OPINION ARTICLE

Biofilms: A Complex and Highly Diverse Ecosystem of Microorganisms

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DESCRIPTION

Biofilms are complex and heterogeneous communities of microorganisms that are formed on a surface and are enclosed in a self-produced extracellular matrix. These structures are widespread in nature and can be found in a variety of environments such as soil, aquatic systems, and medical devices. They are also responsible for numerous health-related problems, including dental caries, chronic wounds, and implant-associated infections. Therefore, controlling biofilm formation and its effects on human health has become an important area of Study. Biofilm inhibitors are compounds that can prevent or disrupt biofilm formation by inhibiting the growth or metabolic activity of microorganisms. These inhibitors can be classified into three major categories: physical, chemical, and biological.

Physical biofilm inhibitors include materials that can prevent the attachment of microorganisms to surfaces or remove biofilms mechanically. One of the most common physical biofilm inhibitors is the use of coatings on surfaces. Coatings such as silver, copper, and zinc have been found to be effective in reducing bacterial attachment and biofilm formation. These metals are known to have antimicrobial properties, and their use as coatings has been shown to inhibit the growth of various microorganisms. In addition to metallic coatings, other materials such as hydrophilic and superhydrophobic surfaces have also been found to be effective in reducing bacterial attachment and biofilm formation. These surfaces can prevent the accumulation of water and organic matter, making it difficult for microorganisms to attach to the surface. Chemical biofilm inhibitors include a wide range of compounds that can inhibit biofilm formation and/or disrupt established biofilms. These inhibitors can be further classified into natural and synthetic compounds.

Natural compounds are compounds that are found in nature, such as plant extracts and essential oils. Many natural compounds have been found to have antimicrobial properties and can inhibit the growth of microorganisms. For example, tea tree oil, a natural essential oil, has been found to have antibacterial and antifungal properties, and its use has been shown to inhibit the growth of biofilms formed by various microorganisms. Similarly, curcumin, a compound found in turmeric, has been found to inhibit the formation of biofilms by various pathogenic bacteria.

Synthetic compounds are compounds that are synthesized in a laboratory. These compounds are designed to have specific properties and can be tailored to target specific microorganisms. One example of a synthetic compound is triclosan, a broad-spectrum antimicrobial agent that is commonly used in consumer products such as toothpaste and soaps. Triclosan has been found to inhibit the growth of various microorganisms and can also disrupt established biofilms.

Biological biofilm inhibitors include compounds that are produced by other microorganisms or organisms that can inhibit the growth of microorganisms. These inhibitors can be further classified into probiotics and bacteriophages. Probiotics are live microorganisms that can confer health benefits to the host. Probiotics can inhibit the growth of pathogenic microorganisms by competing for nutrients and space. For example, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* is a probiotic bacterium that is commonly found in the human gut. Its use has been shown to inhibit the growth of various pathogenic microorganisms, including those that form biofilms.

Bacteriophages are viruses that infect and kill bacteria. Bacteriophages can be used to target specific bacterial species and can be tailored to target bacteria that are known to form biofilms. For example, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is a bacterial species that is known to form biofilms and is a major cause of chronic infections in humans.

Received: 29-Apr-2023, Manuscript No. Jbclinphar-23-97387, **Editor Assigned:** 02-May-2023, Pre QC No. Jbclinphar-23-97387 (PQ), **Reviewed:** 16-May-2023, QC No. Jbclinphar-23-97387, **Revised:** 23-May-2023, Manuscript No. Jbclinphar-23-97387 (R), **Published:** 30-May-2023, DOI:10.37532/0976-0113.14(2).239

Cite this article as: Milachi K. Biofilms: A Complex and Highly Diverse Ecosystem of Microorganisms. J Basic Clin Pharma.2023,14(2):239.