized benign epithelial cell line and an oral cancer cell line. Dark field light surface plasmon resonance scattering images demonstrated that nanorods are located in both the cytoplasm and nucleus of both cell lines. The Raman spectra reveals the difference between benign and cancer cell lines. The work represents an important step toward both imaging and Raman-based intracellular biosensing.

G. Guigas et al. [62] have used uorescence correlation spectroscopy to determine the anomalous diffusion properties of uorescently tagged gold beads in the cytoplasm and the nucleus of living cells in normal and osmotic stress conditions. Another important research [91] was devoted to the imaging of pH in live cells by mobile and biocompatible nanosensors using surface-enhanced Raman scattering of 4-mercapto-benzoic acid on gold nanoaggregates. Designed sensor enables measurements over a wide pH range without the use of multiple probes. I. U. Vakarelski et al. [155] have fabricated robust nanosurgical needles suitable for single cell operations by modifying multiwalled carbon nanotube-terminated atomic force microscopy tips with an outer shell of gold. The terminal diameters of the final fabricated tips were approximately 30–40 nm, such tips can easily penetrate the plasma membrane of living cells at the smallest indentation depths (100–200 nm) and lowest penetration forces (100–200 pN) currently reported for these procedures. An outer layer of gold enhanced their versatility and ease of conjugation with a variety of chemicals, nanoparticles, drugs and biological molecules.

A new method of optical microscopy – antenna-based near-field optical microscopy – was developed by C. Hoppener et al. [67]. An optical antenna in the form of a single gold nanoparticle to localize incident laser radiation to 50 nm (significantly smaller than the diffraction limit of light) was used. This approach enables researchers to optically resolve individual plasma-membrane-bound  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  pumps immersed in aqueous environments and to determine the distribution of interprotein distances. Antenna-based near-field optical microscopy will make it possible to resolve, identify, and probe single membrane proteins in live cells with true protein resolution of 5–10 nm. Molecular study of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  pumps is important for treatment of such diseases as arterial hypertension, heart disorders, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, sickle cell anemia, muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, chronic kidney diseases.

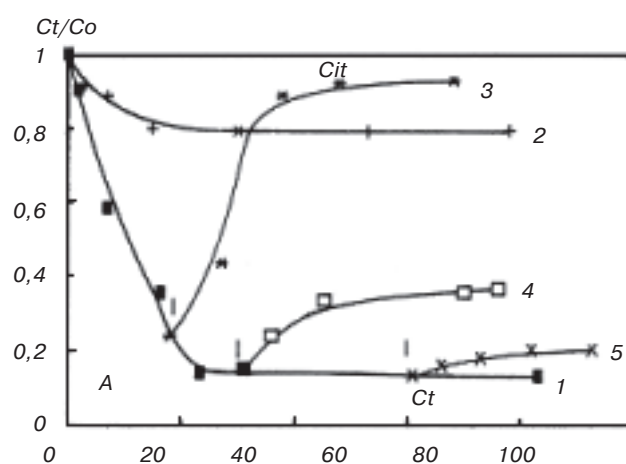
M. Hu et al. [70] developed a labeling method to prepare protein 2D arrays using AuNPs interconnecting genetic tag sites on proteins. As an example, mycobacterium tuberculosis 20S proteasomes tagged with 6x-histidine were assembled into 2D arrays using 3,9 nm AuNPs functionalized with nickel-nitrilotriacetic acid.

AuNPs are used in drug and gene delivery. Lamin A/C, an important nuclear envelope protein, was effectively silenced by lamin A/C-siRNA delivered by charge-reversal functional gold nanoparticles, whose knockdown efficiency was better than that of commercial Lipofectamine 2000 [63]. Liposomes labeled with nanogold were used to target atheromas in a Watanabe heritable hyperlipidemic (WHHL) rabbit model. Liposomes were concentrated in areas of lipoprotein-associated phospholipase  $\text{A}_2$  expression. Modified liposomes can be delivered to the shoulder regions of advanced atheromas in WHHL rabbits and may be useful therapeutically for targeting metabolically active plaque [156].

Although gold compounds have been used as a potential drug for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, some adverse effects, such as skin irritation, dermatitis, stomatitis, contact allergy, and hypersensitivity reactions were associated with over exposure to gold compounds [127]. According to Y. Pan et al. [125] the cytotoxicity of AuNPs was checked by including them with various incubating cell lines; for example, cervix carcinoma epithelial cells (HeLa), SK-Mel-28 melanoma cells (SK-Mel-28), L929 mouse fibroblasts (L929) and mouse monocytic/macrophage cells. There are two types of cell death in the cell lines: a rapid cell necrosis (caused by membrane damage; the products released by this necrotic process are also highly inflammatory) and apoptosis (doesn't involve membrane damage and inflammation). W. S. Cho et al. [33] studied the *in vivo* toxic effects of 13 nm size polyethylenglycol- (PEG) coated AuNPs

on mice. The nanoparticles were seen to induce acute inflammation and apoptosis in the liver. They accumulated in the liver and spleen for up to 7 days after injection and had prolonged blood circulation times. Because PEG-coated AuNPs are widely used in biomedical applications these effects have obvious clinical implications.

However with the increasing interest in studying gold nanoparticles, one should pay attention to their biosafety and peculiarities of interaction with living cells. Z. R. Ulberg group [1–5, 41–44, 85, 153, 154] have shown mechanisms of some bacteria cells interaction with spherical gold nanoparticles of average size 20 nm. The cells used in the experiments were representative heterotrophic bacteria, such as *Bacillus cereus*, *Bacillus fascidiosus*, *Bacillus subtilis*, and *Pseudomonas iodinum*, and microalgae such as *Chlorella vulgaris*. Intriguingly, the interaction occurred in two stages: the nanoparticles were initially bound to the cell very weakly and reversibly but in the second stage, the reversible aggregation gradually became irreversible over 1h. The first stage, reversible aggregation, was the most peculiar. It was very sensitive to specific metabolism inhibitors and, consequently, was under the control of the cell's energetic metabolism. Fig. 1 demonstrates results with pentachlorophenol.

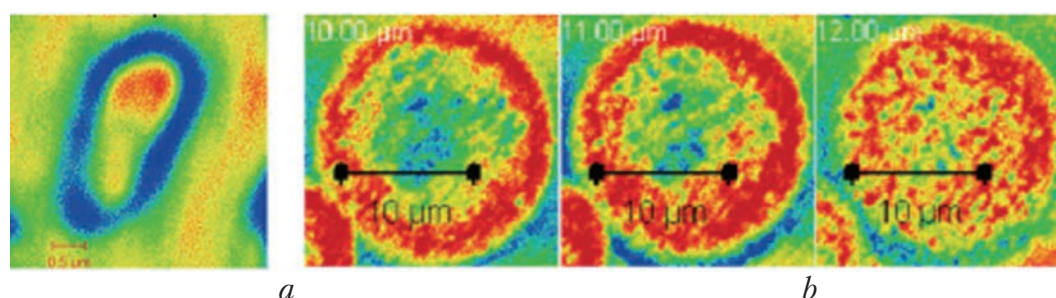


**Fig. 1.** Kinetic curves of the gold nanoparticles adsorption by bacteria *Bacillus cereus* B-4368, where  $C_t$  is a relative concentration of gold nanoparticles in the solution. Curve 1 is uninterrupted adsorption. Curve 2 is adsorption when pentachlorophenol is initially added to the solution. Curves 3, 4 and 5 represent the kinetics after injection of pentachlorophenol at different time points [44]

Injection of pentachlorophenol released gold nanoparticles back into the solution. The amount of released particles decreased with increasing incubation time of the nanoparticles with the cells, suggesting that the aggregation went from reversible to irreversible. Several other inhibitors were used that shared a common feature – they dissipate the proton-motive force or disturb the work of ion pumps that generate this force. The inhibitors were sodium azide and rotenone for blocking the respiratory chain, dicyclohexylcarbodiimide (DCCD) that inhibited proton ATPase, and arsenate that damaged synthesis of ATP. The reversible aggregation was specific for live cells only. Dead cells aggregating with gold nanoparticles did not exhibit this feature. Inactivation of the bacterial cells by thermal shock resulted in losing the capability to accumulate colloidal gold. Most convincing was influence of light on the interaction of algae cells with colloidal gold: cells of green microalgae, *Chlorella vulgaris*, sufficiently decreased the amount of accumulated gold after putting the cell suspension in a dark box [44, 85, 152]. These data shows that interaction of live cells with AuNPs depended on the membrane-energy transformation processes.

During this experimental work the peculiarities of size-dependent interaction of synthesized spherical gold nanoparticles (average sizes 10, 20, 30 and 45 nm) with bacteria (probiotic strains) and eukaryotic (CHO-K1 and U937 cell lines) cells have

been determined [73, 132]. Confocal-microscopic images of *E. coli* bacteria cells and U937 eukaryotic cell with accumulated gold nanoparticles are presented on fig. 2.



**Fig. 2.** Confocal-microscopic image of *E. coli* bacteria cells (a) and U937 eukaryotic cell (b) with accumulated gold nanoparticles

Stimulation on 20–40 % the  $H^+$ -ATP-ase activity of bacteria cells' membrane fraction, on 30–50 % –  $\beta$ -lactamase activity of *E. coli* bacteria and stabilization in concentration 1,1 mcg/ml by metal of the gramnegative (*E. coli*) as well as grampositive (*Ent. faecalis*) bacteria cell walls by gold nanoparticles with average size 30 nm has been established [7, 132, 133].

The concentration optimum (0,1–1 ng metal per cell) and fast kinetics (3–5 min) of the process of AuNPs contact interaction with eukaryotic tumor U937 cells have been determined in the *in vitro* experiments. AuNPs size-dependent influence on  $Na^+, K^+$ -ATP-ase and lactate dehydrogenase activities of U937 tumor cells have been shown [133, 134].

In works [43, 44] with using of genotoxicity as biomarker of nanomaterials' risk assessment the 30 and 45 nm AuNPs biosafety under the conditions of interaction with CHO-K1 as well as U937 cells has been established. In contrast, the 10 and 20 nm AuNPs possess genotoxic influence for both types of the cells.

Thus, AuNPs are used in molecular diagnostics, therapy, drugs detection, cytologic studies. It should be specially noted that AuNPs offer new possibilities in the therapy of cancer and infectious diseases. However, there are certain difficulties in implementing them in practical activities related to the problem of reproducibility, biological and toxicological aspects [15, 151]. Nevertheless, in future it is hoped that these issues will be resolved, because AuNPs have opened new possibilities in medicine, unattainable by traditional methods.

**Nanosilver.** Silver has been known for its antimicrobial properties since ancient times [4]. However, the first medical preparations with this metal were made only in the XIX-th century. Silver nitrate was quite effective agent against different microorganisms but in the 40s of the XX-th century interest to silver preparations had decreased greatly, when antibiotics were discovered [45]. Later, with the rise of nanotechnology this interest increased again, when it became possible to manufacture different materials with defined shape and size at the nanoscale level. Nowadays nanostructured silver is studied very extensively especially for medical purposes.

**Pharmacological properties of nanosilver** In contrary to conventional silver preparations, nanostructured ones have improved pharmacokinetics [20, 45]. Nanosilver has significant anti-inflammatory effect that was shown by K. C. Bhol et al. [21] and J. Jain et al. [76], immunomodulative [21] and antiviral [17, 48, 97, 98, 108, 143] effects. But the most prominent and well-studied is antimicrobial effect of nanosilver. It is known that silver nanoparticles and nano-coatings could be an effective agent against not only gram-negative and positive bacteria but also fungi in concentration of about tens milligrams per liter [92, 137]. Furthermore, some researchers report about synergistic effect of silver nanoparticles and antibiotics [51, 76]. Nevertheless the mechanism of antimicrobial effect has not been completely clarified yet. The possible mechanism of silver nanoparticles action on the

microbial cell was described in works of Q. Li et al. [103] and D. M. Aruguete et al. [11]. Nanoparticles accumulate at the surface of the cell wall, degrade lipopolysaccharides and form “pits” of high permeability. Then nanoparticles penetrate cell wall through this pits, release silver cations in cytoplasm, cause the forming of reactive oxygen species, and bind to cytochromes thus blocking respiratory chain. Some authors allow that silver ions can interact with DNA and block its replication [45]. It is suggested that antimicrobial properties of silver nanoparticles are dependent on their geometrical parameters. Thus O. Choi et al. [35] showed that inhibition of nitrifying bacteria is correlated with fraction of 5 nm-sized silver nanoparticles. S. Pal et al. [124] performed a study which elucidates dependence of antimicrobial activity of silver nanoparticles from their geometry. They determined that triangle-shaped nanoparticles are more effective than spherical and rod-shaped types against *E. coli*. Despite the fact that silver has broad spectrum of antimicrobial activity and resistance to this metal is formed very rarely, there are already mentioned some mechanisms of resistance formation in *Salmonella typhimurium*, *E. coli* strains [36] and *Bacillus cereus* [102]. Researchers also note that resistance may be as a result of using nanosilver in concentrations below minimal inhibition concentration (MIC) [42]. Another effects of nanosilver are anti-inflammatory and immunomodulative which are associated with suppression of cytokines synthesis, and inhibition of matrix metalloproteinases [21, 45].

**Nanosilver as a potential treatment agent**

With increasing interest to nanostructured silver a number of medical preparations and products were made with adding of this metal. These are predominantly topical medicines such as crèmes [21], gels [76] and dressings [20, 45]. Some of them passed clinical trials and available for patients' treatment [45]. Preparations with nanosilver are effective in treatment of wounds and burns, allergic contact dermatitis and skin microbial infections. Silver nanoparticles could be combined with natural or synthetic polymers to improve their efficiency and obtain new effects. For example, chitosan-silver composites have not only antibacterial activity but also decrease blood clotting time [111]. Another study has been dedicated to the so-called polyrhodamine-silver nanofibers, which have significant antimicrobial effect which was greater than conventional silver-sulfadiazine preparation [92].

**Other medical applications of nanosilver**

Silver nano-coatings could be effective in preventing hospital infections when deposited on intravenous catheters [144]. The ability of silver nanoparticles to increase greatly fluorescence emission formed the basis of so-called “silver enhancement” technique which is useful for diagnostic purposes [29]. Silver nanoparticles as well as gold own specific optical properties, and can be useful in surface enhanced Raman spectroscopy [83], sensing and imaging [101].

**Toxicological aspects of using silver nanoparticles**

Despite nanostructured silver being one of the most extensively studied nanomaterials, the toxicological aspects of its use still remain a question. It is necessary to provide *in vitro* studies of cytotoxicity, genotoxicity, and mutagenic action of nanoparticles, and *in vivo* studies, as well due to a lack of data about acute and chronic toxicity of nanosilver. It is known that silver nanoparticles may be cytotoxic to both differentiated and non-differentiated cell lines [10, 115, 138]. Genotoxic action on cells is important point in assessing of nanomaterials safety. Nowadays it is determined that silver nanoparticles with different shape, size and stabilizers could be genotoxic to prokaryotic [59] and eukaryotic cells [6, 39, 95, 119, 126, 160], including human cell lines [12, 54]. However, the cytotoxic concentrations were higher than therapeutic. Most researchers associate cytotoxic and genotoxic effects with formation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) under the influence of Ag<sup>+</sup>-ions, promoting of DNA-damage and generation of oxidative stress [89]. Studies provided on different aquatic invertebrates and pisces also show that silver can be toxic to this organisms and impair their reproductive system [23, 61, 96, 160, 165].

The acute toxicity data concerning silver nanoparticles is poor and quite contradictory. The LD<sub>50</sub> of nanocrystalline silver (spherical nanoparticles 7–20 nm in diam-

eter) in form of gel for topical use was assessed about more than 2000 mg/kg for Sprague-Dawley rats (skin application), and researchers made a conclusion that this nanomaterial could be considered as safe for topical use [76]. In the study of G. Ordzhonikidze et al. [122] the LD<sub>50</sub> for intraperitoneal injection of stabilized silver nanoparticles (size 9nm ± 6 nm) for BALB/c mice was  $1,9 \cdot 10^{-6}$  mg/gm of animal weight. The changes in organs and systems function after repeated administration of silver nanoparticles (sub-chronic and chronic toxicity) are also unclear. In the studies of J. H. Ji et al. [79, 90, 147] 28-day experiments were established with two routes of administration (inhalation and oral) on Sprague-Dawley rats. They determined in what organs nanoparticles could accumulate and how did biochemical parameters changed during experiment. Researchers also marked that accumulation of silver nanoparticles in rat female kidneys is more than two-fold higher than in male ones.

According to mentioned above we can make a conclusion that nanomaterials made of silver or with adding this metal are very prospective in context of their medical applications. Their potential use includes:

- development of new medical preparations and improvement of conventional ones;
- imaging and nanodiagnostics;
- prophylaxis of hospital infections.

Due to pharmacological properties of silver nanoparticles (antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulative) there is a necessity in further research concerned with toxicological aspects and safety for human use and environment.

**Iron-based nanomaterials.** The more bulk iron is dispersed, the more evident become its physical and chemical properties. As a result one can observe enhancement of chemical reactivity and magnetic features of micro-sized iron particles that made them useful in chemical industry as catalysts, in electronics as magnetic data carriers. Further miniaturization in the nanoscale direction that has taken place during the last two decades has led to thorough studying of nanoiron. Term “nanoiron” has an integrative meaning and involves nanosize iron-based materials such as zero-valent iron (ZVI) nanoparticles, iron oxide nanoparticles also known as superparamagnetic iron-oxide nanoparticles (SPIONs), and iron-based nanocomposites. The main advantages of nanoiron among other nanomaterials are relatively low toxicity and biodegradation. In addition, iron is relatively cheap and widespread material [74].

#### **Zero-valent iron nanoparticles**

Iron typically exists in the environment in an oxidized state, and as such, ZVI is a manufactured material. The use of ZVI as a remediation agent in groundwater and soil treatment started in 1990s when granular ZVI was first employed in permeable reactive barrier systems. Recent research in the utilization of ZVI nanoparticles for treatment of contaminated soils and groundwater can be regarded as an extension of the ZVI technology [106].

ZVI nanoparticles typically exhibit core-shell morphology. Due to oxidation of surface atoms metallic core is coated with iron oxide (maghemite and magnetite) or hydroxide shell. While ZVI acts as electron donor during chemical reactions, oxide/hydroxide shell is involved in chemical complexes formation (chemisorption) [114]. In addition, corrosion of iron in the presence of oxygen leads to formation of hydroxyl radicals and other oxidants [80]. According to these processes ZVI nanoparticles cause degradation of various organic contaminants, such as chlorinated organic solvents, organochloride pesticides (lindane, DDT), polychlorinated biphenyls, organic dyes. ZVI nanoparticles can rapidly remove and/or reduce inorganic ions, such as metal ions Cd, Ni, Zn, As, Cr, Ag, Hg, U, and Pb, as well as notorious inorganic anions like perchlorate and nitrate, and also have relatively higher capacity than conventional sorptive media and granular iron particles [32, 49, 105, 162].

Several groups revealed that ZVI nanoparticles exhibit antimicrobial properties against Gram-negative *E. coli*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens* and Gram-positive *Bacillus subtilis var. niger* microorganisms [40, 88, 100]. C. Lee et al. [100] reported that inactivation of *E. coli* by ZVI nanoparticles could be because of the penetration of the small

particles (size ranging from 10–80 nm) into *E. coli* membranes. ZVI nanoparticles could then react with intracellular oxygen, leading to oxidative stress and causing disruption of the cell membrane. In addition, iron oxide nanoparticles also possess antimicrobial properties. N. Tran et al. [152] showed that at the highest tested dose of polyvinylalcohol- (PVA) coated iron oxide nanoparticles (3 mg/mL), the growth of Gram-positive *Staphylococcus aureus* was inhibited significantly compared with the control samples.

**Superparamagnetic  
iron oxide nanoparticles  
(SPIONs)**

In great number of biomedical applications nanoparticles of iron oxide are widely exploited due to their chemical stability and low toxicity. SPIONs with appropriate surface chemistry can be used for numerous *in vivo* applications, such as MRI contrast enhancement, hyperthermia, drug delivery, tissue repair, immunoassay, detoxification of biological fluids, and cell separation. In addition SPIONs are used for treatment of iron deficiency anaemia (IDA). The term superparamagnetic refers to the characteristic strong paramagnetic nature of the particles at nanoscale. SPIONs have much larger magnetic susceptibilities (compared with strictly paramagnetic materials) as the entire crystal aligns with the applied field due to its single crystal nature. Hence SPIONs are useful as contrast agents or for hyperthermic treatment of malignant tumours [81].

SPIONs typically consist of two components, an iron oxide core of one or more magnetic crystallites embedded in a coating. The SPIONs' core can be composed of magnetite ( $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$ ) and/or maghemite ( $\gamma\text{-Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ ). Maghemite is the ferrimagnetic cubic form of iron (III) oxide and it differs from the inverse spinel structure of magnetite through vacancies on the cation sublattice [37, 159].

Pharmacological properties of SPIONs are strongly dictated by their physicochemical properties, such as size, charge, hydrophilicity/hydrophobicity, and surface chemistry. Different monomeric (carboxylates, phosphates), inorganic (silica, gold, gadolinium), and polymeric (dextran, polyvinyl alcohol, chitosan, PEG etc.) surface coatings are used to improve nanoparticles' solubility, stability, reduce toxicity, immunogenicity and phagocytosis. The stability of a magnetic colloidal suspension results from the equilibrium between two attractive (van der Waals and magnetic dipolar) and two repulsive (electrostatic and steric) forces [99].

Size of SPIONs makes important contribution to their fate in organism. Categories of SPIONs, based on their overall diameter (including iron oxide core and hydrated coating), are noted in the literature as oral or micron-sized SPIONs between 300 nm and 3,5  $\mu\text{m}$ ; standard or small SPIONs (SSPIONs) at approximately 60–150 nm; ultrasmall SPIONs (USPIONs) of approximately 10–50 nm; and monocrystalline iron oxide nanoparticles (MION – a subset of USPIONs) of approximately 10–30 nm. MION are so named to underline the single crystal nature of their core. This is in contrast to SPIONs greater than 50 nm that are comprised of multiple iron oxide crystals [117].

Oral SPIONs, such as ferumoxsil (GastroMARK<sup>®</sup>, AMAG Pharmaceuticals) or ferristene (Abdoscan<sup>®</sup>, GE Healthcare), are used for contrast enhancement of gastrointestinal tract on MRI [65]. A sufficiently long blood half-time of USPIONs, such as ferumoxtran-10 (Combidex<sup>®</sup>, AMAG Pharmaceuticals), is in most cases favorable for delivering the magnetic nanoparticles in deep territories and then actively targeting the pathological tissues. These nanoparticles may improve visualization of metastatic lesions in reticuloendothelial system (RES) or be useful during MR-angiography [104].

SPIONs may be administered orally or intravenously. Iron from orally administered SPIONs may replenish iron pool in organism. The clearance of iron oxide nanoparticles intravenously injected is strongly related to the opsonization process, i.e. adsorption of opsonins, such as circulating plasma proteins including complement proteins, fibronectin, immunoglobulins, on the surface of nanoparticles. Opsonins are capable of interacting with specialized plasma membrane receptors on macrophages, and promoting the particle recognition by these cells. As a result, spleen, liver, and bone marrow become the most accessible tissues as they are rich in macrophages [75, 116]. Moreover,



SPIONs may accumulate in a focus of inflammation or degeneration associated with high phagocytic activity, such as atherosclerotic plaque, ischemic stroke etc [93, 136]. Nanoparticles larger than 200 nm are sequestered by the spleen via mechanical filtration and then are taken up by the RES [116]. Particles down to 100 nm or below, are poorly recognized by Kupffer cells. H. S. Choi et al. [34] recently demonstrated that particles with hydrodynamic size smaller than 5,5 nm are rapidly removed through renal clearance. Larger particles undergo biodegradation in RES and the metabolized iron is incorporated into hemoglobin [28, 158].

Taking into account the pharmacokinetics of nanoparticles it is possible to create nanoiron-based antianemic drugs. Ferumoxytol (Feraheme™, AMAG Pharmaceuticals) is an intravenous iron preparation for treatment of the anemia of chronic kidney disease. It is a carbohydrate-coated USPIO that is undergoing clinical trials [139].

**Composite inorganic iron-based nanomaterials** Attempts to create multifunctional nanomaterials or nanomaterials with improved magnetic properties than that of SPIONs led to the synthesis of composite inorganic iron-based nanomaterials. A. Figuerola et al. [53] categorized all these nanostructures based on their levels of compositional and/or structural complexity: 1) nanostructures made of an iron-based magnetic material different from iron oxide; 2) nanostructures whose morphology is not a sphere (e. g. hollow structure); 3) multi-material nanostructures, i. e. each of them is made of two or more domains of different inorganic materials joined together.

These approaches can be illustrated by the results of several recent researches.  $MnFe_2O_4$  nanoparticles have surpassed SPIONs as contrast agents for MRI *in vivo*. The enhanced sensitivity of  $MnFe_2O_4$  nanoparticles was proved *in vivo*, as the  $MnFe_2O_4$  nanoparticle enabled detection of a tumor mass as small as 50 mg [9]. Terbium-doped  $Fe_3O_4$  nanoparticles exhibiting at the same time magnetism and fluorescence, and the nanoparticles were non-toxic in the cytological studies [164]. S. T. Selvan et al. [140] reported a synthesis of  $Fe_2O_3$ -CdSe dumbbells by direct growth of a fluorescent CdSe domain on the surface of a preformed  $\gamma$ - $Fe_2O_3$  nanocrystal, after which the dumbbell was encapsulated in a silica shell. The final nanostructure was strongly fluorescent and magnetically active.

In addition to diagnostic applications, composite iron-based nanocrystals can be used for treatment of malignant tumours. Thus, FePt nanoparticles functionalized with luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone (LHRH) peptide have enhanced cytotoxicity against ovarian cancer cells that express LHRH-receptors. In the acidic environment of lysosomes, these nanoparticles release toxic iron species, which catalyze the formation of reactive oxygen. The latter is toxic for cells as it can damage lipid membranes, DNAs, and proteins [161]. Nanoshells  $CoS_2@FePt$  also possess better antitumor activity than that of cisplatin [58]. MR-visualisation of a tumour with its destruction prompted scientists to develop nanoshells  $Fe_3O_4@FePt$  [56].

Nanoiron-cells interaction strongly depends on physicochemical properties of the nanoparticles. T. Phenrat et al. [128] revealed on rodent brain cells that fresh ZVI nanoparticles was more toxic relative to its "aged" (partially oxidized during 11 months), oxidized (such as magnetite), and surface-modified counterparts. Partial or complete oxidation of ZVI nanoparticles reduce its "redox" activity and cytotoxicity. Surface coating also reduces toxicity of nanoparticles by limiting particles exposure to the cells. Comprehensive study of SPIONs (Ferumoxtran-10) and macrophages interaction *in vitro* showed, nanoparticles was not toxic to cells, did not activate them to produce pro-inflammatory cytokines (interleukin-12, interleukin-6, tumor necrosis factor- $\alpha$  or interleukin-1 $\beta$ ) or superoxide anions, was not chemotactic and did not interfere with Fc-receptor-mediated phagocytosis [118]. In another study phagocytic function of macrophages decreased after labelling with only 10  $\mu$ g Fe/mL SPIONs (ferucarbotran) [69].

Iron-based nanomaterials are thoroughly investigated according to their relatively low toxicity integrated with unique properties in order to exploit them in such biomedical applications as remediation of environment, development of a novel diagnostic tools and methods for individualized treatment.

**Nanocopper.** Among nanometals, copper (Cu) is the promising candidate for a development of new generation preparations. It's interesting that copper is a trace element and a toxic heavy metal to many living cells simultaneously. On the one hand, copper participates in many major metabolic processes [94]. On the other hand, it shows significant bacteriostatic and bactericidal activity, due to cell membrane, nucleic acid and protein damage [24, 55].

The mechanism of the antibacterial action of copper is predominantly based on DNA structure damage. Copper selectively binds to guanine residues in molecule and activates the oxidative stress that results in a break of one or both DNA strands and a base modification with formation of 8-hydroxy-2'-deoxyguanosine and other products [25, 86, 120].

Nowadays it is known that copper shows biocidal activity not only against bacteria, among which are methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* strains [55, 109, 157], but also against bacteriophages [24] and viruses, such as herpes simplex virus, human immunodeficiency virus [26], bronchitis and influenza viruses [27, 60].

Actually, nanomaterials generally readily participate in chemical reactions than larger objects of similar chemical nature. Therefore, nanomaterials show greater biological activity. This fact set scientists thinking about the possibility of copper nanoparticles' use as the antibacterial and biocidal agents.

Development and improvement of synthesis methods is a very important part in creation of nanometals and study of their properties. Among most frequently used, nanocopper synthesis techniques to date are reverse micelles, the reduction of a copper (II) acetate in water and 2-ethoxyethanol using hydrazine, the reduction of a copper chloride using  $\text{NaBH}_4$  in the nonionic water-in-oil (w/o) microemulsion, the sonochemical synthesis, the radiolysis method, the use of carbon nanotubes as a template, the photochemical synthesis and the laser ablation [64, 84].

The sonoelectrochemical synthesis method, initially proposed by J. Reisse et al. [130] and improved for nanotechnology purposes by A. Haas et al. [64], utilizes current and sonic pulses for nanoparticles generation.

S. Sahoo et al. [135] proposed the new  $\text{Cu}_2\text{O}$  nanostructures synthesis technique at the room temperature without utilization of any templates or additional reagents – the copper nanocrystals electric field self-assembly. Nanostructures are formed by the anodic oxidation of copper in deionized water.

The promising area of a nanocopper employment is the copper/low-density polyethylene nanocomposites (nano-Cu/LDPE) creation for copper-containing intrauterine devices (Cu-IUD) – one of the most effective contraceptive methods nowadays. Within the first few months of Cu-IUD application the typical side effects such as a uterine bleeding and a pain syndrome occur. That's the reason of the contraception method discontinuation [110]. Nano-Cu/LDPE were developed with the aim to eliminate this shortcoming of Cu-IUD. Devices with nanocomposites impede the burst release behavior of copper ions in the first few months of use. Therefore the side effects are minimized while high antifertility effectiveness is preserved [107].

Methods of synthesis of copper nanotubes, nanospheres, nanorods and nanorings are swiftly developing nowadays. These nanoscaled structures find their fields of application in the medicine. In 2003 I. A. Banerjee et al. [14] synthesized copper nanotubes with the biomineralization method using histidine-rich peptide nanotubes as a template. Copper nanotubes are utilized as the part of biosensors that combine properties of a nanoelectric component (electric properties of nanocopper change with a crystal size alteration) and a biochemical sensor (peptide templates conformation vary under the influence of biochemical factors).

Y. Chang et al. [30] synthesized hollow  $\text{Cu}_2\text{O}$  nanospheres that, due to the great free surface area and the ability to insert ligands into the structure of the cavity, can find an application as transport structures for drug-delivery [146].

Recently developed copper nanorings [19] and nanorods [163] have a potential application in the surface enhanced Raman spectroscopy (SERS), that's an effective method of chemical analysis, the aim of which is to determine a composition and a

molecular structure of observable objects. Metal nanorings and nanorods are promising nanostructures that can be used in SERS for the purpose of disease and pathological state diagnostics [13, 87].

The growth of synthetic nanoparticles' influence on the Earth's biosphere due to their increasing global production is projected in the coming years. From the position of this prospect an attention of scientists was drawn to aspects of nanomaterials safety, their impact on the environment and human health. Carrying out of continuous studies on toxicological properties of nanomaterials and taking into account their results in order to most effectively avoid a negative impact of nanoparticles on a human organism and the biosphere are of great importance [18]. Toxicological properties of nanoparticles depend on numerous factors, such as size, shape, surface area, mass, charge, solubility, purity, pharmacokinetic parameters (routes of entering the organism, absorbability, distribution and excretion) [38, 112].

Nanoscale size may promote the toxicity of particles owing to several reasons:

- the free surface area increases and therefore the dissolution speed and reactivity grow;
- particles are able to overcome cellular and intracellular barriers;
- nanomaterials can interact with subcellular structures, particularly with microtubules and DNA;
- as a result of previous three clauses, pathological and physiological responses of the organism may occur, among which are inflammation, fibrosis, allergic reactions, genotoxicity and carcinogenicity [73].

Impact of nanocopper on a human health and the environment is partially known, despite the increase in the rate of introduction of copper nanomaterials in medicine. A research in this direction is being actively conducted today [82, 113].

Despite the broad spectrum of toxic activity of nanomaterials, including copper nanostructures, nanotechnologies keep on developing and improving. Optimization of nanocopper synthesis and stabilization technology, change of its physicochemical properties are the main objectives in reducing toxicity of promising copper nanomaterials.

We can conclude that special attention of scientists is paid to copper nanomaterials. Medications with copper nanoparticles may be considered as promising antibacterial drugs. In addition, applied in IUD, nanocopper shows contraceptive activity with low intensity of side effects. Technology of copper nanoparticle synthesis has to be further improved with the purpose of generating homogeneous monodisperse nanocopper fractions. Toxicological properties of copper nanoparticles and means of safe nanopreparations' development have to be studied more thorough too.

**Conclusion.** Metallic nanomaterials are widely researched at present, and gold-, silver, iron-, and copper-based are promising in medical field. Nanogold found its application mostly in immunodiagnostics and cancer treatment, nanosilver is prospective antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and immunomodulative agent, nanoiron could be used in diagnostics and therapy of cancers and in treatment iron-deficiency states, and nanocopper may be useful in construction of biosensors, and as antimicrobial and contraceptive agent. Nevertheless, some aspects of medical usage of this nanomaterials such as problems of safety for human and environment are still need further profound research.

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ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ МЕДИЧНОГО ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ МЕТАЛІЧНИХ  
НАНОЧАСТИНОК ТА НАНОМАТЕРІАЛІВ

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У статті проаналізовано публікації останніх років, присвячені аспектам медичного застосування металічних наночастинок та наноматеріалів. Метали у наноструктурованому вигляді виявляють ряд унікальних хімічних, фізичних, фармакологічних властивостей, що дозволяє використовувати їх у діагностиці, лікуванні та профілактиці хвороб, розробці нових лікарських засобів і удосконаленні традиційних. Разом з тим деякі аспекти впровадження цих наноматеріалів залишаються маловивченими, зокрема токсикологічний.

**Ключові слова:** нанотехнології, наномедицина, нанофармакологія, металічні наночастинки, наноматеріали.

ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ МЕДИЦИНСКОГО ПРИМЕНЕНИЯ МЕТАЛЛИЧЕСКИХ  
НАНОЧАСТИЦ И НАНОМАТЕРИАЛОВ

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Проанализированы публикации последних лет, посвященные аспектам медицинского применения металлических наночастиц и наноматериалов. Металлы в наноструктурированном виде проявляют ряд уникальных химических, физических, фармакологических свойств, что позволяет использовать их в диагностике, лечении и профилактике болезней, разработке новых лекарственных средств и усовершенствовании традиционных. Тем не менее некоторые аспекты внедрения этих наноматериалов остаются малоизученными, в частности токсикологический.

**Ключевые слова:** нанотехнологии, наномедицина, нанофармакология, металлические наночастицы, наноматериалы.

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**ЕКОЛОГІЧНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ ТА ЗДОРОВ'Я НАЦІЇ**

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**FUNCTIONAL STATE OF THE RESPIRATORY  
AND IMMUN SYSTEM IN CHILDREN-RESIDENTS  
OF THE RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATED TERRITORIES**

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*More than 25 years after the Chernobyl accident, a higher prevalence of bronchial hyperactivity, reduced lung function, and increased levels of free radicals in exhaled breath condensates (EBC) were observed in children residing in radioactive contaminated territories. Comparing children with different residential radiation background, this study investigated fatty acids of EBC using gas liquid chromatography, counts of B-lymphocyte antigen CD19 in T-cell (CD3) and phagocytotic activity of neutrophils in blood samples. Regarding EBC, we demonstrate that lipid peroxidation was activated, antioxidant properties of pulmonary surfactant were decreased, were detected metabolic disorders of essential fatty acids at the stage of bioregulators-eicosanoids formation. Regarding the immune function of blood cells,*