Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Materials Chemistry and Environmental Engineering
DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

Paclitaxel in Cancer Therapy: Origins, Action, Resistance, and Future Prospects

Chenqi Liang[1*], Jinfeng Xu[2], Yicheng Zhuang[3]

[1]*Portledge School, Locust Valley, America*
[2]*Yinghua Academic of Tianjin, Tianjin, China*
[3]*UWC Changshu China, Suzhou, China*
**Corresponding Author. Email: alexliang8668@gmail.com*

Abstract. Paclitaxel, branded as Taxol and Abraxane, is a nature-derived chemotherapy drug originally extracted from the Pacific yew. In contrast to previous attempts at combating cancer, Paclitaxel can effectively stop cancer cells division by stabilizing mitotic spindles. That's why it's still one of the most widely used drugs in cancer treatment today. This paper explores Paclitaxel's history, mechanism of action, synthesis routes, metabolism in the human body, side effects, and its success rate. In the future, scientists are looking forward to improving Paclitaxel's delivery, reducing its side effects, and overcoming resistance in certain cancers. This paper does not intend to be a comprehensive report on this amazing molecule. It is meant to be an introductory article to help more people understand Paclitaxel.

Keywords: Paclitaxel, Chemotherapy, Abraxane, Taxol, Cancer, β-tubulin

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The fight against cancer has many heroes, and Paclitaxel, a complex, plant derived molecule has transformed modern chemotherapy with its remarkable ability to disrupt cancer's growth. Commonly known as Taxol, Paclitaxel is used to treat a wide range of cancers, including ovarian, breast, lung, cervical, esophageal, pancreatic cancer, and Kaposi's sarcoma [1].

1.2. Starting from the Pacific yew

Paclitaxel was originally discovered from the bark of the Pacific yew (See Figure 1) by a group of researchers at the NIH (National Institutes of Health). It was part of a project started by the NCI (National Cancer Institute) in 1955 to find molecules that can combat cancer. In 1960, botanists from the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) were commissioned by the NCI to collect 1000 plant species per year that could contribute to the study. However, it was not until 1962 that botanist Arthur S. Barclay collected bark from a Pacific yew tree in a forest north of the town of Packwood, Washington. Then, the bark was analyzed by specialists from CCNSC in 1964 (Cancer

© 2026 The Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

Chemotherapy National Service Center) and through a cellular assay they discovered that the bark was cytotoxic [1].



Figure 1. The photo of Pacific yew tree bark [2]

1.3. Paclitaxel being isolated

In 1967, after 12 years of laborious pursuit, the pure compound ($C_{47}H_{51}NO_{14}$) was finally isolated and named taxol by Monroe E. Wall, Mansukh Wani, and their colleagues. They published their results in 1971 with the chemical structure of taxol (See Figure 2) [3]. Taxol was extremely hard to be isolated, only 10g of pure taxol were extracted from 1200kg of bark. As a result, progress in testing taxol was very difficult.

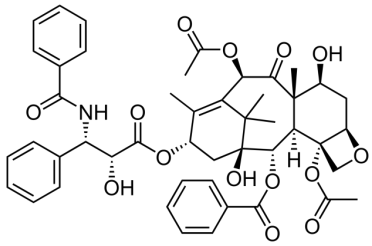


Figure 2. The structure of paclitaxel [4]

1.4. Paclitaxel proved to be effective against cancer

Another 7 years passed in silence. Finally, in 1978, taxol was proved to be effective against cancer. R. K. Johnson and D. A. Fuchs from NCI published a report showing that taxol was effective in leukaemic mice. This breakthrough sparked renewed interest in the compound, making Taxol widely recognized within the cancer research and medical communities. By the next year, Susan B. Horwitz, a well-respected molecular pharmacologist at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, announced that taxol functions by stabilizing microtubules to kill cancer cells [5]. By the summer of 1982, preclinical safety testing in animals had concluded, paving the way for the National Cancer Institute to file an application, IND (Investigational New Drug) that would initiate testing taxol in human clinical trials.

1.5. Clinical trials began

The transition from laboratory research to clinical testing began in the 1980s, as taxol moved into human testing following encouraging results in preclinical studies. In April 1984, the NCI launched

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

a Phase I clinical trial for taxol, marking a key milestone in its development as a cancer therapy [1]. About a year later, followed by encouraging early outcomes, Phase II clinical trial was undertaken.

1.6. Environmental concerns

However, these expanded trials demanded a significantly greater quantity of Pacific yew bark, with about 12,000 pounds of bark collected to fulfil this need. By the end of 1986, these efforts enabled Phase II trials to officially begin. While the need for taxol's clinical testing grew, the NCI researchers soon realized this would require unsustainable harvesting of the bark. They estimated a minimum of 60,000 pounds of the bark would be needed to sustain clinical experiment, this is a level of harvesting that would threaten the already scarce and slow growing Pacific yew population [6].

This situation raised serious environmental concerns about the long-term viability of relying on large-scale bark harvesting. Therefore, researchers began exploring alternative methods that would reduce dependence on the Pacific yew tree, while still ensuring a stable supply of the drug for ongoing clinical and therapeutic use.

1.7. Financial collaboration

Early findings from a Phase II clinical trial in May 1988 indicated that Paclitaxel was a promising treatment for drug-resistant ovarian cancer and melanoma. However, to be able to meet the potential demand in the United States would require the annual destruction of 360,000 Pacific yew. The NCI realized it needed outside assistance to meet the enormous financial and logistical demands of ongoing development. BMS (Bristol-Myers Squibb) and the NCI signed a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) in 1989, whereby the firm agreed to finance further raw material gathering, medication production, and large-scale clinical studies in exchange for access to the NCI's data and current supplies [1]. Following the 1989 agreement, the responsibility for Paclitaxel's large-scale manufacturing, additional clinical testing, and ultimate marketing was transferred to BMS. Their participation greatly sped up the drug's development progress.

1.8. FDA approval of the drug

An important milestone was reached in December 1992 when the FDA approved Paclitaxel for the treatment of advanced ovarian cancer. Over time, Kaposi's sarcoma, non-small cell lung cancer, and breast cancer were added to its list of authorized applications. Despite these successes, clinical use brought new problems [7]. A solvent known as Cremophor EL was in Paclitaxel's original formulation, this solvent can result in serious allergies for patients. Therefore, steroids and antihistamines were needed as pre-treatment. To combat this issue, a new formulation called Abraxane was developed by scientists. This version used albumin-bound nanoparticles to deliver the drug, removing the need for toxic solvents and improving patient safety.

1.9. Further research and synthesis of the drug

Researchers also looked for alternative production methods because of concerns regarding environmental sustainability. They created a semi-synthetic method that uses 10-deacetylbaccatin III, a substance present in European yew needles that could be extracted without causing the tree to die. Even though scientists like Holton and Nicolaou eventually succeeded in creating complete chemical syntheses, these techniques were too difficult and expensive for mass production [8].

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

1.10. A look to the future

Paclitaxel's story shows the challenge of natural drug development. Even with early problems like limited supply and side effects, it grew into one of the most important treatments. Its journey proves how nature can help us find powerful tools to fight serious diseases like cancer. In this work, an introductory overview is given for the current state of research on Paclitaxel. Discussed in detail are its mechanism of actions, synthesis routes, metabolism in the human body, side effects, and success rate. More is left to be done in this field to further improve this miracle drug. May improved targeting and reduced resistance be developed to save more cancer-afflicted lives.

2. Mechanism

2.1. How cells divide

Before going into details of the exact mechanism of action for Paclitaxel, it's important to understand how cancer cells divide. Cancer cells and healthy cells have the same mechanism of division, and they both undergo mitosis. During this process, chromosomes are first duplicated into two copies. Then, they are separated to two opposite ends of the cell. Last, a cleavage is formed in the middle of the cell, and the cell is divided into two new daughter cells [9]. In comparison, cancer cells divide uncontrollably at an extremely fast pace. As a result, a ton of cancer cells are formed, resulting in tumors. Paclitaxel disrupts the growth of tumors by affecting mitotic spindles.

Mitotic spindles play a major role in the process of cell division. They are made up of microtubules, thin, hollow tube-like proteins made from two types of tubulins, α and β, which join together in a repeating pattern to help form a rigid structure. These spindles are very dynamic, they are constantly shrinking and extending themselves by assembling and disassembling microtubules to adjust their length. During mitosis, microtubules attach to the duplicated chromosomes and align them in the center of the cell (See Figure3). Then, microtubules pull the chromosomes apart so each daughter cell can receive a complete set of DNA [10]. This process is highly organized and tightly controlled, and any disruption can prevent the cell from dividing correctly. This precise and ordered procedure is particularly important for cancer cells since they divide far more quickly than normal cells. Therefore, they are easily affected by medication that disrupts cell division.

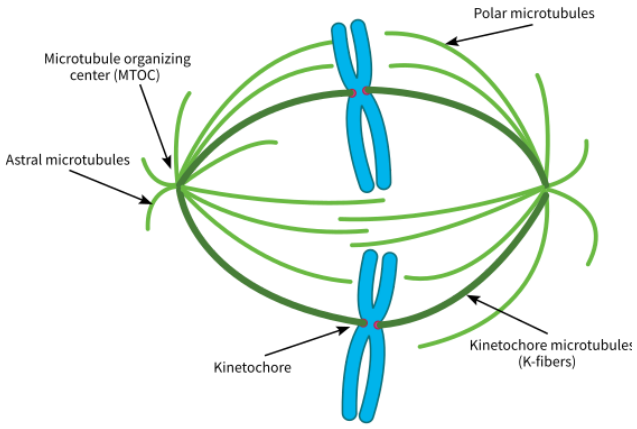


Figure 3. How microtubules attach to chromosomes [10]

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

2.2. How paclitaxel stabilizes microtubules

Paclitaxel takes advantage of this weakness by directly targeting the microtubules. When it's attached to the β-tubulin, it stabilizes the microtubule structure and prevents it from depolymerizing, which stops it from growing and shrinking. This is important because during normal mitosis, microtubules need to both grow and shrink in order to move and separate the chromosomes properly. By stabilizing microtubules, Paclitaxel essentially stops all the movements of microtubules. As a result, the mitotic spindles cannot function correctly, and the cell cannot undergo mitosis. Since the cell cannot complete mitosis, it's stuck in the G2/M phase of the cell cycle (As Shown in Figure 4) . Cells have checkpoints in every part of the cell cycle to monitor whether everything is working properly. When these checkpoints detect a problem, such as the malfunctioning of the microtubules, they stop the cycle to prevent errors from being passed on. If the problem can't be fixed, the cell eventually activates apoptosis [11] , a programmed and controlled system for the cell to die without affecting or damaging the neighboring cells.

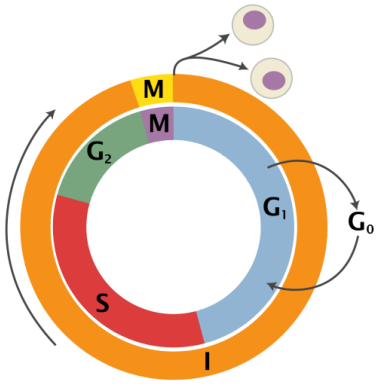


Figure 4. The cell cycle of a cell [12]

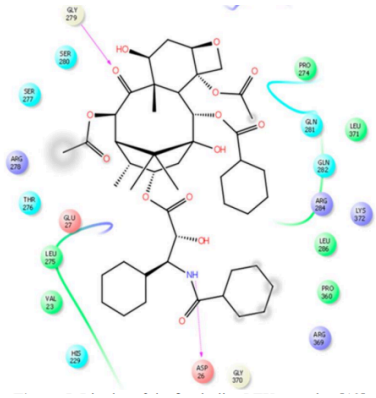


Figure 5. Ligplot of the β-tubulin−PTX complex [13]

It's important to understand how Paclitaxel binds to the β-tubulin. There are a lot of different variations for the specific binding activity, generally the paclitaxel docks into the β-tubulin and forms multiple hydrogen bonds with specific amino acids. For example, the ketone on carbon-35 forms a hydrogen bond with amino acid GLY 279, and the amide on nitrogen forms another hydrogen bond with amino acid ASP 26(As Shown in Figure 5). Furthermore, the hydrophobic regions of Paclitaxel and the β-tubulin also interact. One study found in 2001 that there is a hydrophobic cleft on the surface of the β-tubulin, and the Paclitaxel can fit inside like a "key" fitting

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

into a “lock”. Just like there is an optimal key for each lock, Paclitaxel is a great key for β-tubulins. Sticking Paclitaxel into β-tubulins can effectively shut off microtubules. Thus, Paclitaxel is a key to treat cancer.

Extending this analogy, it is obvious that the effectiveness of Paclitaxel is concentration dependent, enough keys are necessary for the number of locks. Since cancer cells continuously make more microtubules, more Paclitaxel is necessary to shut off the newly made microtubules. Therefore, the concentration of Paclitaxel has to reach the optimal range to successfully freeze the mitotic spindles and cause the cell to activate apoptosis. However, if the amount of Paclitaxel exceeds the optimal range, it can cause too much damage to many healthy cells [14].

2.3. Resistance against paclitaxel

Although Paclitaxel is a powerful drug to treat cancer, some cancer cells can develop resistance over time, making treatment less effective. One common mechanism of resistance involves changes in the structure of microtubules. Mutations in the gene that makes β-tubulin can change the shape of the hydrophobic binding site, which prevents Paclitaxel from binding properly [15]. Without strong binding, Paclitaxel can no longer stop the microtubules movement or mitosis.

Another resistance mechanism is called multidrug resistance, which expels Paclitaxel from the cell. Some cancer cells produce large amounts of P-gp (P-glycoprotein), a cell membrane protein that acts like a drug pump. It's a detoxification protein that would get rid of anything that would interrupt the cell cycle. When Paclitaxel is kicked out before it can do its job, the drug concentration inside the cell drops, making it much less effective [16]. Also, P-gp can remove other chemotherapy drugs.

Another mechanism of resistance results when some cancer cells resist Paclitaxel by slowing their division or changing their cell cycle checkpoints. Paclitaxel works the best when cancer cells are rapidly dividing. Proteins like p21 and p27 help these cells pause before mitosis [17], which reduces the number of cells in the M phase when Paclitaxel is most active, greatly lowering the effectiveness of Paclitaxel.

Finally, the last resisting mechanism is that cancer cells can activate internal survival systems to avoid dying. Proteins such as Bcl-2 or survivin can block apoptosis, allowing cells to survive even when damaged [18]. Others may activate repair systems or alternative pathways like PI3K/Akt or MAPK, which help the cell survive under damage [19]. All of these resistance strategies make it more difficult for Paclitaxel to kill cancer cells, and they remain an ongoing challenge in cancer treatment.

3. The synthesis of paclitaxel

3.1. Semisynthesis of paclitaxel

Due to the discovery of the anticancer function of paclitaxel, the synthetic chemists in the U.S. and France had been interested in paclitaxel. However, the main theme of the research of palitaxel was finding chemical properties about it rather than finding artificial synthesis.

The French group of Pierre Potier solved the problems of overall processed yield and proved possible to isolate the large quantity of 10-deacetylbaccatin (As Shown in Figure 6). The compound mainly appears in the needles of European yew (Taxus baccata). By 1988, Poitier and collaborators had published a semisynthetic route [6].

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

In 1989, Holton's group developed the semisynthesis route to paclitaxel with twice the yield of Potier's semisynthesis strategies [20]. The main innovation was "Ojima–Holton coupling", a ring-opening method independently discovered by Holton and Ojim [21,22]. In 1992, BMS(Bristol Myers Squibb) took the process in-house and started to manufacture paclitaxel in Ireland from 10-deacetylbaccatin isolated from the needles of the European yew. The process is shown in Figure 6.

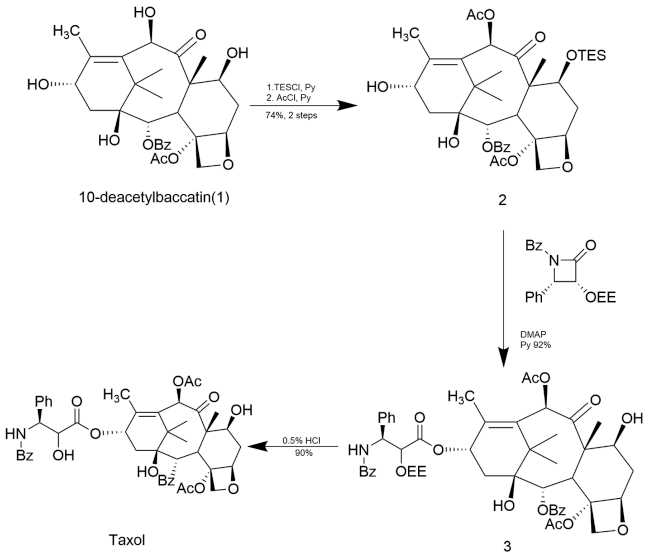


Figure 6. The pathway of Robert A. Holton's semisynthesis strategies

The semisynthesis starts with the raw material 10-deacetylbaccatin which comes from needles of European yew trees. There are 3 steps to extract 10-deacetylbaccatin 1 from needles. Alcohol extraction, extraction chromatography, and crystallization. 10-deacetylbaccatin dissolves in alcohol because of the polarity. First, use acetyl chloride (AcCl) and triethylchlorosilane (TESCl) to protect the hydroxyl group at C-7 and C-10 in pyridine (Py) then form, which can ensure the coupling the Ojima lactam at the hydroxyl group at C-13 because the C-7 and C-10 hydroxyl group have higher activity than C-13. Then form 2. Second, Couple Ojima lactam to the C-13 hydroxyl group of 3 [23]. Ojima lactam is a kind of beta-lactam and the lactam has the same stereochemical structure, it was synthesized by Iwao Ojima. The process happens in pyridine and is catalyzed by 4-Dimethylaminopyridine (DMAP) then the compound 3 was produced. Finally, use 0.5% hydrochloric acid to remove the protecting groups and then get the pure taxol(As Shown in Figure 6).

3.2. Biosynthesis of paclitaxel

Taxol's biosynthesis begins with the loss of pyrophosphate of E, E, E-GGPP through an SN1 mechanism (Step 4). The double-bond attacks the cation through electrophilic addition, forming a tertiary cation and creating the first ring closure (Step 5). Another electrophilic attack occurs, making a further ring of the structure by creating the first 6-membered ring and creating another tertiary cation (Step 6). An intramolecular proton transfer occurs, attacking the vertical cation and creating a double bond, forming a tertiary cation (Step 7). Then electrophilic cyclization occurs (Step 8), and the intramolecular proton transfers and attacks the taxenyl cation (Step 9). This forms the fused ring structure intermediate known as taxadiene 10. Taxadiene then undergoes a series of 10 oxidations via NADPH, forming the intermediate taxadiene-5α-acetoxy-10β-ol 11. Then steps of

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

hydroxylations and esterifications occur, forming the intermediate 10-deacetyl-baccatin III 12, which passes a further series of esterifications and a side-chain hydroxylation. This finally yields the product paclitaxel.

3.3. Total synthesis of taxol

Table 1. Synthesis method of taxol

Synthesis	Year	Group	Starting Material	Strategy	Key Features
Holton	1994	Robert A. Holton	Patchoulol	Linear	Sequential ring construction, Ojima lactam for tail
Nicolaou	1994	K. C. Nicolaou	Mucic acid	Convergent	Merging A and C rings, then D ring and tail
Danishefsky	1996	Samuel J. Danishefsky	Wieland-Miescher ketone	Convergent	C and D ring merger, then A ring
Wender	1997	Paul A. Wender	Pinene	Linear	Photoinduced electron transfer for B ring
Baran	2020	Phil S. Baran	Vinylogous ester	Two-phase	Biosynthetic-inspired, Diels-Alder cycloaddition

In table 1, Holton's group first achieved the total synthesis in 1994, using a linear approach and beginning with patchoulol, a sesquiterpene. The synthesis constructed rings A, B, C, and D through 41 steps. Key steps included epoxy alcohol cleavage for the AB ring, Dieckmann condensation in the C ring, and intramolecular SN2 change in the D ring, attaching the side chain at C-13 using the Ojima lactam. This effort demonstrated the feasibility of total synthesis but was complex and wasted time [24,25].

At the same time, Nicolaou's team use a convergent strategy, Synthesis paclitaxel from three fragments: A ring (from ethyl 4-hydroxy-2-methylbut-2-enoate), C ring (from 3-hydroxy-2-pyrone), and the side chain. The A and C rings were coupled following the Shapiro reaction at C1–C2, followed by McMurry coupling at C9–C10 to form the B ring, and D ring formation. This 51-step synthesis shows the low efficiency of convergent assembly for complex molecules [26].

Danishefsky's synthesis started from the Wieland-Miescher ketone, coupling C and D rings via 1,2-addition at C1–C2, followed by Heck coupling at C9–C10 to form the B ring. The A ring was then combined to complete the core, with C9 and C13 oxidations and side chain addition in 47 steps. This approach showcased a unique ring assembly order [27].

Wender's linear synthesis used pinene, and featured a Grob-type fragmentation to form the AB ring system. The C ring was constructed by aldol cyclization, and the D ring follows the intramolecular SN2 mechanism, completing the synthesis in 37 steps [28].

Baran's two-phase divergent synthesis, inspired by the biosynthesis of taxol, used 2,3-dimethylbut-2-ene and other fragments. Phase one constructed a tricyclic ABC intermediate following Michael addition and a type II intramolecular Diels-Alder reaction. Phase two involved stereoselective oxidations at C13, C5, C10, C9, and D ring formation in 24 steps, showcasing efficiency [29].

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

4. The metabolism of taxol

4.1. The injection of paclitaxel

To understand how Paclitaxel works in the body, it's important to know about its metabolism pathway, how the drug is processed, transformed, and released from the body(As Shown in Figure 7). Paclitaxel is administered through intravenous infusion, which helps it directly enter the bloodstream and begin doing its job [30].

However, it's important to know that Paclitaxel is a hydrophobic molecule, it's insoluble in water. This characteristic of Paclitaxel prevents it from being dissolved in blood and being carried to the target site [31]. Therefore, a large percentage of natural state Paclitaxel would not be working properly if injected alone.

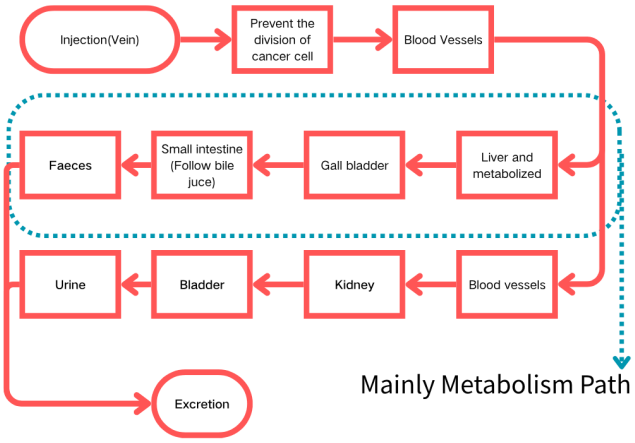


Figure 7. The metabolism pathway of taxol in human body

4.2. Cremophor EL

To solve this problem, scientists developed a new formulation by adding Cremophor EL to help it travel better in the bloodstream. Cremophor EL is a polyethoxylated castor oil. It forms micelles around Paclitaxel. Micelles have hydrophobic tails facing inside, towards the Paclitaxel, and hydrophilic heads pointing outwards, towards the blood stream [32]. Protected by the Cremophor EL, Paclitaxel reaches the target site more smoothly.

Then, a new issue arises. Although Cremophor EL increases the solubility of Paclitaxel, it blocks the hydrophobic property of Paclitaxel, which is essential for interacting with the hydrophobic site on β-tubulins. If Paclitaxels can't be insoluble when it gets to the tumor site, it can't do its job. Furthermore, a lot of micelles trap Paclitaxel so tightly that Paclitaxel can't even break out of it when it gets to the tumor site. These factors greatly reduced the therapeutic effectiveness of this early formulation of Paclitaxel. Additionally, Cremophor EL caused severe allergic reactions and was very toxic to many patients [33]. As a result, scientists sought a different formulation to combat these problems.

4.3. Abraxane

Scientists found a solution in Abraxane. Instead of using Cremophor EL to carry Paclitaxel, scientists now use albumin-bound nanoparticles to help Paclitaxel travel through the blood stream.

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

Albumin is the most abundant protein in human blood plasma [34]. It regulates oncotic pressure, maintains blood pH, reduces oxidative stress, and serves as a carrier protein for hormones, fatty acids, minerals and other drugs. Since it is not foreign to the body like Cremophor EL, it wouldn't cause allergic reactions. Also, instead of being surrounded in oily micelles, Paclitaxel attaches to Albumin's hydrophobic binding pockets, Sudlow's Site I and II, riding it like a boat [35]. Conveniently, tumor cells absorb more albumin because they grow fast and need more protein to build new cells. This means more Paclitaxel are delivered to tumor sites instead of affecting healthy cells.

When the Paclitaxel-bound albumin gets near cancer regions, another key helper, the gp60 protein located on the inside of the blood vessels, helps it get out of the bloodstream. After albumin attaches to gp60, it pulls the drug-carrying "boat" into the tumor area through a process called caveolae-mediated transcytosis. Once albumin is inside the tumor environment, another protein called SPARC (Secreted Protein Acidic and Rich in Cysteine), found in high amounts around the tumor, grabs onto albumin and keeps it in place [36] . Which prevents Paclitaxel from drifting away.

In cells, there are large amounts of enzymes called proteases, which cut down proteins into small pieces. These enzymes slowly break down albumin and release Paclitaxel into function. Additionally, the acidity of tumor tissues also plays a role in weakening the bonds between albumin and Paclitaxel. Thus, Paclitaxel is successfully released from its "boat" to bind to β-tubulins and start shutting down mitosis.

Another benefit of this delivery mechanism is that the maximum dosage increased significantly compared to Cremophor El, going from 175mg/m^2 to 260mg/m^2 [37]. This new formulation is marketed under the name "Abraxane", and it is now the most commonly used version of paclitaxel in the world.

4.4. How liver metabolizes paclitaxel

Once Paclitaxel finishes its job of stopping cancer cell division, it's important for the drug to turn inactive. Like most chemotherapy drugs, Paclitaxel doesn't just target cancer cells, it can also affect healthy cells that divide quickly. Such as cells in the bone marrow, hair follicles, and stomach lining. If the drug isn't broken down and inactivated after it completes its job, it will continue to attack healthy tissue, leading to serious side effects. To combat this problem the human body has its metabolism process to deactivate and remove drugs after they finish their job. By converting Paclitaxel into inactive forms, the liver detoxifies it and protects the rest of the body. This process happens in two phases in the liver.

In Phase I, Paclitaxel undergoes reactions that make it more water soluble, namely by oxidation and hydroxylation. It's important for Paclitaxel to become more water soluble because this prevents them from binding to the hydrophobic clefts on other healthy cells' β-tubulins. Paclitaxel is mainly metabolized by two enzymes from a family named cytochrome P450, CYP2C8 and CYP3A4. Paclitaxel first enters the active site of the enzyme, which also has a hydrophobic pocket that fits Paclitaxel well. Specifically, the active site orients Paclitaxel's C6 carbon near the heme group of the enzyme for oxidation. The heme group (As Shown in Figure 8) is very important for the process, it contains an iron (Fe) atom that changes between oxidation states (Fe^{2+} and Fe^{3+}). The iron receives an electron from a NADPH, and reacts with molecular oxygen to form reactive iron (IV)-oxo species [38]. This intermediate is very attractive; it grabs a hydrogen from the C6 position of the Paclitaxel. Then, it plugs an oxygen atom into the same spot, and completes the hydroxylation by tagging another hydrogen along. Thus, CYP2C8 converts Paclitaxel into its major metabolite, 6α-hydroxypaclitaxel, which is inactive. If the enzyme CYP3A4 is used, on the other hand, the products

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

would be minor metabolites such as C3′-hydroxypaclitaxel and C6-hydroxypaclitaxel (as shown in Figure 9).

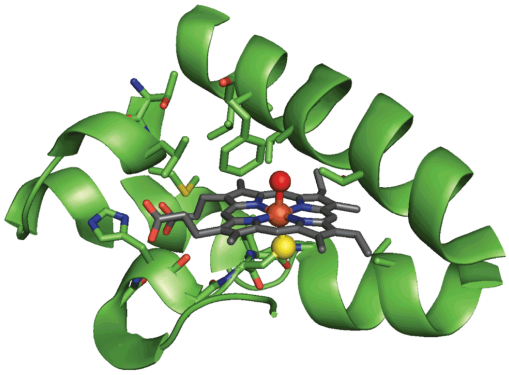


Figure 8. An enzyme showing the heme group in the center, with the iron marked red [39]

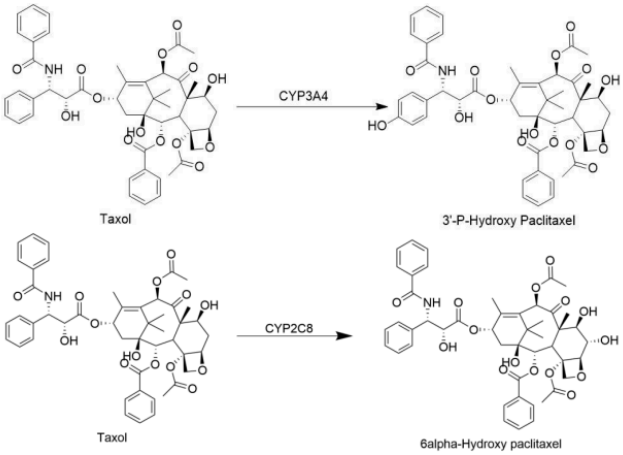


Figure 9. The structure change of taxol

In Phase II, conjugation deactivates Paclitaxel further. In this process, Paclitaxel binds with other molecules, such as sulfate and glucuronic acid [40]. This eliminates the chance of it being activated again because it changes Paclitaxel's structure significantly. Also, this process makes it easier for the body to excrete it.

After Paclitaxel is metabolized into inactive forms, the body needs to get rid of it completely. Most of the drug was removed through the liver and excreted into the bile. Then, they travel into the intestines and are eventually passed out of the body through feces. A smaller amount of the drug is also filtered by the kidneys and removed through urine [41]. In addition, other parts of the body like the lungs also contribute to the breakdown process. All of these pathways help make sure Paclitaxel and its inactive metabolites don't build up in the body over time.

4.5. Dosage considerations

However, patients have different metabolism rates. Some factors that contribute to the rate differences are patients' genetics, liver health, and interactions with other medications. It's important for doctors to consider the dosage of the drug for each patient based on these factors. Inappropriate dosing can cause serious consequences. If a patient clears the drug out of the body too quickly, it will not have enough time to be effective in killing cancer cells. On the flip side, if a patient

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

metabolizes the drug too slowly, it would build up in the body and potentially cause unwanted damage to healthy cells. Therefore, Paclitaxel can also be considered a double-edged sword that can lead to unintended harm if not administered with care.

5. Success rate of injecting taxol

Table 2. The success rate of injecting taxol and other anti-cancer medicine

Cancer Type	Treatment Regimen	Key Outcomes	Specific Study Details
Stage I HER2+ Breast Cancer	Adjuvant Paclitaxel + Trastuzumab (APT regimen)	5-year disease-free survival (rwDFS): 95.3%5-year overall survival (rwOS): 97.9%	Focus on 252 patients, median follow-up: 5.8 years
HER2- Metastatic Breast Cancer	Paclitaxel + Bevacizumab vs. Paclitaxel alone	Median OS: 27.7 months (with Bevacizumab) vs. 19.8 months (Paclitaxel alone) HR: 0.672 (95% CI: 0.601-0.752)	Multicenter observational study
Platinum-Resistant Ovarian Cancer	Relacorilant + Nab-Paclitaxel vs. Nab-Paclitaxel alone	Median PFS: 5.82 months (combo) vs. 3.94 months (monotherapy) Median OS: Not Reached (combo) vs. 9.56 months (monotherapy)	Phase 3 ROSELLA trial
Chemoresistant Small Cell Lung Cancer (SCLC)	Paclitaxel + Bevacizumab (salvage therapy)	Overall response rate: 20% Median PFS: 2.7 months Median OS: 6.3 months	Phase II multicenter study (30 patients, heavily pretreated)
Advanced Anal Cancer (SCAC)	Retifanlimab + Carboplatin-Paclitaxel vs. Placebo + Chemo	Median PFS: 9.3 months (combo) vs. 7.4 months (chemo alone) ORR: 55.8% (combo) vs. 44.2% (chemo)	Phase 3 POD1UM-303/InterAACT-2 trial (308 patients)

In table 2, it shows findings on treatment with Taxol (Paclitaxel) and combinations that use this approach for different types of disease. The data indicate outcomes relating to how long individuals survive. The data show how long disease does not progress. The findings show how many individuals respond to treatment. These patterns appear across multiple disease types. The patterns occur with different treatment approaches that use Taxol as the main component. The patterns also appear when Taxol combines with other agents.

The APT regimen for Stage I HER2+ disease of the breast shows particularly high rates of survival at five years following treatment. Other combinations that the table presents include Paclitaxel with Bevacizumab. The table also presents Retifanlimab with Carboplatin-Paclitaxel. These combinations show outcomes that differ from approaches using single agents. These outcomes differ from groups that receive placebo treatment. The data suggest that combinations produce effects that appear more substantial. These effects differ from effects that single treatment approaches produce.

The findings indicate that treatment using Taxol as the main component continues to provide important means for treatment across multiple disease types. The data show this pattern particularly when Taxol combines with agents that target specific features. This pattern appears when Taxol combines with approaches that involve treatment affecting response mechanisms. The table presents evidence that selecting particular regimens based on disease type represents an important consideration. Selecting regimens based on patterns of response to previous treatment also represents an important consideration. Results suggest that combinations developed more recently

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

can produce effects even in cases that present challenges. These include disease of the small cell lung type that shows resistance to treatment approaches. These also include disease of the ovary that does not respond to agents using platinum as the main component.

The data reflect that approaches using Taxol maintain relevance in current treatment of disease. The findings show versatility across different types. The findings show versatility across different stages. The evidence indicates that pairing Taxol with targeted agents produces outcomes that differ from traditional approaches. Pairing Taxol with approaches using response mechanisms produces similar outcomes. This pattern appears consistent across the various disease types that the table presents. This pattern appears consistent across different combinations that studies examine.

6. Discussion

Paclitaxel is one of the most effective chemotherapy drugs. It has a lot of benefits over other treatment options. For instance, it is better tolerated by the human body and significantly improves response rates. It has a proven track record combating a wide range of cancers. Cost-wise, the Taxol formulation is now available in generic forms and is much more affordable than a lot of other drugs.

However, Paclitaxel still has many side effects. As previously mentioned, Cremophor EL, the solvent used in the formulation Taxol, causes severe allergic reactions to patients. Data shows that up to 30% of patients experience immediate allergic reactions. It triggers the release of histamine, causing blood vessel dilation and bronchoconstriction. The symptoms include rashes, breathing difficulties and low blood pressure [42].

A second major side-effect is bone marrow suppression. Paclitaxel can't target cancer cells specifically, it attacks all dividing cells, including bone narrow stem cells. Common symptoms include neutropenia, anemia, fatigue, shortness of breath and thrombocytopenia [43].

The third group of side-effects involve neurotoxicity. When paclitaxel accidentally stabilizes microtubules in sensory neurons, it disrupts axonal transport, nerve signal transmission, and mitochondrial function. These may lead to peripheral neuropathy. Patients may feel numbness, tingling, burning sensations, or pain in their hands and feet [44].

There are some less common but significant effects. For one, Paclitaxel can disrupt the beating of the hearts, causing bradycardia, when the heart beats slower than usual, or tachycardia, when the heart beats too fast. Additionally, this may be accompanied by the occurrence of vision disorders [43,45].

Delayed skin reactions are another type of symptoms. While some patients successfully avoid immediate allergic reactions, 1%-5% will get skin rashes a few days later [43].

In some rare cases, Abraxane causes Cystoid Macular Edema. This occurrence is because of the toxicity to retinal support cells and the damage to retinal pigment epithelium. The most apparent symptom is the declining vision.

Scientists are working diligently on ameliorating and reducing Paclitaxel's potential side effects. Although this list may seem long, they are less dangerous when compared with the destructive powers of cancer. Perhaps one day in the future, patients may be able to enjoy the benefits of Paclitaxel without fear of unintended consequences. For now, they are forced to choose the lesser of two "evils".

7. Conclusion

Scientists have gone a long way since the discovery of the bark of the Pacific yew. It's stunning how a piece of bark collected during a simple screening project can lead to one of the most effective

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

cancer treatment drugs in the world. When scientists realized Paclitaxel is water insoluble and difficult to transport, scientists searched for a carrier to bring it to the tumor site, temporarily settling on Cremophor EL. Then, when Cremophor EL was found to cause too many side effects, including dangerous allergic reactions, scientists tried many new delivery mechanisms and developed the new formulation Abraxane using nanoparticles and the protein albumin. This introductory paper simply scratches the surface on the mountain of work that has been done on Paclitaxel. In the Mechanism section, a close-up description is given on how Paclitaxel disrupts the proliferation of cancer cells by binding to the β-tubulin in mitotic spindles. The Synthesis section traces its development step-by-step, from Potier and Holton's contribution of the semisynthesis pathway to the efforts of Nicolaou, Danishefsky, Wender, and Baran in attempting total synthesis of this molecule, despite the fact that thus far these methods appear to be too complicated and costly for mass production. The Metabolism section explains the pathway of Paclitaxel in the human body. As a rudimentary overview of its history, mechanism, metabolism, synthesis, side effects, and success rate, it seeks more to evoke curiosity than provide all the answers. However, there are still many problems left to be solved. How can Paclitaxel target cancer cells specifically instead of affecting nearby healthy cells at the same time? How can Paclitaxel avoid all the resistance from both the human body and the cancer cells? How can Paclitaxel be administered without any side effects? Scientists worldwide are working tirelessly to solve these problems. More importantly, the story of Paclitaxel is not just one solution to one problem, the lessons behind it serve as a shining model that demonstrates how nature, chemistry, and medicine can work together to combat complex diseases. In the future, scientists can seek to replicate the success of Paclitaxel and develop more "miracle drugs" that can reduce misery and save lives.

References

[1] Discovery: Natural Compound Offers Hope - NCI [Internet]. 2015 [cited 2025 Aug 6]. Available from: https: //www.cancer.gov/research/progress/discovery/taxol
[2] Alan Sirulnikoff. Yew tree bark [Internet]. Available from: https: //www.sciencephoto.com/media/28692/view/yew-tree-bark
[3] Jauhari S, Singh S, Dash AK. Chapter 7 - Paclitaxel. In: Brittain HG, editor. Profiles of Drug Substances, Excipients and Related Methodology [Internet]. Academic Press; 2009. p. 299–344. Available from: https: //www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1871512509340078
[4] Paclitaxel. In: Wikipedia [Internet]. 2025 [cited 2025 Aug 6]. Available from: https: //en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Paclitaxel& oldid=1301329943
[5] Juestrich C. Dr. Susan Band Horwitz: Decades of Work to Understand One Molecule [Internet]. Leading Discoveries Magazine. 2021 [cited 2025 Aug 6]. Available from: https: //leadingdiscoveries.aacr.org/dr-susan-b-horwitz-decades-of-work-to-understand-one-molecule/
[6] Goodman J, Walsh V. The story of Taxol: nature and politics in the pursuit of an anti-cancer drug. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2006. 282 p.
[7] Wani MC, Horwitz SB. Nature as a remarkable chemist: a personal story of the discovery and development of Taxol. Anti-Cancer Drugs [Internet]. 2014 June [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 25(5): 482–7. Available from: https: //journals.lww.com/00001813-201406000-00002
[8] Sati P, Sharma E, Dhyani P, Attri DC, Rana R, Kiyekbayeva L, Büsselberg D, Samuel SM, Sharifi-Rad J. Paclitaxel and its semi-synthetic derivatives: comprehensive insights into chemical structure, mechanisms of action, and anticancer properties. Eur J Med Res [Internet]. 2024 Jan 30 [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 29(1): 90. Available from: https: //eurjmedres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40001-024-01657-2
[9] In brief: How do most cells divide (mitosis)? In: InformedHealth.org [Internet] [Internet]. Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG); 2023 [cited 2025 Aug 6]. Available from: https: //www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK541155/
[10] Cell Biology 07: Microtubules and Cell Division [Internet]. [cited 2025 Aug 6]. Available from: https: //www.cureffi.org/2013/03/30/cell-biology-07-microtubules-and-cell-division/

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

[11] Alalawy AI. Key genes and molecular mechanisms related to Paclitaxel Resistance. Cancer Cell International [Internet]. 2024 July 13; 24(1): 244. Available from: https: //doi.org/10.1186/s12935-024-03415-0
[12] By Cell_Cycle_2.svg: *Cell_Cycle_2.png: Original uploader was Zephyris at en.wikipediaderivative work: Beaoderivative work: Histidine (talk) - Cell_Cycle_2.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0, https: //commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12800954.
[13] Karthikeyan S, Bharanidharan G, Ragavan S, Kandasamy S, Chinnathambi S, Udayakumar K, Mangaiyarkarasi R, Suganya R, Aruna P, Ganesan S. Exploring the Binding Interaction Mechanism of Taxol in β-Tubulin and Bovine Serum Albumin: A Biophysical Approach. Mol Pharmaceutics [Internet]. 2019 Feb 4; 16(2): 669–81. Available from: https: //doi.org/10.1021/acs.molpharmaceut.8b00948
[14] Radovanovic M, Galettis P, Flynn A, Martin JH, Schneider JJ. Paclitaxel and Therapeutic Drug Monitoring with Microsampling in Clinical Practice. Pharmaceuticals [Internet]. 2024 Jan [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 17(1): 63. Available from: https: //www.mdpi.com/1424-8247/17/1/63
[15] Hari M, Loganzo F, Annable T, Tan X, Musto S, Morilla DB, Nettles JH, Snyder JP, Greenberger LM. Paclitaxel-resistant cells have a mutation in the paclitaxel-binding region of beta-tubulin (Asp26Glu) and less stable microtubules. Mol Cancer Ther. 2006 Feb; 5(2): 270–8.
[16] Beretta GL, Cassinelli G, Rossi G, Azzariti A, Corbeau I, Tosi D, Perego P. Novel insights into taxane pharmacology: An update on drug resistance mechanisms, immunomodulation and drug delivery strategies. Drug Resistance Updates [Internet]. 2025 July 1 [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 81: 101223. Available from: https: //www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1368764625000238
[17] Maloney SM, Hoover CA, Morejon-Lasso LV, Prosperi JR. Mechanisms of Taxane Resistance. Cancers (Basel) [Internet]. 2020 Nov 10 [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 12(11): 3323. Available from: https: //www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7697134/
[18] Alam M, Ali S, Mohammad T, Hasan GM, Yadav DK, Hassan MdI. B Cell Lymphoma 2: A Potential Therapeutic Target for Cancer Therapy. Int J Mol Sci [Internet]. 2021 Sept 28 [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 22(19): 10442. Available from: https: //www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8509036/
[19] Wright SCE, Vasilevski N, Serra V, Rodon J, Eichhorn PJA. Mechanisms of Resistance to PI3K Inhibitors in Cancer: Adaptive Responses, Drug Tolerance and Cellular Plasticity. Cancers (Basel) [Internet]. 2021 Mar 26 [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 13(7): 1538. Available from: https: //www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8037590/
[20] Suffness M. Taxol: science and applications. 1st ed. Boca Raton: CRC Press; 2021.
[21] Ojima I, Habus I, Zhao M, Zucco M, Park YH, Sun CM, Brigaud T. New and efficient approaches to the semisynthesis of taxol and its C-13 side chain analogs by means of β-lactam synthon method. Tetrahedron [Internet]. 1992 Jan [cited 2025 July 25]; 48(34): 6985–7012. Available from: https: //linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0040402001912104
[22] Ojima I, Wang X, Jing Y, Wang C. Quest for Efficacious Next-Generation Taxoid Anticancer Agents and Their Tumor-Targeted Delivery. J Nat Prod [Internet]. 2018 Mar 23 [cited 2025 July 24]; 81(3): 703–21. Available from: https: //pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.jnatprod.7b01012
[23] Holton RA. Method for preparation of taxol [Internet]. EP0400971A2, 1990 [cited 2025 July 25]. Available from: https: //patents.google.com/patent/EP0400971A2/en
[24] Holton RA, Somoza C, Kim HB, Liang F, Biediger RJ, Boatman PD, Shindo M, Smith CC, Kim S. First total synthesis of taxol. 1. Functionalization of the B ring. J Am Chem Soc [Internet]. 1994 Feb [cited 2025 July 24]; 116(4): 1597–8. Available from: https: //pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/ja00083a066
[25] Holton RA, Kim HB, Somoza C, Liang F, Biediger RJ, Boatman PD, Shindo M, Smith CC, Kim S. First total synthesis of taxol. 2. Completion of the C and D rings. J Am Chem Soc [Internet]. 1994 Feb [cited 2025 July 24]; 116(4): 1599–600. Available from: https: //pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/ja00083a067
[26] Nicolaou KC, Nantermet PG, Ueno H, Guy RK, Couladouros EA, Sorensen EJ. Total Synthesis of Taxol. 1. Retrosynthesis, Degradation, and Reconstitution. J Am Chem Soc [Internet]. 1995 Jan [cited 2025 July 24]; 117(2): 624–33. Available from: https: //pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/ja00107a006
[27] Danishefsky SJ, Masters JJ, Young WB, Link JT, Snyder LB, Magee TV, Jung DK, Isaacs RCA, Bornmann WG, Alaimo CA, Coburn CA, Di Grandi MJ. Total Synthesis of Baccatin III and Taxol. J Am Chem Soc [Internet]. 1996 Jan 1 [cited 2025 July 24]; 118(12): 2843–59. Available from: https: //pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/ja952692a
[28] Wender PA, Badham NF, Conway SP, Floreancig PE, Glass TE, Gränicher C, Houze JB, Jänichen J, Lee D, Marquess DG, McGrane PL, Meng W, Mucciaro TP, Mühlebach M, Natchus MG, Paulsen H, Rawlins DB, Satkofsky J, Shuker AJ, Sutton JC, Taylor RE, Tomooka K. The Pinene Path to Taxanes. 5. Stereocontrolled Synthesis of a Versatile Taxane Precursor. J Am Chem Soc [Internet]. 1997 Mar 1 [cited 2025 July 24]; 119(11): 2755–6. Available from: https: //pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/ja9635387

DOI: 10.54254/2755-2721/2026.KA31245

[29] Kanda Y, Nakamura H, Umemiya S, Puthukanoori RK, Murthy Appala VR, Gaddamanugu GK, Paraselli BR, Baran PS. Two-Phase Synthesis of Taxol. J Am Chem Soc [Internet]. 2020 June 10 [cited 2025 July 24]; 142(23): 10526–33. Available from: https: //pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/jacs.0c03592
[30] Stage TB, Bergmann TK, Kroetz DL. Clinical pharmacokinetics of paclitaxel monotherapy: an updated literature review. Clin Pharmacokinet [Internet]. 2018 Jan [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 57(1): 7–19. Available from: https: //www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8572663/
[31] Kim SC, Kim DW, Shim YH, Bang JS, Oh HS, Kim SW, Seo MH. In vivo evaluation of polymeric micellar paclitaxel formulation: toxicity and efficacy. Journal of Controlled Release [Internet]. 2001 May 14 [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 72(1): 191–202. Available from: https: //www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0168365901002759
[32] Jadhav SR, Bryant G, Mata JP, Eldridge DS, Palombo EA, Harding IH, Shah RM. Structural aspects of a self-emulsifying multifunctional amphiphilic excipient: Part II. The case of Cremophor EL. Journal of Molecular Liquids [Internet]. 2021 Dec 15 [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 344: 117881. Available from: https: //www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167732221026064
[33] Gelderblom H, Verweij J, Nooter K, Sparreboom A. Cremophor EL: the drawbacks and advantages of vehicle selection for drug formulation. European Journal of Cancer [Internet]. 2001 Sept 1 [cited 2025 Aug 9]; 37(13): 1590–8. Available from: https: //www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S095980490100171X
[34] Moman RN, Gupta N, Varacallo MA. Physiology, Albumin. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2025 [cited 2025 Aug 9]. Available from: http: //www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK459198/
[35] Paclitaxel-albumin interaction in view of molecular engineering of polymer-drug conjugates [Internet]. [cited 2025 Aug 9]. Available from: https: //www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1351/PAC-CON-08-08-33/html?srsltid=AfmBOor36GcIvnwazzNQmosESevQDa4C89e3tMFVdd-k_vcvXajWxZt0
[36] Iglesias J. nab-Paclitaxel (Abraxane®): an albumin-bound cytotoxic exploiting natural delivery mechanisms into tumors. Breast Cancer Res [Internet]. 2009 [cited 2025 Aug 9]; 11(Suppl 1): S21. Available from: https: //www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4284885/
[37] EX-99.1 [Internet]. [cited 2025 Aug 9]. Available from: https: //www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/850261/000119312513390756/d607708dex991.htm
[38] Structure and function of the cytochrome P450 peroxygenase enzymes | Biochemical Society Transactions | Portland Press [Internet]. [cited 2025 Aug 9]. Available from: https: //portlandpress.com/biochemsoctrans/article/46/1/183/66521/Structure-and-function-of-the-cytochrome-P450?utm_source=chatgpt.com
[39] Groves JT. Cytochrome P450 enzymes: understanding the biochemical hieroglyphs. F1000Res [Internet]. 2015 July 1 [cited 2025 Aug 6]; 4: 178. Available from: https: //f1000research.com/articles/4-178/v1
[40] Yang G, Ge S, Singh R, Basu S, Shatzer K, Zen M, Liu J, Tu Y, Zhang C, Wei J, Shi J, Zhu L, Liu Z, Wang Y, Gao S, Hu M. Glucuronidation: Driving Factors and Their Impact on Glucuronide Disposition. Drug Metab Rev [Internet]. 2017 May [cited 2025 Aug 9]; 49(2): 105–38. Available from: https: //www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7660525/
[41] Awosika AO, Farrar MC, Jacobs TF. Paclitaxel. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2025 [cited 2025 Aug 9]. Available from: http: //www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK536917/
[42] To be honest, since they are all paclitaxel preparations, why do some need pretreatment? Haoyishu [Internet]. [cited 2025 Aug 9]. Available from: https: //www.haoyishu.org/web/article/5913
[43] Taxol- Wangchao [Internet]. [cited 2025 Aug 9]. Available from: http: //baike.wangchao.net.cn/detail_332861.html
[44] Staff NP, Fehrenbacher JC, Caillaud M, Damaj MI, Segal RA, Rieger S. Pathogenesis of paclitaxel-induced peripheral neuropathy: A current review of in vitro and in vivo findings using rodent and human model systems. Experimental Neurology [Internet]. 2020 Feb 1 [cited 2025 Aug 9]; 324: 113121. Available from: https: //www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0014488619302687
[45] Types of paclitaxel and how to use Paclitaxel - Gene Doctor [Internet]. [cited 2025 Aug 9]. Available from: https: //www.cgene.com/drugs/baike/1063.html