

POLYSACCHARIDE-BASED MAGNETIC NANOCOMPOSITES AS  
DRUG CARRIERS FOR POTENTIAL COLORECTAL CANCER  
TREATMENT

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POLYSACCHARIDE-BASED MAGNETIC NANOCOMPOSITES AS DRUG  
CARRIERS FOR POTENTIAL COLORECTAL CANCER TREATMENT

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their unlimited love, great encouragement, and wonderful support to achieve my goal.

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## ABSTRACT

Colorectal cancer is one of the most diagnosed malignant diseases in the world. The green-based, multifunctional, and highly biocompatible polysaccharide-based magnetic nanocomposites (PMNCs) as smart drug carriers can satisfy targeted cancer treatments to circumvent off-target cytotoxicity from conventional chemotherapy. This comprehensive research has sought to introduce five different green-based 5-Fluorouracil (5-FU) drug carriers, including  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  nanoparticles stabilized with *Punica granatum* fruit peel extract ( $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/P. granatum/5\text{-FU}$ ), rice straw cellulose fiber (CF/5-FU), magnetic cellulose fiber (MC/5-FU), cellulose nanocrystals (CNC/5-FU), and chitosan-coated magnetic CNC (CH/MCNC/5-FU) bionanocomposites. For this aim, spherical  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  nanoparticles was produced by a facile co-precipitation technique and using four different weight percentages of *Punica granatum* fruit peel extract as a green stabilizer. Then, the rod-shaped CF was isolated from rice straw waste by employing bleaching and alkali treatments.  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  nanoparticles were supported onto the CF matrix to fabricate MC nanocomposites. The needle-like CNC was isolated from rice straw cellulose by the acid hydrolysis process. In addition, the ionic gelation method and the sodium tripolyphosphate cross-linker were used to fabricate layer-by-layer bionanocomposites of CH/MCNC/5-FU. The successful fabrication of the samples with desired physiochemical properties was indicated by X-ray powder diffraction (XRD), Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), scanning electron microscopy (SEM), transmission electron microscopy (TEM), energy dispersion X-ray spectroscopy (EDX), dynamic light scattering (DLS), thermogravimetric analysis (TGA), vibrating-sample magnetometry (VSM) of the swelling analysis, and ultraviolet-visible (UV) spectroscopy. The use of 2 weight % extract as stabilizer and capping agent appropriately decreased the size of spherical  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  NPs with enhanced stability and anticancer effects. Compared to CF/5-FU formulation, CNC/5-FU showed higher crystallinity, smaller size, and prolonged drug release at targeted pH media. The PMNCs samples of MC/5-FU and CH/MCNC/5-FU showed multifunctional physiochemical properties and also magnetic and heat-responsive manner. The use of chitosan coating in CH/MCNC/5-FU improved drug encapsulation efficiency and controlled drug release at various pH and heat induction conditions. From images of TEM and SEM, the size of all the synthesized samples was estimated to be below 80 nm, showing their potential usage in nanodrug delivery systems. In in vitro anticancer assay, the fabricated  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/P. granatum/5\text{-FU}$ , CF/5-FU, and CNC/5-FU desirably exhibited negligible damage against CCD112 normal cells and appropriate anticancer actions against HCT116 colorectal cancer cells. MC/5-FU with magnetic targeting and heat induction improved the anticancer effects, guide ability, and tolerable toxicity in targeted drug delivery systems. Further, CH/MCNC/5-FU showed not only high biocompatibility but also caused enhanced selectivity and elimination of the cancer cells. In conclusion, the fabricated the fabricated  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  nanoparticles, polysaccharides, PMNCs as innovative, low-cost, and topical nanodrug formulations could offer promising potential to tackle most, if not all, of the conventional drug delivery issues in colorectal cancer therapy.

## ABSTRAK

Kanser kolorektal adalah salah satu penyakit malignan yang paling banyak didiagnosis di dunia. Ini merupakan fakta yang telah dibuktikan dengan baik bahawa ketoksikan ubat kemoterapi luar sasaran seperti 5-Fluorouracil (5-FU) mempengaruhi tubuh dengan kesan goyah. Nanokomposit magnetik berasaskan polisakarida (PMDC) berasaskan hijau, pelbagai fungsi, dan sangat biokompatibel sebagai pembawa ubat pintar dapat memenuhi rawatan barah yang disasarkan untuk mengelakkan *sitotoksik* yang tidak disasarkan daripada kemoterapi konvensional. Penyelidikan komprehensif ini telah berusaha untuk memperkenalkan lima pembawa ubat 5-FU berasaskan hijau yang berbeza, termasuk nanopartikel  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  yang distabilkan dengan ekstrak kulit buah *granatum Punica* ( $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/\text{P. granatum}/5\text{-FU}$ ), serat selulosa jerami padi (CF/5-FU), serat selulosa magnetik (MC/5-FU), nanokristal selulosa (CNC/5-FU), dan bionanokomposit magnetik bersalut chitosan (CH/MCNC/5-FU). Untuk tujuan ini, nanopartikel  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  sfera dihasilkan dengan teknik pemendakan bersama dan menggunakan empat peratusan berat yang berbeza dari ekstrak kulit buah *granatum Punica* sebagai penstabil hijau. Kemudian, CF berbentuk batang telah diasingkan daripada sisa jerami padi dengan menggunakan pelunturan dan rawatan alkali. Kemudian, CF berbentuk batang diasingkan daripada sisa jerami beras dengan menggunakan pelunturan dan rawatan alkali. Nanopartikel  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  telah disokong ke matriks CF untuk menghasilkan bionanokomposit MC. CNC seperti jarum telah diasingkan daripada selulosa jerami padi melalui proses hidrolisis asid. Di samping itu, kaedah gelasi ionik dan natrium tripolyfosfat *cross-linker* digunakan untuk menghasilkan lapisan demi lapisan bionanokomposit CH/MCNC/5-FU. Kejayaan fabrikasi sampel dengan sifat fisiokimia yang dikehendaki ditunjukkan oleh difraksi serbuk X-ray (XRD), spektroskopi Inframerah Transformasi Fourier (FTIR), pengimbasan mikroskopi elektron (SEM), mikroskop elektron penghantaran (TEM) sinar-X penyebaran tenaga spektroskopi (EDX), penyebaran cahaya dinamik (DLS), analisis termogravimetrik (TGA), magnetometri bergetar-sampel (VSM) analisis bengkak, dan spektroskopi ultraviolet-visible (UV). Penggunaan ekstrak 2 % berat sebagai penstabil dan ejen penutup dengan sewajarnya menurunkan saiz sfera  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  NPs dengan peningkatan kestabilan dan kesan antikanser untuk sistem penyampaian ubat 5-FU. Berbanding dengan formulasi CF/5-FU, CNC/5-FU menunjukkan kristal yang lebih tinggi, saiz yang lebih kecil, dan pelepasan ubat yang berpanjangan pada media pH yang disasarkan. Sampel PMNCs MC/5-FU dan CH/MCNC/5-FU menunjukkan sifat fisiokimia pelbagai fungsi dan juga cara magnet dan responsif haba. Penggunaan salutan chitosan dalam CH/MCNC/5-FU meningkatkan kecekapan encapsulasi ubat dan pelepasan ubat terkawal pada pelbagai pH dan keadaan induksi haba. Daripada imej TEM dan SEM, saiz semua sampel yang disintesis dianggarkan di bawah 80 nm, menunjukkan potensi penggunaannya dalam sistem penghantaran nanodrug. Dalam ujian antikanser *in vitro*,  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/\text{P. granatum}/5\text{-FU}$ , CF/5-FU, dan CNC/5-FU yang dihasilkan dengan pasti menunjukkan kerosakan yang boleh diabaikan terhadap sel biasa CCD112 dan tindakan antikanser yang sesuai terhadap sel barah kolorektal HCT116. MC/5-FU dengan penyasaran magnetik dan induksi haba meningkatkan kesan antikanser, keupayaan panduan, dan ketoksikan yang boleh diterima dalam sistem penghantaran ubat yang disasarkan. Selanjutnya, CH/MCNC/5-FU menunjukkan bukan sahaja biokompatibiliti yang tinggi tetapi juga menyebabkan peningkatan dan penghapusan sel-sel barah. Kesimpulannya, nanopartikel  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$ , polisakarida, dan PMDC yang dibuat sebagai formulasi *nanodrug* yang inovatif, kos rendah, dan topikal boleh menawarkan potensi yang menjanjikan untuk menangani kebanyakan, jika tidak semua, masalah penghantaran ubat konvensional dalam terapi barah kolorektal.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

5-FU	-	5-Fluorouracil
AFM	-	Atomic force microscopy (AFM)
AMF	-	Applied magnetic field
BET	-	Brunauer–Emmett–Teller
BJH	-	Barrett–Joyner–Halenda
CF/5-FU	-	Cellulose fiber as 5-Fluorouracil carrier
CF	-	Cellulose fiber
CH NPs	-	Chitosan nanoparticles
CH/MCNC	-	Chitosan-coated magnetic cellulose nanocrystals
CH/MCNC/5-FU	-	Chitosan-coated magnetic cellulose nanocrystals as 5-Fluorouracil carrier
CNC	-	Cellulose nanocrystals
CNC/5-FU	-	Cellulose nanocrystals as 5-Fluorouracil carrier
CNF	-	Cellulose nanofibers
CNW	-	Cellulose nanowhiskers
d	-	Day
DLS	-	Dynamic light scattering
DMEM	-	Dulbecco’s Modified Eagle’s medium
DOX	-	Doxorubicin
DRS	-	Delignificated rice straw
EDX	-	Energy dispersive spectroscopy
EE	-	Encapsulation efficiency
EMF	-	External magnetic field
FBS	-	Fetal bovine serum
Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> / <i>P. granatum</i>	-	Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> stabilized with <i>Punica granatum</i> fruit peel extract
FTIR	-	Fourier transform infrared
FWHM	-	Full width at half maximum
HCl	-	Hydrochloric acid

IC <sub>50</sub>	-	50 % growth inhibition
IONPs	-	Iron oxide nanoparticles
LC	-	Loading capacity
LMWC	-	Low molecular weight chitosan
MARDI	-	Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
MC	-	Magnetic cellulose fiber
MC/5-FU	-	Magnetic cellulose fiber/5-Fluorouracil
MCNC	-	Magnetic cellulose nanocrystals
MHT	-	Magnetic hyperthermia therapy
MNCs	-	Magnetic nanocomposites
MNPs	-	Magnetic nanoparticles
MRI	-	Magnetic resonance imaging
Ms	-	Saturation magnetization
NCC	-	Nanocrystalline cellulose
NFC	-	Nanofibrous cellulose
NPs	-	Nanoparticles
<i>P. granatum</i>	-	<i>Punica granatum</i>
PAA	-	Polyacrylic acid
PBS	-	Phosphate-buffered saline
PCR	-	Polymerase chain reaction
PEG	-	Polyethylene glycol
PEI	-	Polyethylenimine
PLA	-	Polylactic acid
PLGA	-	Poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid)
PMMA	-	Polymethyl methacrylate
PMNCs	-	Polysaccharide-based magnetic nanocomposites
PVP	-	Polyvinyl pyrrolidone
RLU	-	Relative luminescence unit
S0	-	Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> nanoparticles synthesized without the extract stabilizer
S1	-	Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> nanoparticles stabilized with 1 wt % <i>Punica granatum</i> fruit peel extract
S2	-	Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> nanoparticles stabilized with 2 wt % <i>Punica granatum</i> fruit peel extract

S3	-	Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> nanoparticles stabilized with 4 wt % <i>Punica granatum</i> fruit peel extract
S4	-	Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> nanoparticles stabilized with 8 wt % <i>Punica granatum</i> fruit peel extract
S5	-	<i>Punica granatum</i> fruit peel extract
SAED	-	Selected-area electron diffraction
SAR	-	Specific absorption rate
SPIONs	-	Superparamagnetic iron oxide nanoparticles
SEM	-	Scanning electron microscopy
TEM	-	Transmission electron microscopy
TGA	-	Thermogravimetric analysis
TPP	-	Tripolyphosphate
UV	-	Ultraviolet
UV-vis	-	Ultraviolet-visible
VSM	-	Vibrating sample magnetometer
XPS	-	X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy
XRD	-	X-ray diffraction

## LIST OF SYMBOLS

A	-	Constant
C	-	Concentration
D	-	Crystallite size
eV	-	Electron volt
E <sub>g</sub>	-	Band gap energy
R <sup>2</sup>	-	Correlation coefficient
t	-	Time
wt	-	Weight
β	-	Full width at half the maximum
θ	-	Diffraction angle
λ	-	X-ray wavelength of radiation

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Colorectal cancer causes the death of more than 600,000 patients every year [1]. It is attributed to colon, rectal, and bowel cancer and is developed inside polyps (adenoma) and formed within the bowel wall. Chemotherapy is the most prominent route in colorectal cancer therapy to prolong the life span of cancer patients. Anticancer drug 5-Fluorouracil (5-FU) is widely used to treat colorectal cancer. However, it may cause harmful side effects and unwanted damages against normal cells. Since two decades ago, nanotechnology has advantageously gained its reputation in nanomedicine and various biomedical applications. Magnetic nanoparticles (MNPs) as smart nanoagent possesses numerous advantages such as low cost of preparation, magnetic and heat-responsive properties, guide ability, and low toxicity [2]. It can be used in different biomedical applications, including targeted drug delivery [3], magnetic hyperthermia and thermoablation [4], bioseparation [5], biosensing [6], cancer therapy [7], cell labeling [8], magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) [9], and targeting and immunoassays [10]. For therapeutic and biomedical applications,  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  and  $\gamma\text{-Fe}_2\text{O}_3$  are popular since these MNPs have small size and narrow size distribution as well as high magnetization [11]. An investigation analyzed the in vitro toxicity of copper, titanium dioxide,  $\text{CuZnFe}_2\text{O}_4$ , and  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  NPs at concentrations ranging between 20 to 100  $\mu\text{g/mL}$ , which found no toxicity from the tested  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  NPs [12]. Despite this, the bare MNPs may exert weak colloidal stability, poor drug conjugation, low drug encapsulation efficiency, quick drug release, and undesired toxicity against normal cells [13].

The colloidal stability and biocompatibility of the MNPs can be improved by using green-based materials such as plant extract [13, 14], natural cellulose [15], and chitosan [16] as stabilizer, capping agent, or solid supports and coating agent. In addition green-synthesized nanocarrier system can trigger increased drug loading and sustained drug release for advanced cancer treatments, Therefore, MNPs have been

synthesized by using different plant extracts including *Calliandra haematocephala* leaf [17], *Juglans regia* fruit peel [18], *Couroupita guianensis Aubl* fruit [19], *Mimosa pudica* root [20], coffee waste [21], seaweed marine plant [22], *Syzygium cumini* seed [23], and Arabic gum [24]. MNPs prepared by a combination of facile co-precipitation and green synthesis using stabilizer/capping agents of the plant extract can lead to obtaining green-based MNPs with enhanced anticancer effects [13, 25]. Interestingly, the peel of some fruits has higher antioxidant and anticancer activities than the pulp [26]. The extract of fruit peels such as *Garcinia mangostana* and *Punica granatum* (*P. granatum*) are rich sources of antioxidants and anticancer [13, 14], due to their metabolite content of polyphenol or flavonoid subclass [27]. Although *P. granatum* fruit peel contains 30-40 % of the fruit protein, it is considered a waste material [28]. Polyphenols, including anthocyanins, may show structural modification at in vitro or in vivo evaluation, along with enhanced bioavailability and biological properties [29]. *P. granatum* caused remarkable effects against various cancer cell lines, including bladder T24 [30], cervical HeLa [31], prostate [32-34], breast cancer [35-38], and thyroid [39].

Fascinating and enlightening studies on novel natural-based carriers are prone to assert solutions for many issues in global health and drug delivery systems. In this manner, insights into polysaccharide nanocomposites have eminently illuminated several authentic features for medical applications in the past few years that are linked to evidence of bias for developing sophisticated technologies to promote a healthy society [40]. As the most obtained polysaccharides, natural cellulose with a desirable structure, improved crystallinity or ordered regions, and also nano-dimensional scale can be isolated from various wood-based materials, including rice straw waste, which is the highest agro-waste material in South East Asia [41-43]. The polysaccharide-based products advantageously can bind with various drugs and show desired swelling behavior, pH gradient behavior, and high biodegradability for innovative antitumor drug delivery systems [44]. Each property has its particular pros and cons for developing a topical nanodrug formulation with improved stability and therapeutic effects [45]. The vitality of drug-loaded polysaccharides is a consequence of its potential to deliver a sufficient amount of drugs to cancer cells without significant effects against normal cells to decrease medical malpractice derived from the drug alone [45, 46]. The disadvantages of side-effects of chemotherapy have been alleviated

by loading a sufficient dosage of chemo-drugs onto various polymer and polysaccharide-based carrier systems, for instance, poly(2-vinyl pyridine)-b-poly(ethylene oxide) nanomicelles [47], chitosan microspheres [48, 49], carboxymethyl cellulose [50], and crystalline nanocellulose to name a few [51]. Further, curcumin was loaded onto crystalline nanocellulose and caused almost three times higher colorectal cancer cell death than that of curcumin alone [52]. Gao et al. in a different report used rice husk to extract acid hydrolyzed nanocellulose and then analyzed its phytochemical bioactivities [41]. Thus, with the immense demand for using biocompatible nanocarriers in anticancer drug delivery systems, natural polysaccharides should be explored as a treatment for killing colorectal cancer cells.

The use of polymer blends leads to fabricating innovative composites with enhanced drug encapsulation efficiency and prolonged drug release. In drug delivery applications, chitosan is the second most popular biopolymer after cellulose, with a production of over 100 million tons per year [16, 49]. It may be derived from chitin and is a cationic linear and natural amino-polysaccharide containing-(1-4)-linked d-glucosamine and *N*-acetyl-d-glucosamine in deacetylated and acetylated form, respectively. Among diverse methods to synthesize layer-by-layer chitosan-based composites, the ionic gelation approach is an organic solvent-free solution, straightforward, and a facile method with minimal toxicity [53]. In this method, the phosphate groups of sodium tripolyphosphate (TPP) may act as a physical crosslinking agent, which has advantages over emulsifying and chemical crosslinking agents, such as less toxicity to the organs and no destruction to the structure of the loaded-drugs in chitosan nanocomposites. In addition, the crosslinking procedure might considerably improve physiochemical properties of the polymer composites. In medically-related applications, the most popular antimicrobial coating agent on cellulose is currently chitosan to synthesize composites with suitable biocompatibility and water-rich structures to encapsulate both hydrophilic and hydrophobic drugs. Furthermore, the bionanocomposites of chitosan and cellulose possess intermolecular interactions, owing to H-bonds and Van der Waals forces [54]. Most importantly, chitosan/cellulose bionanocomposites may possess a tremendous swelling capacity, water absorption ability, and pH-sensitivity to release the drug at the targeted cells [55]. Therefore, the biocompatibility and physiochemical properties of both cellulose and chitosan can be

modified by using cellulose as a reinforcement or solid support and chitosan as a coating agent to synthesize double polysaccharide composites.

Polysaccharides-based nanocomposites with desired pH-responsive structures could be a promising nanodrug system for future cancer treatment. However, changing pH in the human body is required a long time with incapability to be adjusted externally. This issue can be tackled via using polysaccharides as solid supports or coating agents for MNPs as fillers to fabricate multifunctional, biocompatible, and biodegradable polysaccharide-based magnetic nanocomposites (PMNCs) to obtain remotely controlled drug delivery systems, combination therapy of heat induction and magnetic targeting, switchable synthetic cell surfaces, and magnetothermal therapy [56, 57]. Numberless studies indicated the fabrication of different magnetic nanocomposites (MNCs) and PMNCs (with various size ranges) by using, for example, chitosan coated  $\text{MnFe}_2\text{O}_4$  (18 nm) [58], dextran coated  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  (21 nm) [59], cellulose matrix (87.12 nm)/ $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  fillers (11.01 nm) [15], PEG coated  $\text{NiFe}_2\text{O}_4$  (16 nm) [60], phosphate coated  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  (14 nm) [61], tetraethyl orthosilicate coated  $\text{MnFe}_2\text{O}_4$  (14 nm) [62],  $\text{Zn}_{0.9}\text{Fe}_{0.1}\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_4$  (11 nm) [63], stevioside coated  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  (3 nm) [64], citric acid coated  $\text{Mn}_x\text{Fe}_{3-x}\text{O}_4$  (34 nm) [65], aminosilane coated  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  (100 nm) [66], and oleic acid coated  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  (45 nm) [67].

The use of various natural counterparts and coating agents such as polysaccharides for MNPs can lead to synthesize PMNCs with increased multifunctional properties, biocompatibility, and free magnetic ions onto the target organ causing oxidative stress and toxicity against target cancer cells. In this manner, the therapeutic nature of PMNCs with arsenal of magnetothermal drug delivery systems have manifested several advantages over the conventional cancer therapy methods due to their low damage to normal cells and ability to deliver sufficient drug dosage to the tumor. Thus, anticancer drug-loaded PMNCs under heat induction and external magnetic field (EMF) can perform a desired multifunctional cancer therapy. In addition to the high drug loading capacity, pH sensitivity structure of PMNCs, intervention of both EMF and heat inductions are capable of remotely switchable on-demand drug release and precisely steering the magnetothermal effects for local ablation of cancer cells in future colorectal cancer therapy. Most importantly, the

green-based nano-magnetic carrier systems using for example plant-extract, cellulose and chitosan can show sophisticated, biocompatibility, biodegradability, colloidal stability and different physiochemical to obtain increased drug loading and desired cancer treatments.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Cancer statistics from over 185 countries have demonstrated 18.1 million new cancer cases from 36 different types of cancers in just 2018 alone. Colorectal cancer is the second and third most diagnosed cancer for males and females, respectively, globally. Anticancer drug 5-FU has been the top-choice chemotherapy drug in both adjuvant and advanced colorectal cancer treatment for over six decades. Despite this, chemo-drugs possess issues of morbidity and harmful side-effects due to their lack of bioavailability and consequent high doses. In addition, 5-FU is poorly water-soluble that can cause a weak and heterogeneous distribution of drugs in tumors and thereby therapeutic failure.

The peel of *P. granatum* has higher antioxidant activities than the pulp, but it is considered a waste material. MNPs fabricated without stabilizer or capping agent undesirably show low colloidal stability and poor biodegradability. Further, the bare MNPs in drug delivery systems are no longer welcome because of their low drug loading capacity and undesired biocompatibility. It is worth to mention that coating MNPs with non-biodegradable and synthetic materials could be costly and toxic to the environment.

Over the years, rice straw has been the second and first highest agro-waste in the world, causing toxicity and the reduction in landfill space. Rice straw waste contains a high ratio of natural cellulose to be used in advanced biomedical applications. Yet, rice straw cellulose has not been used in drug delivery applications and colorectal cancer treatments. Untreated natural cellulose possesses some drawbacks, including low thermal stability, undesired crystallinity, poor crease-resistance, and low solubility in solvent fluids. Although it has obtained success in

some cases, cellulose-based single-modality with pH-sensitive carrier structure may not be externally guided for the multi-stage drug release procedures.

Chitosan alone as a drug carrier shows only single-functionality. It can be considered that chitosan-based composites without a crosslinking agent indicate inappropriate physiochemical properties and weak intermolecular interactions. Uncoated magnetic natural nanocellulose composites can display pH, magnetic, and heat responsive properties, but with lower drug encapsulation efficiency and faster drug release compared to that containing a coating agent. However the synthesis of polymer-based drug delivery systems using chemical and physical methods so far has been great, the synthesis of low-cost polysaccharide-based magnetic  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  bionanocomposites as smart drug carriers for targeted cancer therapy is still beginning and limited. Many questions remain unanswered about production methods, the ratio among MNPs, type of polysaccharide as solid support and coating agent, and the loaded-drug, along with the mechanisms of the components in the synthesis of PMNCs as 5-FU carriers for effective colorectal cancer treatments. Above all, the green-based carrier formulations can be fabricated via novel and low cost materials such as example plant-extract, cellulose and chitosan due to their biocompatibility, biodegradability, stability, and great conjugation with various anticancer drug to produce natural-based nanodrug formulation for targeted colorectal cancer therapy.

### 1.3 Objectives

The main objective of this study is to introduce plant-mediated MNPs, polysaccharides, and PMNCs as novel, low-cost, facile, and advanced drug delivery systems for potential colorectal cancer treatments. Based on the background and problem statement, the following objectives are derived:

- (a) To synthesize and evaluate physiochemical properties of various anticancer drug delivery systems including magnetic  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/P. granatum/5\text{-FU}$ , rice straw cellulose fiber (CF/5-FU), magnetic cellulose fiber (MC/5-FU), cellulose nanocrystals (CNC/5-FU), and chitosan-coated magnetic cellulose nanocrystals (CH/MCNC/5-FU) bionanocomposites.

- (b) To determine the drug loading and release of  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/P. granatum/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CF}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{MC}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CNC}/5\text{-FU}$ , and  $\text{CH}/\text{MCNC}/5\text{-FU}$  bionanocomposites.
- (c) To assess colorectal cancer effects of  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/P. granatum/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CF}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{MC}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CNC}/5\text{-FU}$ , and  $\text{CH}/\text{MCNC}/5\text{-FU}$  bionanocomposites.

#### 1.4 Scope of Study

To complete all the objectives in this project, the research scopes for this study are:

The co-precipitation method and green stabilizer are used to synthesize magnetic  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  NPs, in which *P. granatum* peel extract (1, 2, 4, and 8 wt %) and the sodium hydroxide are served as a stabilizer and a reducing agent, respectively. The reason to use *P. granatum* peel as agro-waste materials is due to the presence of the phenolic compounds in the extract. The plant extract improves the colloidal stability, biocompatibility, and anticancer effects of the green-synthesized  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  NPs. The  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  NPs mediated with 2 wt % extract is ideally selected for drug loading procedure.

CF as natural polysaccharide is extracted from rice straw waste using a series of procedures, including bleaching, delignification, and alkali treatments. CF shows the rod-shaped structure, desired purity, and physiochemical properties. The obtained rice straw cellulose is loaded with the 5-FU drug to obtain a pH-sensitive and green-based drug delivery system.

CF as solid support collects the cluster of magnetic  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4$  NPs as fillers to fabricate MC bionanocomposites, indicating both pH-sensitive and magnetothermal responses for a 5-FU carrier system. In addition, the CF matrix increases the biocompatibility and multifunctionality of the magnetic bionanocomposites. Since CF is also served as a stabilizer, the use of another stabilizer such as extract is unnecessary.



For isolation of CNC, acid hydrolysis treatment on CF removes the amorphous regions and liberates the crystalline regions. Compared to CF, the hydrolysed CNC with a needle-like structure indicates smaller nanodimension. CNC is also effectively loaded with 5-FU for a pH-sensitive drug delivery system.

CNC matrix and Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> nanofillers are used for the synthesis of magnetic CNC bionanocomposites. To improve drug encapsulation efficiency and prolonged drug release, double polysaccharide-based magnetic bionanocomposites of CH/MCNC/5-FU is fabricated using cross-linked chitosan coater, CNC reinforcement or solid support, and Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> nanofillers to not only obtain enhanced pH-sensitive, but also magnetothermal responses for novel and advanced 5-FU carrier system. Thus, the fruit peel, the rice straw and chitosan are natural materials with their specific properties to fabricate green-based and low-cost nanocarrier systems.

Physicochemical properties of all the synthesized samples are evaluated by various characterization methods, such as, X-ray powder diffraction (XRD), Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), scanning electron microscopy (SEM), transmission electron microscopy (TEM), energy dispersive spectroscopy (EDX), dynamic light scattering (DLS), thermogravimetric analysis (TGA), vibrating sample magnetometer (VSM), and swelling analysis. Ultraviolet (UV)-visible spectroscopy estimates the drug encapsulation and release of all the synthesized samples. The potential targeted drug delivery systems and in vitro cancer treatments of all the fabricated samples are carried out against colorectal cancer and normal cell lines.

## **1.5 Significance of Research**

Colorectal cancer is one of the significant reasons of death, globally. The significance of this study is to use agro-waste materials in developing five new anticancer drug delivery systems for colorectal cancer treatments. Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> NPs stabilized with *P. granatum* peel extract or rice straw cellulose trigger enhanced physiochemical properties, biocompatibility, biodegradability, and tolerable toxicity. The use of plant-mediated MNPs, chitosan, and CF and CNC extracted from rice straw (as the highest agro waste in South East Asia) to fabricate various nanodrug delivery

systems are prone to assert solutions for colorectal cancer that are linked to evidence of bias for developing sophisticated nanomaterials to promote a healthy society. Magnetic chitosan and cellulose-based drug delivery systems with great swelling property, well biocompatibility, and targeted actions can decrease the issues of 5-FU chemotherapy such as diarrhea, stomatitis, and gastrointestinal mucosal injury. In addition, the use of nanopolysaccharide-based magnetic composites for combination therapy of heat treatment, tumor pH targeting, and magnetic targeting offer promising potential to tackle issues of single-modality drug delivery systems.

Thus, polysaccharide-based magnetic bionanocomposites are exceptional in smart and remotely guided drug delivery systems due to not only their magneto effects and guide-ability, but also their heat capacity develops thermal-stimuli and on-demand drug release performance and subsequent thermo-chemosensitisation. This research would show fabrication and characterizations of various MNPs, polysaccharides, and magnetic polysaccharide bionanocomposites to achieve affordable scale-up of natural-based drug delivery systems and advanced colorectal cancer treatments to assist attainment of cancer survivors' aims.

## **1.6 Outline of Thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters.

Chapter 1 is the introduction of the thesis to explain background, problem statement, objectives, scope, and significance of this research. This chapter indicates the knowledge required to tackle the issue, hypothesis, scope and limitation, conceptual framework, aims, and significance of this research.

Chapter 2 is the literature review to indicate findings of the previous studies. This chapter identifies gaps on why mpolysaccharide-based magnetic nanocomposites for targeted drug delivery systems have yet to fulfil reliable magnetothermal chemotherapy for colorectal cancer. Given the presumed important role magnetic nanocomposites (MNCs) and polysaccharide-based magnetic nanocomposites (PMNCs) as well as their synthesis methods, surface modifications, and coating, it

presents recent studies on targeted drug delivery systems for development of inexpensive, minimal invasiveness, and advanced cancer therapy.

Chapter 3 contains the research materials, fabrication methods of  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/P. granatum/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CF}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{MC}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CNC}/5\text{-FU}$ , and  $\text{CH/MCNC}/5\text{-FU}$  bionanocomposites as green-based drug delivery systems for colorectal cancer treatments. The physiochemical analysis of the samples is explained using various techniques, including XRD, FTIR, SEM, TEM, EDX, DLS, TGA, VSM, and swelling analysis. The drug loading and release study for all synthesized drug carrier systems are indicated using UV-visible spectroscopy. Cytotoxicity and anticancer effects of the synthesized samples are explained using colorectal normal and cancer cell lines.

Chapter 4 discusses the obtained results of various physiochemical properties for  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/P. granatum/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CF}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{MC}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CNC}/5\text{-FU}$ , and  $\text{CH/MCNC}/5\text{-FU}$  bionanocomposites. This chapter indicates the drug loading and release performance of the synthesized samples. In addition, results of cytotoxicity assays and anticancer effects of the samples are explained to indicate the potential use of the fabricated drug nanocarrier systems for colorectal cancer treatments.

Chapter 5 presents summary of the obtained results in this project. This chapter shows the research conclusion for synthesis of  $\text{Fe}_3\text{O}_4/P. granatum/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CF}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{MC}/5\text{-FU}$ ,  $\text{CNC}/5\text{-FU}$ , and  $\text{CH/MCNC}/5\text{-FU}$  for colorectal cancer therapy, followed by the recommendation for future works in smart drug delivery systems.

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### Web of Science Indexed Journals

1. **M. Yusefi**, M.L.-K. Soon, S.-Y. Teow, E.I. Monchouguy, B.N.H. Mooneerah, Z. Izadiyan, H. Jahangirian, R. Rafiee-Moghaddam, T.J. Webster, K. Shameli, Fabrication of cellulose nanocrystals as potential anticancer drug delivery systems for colorectal cancer treatment, *International Journal of Biological Macromolecules* (2022). **(Q1, IF: 6.953)**
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