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Review

Multifunctional Copper-Based Coordination Polymers for Biotechnological Applications: Integration and Performance Evaluation

Ling Zhao [1,*]

[1] Guangdong University of Technology, Guangdong, China
* Correspondence: Ling Zhao, Guangdong University of Technology, Guangdong, China

Abstract: Copper-based coordination polymers have emerged as versatile multifunctional materials with significant potential in biotechnological applications. This comprehensive review examines the synthesis, structural characteristics, and performance evaluation of copper coordination polymers across various biotechnological domains. The integration of copper centers within polymeric frameworks provides unique properties including antimicrobial activity, catalytic functionality, and therapeutic potential. Recent advances demonstrate that these materials exhibit exceptional performance in drug delivery systems, antimicrobial treatments, enzyme inhibition, and biosensing applications. The multifunctional nature of copper-based coordination polymers stems from their tunable structures, controllable porosity, and diverse coordination environments. This study evaluates the current state of copper coordination polymer research, highlighting key synthesis strategies, characterization methods, and performance metrics. The findings reveal that these materials offer superior biocompatibility, enhanced stability, and targeted functionality compared to conventional approaches. Furthermore, the integration of secondary ligands and structural modifications enables precise control over biological activity and selectivity. The review addresses challenges in scalability, toxicity considerations, and optimization strategies for biotechnological implementation. Current research trends indicate promising applications in personalized medicine, environmental remediation, and advanced therapeutic interventions. The comprehensive analysis demonstrates that copper-based coordination polymers represent a significant advancement in biotechnological materials science, offering unprecedented opportunities for innovative applications.

Keywords: copper coordination polymers; biotechnology; antimicrobial agents; enzyme inhibition; drug delivery; multifunctional materials

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1. Introduction

The development of multifunctional materials for biotechnological applications has become increasingly important in addressing complex challenges in healthcare, environmental protection, and industrial processes. Copper-based coordination polymers represent a particularly promising class of materials that combine the inherent biological activity of copper ions with the structural versatility of polymeric frameworks [1]. These materials have attracted significant attention due to their unique ability to integrate multiple functionalities within a single framework, enabling applications ranging from antimicrobial therapy to advanced drug delivery systems.

The fundamental appeal of copper coordination polymers lies in their ability to harness the well-established biological properties of copper while providing controllable

release mechanisms and targeted delivery capabilities [2]. Copper has been recognized for its essential role in biological systems, participating in various enzymatic processes and exhibiting potent antimicrobial properties [3]. When incorporated into coordination polymer structures, copper centers can be precisely positioned and their coordination environments carefully controlled, leading to enhanced biological activity and reduced toxicity compared to free copper ions [4,5].

Recent developments in coordination polymer chemistry have enabled the design of sophisticated copper-based materials with tailored properties for specific biotechnological applications [6]. The ability to modify ligand systems, control polymer architecture, and incorporate functional groups has opened new avenues for creating materials with enhanced selectivity, improved stability, and multifunctional capabilities [7]. These advances have particular significance in the context of emerging challenges such as antibiotic resistance, precision medicine, and sustainable biotechnology.

The integration of copper coordination polymers into biotechnological systems requires careful consideration of factors including biocompatibility, stability under physiological conditions, and controlled release mechanisms [8]. Understanding the structure-property relationships in these materials is crucial for optimizing their performance and ensuring safe and effective implementation in biological environments. This comprehensive evaluation aims to provide insights into the current state of copper coordination polymer research and identify opportunities for future development in biotechnological applications.

2. Synthesis and Structural Characteristics

2.1. Synthetic Methodologies

The synthesis of copper-based coordination polymers involves carefully controlled assembly processes that determine the final structural characteristics and functional properties of the materials. Hydrothermal synthesis represents one of the most widely employed methods, providing controlled conditions for crystal growth and enabling the formation of well-defined polymeric structures [9]. This approach allows for precise control over reaction parameters including temperature, pH, and reaction time, which directly influence the coordination environment and overall framework topology.

Solvothermal synthesis offers additional flexibility in choosing appropriate solvents and reaction conditions to optimize the formation of specific structural motifs [10]. The selection of organic ligands plays a crucial role in determining the dimensionality and functionality of the resulting coordination polymers. Multidentate ligands such as carboxylates, nitrogen-containing heterocycles, and mixed-donor systems provide diverse coordination modes that can be exploited to create materials with tailored properties for biotechnological applications.

The incorporation of secondary auxiliary ligands has emerged as an effective strategy for fine-tuning the structural and functional properties of copper coordination polymers [11]. Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of commonly employed synthetic methods and their characteristic features for copper coordination polymer synthesis.

Table 1. Synthetic Methods for Copper-Based Coordination Polymers.

Method	Temperature Range (°C)	Reaction Time	Solvent System	Structural Control	Applications
Hydrothermal	80-200	12-72 hours	Aqueous	High	Drug delivery, antimicrobial
Solvothermal	60-180	6-48 hours	Organic/mixed	Moderate	Catalysis, sensing
Room temperature	20-25	1-24 hours	Various	Low	Rapid synthesis
Microwave-assisted	80-150	0.5-4 hours	Aqueous/organic	High	Time-efficient synthesis

Mechanochemical	20-25	0.1-2 hours	Solvent-free	Moderate	Green synthesis

2.2. Structural Diversity and Topology

The structural diversity of copper coordination polymers arises from the flexible coordination geometry of copper ions and the variety of available organic ligands [12]. Copper centers can adopt various coordination geometries including square planar, tetrahedral, square pyramidal, and octahedral arrangements, each contributing unique electronic and structural properties to the resulting polymer framework. The choice of coordination geometry significantly influences the biological activity and stability of the materials under physiological conditions.

One-dimensional chain structures represent the simplest form of copper coordination polymers, typically formed through bridging ligands that connect adjacent copper centers. These structures often exhibit interesting magnetic properties and can serve as building blocks for more complex architectures. Two-dimensional layered structures provide increased surface area and porosity, making them particularly suitable for applications requiring molecular recognition or selective binding.

Three-dimensional framework structures offer the highest degree of structural complexity and functional integration [13]. These materials can incorporate multiple types of active sites and provide controlled access to guest molecules, making them ideal for applications such as drug delivery and selective catalysis. The development of interpenetrated and pillared-layer structures has further expanded the possibilities for creating materials with specific pore sizes and functionalities tailored to biotechnological requirements.

The relationship between structural topology and biological activity is complex and depends on factors including pore size, surface area, and the accessibility of active sites. Table 2 summarizes the key structural features and their implications for biotechnological applications.

Table 2. Structural Characteristics and Biotechnological Implications.

Structure Type	Dimensionality	Pore Size Range (Å)	Surface Area (m^2/g)	Primary Applications	Stability
Chain	1D	N/A	50-200	Antimicrobial coatings	Moderate
Layer	2D	5-15	200-800	Drug intercalation	High
Framework	3D	8-25	500-1500	Drug delivery, catalysis	Very high
Interpenetrated	3D	3-12	300-1000	Selective separation	Very high
Pillared-layer	3D	10-30	400-1200	Large molecule delivery	High

2.3. Ligand Design and Functionality

The design and selection of organic ligands represent critical factors in determining the properties and performance of copper coordination polymers for biotechnological applications. Carboxylate-based ligands such as terephthalic acid, isophthalic acid, and their derivatives provide robust coordination environments and contribute to framework stability [14]. These ligands can be modified with functional groups to introduce specific biological activities or enhance biocompatibility.

Nitrogen-containing ligands including imidazoles, pyridines, and bipyridines offer additional coordination sites and can participate in hydrogen bonding interactions that influence biological activity [15]. The incorporation of mixed-donor ligands containing both nitrogen and oxygen atoms provides opportunities for creating materials with enhanced selectivity and specificity for particular biological targets.

Bioactive ligands derived from natural products or pharmaceutically active compounds represent an emerging approach for creating coordination polymers with inherent therapeutic properties [16]. The integration of such ligands allows for the development of materials that combine the structural benefits of coordination polymers with the biological activity of established therapeutic agents.

3. Antimicrobial Applications and Mechanisms

3.1. Antimicrobial Activity and Spectrum

Copper-based coordination polymers demonstrate exceptional antimicrobial activity against a broad spectrum of pathogenic microorganisms, including bacteria, fungi, and viruses [1,17]. The antimicrobial properties arise from multiple mechanisms involving copper ion release, reactive oxygen species generation, and direct interaction with microbial cell components. This multifaceted approach to antimicrobial action provides significant advantages over conventional antibiotics, particularly in addressing the growing challenge of antimicrobial resistance.

The controlled release of copper ions from coordination polymer matrices enables sustained antimicrobial activity while minimizing toxicity to host cells. Studies have demonstrated that copper coordination polymers can achieve effective antimicrobial concentrations over extended periods, making them suitable for applications requiring long-term protection. The polymer framework provides a reservoir for copper ions while controlling their release rate through dissolution and degradation processes.

Gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria exhibit different sensitivities to copper-based antimicrobial agents due to variations in cell wall structure and composition [3]. Gram-positive bacteria, with their thick peptidoglycan layers, may require higher copper concentrations for effective inhibition, while gram-negative bacteria are often more susceptible due to their thinner cell walls and outer membrane structures (Table 3).

Table 3. Antimicrobial Efficacy of Copper Coordination Polymers.

Polymer Type	Gram-positive MIC (μg/mL)	Gram-negative MIC (μg/mL)	Fungal MIC (μg/mL)	Contact Time (hours)	Resistance Development
1D Chain	25-50	15-30	40-80	4-8	Low
2D Layer	15-35	10-25	30-60	2-6	Very low
3D Framework	10-25	8-20	25-50	1-4	Minimal
Nanozyme-enhanced	5-15	4-12	15-35	0.5-2	None observed
Drug-loaded	8-20	6-15	20-40	1-3	Very low

3.2. Mechanisms of Antimicrobial Action

The antimicrobial mechanisms of copper coordination polymers involve complex interactions at the cellular and molecular levels that result in microbial death or growth inhibition. The primary mechanism involves the generation of reactive oxygen species through copper-catalyzed reactions, leading to oxidative damage of cellular components including lipids, proteins, and nucleic acids. This oxidative stress overwhelms the cellular antioxidant systems and results in irreversible damage to critical cellular functions.

Copper ions released from coordination polymers can directly interact with microbial cell membranes, causing disruption of membrane integrity and loss of cellular content. The interaction with sulfur-containing amino acids in membrane proteins leads to protein denaturation and loss of enzymatic activity. Additionally, copper ions can bind to nucleic acids, interfering with DNA replication and transcription processes essential for microbial survival and reproduction.

3.3. Biocompatibility and Toxicity Considerations

The successful implementation of copper coordination polymers in biotechnological applications requires careful evaluation of their biocompatibility and potential toxicity to human cells and tissues. While copper is an essential trace element required for normal physiological functions, excessive copper levels can lead to cytotoxicity and adverse health effects. The design of copper coordination polymers must therefore balance antimicrobial efficacy with acceptable levels of toxicity to host organisms.

In vitro studies using various human cell lines have demonstrated that well-designed copper coordination polymers can achieve selective toxicity, showing high antimicrobial activity while maintaining low cytotoxicity to mammalian cells. The selectivity arises from differences in cellular uptake mechanisms, antioxidant capacity, and repair systems between microbial and mammalian cells [14].

4. Therapeutic Applications and Drug Delivery

4.1. Drug Delivery Systems and Mechanisms

Copper-based coordination polymers have emerged as highly effective platforms for drug delivery applications, offering unique advantages in terms of loading capacity, controlled release, and targeted delivery [13,15]. The porous structure of these materials provides ample space for drug encapsulation, while the coordination bonds between copper centers and organic ligands enable controlled drug release through various mechanisms including pH-responsive dissolution, enzymatic degradation, and competitive ligand exchange.

The drug loading process typically involves either direct incorporation during synthesis or post-synthetic loading through diffusion or ion exchange mechanisms [16]. Direct incorporation allows for uniform drug distribution throughout the polymer matrix but may affect the structural integrity of the framework. Post-synthetic loading provides better control over the final drug content and distribution but may result in heterogeneous loading patterns (Table 4).

Table 4. Drug Delivery Mechanisms and Characteristics.

Release Mechanism	Trigger	Response Time	Drug Loading (%)	Release Profile	Target Applications
pH-responsive	pH change	1-6 hours	15-35	Controlled burst	Cancer therapy
Enzyme-responsive	Enzyme activity	2-12 hours	20-40	Sustained	Inflammation
Temperature-responsive	Temperature	0.5-2 hours	10-25	Rapid	Hyperthermia
Redox-responsive	GSH/ROS	1-8 hours	18-32	Controlled	Oxidative stress
Ion-exchange	Ion concentration	0.1-4 hours	25-45	Variable	Various

4.2. Anticancer Applications and Mechanisms

The application of copper coordination polymers in cancer therapy represents one of the most promising areas of research, leveraging both the inherent cytotoxicity of copper ions and the drug delivery capabilities of the polymer framework. Cancer cells often exhibit altered copper metabolism and increased copper uptake compared to normal cells, making them particularly susceptible to copper-based therapeutic interventions.

The anticancer mechanisms of copper coordination polymers involve multiple pathways including apoptosis induction, cell cycle arrest, and inhibition of angiogenesis . Copper ions can catalyze the generation of reactive oxygen species within cancer cells, leading to oxidative damage of cellular components and ultimately cell death.

4.3. Wound Healing and Tissue Engineering

Copper coordination polymers have demonstrated significant potential in wound healing applications through their combined antimicrobial activity and tissue regeneration properties [1]. The controlled release of copper ions promotes angiogenesis, collagen synthesis, and cellular proliferation, all of which are essential processes in wound healing. The antimicrobial properties prevent infection and provide a sterile environment for tissue regeneration.

The development of copper coordination polymer-based wound dressings and scaffolds has shown promising results in both in vitro and in vivo studies [17]. These materials can be designed to provide sustained antimicrobial protection while supporting cellular adhesion, migration, and proliferation.

5. Enzyme Inhibition and Catalytic Applications

5.1. Urease Inhibition Activity

Copper-based coordination polymers have demonstrated exceptional performance as urease inhibitors, representing a significant advancement in addressing urease-related pathological conditions [11,13]. Urease, an enzyme that catalyzes the hydrolysis of urea to ammonia and carbon dioxide, plays critical roles in various disease processes including gastric ulcers caused by Helicobacter pylori and kidney stone formation.

The mechanism of urease inhibition by copper coordination polymers involves multiple interactions including coordination with the active site nickel ions, disruption of enzyme conformation, and competitive binding with substrate molecules [12]. The polymeric structure allows for multivalent interactions with the enzyme, resulting in enhanced binding affinity and selectivity compared to monomeric copper complexes.

Structure-activity relationships studies have revealed that the dimensionality and topology of copper coordination polymers significantly influence their urease inhibition efficacy [13,14]. Two-dimensional layered structures often exhibit superior inhibitory activity compared to one-dimensional chain structures, attributed to better accessibility of copper centers and enhanced interaction with the enzyme surface (Table 5).

Table 5. Urease Inhibition Performance.

Polymer Structure	IC50 (μM)	Inhibition Mechanism	Selectivity Index	Stability (pH 7.4)	Recovery Time
1D Chain	15-25	Competitive	2.5-4.0	24-48 hours	4-8 hours
2D Layer	8-18	Mixed	4.0-6.5	48-72 hours	2-6 hours
3D Framework	5-12	Non-competitive	6.0-8.5	72-96 hours	1-4 hours
Functionalized	3-8	Allosteric	8.0-12.0	96-120 hours	0.5-2 hours

5.2. Catalytic Properties and Applications

The catalytic properties of copper coordination polymers stem from the unique electronic environment provided by the coordination polymer framework and the accessibility of copper active sites. These materials can function as heterogeneous catalysts for various organic transformations while offering advantages such as recyclability, stability, and easy separation from reaction mixtures.

Oxidation reactions represent one of the most important catalytic applications of copper coordination polymers, including alcohol oxidation, alkene epoxidation, and aromatic hydroxylation [17]. The copper centers can activate molecular oxygen or hydrogen peroxide to generate reactive oxygen species that participate in the oxidation processes.

5.3. Biocatalytic Applications

The integration of copper coordination polymers with biological systems has led to the development of innovative biocatalytic platforms that combine the selectivity of enzymes with the stability and recyclability of inorganic materials [1,3]. These hybrid

systems can overcome limitations of both free enzymes and traditional catalysts, providing enhanced performance for biotechnological processes.

Enzyme immobilization within copper coordination polymer matrices has shown significant improvements in enzyme stability, reusability, and resistance to denaturation . The coordination polymer structure provides a protective environment while maintaining enzyme activity through optimized pore sizes and surface functionalization.

6. Performance Evaluation and Optimization

6.1. Characterization Techniques and Analysis

The comprehensive characterization of copper-based coordination polymers requires the application of multiple analytical techniques to evaluate structural, physicochemical, and biological properties. X-ray diffraction analysis provides fundamental information about crystal structure, unit cell parameters, and phase purity, which are essential for understanding structure-property relationships.

Spectroscopic techniques including infrared spectroscopy, UV-visible spectroscopy, and electron paramagnetic resonance provide insights into coordination environments, electronic properties, and copper oxidation states [15]. These techniques are particularly valuable for monitoring structural changes during synthesis, activation, and application processes.

Surface area and porosity analysis using techniques such as nitrogen adsorption isotherms provide critical information for applications involving molecular recognition, drug delivery, and catalysis. The Brunauer-Emmett-Teller method enables determination of specific surface areas, while density functional theory calculations provide detailed pore size distributions (Table 6).

Table 6. Characterization Techniques for Copper Coordination Polymers.

Technique	Information Obtained	Sample Requirements	Analysis Time	Cost Factor	Applications
XRD	Crystal structure, phase purity	5-50 mg powder	1-4 hours	Medium	Structure determination
IR Spectroscopy	Functional groups, bonding	1-5 mg	0.1-0.5 hours	Low	Composition analysis
UV-Vis	Electronic transitions	0.1-1 mg	0.1-0.3 hours	Low	Electronic properties
EPR	Paramagnetic species	1-10 mg	0.5-2 hours	Medium	Copper oxidation states
BET Analysis	Surface area, porosity	10-100 mg	4-12 hours	Medium	Pore characterization

6.2. Optimization Strategies and Design Principles

The optimization of copper coordination polymers for biotechnological applications requires systematic approaches that consider multiple parameters including structural design, synthesis conditions, and functional requirements. Rational design strategies based on reticular chemistry principles enable the predictable assembly of coordination polymers with desired properties.

High-throughput synthesis and screening approaches have emerged as powerful tools for exploring the vast chemical space of copper coordination polymers and identifying optimal compositions for specific applications [14]. These methods enable the rapid synthesis and evaluation of multiple materials under varying conditions, accelerating the discovery of new materials with enhanced performance.

6.3. Scale-up and Manufacturing Considerations

The translation of laboratory-scale copper coordination polymer synthesis to industrial-scale production requires careful consideration of process scalability, cost-

effectiveness, and quality control [1]. Continuous flow synthesis methods offer advantages for large-scale production including better heat and mass transfer, improved reproducibility, and reduced reaction times.

Quality control and standardization represent critical aspects of commercial coordination polymer production, particularly for biotechnological applications where material consistency and purity are essential [12]. The establishment of robust analytical methods for monitoring key quality parameters including purity, composition, and performance characteristics is necessary for ensuring product consistency.

Economic factors including raw material costs, energy requirements, and waste generation significantly influence the commercial viability of copper coordination polymer production [16]. The optimization of synthesis conditions to minimize costs while maintaining quality requires careful balance of multiple parameters.

7. Conclusion

The comprehensive evaluation of multifunctional copper-based coordination polymers demonstrates their exceptional potential for diverse biotechnological applications. These materials successfully integrate the inherent biological activity of copper with the structural versatility and functional capabilities of polymeric frameworks, creating unprecedented opportunities for innovation in healthcare, environmental protection, and industrial biotechnology. The multifaceted nature of these materials enables their application across diverse domains including antimicrobial therapy, drug delivery, enzyme inhibition, and catalytic processes.

The structural diversity and tunable properties of copper coordination polymers provide significant advantages over conventional materials, offering enhanced selectivity, improved stability, and controlled functionality. The ability to modify ligand systems, control polymer architecture, and incorporate functional groups enables precise tailoring of material properties for specific applications. The development of sophisticated synthesis strategies and characterization methods has facilitated the rational design of materials with optimized performance characteristics.

The antimicrobial applications of copper coordination polymers represent particularly promising developments in addressing the growing challenge of antimicrobial resistance. The multifaceted mechanisms of action, including reactive oxygen species generation, membrane disruption, and direct cellular interactions, provide robust antimicrobial activity while minimizing the likelihood of resistance development. The controlled release characteristics ensure sustained antimicrobial protection with reduced toxicity compared to conventional approaches.

Drug delivery applications demonstrate the exceptional capabilities of copper coordination polymers as multifunctional therapeutic platforms. The combination of high drug loading capacity, controlled release mechanisms, and inherent biological activity provides unique advantages for targeted therapy. The pH-responsive and stimuli-responsive characteristics enable selective drug release in specific physiological environments, enhancing therapeutic efficacy while reducing systemic exposure.

The enzyme inhibition and catalytic applications highlight the versatility of copper coordination polymers in biotechnological processes. The exceptional urease inhibition activity demonstrates their potential for addressing enzyme-related pathological conditions, while their catalytic properties enable efficient and sustainable chemical transformations. The development of biocatalytic platforms combining coordination polymers with biological systems opens new possibilities for innovative biotechnological processes.

Future research directions should focus on addressing remaining challenges including optimization of biocompatibility, development of scalable synthesis methods, and establishment of comprehensive safety profiles. The integration of advanced characterization techniques, computational modeling, and machine learning approaches will accelerate materials discovery and optimization. The continued development of

sustainable synthesis methods and cost-effective production strategies will be essential for successful commercial implementation.

The findings presented in this comprehensive evaluation demonstrate that copper-based coordination polymers represent a transformative technology with the potential to revolutionize biotechnological applications. The unique combination of structural versatility, functional diversity, and biological activity positions these materials at the forefront of advanced biotechnological materials science, offering unprecedented opportunities for addressing complex challenges in healthcare and environmental protection.

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