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Review

Nanotechnology in clinical laboratory diagnostics

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Abstract

Nanotechnology—the creation and utilization of materials, devices, and systems through the control of matter on the nanometer—has been applied to molecular diagnostics. This article reviews nanobiotechnologies that are clinically relevant and have the potential to be incorporated in clinical laboratory diagnosis. Nanotechnologies enable the diagnosis at single cell and molecule level and some of these can be incorporated in the current molecular diagnostics such as biochips. Nanoparticles, such as gold nanoparticles and quantum dots, are the most widely used but various other nanotechnologies for manipulation at nanoscale as well as nanobiosensors are reviewed. These technologies will extend the limits of current molecular diagnostics and enable point-of-care diagnosis as well as the development of personalized medicine. Although the potential diagnostic applications are unlimited, most important current applications are foreseen in the areas of biomarker research, cancer diagnosis and detection of infectious microorganisms.

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1. Introduction

Nanomolecular diagnostics is the use of nanobiotechnology in molecular diagnostics and can be termed "nanodiagnostics" [1]. Nanotechnology is the creation and utilization of materials, devices, and systems through the control of matter on the nanometer (1 billionth of a meter)-length scale. Various nanotechnologies and their applications in life sciences are described in detail elsewhere under the term 'nanobiotechnology' [2]. Numerous nanodevices and nanosystems for sequencing single molecules of DNA are feasible. Given the inherent nanoscale of receptors, pores, and other functional components of living cells, the detailed monitoring and analysis of these components will be made

possible by the development of a new class of nanoscale probes.

Because of the small dimension, most of the applications of nanobiotechnology in molecular diagnostics fall under the broad category of biochips/microarrays but are more correctly termed nanochips and nanoarrays. Nanotechnology-on-a-chip is a general description that can be applied to several methods. Some of these do not use nanotechnologies but merely have the capability to analyze nanoliter amounts of fluids.

It is difficult to classify such a wide range of nanotechnologies but those with potential applications in molecular diagnostics are listed in Table 1. Molecular diagnostic technologies are used in biological research, detection of bioterrorism agents, clinical diagnostics, drug discovery and development, as well

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