

Acta Pharm. Sci. Vol 59:(), 2020

DOI: 10.23893/1307-2080.APS.05920

**Formulation Design And Optimization Of Sustained Released Matrix Tablets Of
Propranolol Hcl Using Natural And Synthetic Polymers**

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(Received 05 March 2020, accepted 10 September 2020)

ABSTRACT

The proposed research work aimed to design, formulate and finally to evaluate sustained released matrix tablets of propranolol hydrochloride using the combination of hydrophilic and hydrophobic polymers. Formulation and optimization of Propranolol HCl was done by direct compression technique using 3^2 factorial design. The amount of polymer Mastic gum (X_1) and HPMC (X_2) were chosen as independent variables and their effect on amount of drug release at 2 hours (Y_1), 4 hours (Y_2) and 8 hours (Y_3) at three levels low (-1), medium(0) and high(+1) was taken as dependent variable. Drug-excipient compatibility studies were performed by FTIR and DSC analysis. A total of 9 combinations of sustained released tablets were formulated and evaluated for both pre and post compression parameters. Design expert software version 10 was used to evaluate the effect of independent variable over dependent variable and to generate polynomial equation to represent experimental results. The B7 formulation containing 5 % of mastic gum and 25% of HPMC K-15 combination showed 60.13% drug release in 8 hours and was chosen as optimized formulation. Release kinetic mechanism indicated that the optimized formulation fitted well into Kosmeyer Peppas model ($R^2= 0.9974$). Stability studies indicated that selected formulation was stable for 90 days. Formulation containing 5% of mastic gum and 25% HPMC was found to be effective and can be explored further to develop sustained released formulations.

Keywords: Sustained release, mastic gum, factorial design, propranolol HCl.

INTRODUCTION

Sustained drug delivery is specialized form of modified drug delivery that offer the advantage of reducing the dose frequency as compared to conventional dosage forms for those drug candidate that have rapid clearance rate due to short elimination half life. Oral sustained release formulations are capable of achieving a steady therapeutic drug blood level by continuously releasing the drug for long duration after a single dose administration thus offering better patient compliance and control over therapy.^{1, 2} Depending upon release kinetics these systems are designated as continuous release, delayed transit and continuous release and delayed released systems. The mechanism involved in drug release may be dissolution, diffusion, and dissolution along with diffusion. Among all these systems, dissolution controlled system are the most acceptable one. The dissolution controlled release system is further classified as matrix dissolution control/ encapsulating/ or reservoir device type. Matrix systems are mostly preferred for sustained release dosage forms because they are simple to design, economical. Formulation of matrix systems involves the dispersion or dissolving the drug into polymeric matrix that retard the drug release and then blending with other additives to formulate a tablet dosage form.^{3, 4} Releases retardant mainly used are hydrophilic and hydrophobic polymers. Different natural and synthetic polymers are matrix forming agents in order to control the drug release. Mastic gum is a natural oleoresin exudate isolated from the stems and leaves of *Pistacia lentiscus*. It is known to possess anti-oxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and hepatoprotective activity. Recent studies demonstrated its use as tablet binder, microencapsulating agent and matrix former in the formulation of sustained released dosage forms. Propranolol hydrochloride is a non selective beta adrenergic blocking agent prescribed in high blood pressure, angina pectoris and many other cardiovascular disorders.⁵ The oral bioavailability of Propranolol hydrochloride is low. It is a highly water soluble drug with relatively short biological half life of 3-6 hours and a dose of 40 mg thrice daily. This high dosing frequency results in fluctuation of plasma drug level; therefore it is needed to have in sustained release dosage form to reduce dose frequency and improve patient compliance. The purpose of the present study is to formulate and optimize sustained released matrix tablets of Propranolol HCl using hydrophilic polymer HPMC K-15 and hydrophobic polymer mastic gum as a material for matrix formation with improved patient compliance.⁶

METHODOLOGY

Propranolol HCl and mastic gum were procured from Yarrow chem, Mumbai, India. HPMC K-15 was taken from Loba chemie Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai, India. All other chemical used were of laboratory and analytical grade

Standard calibration of Propranolol hydrochloride

A standard calibration curve of Propranolol HCl was plotted in Phosphate buffer pH 6.8 and 0.1N HCl having pH 1.2. A stock solution of drug was prepared by dissolving 100 mg of drug in phosphate buffer pH 6.8 and 0.1N HCl. The volume was made up to 100ml to prepare stock solution (A) to get a concentration of 1000 µg/ml. 10 ml of stock solution (A) was further diluted to 100 ml to obtain stock solution (B) with concentration 10 µg /ml. Aliquots of stock solution (B) was diluted to obtain working solutions of concentration 2 to 20 µg/ml.⁷ The absorbance of the final solutions were taken at 290nm using double beam UV spectrophotometer, Systronics (AU – 2701).

Compatibility studies of drug and excipients

Compatibility studies were carried by FTIR and DSC analysis. FTIR spectrum of pure drug Propranolol HCl, Polymer (mastic gum) and mixture of drug with polymer (1:1) was taken using Bruker Alpha T instrument by KBr pellet method. The spectra were scanned over a frequency range 4000-400 cm⁻¹. The possibility of drug-excipient interaction was also investigated by DSC. The samples set in a DSC instrument Mettler Toledo (model number: Star 1). The DSC thermograms of pure drug, a mixture of drug with mastic gum, HPMC, Magnesium stearate, aerosil, microcrystalline cellulose were taken. The thermal analysis was performed at a heating rate of 10.00⁰ C/min over a temperature range 98-80⁰C.

Design of Experiment

A 3² full factorial design given in **Table 1** was used to assess the combined effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. Two factors were assessed at three levels, high, medium and low. The experimental trials were taken on all 9 possible combinations. Statistical model including mathematical polynomial equation was generated to study the response.⁸ Polynomial equation generated by this design is as follows:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_{11}X_1X_1 + b_{22}X_2X_2 + b_{12}X_1X_2 \quad \text{Equation: 1}$$

Where Y is the response variable b_0 is the arithmetic mean response of the 9 trials, and b_1 and b_2 are the regression coefficients. The main effects (X_1 and X_2) are represents the average results of changing 1 factor at time from its low to high value. The interaction terms ($X_1 X_2$) show how the response varies when two factors are simultaneously varied. The polynomial terms ($X_1 X_1$ and X_2X_2) are included to investigate nonlinearity. The level of independent variables and their coding is given in **Table 2**.

Preparation of sustained release tablets

The propranolol HCl matrix tablets having a net weight of 200 mg were compressed by direct compression method. All the excipients as per the composition were previously passed through sieve no.60 to get uniform particle size were weighed accurately and mixed thoroughly for 15 min. After mixing powder blend was transferred to double punch tablet punching machine (A.K industries) for compression. The detailed composition of the prepared tablets using 3^2 factorial design is given in **Table 3**.

Evaluation of sustained released matrix tablets

Pre compression parameters

The micromeritics of all the compositions (B1to B9) were evaluated by calculating their bulk density, tapped density, angle of repose, carr's index and hausner's ratio.⁹

Post compression parameters:

Weight variation

To ensure uniformity in tablets weight, twenty tablets were selected at random from each batch and average weight was determined. Then the individual tablet weight was compared with the average weight. The percentage deviation was calculated and checked for weight variation as per the official specifications.¹⁰

% deviation= $\frac{\text{Average weight} - \text{Individual weight}}{\text{Average weight}} \times 100$

Thickness

The thickness of tablets was measured by Vernier calipers to ensure uniformity in thickness. This is done by taking three tablets at random from each batch. It is expressed in mm.

Hardness

To find tablet hardness Monsanto hardness tester was used. Three tablets from each batch were taken and the average value with standard deviation was taken as tablet hardness. It is expressed in kg/cm².

Percent Friability

Tablets friability was assessed using Roche friabilator. Ten tablets from each formulation batch were initially weighed and placed in Roche friabilator rotated at 25 rpm for 4 minutes with 100 revolutions.¹¹ Then final weight was taken. The percentage friable loss was calculated using the formula:

$$\% \text{ Friability} = \frac{\text{initial weight} - \text{final weight}}{\text{initial weight}} \times 100$$

Content uniformity

Uniformity in drug distribution was carried out by triturating ten tablets to fine powder. Powder equivalent to the 40 mg of drug was weighed and dissolved in 100 ml of phosphate buffer pH 6.8 and after suitable dilution absorbance was measured using UV-visible spectrophotometer at λ_{max} 290nm.¹²

Swelling index

Swelling index of formulated batches was estimated by placing the initially weighed tablet into a petriplate containing 5ml of phosphate buffer pH 6.8. After a regular interval of time the tablets were removed and swollen tablets were weighed. This was done for the period of 6hours.¹³

In vitro dissolution studies

The *in vitro* drug release studies were done using basket type dissolution test apparatus in 900 ml of 0.1 N HCl pH 1.2 as dissolution medium for 2 hours followed by phosphate buffer pH 6.8. The basket was adjusted at 50rpm and the temperature of 37±1⁰C was maintained throughout the

experiment. A sample of 5ml was withdrawn at different time intervals for 8 hours. Each sample was filtered using membrane filter with a pore size of 0.45 mm and was analyzed after appropriate dilution by UV spectrophotometer at λ_{\max} 290nm.¹⁴

Drug release kinetic study

To assess release kinetics, various mathematical equations have been used, namely zero order, first order, Higuchi model and Kosmeyer Peppas equation.¹⁵ The most suitable model was selected on the basis of the value of regression coefficient near to unity.

Selection of optimized formulations

For the selection of optimized formulation, a simple exhaustive grid search was done. The regression equations were calculated for different combinations of independent variables and the response values were compared for the selection of optimized formulation. The areas that give the optimum value for each studied response was found using overlay plot.

Comparison of optimized formulation with commercial brand

The optimized formulation selected by design expert software was then compared with one of commercial brand of propranolol HCl tablet, Inderal 40 (Abott India Ltd) for its *in vitro* drug release.

Stability studies

The optimized formulation was subjected to stability studies after packing in aluminum pack as per ICH guidelines for 90 days at 40°C ± 2°/ 75% RH ± using stability test chamber (Remi elektrotechnik Ltd; Vasai, India). Test sampling was done at different time points for analysis.¹⁶

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Preformulation studies

Standard calibration curve of propranolol Hydrochloride

Standard calibration curve of drug plotted in 0.1N HCl and pH 6.8 phosphate buffers is shown in **Figure 1 and 2**, the R^2 value was found to be 0.9995 and 0.9857 respectively which indicated the linearity of the graph.

Compatibility studies of drug and excipients

FTIR Analysis

FTIR spectra of propranolol hydrochloride showed a characteristics peak of OH stretch at 3435.84 cm^{-1} . -NH stretch at 3330.11 cm^{-1} , -CH stretch at 2928.33 . A Peak of acryl C=C symmetric aromatic ring stretching at 1632.65 cm^{-1} and aryl coupling C-O-Stretching at 1268.17 cm^{-1} which peak was obtained from 1500 cm^{-1} . An aryl O-CH₂ asymmetric stretching at 1240.96 and symmetric stretching at 1074.95 cm^{-1} . A peak at 796.90 cm^{-1} is due to naphthalene ring. Spectra of mastic gum showed a characteristics peak of OH group at 3440.25 cm^{-1} . FTIR spectra of mastic gum and drug showed a characteristics peak of -NH stretching at 3330.34 , -CH aromatic at 2925.40 , C=C aryl group attached at 1691.09 and 1637.70 , -CH₃ bending at 1456.71 and 1401.01 , C-O-C Stretching at 1267.46 . All characteristic peaks of drug are shown in FTIR spectra of drug and mastic gum which indicates the compatibility of drug and mastic gum. FTIR spectra of Propranolol hydrochloride, Mastic gum and physical mixture of mastic gum HPMC K-15 and drug are given in **Figure 3, 4 and 5** respectively.

DSC Analysis

The possibility of drug excipient interaction was further investigated by DSC. DSC curve of pure drug as shown in **Figure 6** give endothermic peak at 168.74°C . DSC curve of mastic gum as shown **Figure 7** give endothermic peak at 98.80°C . DSC curve of drug and mastic gum as depicted in **Figure 8** give endothermic peak at 155.43°C . From the DSC results it was concluded that there is no incompatibility between the drug and excipient selected.

Evaluation of 3² full factorial design batches B1 to B9:

Pre compression Evaluations

Bulk density was found in range of 0.24 to 0.645 gm/cm^3 , tapped density ranged from 0.535 to 0.6 , Angle of repose 14.0 to 26.26 , Carr's index range from 22.3 to 4.2 , Hausner's ratio ranged

from 1.04 to 1.181. Results of evaluation of precompression parameters as shown in **Table 4** indicated good micromeritic properties of all formulation batches.

Post compression Evaluations

The Weight of the formulated batches passed the weight variation test as the % weight variation was within the Pharmacopoeial limits of ± 7.5 % of the weight. The thickness of all tablets was in the range between 3.23 to 3.98 mm which indicates uniformity in size and shape of the tablets. The hardness of tablets was in the range between 4.66 to 7.5 kg/cm² which indicated the good mechanical strength of the prepared formulations that could maintain physical integrity during the normal course of handling, also increase in content of mastic gum increases hardness due to the strong binding character of gum mastic.¹⁷ Friability was in the range between 0.5% to 0.94%. Friability values were in agreement with official limit of less than 1% in all cases which indicated good mechanical strength required for handling and transportation. Content of drug distributed in all tablets was found in the range between 95.3 to 99.68% this ensured the uniformity and homogeneity of the drug distribution in the tablets. Results of post compression parameters are given in **Table 5**.

In vitro drug release studies

From *in vitro* drug release it was observed that as the concentration of the mastic gum increases, the amount of drug release decreases. This may be explained due hydrophobic nature of gum which delay the hydration and swelling of polymer matrix to release drug. Decreasing content of mastic gum and increasing amount of HPMC stimulates the drug release, due to the hydrophilic nature of HPMC which dissolve the coating of mastic gum around the drug particles and increase release in early stage. From the results of *in vitro* drug study it was found that B7 tablet batch containing 5% (10mg) of mastic gum and 25% (50mg) of HPMC-K15 could sustain the drug release for 8 hours and was selected as optimized formulation, showing 19.43 at 2hours, 31.55 at 4 hours and 60.13 % drug release at 8 hours which was found to uniform and consistent, this may be attributed due to more free drug: polymer ratio and constant release of the drug embedded in the mastic gum and HPMC-K15 matrix which has a hydrophilic gel forming nature. On coming in contact with liquid medium this polymer hydrate and swell, forming a hydro gel layer which regulate the further penetration of the liquid into the tablet matrix and control the dissolution and diffusion of drug out of the polymer matrix and there by sustain the drug release.

¹⁸As the concentration of mastic gum increases the hydrophobic nature of the gum retarded the drug release which was due to the gummy nature and therefore poor solvent penetration into the tablet matrix that reduces the wetting and drug dissolution. Results of in vitro drug release study are shown in **Figure 9 (a), (b) and (c)**

Regression Analysis

Mathematical relationship generated in the form of polynomial equations for the studied responses are expressed as follows:

$$Y1 = +26.75444 - 0.58667X_1 - 3.22500X_2 + 3.89250X_1X_2$$

$$Y2 = +30.75889 - 1.62833X_1 - 2.88500X_2 + 1.66500X_1X_2 + 1.42167X_1^2 - 58167X_2^2$$

$$Y3 = +60.28444 - 0.9600X_1 + 0.61833X_2 + 6.85500X_1X_2$$

The above equation demonstrates the effect of various process variables over the studied responses. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to estimate the level of significance of model at 5%. A model is said to be significant if the p value is less than 0.05. Summary of regression analysis for studied response is given in **Table 6**; all measured responses were found to be statistically significant as indicated by P value. F value measures the equality of two variance. The results are shown in **Table 7**. The relationship between dependent and independent variables was further elucidated using surface response, contour plots and diagnostic graph as given in **Figure. 10, 11 and 12**. Correlation between predicted and actual values as indicated by diagnostic graph was found linear with R² value 0.998, 0.9782 and 0.9360 indicating the excellent fit.

Formulation optimization

A numerical optimization using desirability approach was used to develop a new formulation with desired response. Upon evaluation a formulation having desirability closer to 1 was observed. The percentage prediction error between the predicted and experimental values for each response was calculated which was found to be within 5%. The formulation B7 was selected as optimized batch as error was minimum for studied responses.^{19, 20} Comparison

between experimented (E) and predicted value (P) of B2 formulation are given in **Table 8**. Desirability and predicted values of the response R1, R2 and R3 are shown in **Figure 13**.

Drug Release Kinetic Study

From the results of drug release kinetics it was found that the release mechanism follows swelling and diffusion best demonstrated by Korsmeyer Peppas model giving R^2 value of 0.9942. Results of drug release kinetic study are shown in **Table 9**.

Comparison of marketed formulation of Inderal 40 with optimized B7 formulation

In vitro drug release of optimized formulation was compared with marketed tablet of Propranolol HCl, Inderal 40 for 8 hours. Results of % cumulative drug release are shown in **Figure 14**. The *in vitro* drug release of B7 formulation showed more sustained release behavior as comparison to Inderal 40

Stability Studies

Results of stability studies of optimized batch are give in **Table10** which indicated that all the physical parameters of formulation remains with the prescribed limit during the test periods. The percentage drug release estimated at different time points does not showed any variation, which means that the selected formulation is stable.

CONCLUSION

The current research work was done with the objective of formulation of sustained released tablets of propranolol HCl using combination of gum mastic and HPMC-K15 utilizing 3^2 factorial design approaches. It was concluded that mastic gum (5%) and HPMC- K15 (25%) exhibited desired sustained drug release and followed Kosmeyer Peppas kinetic; the drug release mechanism may be diffusion or swelling of matrix. Therefore, mastic gum and HPMC- K15 can be a suitable combination for formulation of sustained released tablets.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Authors has no conflicts of interest

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed equally

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Figure captions:

Figure 1: Standard plot of drug in 0.1N HCL

Figure 2: Standard plot of drug in Phosphate buffer pH 6.8

Figure 3: FTIR of drug Propanolol HCl

Figure 4: FTIR of Mastic gum

Figure 5: FTIR of HPMC-K 15

Figure 6: DSC analysis of Propanolol Hydrochloride

Figure 7: DSC analysis of Mastic Gum

Figure 8: DSC analysis of HPMC-K15

Figure 9: *In vitro* drug release of formulations. (a), B1, B2 and B3; (b), B4, B5 and B6; and (c), B7, B8 and B9.

Figure 10: (a) Response surface plot for 2 hours drug release; (b) Contour plot for drug release at 2 hours and (c) Diagnostic plot for drug release at 2 hours.

Figure 11: (a) Response surface plot for drug release at 4 hours; (b) Contour plot for drug release for 4 hours; and (c) Diagnostic plot for drug release at 4 hours.

Figure 12: (a) Response surface plot for drug release at 8 hours; (b) Contour plot for drug release for 8 hours; and (c) Diagnostic plot for drug release for 8 hours

Figure 13: Desirability and Predicted values Responses R1, R2 and R3

Figure 14: Comparison of marketed formulation with Optimized B7 formulation

