

O ELO ENTRE MICROPLÁSTICO E DOENÇAS NEURODEGENERATIVAS

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RESUMO

Introdução: Os microplásticos e nanoplásticos (MNPs), minúsculos fragmentos de plástico resultantes do desgaste de materiais poliméricos com comprimento inferior a 5 mm e 1 µm respectivamente, tem levantado preocupações sobre a saúde pública, sugerindo riscos potenciais à saúde humana, especialmente no que tange a neurotoxicidade e sua potencial correlação na patogênese de doenças neurodegenerativas (DNDs), condições debilitantes que causam degeneração progressiva de neurônios, resultando em declínio cognitivo. Isso está associado à distribuição sistêmica desses contaminantes e a sua capacidade de atravessar barreiras biológicas, principalmente a barreira hematoencefálica (BHE). **Objetivo:** O presente estudo teve por objetivo analisar e sintetizar evidências que demonstram os mecanismos de ação e penetração dos MNPs no Sistema Nervoso Central (SNC), e avaliar sua relação com a patogênese das principais DNDs. **Metodologia:** Para isso, foi realizada uma Revisão Sistemática da Literatura, na qual foram consultados os indexadores PubMed e ScienceDirect para identificar artigos publicados nos últimos cinco anos (2020-2025), utilizando as palavras-chave, Microplastics, Neurotoxicity e Neurodegenerative Diseases, combinadas através do operador booleano “AND” ou isoladas. **Resultados:** Na investigação dos mecanismos de migração, estudos demonstram que a toxicidade neural associada aos MNPs integra um quadro sistêmico. As principais vias de entrada desses fragmentos no organismo ocorrem por meio dos sistemas respiratório e digestivo. Após a internalização, os MNPs apresentam capacidade de transpor barreiras biológicas, como a BHE, disseminando-se sistemicamente e promovendo alterações metabólicas e funcionais em diferentes tecidos, particularmente alterações significativas no SNC. Os mecanismos potenciais para a transposição da BHE incluem, permeação passiva em condições nas quais a BHE encontra-se comprometida, como em processos inflamatórios ou infecciosos, captação ativa e transcitose pelas células endoteliais e influência das propriedades físico-químicas dos MNPs, fatores que modulam a capacidade de penetração dessas partículas. Os mecanismos de toxicidade mais recorrentes nos diferentes modelos experimentais in vivo, como zebrafish e roedores, é a intensa indução de estresse oxidativo e neuroinflamação crônica. Além do dano inflamatório, a literatura descreve mecanismos de morte celular e disfunção molecular específicas. Dentre esses mecanismos, a ferroptose, processo de morte celular dependente de ferro, identificada como uma das principais vias envolvidas na neurotoxicidade induzida pelos MNPs. Enquanto as alterações epigenéticas, capazes de interferir na expressão gênica, favorecem a progressão de processos neurodegenerativos. **Conclusão:** Com base nos achados, evidências emergentes sugerem que o potencial impacto da exposição a MNPs na saúde cerebral exige atenção urgente. A distribuição sistêmica dessas partículas, a transposição da BHE e os mecanismos de toxicidade evidenciam os MNPs como cofatores ambientais significativos na patogênese e progressão de DNDs. No entanto, a maioria dos estudos toxicológicos disponíveis de MNPs não representam a complexidade da contaminação

ambiental. Portanto, pesquisas futuras devem se concentrar em modelos toxicocinéticos e toxicodinâmicos multicomponentes que reflitam com mais precisão a realidade ambiental.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Doenças neurodegenerativas, microplásticos e neurotoxicidade.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Microplastics and nanoplastics (MNPs), tiny plastic fragments resulting from the wear of polymeric materials with lengths of less than 5 mm and 1 μm respectively, have raised public health concerns, suggesting potential risks to human health, especially regarding neurotoxicity and its potential correlation in the pathogenesis of neurodegenerative diseases (NDDs), debilitating conditions that cause progressive degeneration of neurons, resulting in cognitive decline. This is associated with the systemic distribution of these contaminants and their ability to cross biological barriers, primarily the blood-brain barrier (BBB). **Objective:** The present study aimed to analyze and synthesize evidence demonstrating the mechanisms of action and penetration of MNPs in the Central Nervous System (CNS), and to evaluate their relationship with the pathogenesis of major ND. **Methodology:** For this, a Systematic Literature Review was conducted, in which the PubMed and ScienceDirect indexes were consulted to identify articles published in the last five years (2020-2025), using the keywords Microplastics, Neurotoxicity, and Neurodegenerative Diseases, combined thru the boolean operator "AND" or isolated. **Results:** In the investigation of migration mechanisms, studies demonstrate that the neural toxicity associated with MNPs integrates into a systemic framework. The main routes of entry of these fragments into the body occur thru the respiratory and digestive systems. After internalization, MNPs have the ability to cross biological barriers, such as the BBB, disseminating systemically and promoting metabolic and functional changes in different tissues, particularly significant changes in the CNS. The potential mechanisms for crossing the BBB include passive permeation under conditions where the BBB is compromised, such as in inflammatory or infectious processes, active uptake and transcytosis by endothelial cells, and the influence of the physicochemical properties of NPs, factors that modulate the penetration capacity of these particles. The most recurrent toxicity mechanisms in different in vivo experimental models, such as zebrafish and rodents, are the intense induction of oxidative stress and chronic neuroinflammation. In addition to inflammatory damage, the literature describes specific mechanisms of cell death and molecular dysfunction. Among these mechanisms, ferroptosis, a process of iron-dependent cell death, has been identified as one of the main pathways involved in MNP-induced neurotoxicity. While epigenetic alterations, capable of interfering with gene expression, favor the progression of neurodegenerative processes. **Conclusion:** Based on the findings, emerging evidence suggests that the potential impact of MNP exposure on brain health requires urgent attention. The systemic distribution of these particles, the translocation across the BBB, and the mechanisms of toxicity highlight MNPs as significant environmental cofactors in the pathogenesis and progression of NDDs. However, most of the available toxicological studies on MNPs do not represent the complexity of environmental contamination. Therefore, future research should focus on multicomponent toxicokinetic and toxicodynamic models that more accurately reflect environmental reality.

KEYWORDS: Microplastics, neurodegenerative diseases and neurotoxicity.

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