

Extracellular vesicles as a novel therapeutic tool for cell-free regenerative medicine in oral rehabilitation

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Abstract

Oral maxillofacial defects may always lead to complicated hard and soft tissue loss, including bone, nerve, blood vessels, teeth and skin, which are difficult to restore and severely influence the life quality of patients. Extracellular vesicles (EVs), including exosomes, microvesicles and apoptotic bodies, are emerging as potential solutions for complex tissue regeneration through cell-free therapies. In this review, we highlight the functional roles of EVs in the regenerative medicine for oral maxillofacial rehabilitation, specifically bone, skin, blood vessels, peripheral nerve and tooth-related tissue regeneration. Publications were reviewed by two researchers independently basing on three databases (PubMed, MEDLINE and Web of Science), until 31 December 2018. Basing on current researches, we classified the origin of EVs for regenerative medicine into four categories: related cells in the regenerative niche, mesenchymal stem cells, immune cells and body fluids. The secretome of different cells are distinct, while the same cells secrete different EVs under varied conditions; therefore, the content profiles of EVs and regulatory mechanisms on target cells are compared and emphasised. By unravelling the regulatory mechanisms of EVs in tissue regeneration, modified cells and tailored EVs with specific target may be produced for precision medicine with high efficacy.

KEYWORDS

angiogenesis, bone, extracellular vesicles, nerve, tissue regeneration, wound healing

1 | BACKGROUND

Oral maxillofacial defect is one of the most tackle problems that clinicians should be facing, which always renders to complicated hard and soft tissue defect, such as bone, soft tissue, nerve, blood vessels and teeth, thus severely influencing the life quality of patients. Tissue engineering, based on stem cells, has brought hope to the sufferings by realising the regeneration of a wide range of tissue lost caused by trauma or diseases. However, with accumulating number of approved clinical trials on stem-cell therapies, some serious complications happened and considerable limitations have restricted a wider application of stem-cell therapy.¹ The first restriction is the

low availability of stem cells harvested from donor tissues, as well as loss of potency and probable contamination after *in vitro* expansion. The second consideration is the low efficacy of injected cells, with growing evidences suggesting that only 1%-3% stem cells finally maintain or reach the target sites, and a majority may instead be trapped in the lungs, liver and spleen, while also a large number of cells ending to apoptosis in a short time after injection.²⁻⁴ Most importantly, some of the injected stem cells lead to tumour formation, the most severe complication that made us reconsider the safety of stem-cell therapy.^{5,6} Basing on the above unneglectable limitations of stem-cell therapy, the notion of cell-free therapy has attracted attentions. We are presently witnessing the emergence of a novel

paradigm that stem cell contributes to their therapeutic effects mainly through paracrine activity depending on their secretome, rather than engraftment or differentiation.⁷

The cellular secretome is a group of factors, including soluble proteins, growth factors, cytokines, free nucleic acids, lipids and extracellular vesicles, secreted to the extracellular space, which plays a critical role in biological regulation and cell-cell communication. Conditioned medium (CM), the culture medium containing biologically active components secreted from previously cultured cells or tissues that have released into the media substances, represents the complete milieu of cell-sourced secretomic and vesicular elements. Extracellular vesicles (EVs), the vesicular elements of the secretome, are nanoparticles (30-2000 nm) enclosed by phospholipid and contain complex and variable cargo of nucleic acids, proteins and lipids. Extracellular vesicles can be separated from the soluble factors in CM by ultracentrifugation, filtration, ion exchange chromatography, size-exclusion chromatography and polymer precipitation-based methodologies.⁸⁻¹² The soluble factors and free nucleic acids in CM are vulnerable and easy to be degraded; on the other hand, the membrane of EVs protects the component from a fast degradation. Therefore, EVs are more suitable for storage and transportation for clinical application compared with conditioned medium, with less dosage,¹³ smaller volume and longer storage time. Researches on CM have been started in 1950s, due to their easy isolation methods. However, EVs had been considered as by-products of cellular metabolism till their biological roles were recognised. The latest decade has witnessed a booming number of researches on EVs, not only on their important biological roles, but also improved isolation methods and elevated yields.

Up till now, EVs have been identified as three different subtypes, exosomes, microvesicles and apoptotic bodies, classified by their diameters and biogenesis.¹⁴ Exosomes, 30-150 nm in diameter, are generated within the endoplasmic reticulum and are released when multivesicular bodies (MVBs) fuse with the plasma membrane. Exosomes are usually cup-shaped and contain cytokines and growth factors, signalling lipids, as well as mRNA, miRNA and non-coding RNAs.^{14,15} Microvesicles (MVs, also known as shedding vesicles, microparticles and ectosomes) are around 50-1000 nm in diameter. Microvesicles, formed by outward budding of the plasma membrane, shuttle local cytosolic proteins and nucleic acids.¹⁶ Apoptotic bodies are larger vesicles (50-5000 nm) released as fragments of dying cells in the late stage of apoptosis, which contain cell debris, organelles and nuclear particulates as a result of karyorrhexis.^{14,15,17} EVs not only play important roles in physiological conditions, but also are effective factors for tissue repair and regeneration.

2 | OBJECTIVES

In this review, we aim to summarise the functional roles of cellular secretome, including CM and EVs, in the regenerative medicine for oral maxillofacial rehabilitation, specifically bone, skin, blood vessels,

peripheral nerve and tooth-related tissue regeneration, reassuring the feasibility and efficacy of EVs in tissue regeneration. In addition, the content profiles and regulatory mechanisms of EVs from various origins and distinct usages were highlighted, in the service of safety evaluation and modified EV production.

3 | METHODS

Publications were reviewed by two researchers independently basing on three databases (PubMed, MEDLINE and Web of Science), until 31 December 2018. The following keywords were used: (exosome OR (extracellular vesicles) OR microvesicles OR (conditioned medium)) AND (bone OR (blood vessels) OR angiogenesis OR neovascularization OR (skin healing) OR (wound healing) OR nerve OR (neural regeneration) OR (tooth regeneration) OR (dental pulp regeneration)). Titles and abstracts were reviewed by two researchers, respectively. And then, the full texts of the selected articles were further checked to make sure for inclusion. Reference tracking of the above included articles was also performed, and then, related reference articles were included.

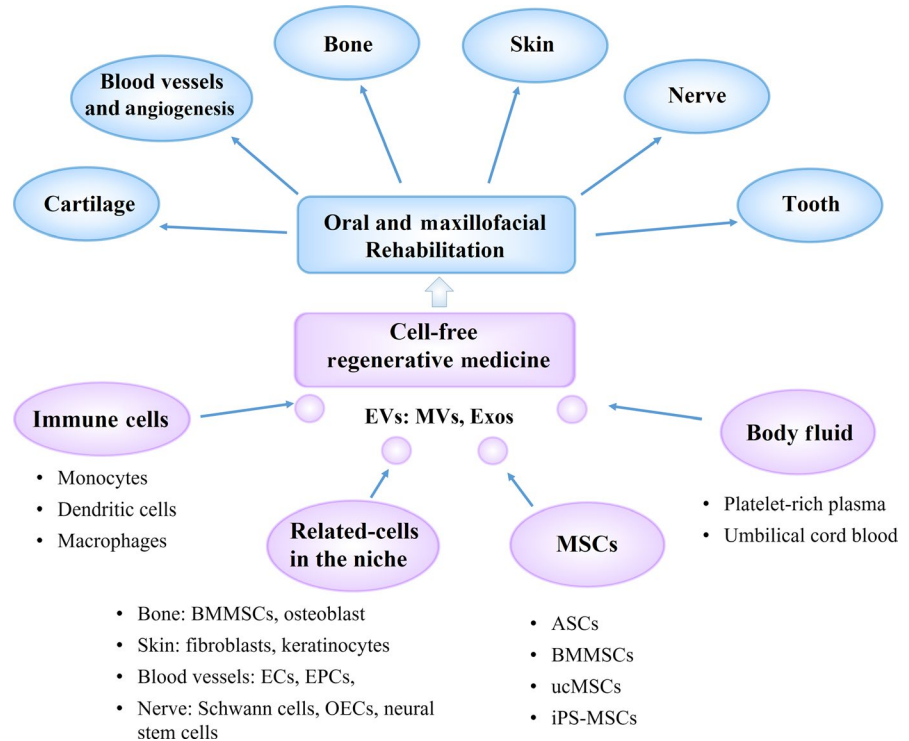
4 | RESULTS

By summarising the functions of EVs in different tissue regeneration, we found the origin of EVs for regenerative medicine mainly fall into four categories (Figure 1): (a) related cells in the regenerative niche, such as bone marrow-derived stem cells (BMMSCs), osteoblast for bone regeneration; fibroblasts, keratinocytes and fibrocytes for skin regeneration; endothelial cells (ECs) and endothelial progenitor cells (EPCs) for angiogenesis; Schwann cells, neural stem cells for nerve regeneration; (b) mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), such as bone marrow mesenchymal stem cells (BMMSCs), adipose-derived stem cells (ASCs), induced pluripotent stem cell (iPSC)-derived mesenchymal stem cells (iPSC-MSCs) and umbilical cord MSCs (ucMSCs); (c) immune cells, such as dendritic cells, monocytes and macrophages; (d) body fluids, such as platelet-rich plasma (PRP), and human umbilical cord blood (UCB). The secretome of different cells are distinct, while the same cells secrete different EVs under varied conditions. By unravelling the regulatory mechanisms of EVs in different and complex tissue regeneration, modified cells and EVs can be produced for precision medicine with high efficacy.

4.1 | EVs in bone regeneration

Oral and maxillofacial bone loss is a challenging clinical problem due to the complex morphology of maxilla and mandible, difficulties in functional bone regeneration for teeth prosthesis or implantation, and challenges in vascularisation and neurotisation of regenerated bone. New bone formation or osteogenesis can be divided into two processes, intramembranous ossification and endochondral ossification. The former one depends on differentiation

FIGURE 1 Overview of EV origins for different tissue regeneration in oral maxillofacial region. ASCs, adipose-derived stem cells; BMMSCs, bone marrow mesenchymal stem cells; ECs, endothelial cells; EPCs, endothelial progenitor cells; EVs, extracellular vesicles; Exos, exosomes; iPSC-MSCs, induced pluripotent stem cell (iPSC)-derived mesenchymal stem cells; MVs, microvesicles; OECs, olfactory ensheathing cells; ucMSCs, umbilical cord MSCs [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

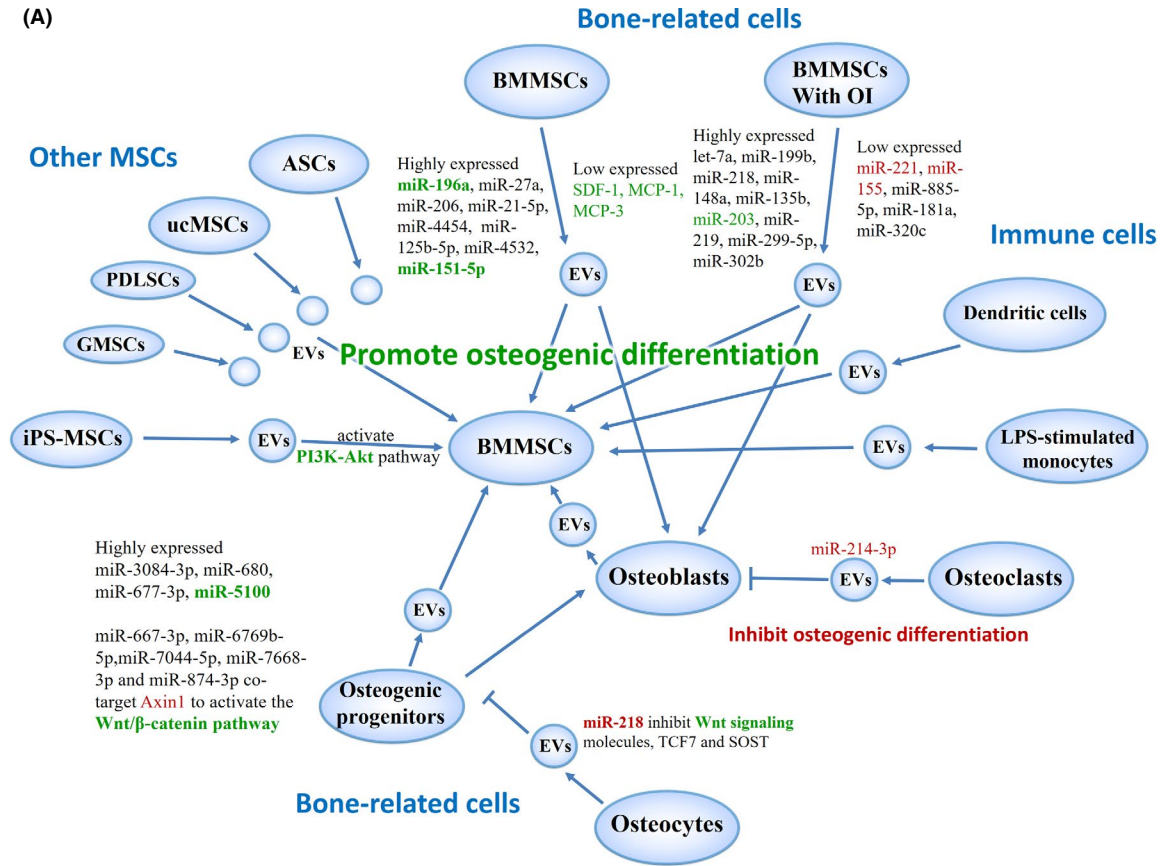


of MSCs into osteoblasts, which is the case in oral maxillofacial region, and the latter one leads to the longitudinal growth of long bones. Bone regeneration involves in complex processes of bone remodelling, which requires cooperation among BMMSCs, osteoblasts, osteoclasts, osteocytes and chondrocytes to maintain the balance of bone metabolism. Apart from bone-related cells, immune cells and endothelial cells (ECs) also contribute to bone remodelling. For example, ECs are involved in osteoblast maturation and angiogenesis. Immune cells, such as dendritic cells (DCs), T cells, monocytes, and macrophages, also participate in the process of bone remodelling.

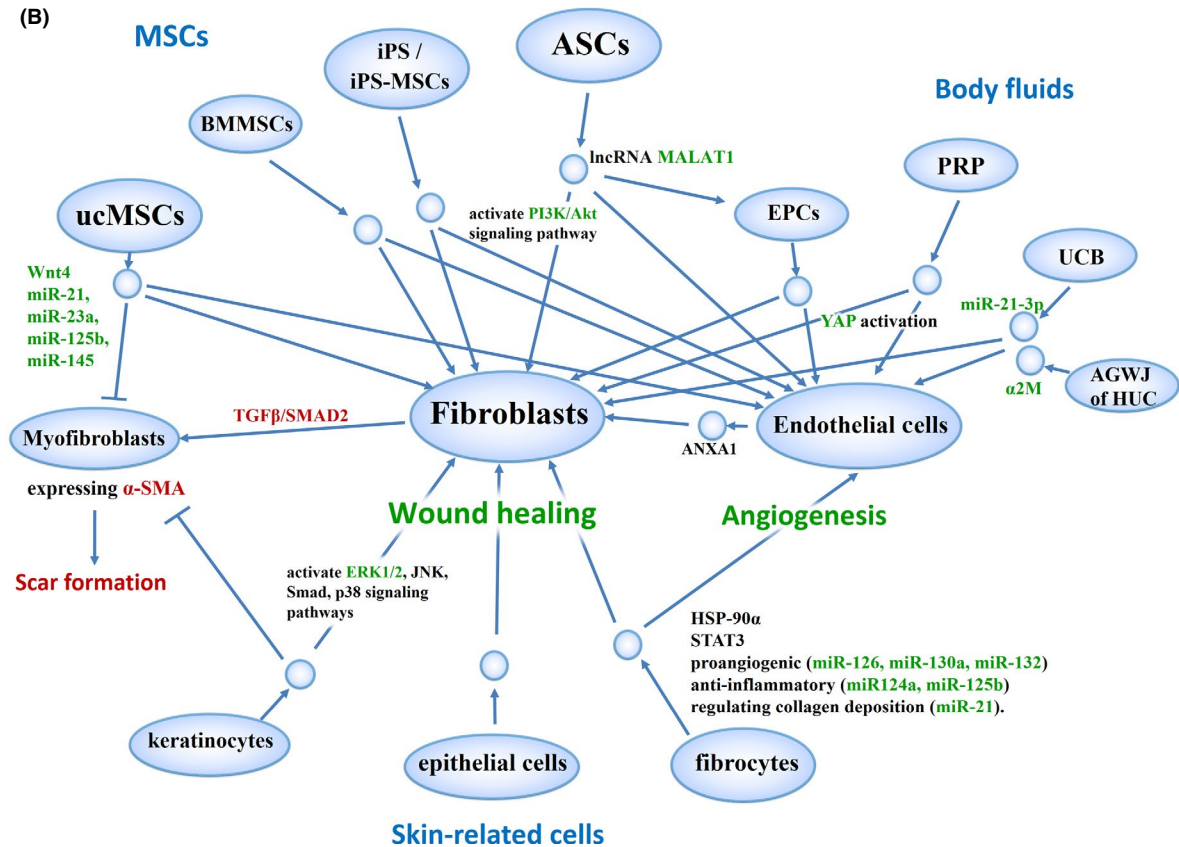
Bone-related cells, including BMMSCs, osteoblast progenitors, and osteoblasts, contribute to an effective group of secretome to promote bone regeneration (Figure 2A, Table 1). Exogenous BMMSC-EVs can be internalised by endogenous BMMSCs or osteoblasts into the Golgi apparatus,¹⁸ and “turn on” the differentiation of endogenous BMMSCs^{19,20} and osteoblasts¹⁸ or rescue the function of BMMSCs in diseased states.²¹⁻²³ Exosomes from BMMSCs with or without osteogenic induction can both promote osteogenic differentiation of BMMSCs and osteoblasts.^{20,24} There are no statistical difference between EVs and CM from BMMSCs without osteogenic induction, but classical osteoinduction medium (OM) is still better in promoting osteogenic differentiation.¹⁸ Besides abundant evidence in vitro, BMMSC-derived EVs indeed facilitate angiogenesis and bone regeneration in vivo when used with bone scaffolds.^{18,19,22,24-26} On the other hand, osteoblast progenitors or osteoblasts can, in turn, regulate the differentiation of BMMSCs via paracrine effects. For example, differentiated osteoblast progenitors (MC3T3-E1 cells) secrete exosomes to promote osteogenic differentiation of BMMSCs by activating Wnt signalling.²⁷

MicroRNAs are important composition of EV cargos that contribute to their osteogenic capability.¹⁷ MiR-196a, miR-27a and miR-206 are highly enriched in human bone marrow stromal cell (BMSC)-derived EVs, and miR-196a is verified to be a critical factor regulating osteogenic differentiation.¹⁸ MiR-21-5p, miR-4454, miR-125b-5p and miR-4532 are also highly expressed in human BMSC-derived exosomes, but bone-repair-related proteins (SDF-1, MCP-1 and MCP-3) are lower in BMSC exosomes.²² MiR-199b, miR-218, miR-148a, miR-135b and miR-221 are also reported to be enriched in hBMSC exosomes.²⁸ Mouse BMMSC exosomal miR-151-5p promotes osteogenic differentiation of BMMSCs in systematic sclerosis mice by inhibiting IL4R α expression, thus down-regulating mTOR pathway.²³ MiR-3084-3p, miR-680, miR-677-3p, miR-5100 and miR-5100 are highly expressed in EVs from differentiated mouse osteogenic progenitors (MC3T3-E1 cells), and among the upregulated microRNAs, five upregulated miRNAs (miR-667-3p, miR-6769b-5p, miR-7044-5p, miR-7668-3p and miR-874-3p) co-target Axin1 to activate the Wnt signalling pathway by inhibiting Axin1 expression and increasing β -catenin expression.²⁷ To maintain the balance of bone remodelling, there are also EVs that carry inhibitors for osteogenesis. Osteoclast-derived exosomal miR-214-3p inhibits bone formation by targeting osteoblasts.²⁹ Another study showed that EVs from osteoclast precursors promote osteoclastogenesis of mouse marrow haematopoietic precursors, whereas EVs from osteoclasts reduced osteoclast formation instead.³⁰ Meanwhile, EVs derived from the bone marrow interstitial fluid of aged mice can inhibit the osteogenic differentiation of young BMSCs through miR-183-5p by targeting heme oxygenase-1 (Hmox1), a factor sensitive to oxidative stress and promoting osteoblastic differentiation of BMSCs.³¹ Osteocyte-derived exosomal miR-218, which is related

(A)



(B)



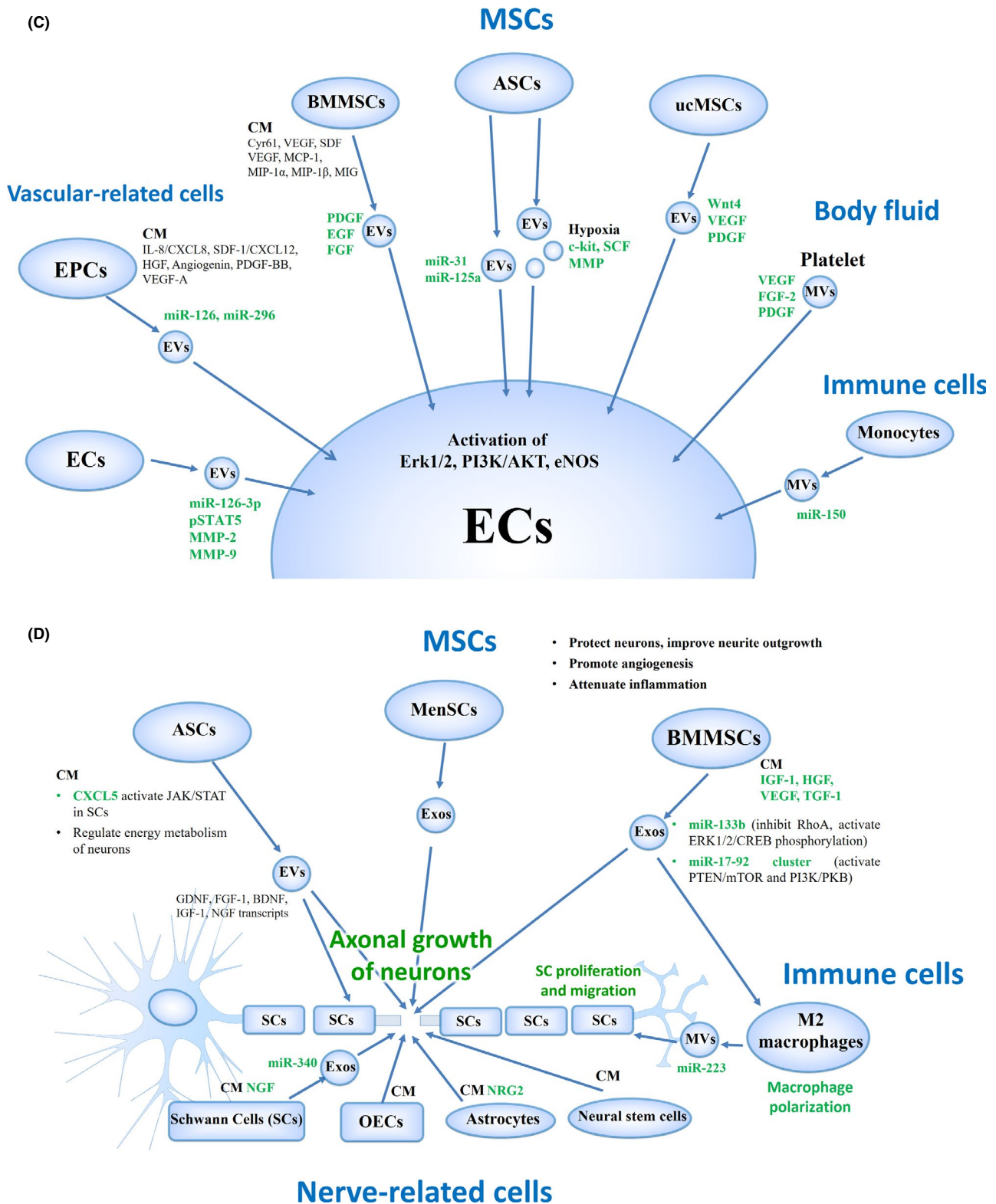


FIGURE 2 Network of interactions via EVs in bone regeneration, skin and wound healing, neovascularisation and nerve regeneration. A, Network of crosstalk among bone-related cells, mesenchymal stem cells and immune cells in bone regeneration; B, network of interactions among skin-related cells, mesenchymal stem cells and body fluids for skin and wound healing; C, network of interactions among vascular-related cells, mesenchymal stem cells, immune cells and body fluids for neovascularisation; D, crosstalk among nerve-related cells, mesenchymal stem cells and immune cells for nerve repair and regeneration. AGWJ of HUC, acellular Wharton's jelly (AGWJ) of the human umbilical cord (HUC); ASCs, adipose-derived stem cells; BMMSCs, bone marrow mesenchymal stem cells; EVs, extracellular vesicles; GMSCs, gingival mesenchymal stem cells; iPSC-MSCs, induced pluripotent stem cell (iPSC)-derived mesenchymal stem cells; OI, osteogenic induction; PDLSCs, periodontal-ligament stem cells; PRP, platelet-rich plasma; UCB, umbilical cord blood; ucMSCs, umbilical cord MSCs [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

TABLE 1 Summary of researches on extracellular vesicles in bone regeneration

Cell origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
Mouse BMMSCs	Exos	20 µg/mL	—	—	Mesenchymal stem cell transplantation (MSCT) rescued BMMSC function and ameliorated osteopenia in Fas-deficient-MRL/lpr mice (a mouse model of SLE)	Normal BMMSC-Exos transferred Fas to recipient BMMSCs to reduce miR-29b, leading to recovery of Dnmt1-mediated Notch1 promoter hypomethylation	Liu ²¹
hBMMSCs	EVs CM	5 µg/mL EVs	miR-196a, miR-27a, miR-206	BMSC-EVs promoted osteogenic function of osteoblast. No statistical difference between EVs and CM, while OM was better	BMSC-EVs led to more bone formation in the 5mm critical-sized calvarial bone defects in SD rats	miR-196a played an essential role in osteoblastic differentiation. Exogenous EVs directly entered the Golgi apparatus rather than the lysosomes	Qin ¹⁸
hBMMSCs	Exos	local injection of 100 µl of CM, Exo-depleted CM, or Exos	miR-21-5p, miR-4454, miR-125b-5p, miR-4532	—	BMMSC-Exos rescued delayed fracture healing in CD9 ^{-/-} mice, a strain with reduced levels of Exos	Bone repair was related to miRNAs. Bone-repair-related cytokines (MCP-1, MCP-3, SDF-1) in Exos were lower compared with CM and Exo-depleted CM	Furuta ²²
hBMMSCs with OM	EVs	—	—	Promoted osteogenic differentiation of uncommitted hBMMSCs	—	—	Martins ²⁰
hBMMSCs with or without OM	Exos	—	—	Induced osteogenic differentiation of hBMMSCs under both 2D and 3D cultural environment	Subcutaneous implantation of hydrogels on the back of nude mice showed the bone regenerative potential of hBMMSC-Exos incorporated into type I collagen hydrogels	—	Narayanan ²⁴
hBMMSCs	MVs	In vitro: 1, 20, and 50 µg/mL In vivo: 1 µg/µL	—	Promoted EC proliferation, migration and tube formation	Enhanced vessel formation and tissue-engineered bone regeneration in a nude mouse subcutaneous bone formation model	—	Xie ²⁵
Mouse BMMSCs	EVs	In vitro: 20 µg/mL In vivo: 100 µg EVs in 200 µl PBS	miR-151-5p	—	Systemic infusion of Exos rescued osteopenia in Tsk ⁺ systematic sclerosis mice through miR-151-5p transfer	MSCT transferred miR-151-5p through Exos into Tsk ⁺ BMMSCs to regulate IL4Rα/mTOR signalling	Chen ²³
Rat BMMSCs	EVs	1, 20, and 50 µg/mL for in vivo	—	Promoted osteogenic differentiation of rat BMMSCs	EVs coated decalcified bone matrix (DBM) promoted bone formation and vascularisation; MSCs + EVs better than MSCs; MSCs better than EVs	—	Xie ¹⁹
Rat BMMSCs	Exos	—	—	Promoted the proliferation of osteoblasts	—	MSC-Exo promoted the proliferation of osteoblasts through MAPK pathway	Zhao ¹³⁸

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Cell origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
DXM-stimulated Rat BMSCs	MVs	10 ⁷ MVs/mL in vitro	—	DXM-MVs promoted the migration and osteogenesis of MC3T3	Injection of 5 × 10 ⁷ mL MVs in a 2mm diameter and 1mm depth femur defect SD rat promoted bone healing	—	Zhao ²⁶
Mineralising MC3T3-E1 cells	Exos	3 µg of Exos in 2 × 10 ⁵ cells	miR-3084-3p, miR-680, miR-677-3p, miR-5100	Promoted BMSCs (ST2) differentiation to osteoblasts	—	Five upregulated miRNAs (miR-667-3p, miR-6769b-5p, miR-7044-5p, miR-7668-3p and miR-874-3p) co-target Axin1 to activate the Wnt signalling pathway by inhibiting Axin1 expression and increasing β-catenin expression	Cui ²⁷
Osteoclast precursors & osteoclasts	EVs	1 × 10 ⁷ or 1 × 10 ⁸ EVs/mL	—	EVs from osteoclast precursors promote osteoclastogenesis, while EVs from osteoclasts reduced osteoclast formation	—	Rank-containing EVs inhibit osteoclastogenesis in 1,25(OH) ₂ D ₃ -stimulated mouse marrow	Huyth ³⁰
hucMSCs	Exos	20 µg/mL	—	hucMSC-Exos promoted osteogenic differentiation of hBMSCs without OM	Exos with hydrogel and 1 × 10 ⁵ rat BMSCs enhanced the bone repair of rat calvarial bone critical defect model	—	Wang ⁴⁰
PlamSC	Exos	10 µg/well (24-well plate)	—	PlamSC-exo influenced the differentiation competence of fibroblasts to both osteoblastic and adipocyte differentiation	—	PlamSC-exo increased the expression of stemness-related genes' mRNA in fibroblasts, including OCT4 and NANOG	Tooi ³⁹
Senescent ECs	MVs	—	miR-31	MVs from senescent ECs or circulating MVs from elderly human donors reduced osteogenic differentiation of ASCs	—	Vesicular miR-31 reduced osteogenesis by knocking down its target Frizzled-3 (FZD3), a Wnt5A receptor	Weilner ¹³⁹
hiPSC-MSC	Exos	100, or 200 (better) µg/mL Exos	—	hiPSC-MSC-Exos promoted proliferation and osteogenic differentiation of OVX rat BMSC	Exos/β-TCP scaffolds promoted bone regeneration in critical-sized calvarial defects by enhancing angiogenesis and osteogenesis in OVX rats	—	Qi ³⁷
hiPSC-MSC	Exos	5 × 10 ¹¹ or 1 × 10 ¹² particles/mL (100 µL)	—	hiPSC-MSC-Exos promoted osteogenic differentiation of hBMSCs	The Exos/β-TCP scaffolds enhanced osteogenesis compared with pure β-TCP scaffolds	Exos activated PI3K-Akt pathway, with increased expression of positive effector genes (PDGFA, FGF1/2, FGFR1, COL1A1/2, and BCL2L1), and a decrease in the negative effector genes (GSK3β, PTEN)	Zhang ³⁸
hASCs	Exos	10, 25, 50 µg/mL	—	Promoted osteogenic differentiation of hBMSCs	Exos with PLA promoted bone formation	—	Li ³⁴

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Cell origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
hPDLSCs & PEI-EVs	EVs	—	—	More calcium deposition was observed on collagen membrane cultured in hPDLSCs with hPDLSCs EVs or PEI-EVs	Collagen membrane enriched with hPDLSCs or PEI-EVs promoted bone regeneration in rat calvarium defects	—	Diomede ³⁵
hGMSCs	EVs	—	—	hGMSCs cultured in 3D-PLA + EVs and 3D-PLA + PEI-EVs showed better osteogenic differentiation compared with EVs or PEI-EVs or 3D-PLA	3D-PLA + PEI-EVs + hGMSCs and 3D-PLA + PEI-EVs scaffolds improve bone healing of calvaria bone defect with a diameter of 5 mm	—	Diomede ³⁶
LPS-stimulated monocytes	Exos CM	—	—	Promoted osteogenic differentiation of MSCs	—	—	Ekstrom ⁴⁴
LPS-activated monocytes & osteoclasts	EVs	—	—	Upregulated the expression of MMPs, and promoted the secretion cytokines by hASCs	—	CXCL5, CXCL3, IL1RN, IL1B, MMP3 and MMP1 were upregulated in hASCs by monocyte EVs	Gebraad ⁴⁰

Abbreviations: CM, conditioned medium; ECs, endothelial cells; EV, extracellular vesicle; Exos, exosomes; hBMSCs, human bone marrow mesenchymal stem cells; hBMSCs, human bone marrow-derived stromal cells; hGMSCs, human gingival mesenchymal stem cells; hiPSC-MSCs, mesenchymal stem cells derived from human induced pluripotent stem cells; hPDLSCs, human periodontal-ligament stem cells; hucMSCs, human umbilical cord-derived mesenchymal stem cells; MCP-1, monocyte chemoattractant protein-1; MV, microvesicles; OM, osteoinduction medium; PEI-EVs, polyethyleneimine (PEI)-engineered EVs; TGF- β 1, transforming growth factor- β 1.

to muscle-bone communication, is found to inhibit osteogenic differentiation of osteoblast progenitors by targeting Wnt signalling molecules (TCF7 and SOST).³²

Besides BMMSCs, other mesenchymal stem cells, such as ASCs, ucMSCs and iPSC-MSCs, can also secrete abundant EVs, providing wide choices for cell-free bone regeneration. Adipose-derived stem cells, obtained from discarded adipose tissue from liposuction, enjoy the advantages of full abundance and little side effects to donors and are promising cell sources for bone regeneration.³³ Exosomes from human adipose-derived stem cells (hASCs) promote osteogenic differentiation of hBMMSCs and facilitate cell-free bone regeneration *in vivo*.³⁴ Meanwhile, tooth-derived MSCs also consist a potential group of origins of EVs for osteogenesis. For example, EVs derived from human periodontal-ligament stem cells (hPDLSCs)³⁵ and human gingival mesenchymal stem cells (hGMSCs)³⁶ with cell-free scaffolds can also effectively improve healing of calvaria bone defects. Moreover, exosomes from hiPSC-MSCs accelerate osteogenic differentiation of BMSCs from ovariectomised (OVX) rat and facilitate bone regeneration in critical-sized calvarial defects by enhancing angiogenesis and osteogenesis.³⁷ Mechanically, hiPSC-MSC exosomes activate PI3K-Akt pathway in BMSCs, leading to higher expression of pro-osteogenic genes (PDGFA, FGF1/2, FGFR1, COL1A1/2 and BCL2L1), and a decrease in the negative effector genes [glycogen synthase kinase 3 β (GSK3 β), phosphatase and tensin homolog (PTEN)].³⁸ Human placenta MSC (PlamSC)-derived exosomes influence the differentiation competence of normal adult human dermal fibroblasts (NHDF) to both osteoblastic and adipocyte differentiation by increasing the expression of stemness-related genes mRNA, OCT4 and NANOG.³⁹ Exosomes from human umbilical cord-derived mesenchymal stem cells (hucMSCs) can promote osteogenic differentiation of BMSCs, but the *in vivo* bone-repair effect was examined under the existence of BMSCs.⁴⁰

Inflammation is recognised as a double-edged sword for bone regeneration, with constant communications between immune cells and bone-related cells. Extracellular vesicles from BMMSCs may attenuate inflammatory responses by modulating maturation, apoptosis and proliferation of T cells.^{41,42} In turn, EVs from immune cells, such as DCs, can be internalised by BMMSCs to promote their recruitment, homing and osteogenic differentiation.⁴³ Meanwhile, activated monocytes can also contribute to bone regeneration. Exosomes and CM from lipopolysaccharide (LPS)-stimulated human monocytes are found to promote osteogenic differentiation of BMMSCs.⁴⁴

4.2 | EVs in skin and wound healing

Skin restoration without scar or little scar is important for oral maxillofacial region. How to accelerate wound healing and reduce scar formation are two major obstacles for soft tissue regeneration and skin healing. The process of wound healing includes four stages: coagulation or haemostasis, inflammation, cellular migration and proliferation, and tissue remodelling.⁴⁵⁻⁴⁷ During cellular proliferative phase, fibroblasts differentiate into contractile myofibroblasts

expressing α -smooth muscle actin (α -SMA) mediated by the TGF- β signalling pathway,⁴⁸ whereas myofibroblast aggregations lead to excessive scar formation. Therefore, factors that promote fibroblast migration and proliferation will accelerate wound healing, while methods to inhibit excessive myofibroblastic differentiation are potential to reduce scar formation.

In the first place, skin-and-epithelial-related cells are important origin of EVs for skin regeneration (Table 2, Figure 2B). Exosomes from fibrocytes, containing HSP-90 α , total and activated STAT3, proangiogenic microRNAs (miR-126, miR-130a, miR-132), anti-inflammatory microRNAs (miR124a, miR-125b) and miR-21 (regulating collagen deposition), promote tube formation of endothelial cells (ECs) and the proliferation of diabetic dermal fibroblasts, thus accelerating wound closure in diabetic mice.⁴⁹ Microvesicles from human keratinocytes activate ERK1/2, JNK, Smad, and p38 signalling pathways in fibroblasts, decreasing cadherin-2 expression and reducing α -SMA mRNA expression, alleviating the process of myofibroblast differentiation.⁵⁰ Although excessive myofibroblasts are unexpected, they are also needed in the balanced process of wound healing, since MVs from myofibroblasts benefit angiogenesis in skin regeneration.⁵¹ Exosomes from human amniotic epithelial cells (hAECs) are also reported to promote fibroblast proliferation and migration, and shorten the healing time and narrow the scars in full-thickness skin wounds of SD rats.⁵² The RNA component of exosomes plays a critical role in this process, since exosomes with RNase A lose the ability to facilitate wound healing compared with exosomes or exosomes with proteinase K.⁵³

Extracellular vesicles derived from MSCs are also promising candidates for skin regeneration. Exosomes from hucMSCs delivered Wnt4 to activate β -catenin nuclear trans-location and activity, and activated AKT pathway to enhance proliferation and migration of keratinocytes.⁵⁴ More importantly, exosomes from hucMSCs suppress myofibroblast aggregation via microRNAs (miR-21, miR-23a, miR-125b and miR-145) to inhibit excess α SMA and collagen deposition by regulating TGF β /SMAD2 signalling pathway to minimise scar formation.⁴⁸ Extracellular vesicles from ASCs are considered better than EVs from BMMSCs in wound healing.⁵⁵ Extracellular vesicles from hASCs promote fibroblasts migration, proliferation and collagen synthesis⁵⁶ by increasing the level of p-Akt/Akt to activate PI3K/Akt signalling pathway.⁵⁷ hASC-derived exosomes contain lncRNA MALAT1, which is essential to stimulate fibroblast migration and angiogenesis involved in wound healing.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, MSCs can be stimulated or modified to secrete tailored EVs to meet certain clinical requirements, such as inflammatory status under diabetic conditions. For example, exosomes from hASCs overexpressing Nrf2 inhibited ROS and inflammatory cytokine expression and accelerate cutaneous wound healing of rat diabetic foot ulcers.⁵⁹ Synovium mesenchymal stem cells (SMSCs) overexpressing miR-126-3p accelerated re-epithelialisation, activated angiogenesis and promoted collagen maturity in full-thickness skin defect in a diabetic rat model.⁶⁰ Moreover, exosomes from hiPSCs⁶¹ or hiPSC-MSCs⁶² promote vessel formation, accelerate cutaneous wound healing and reduce scar widths in the process of skin and wound healing. These

TABLE 2 Summary of researches on extracellular vesicles in skin and wound healing

Cell Origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
Fibrocytes	Exos	In vitro: 0.1, 1, and 10 µg/mL In vivo: 0.1, 1, and 10 µg/site	HSP-90α, STAT3, miR-126, miR-130a, miR-132, miR124a, miR-125b, miR-21	Promoted tube formation of ECs; enhanced migration and proliferation of diabetic keratinocytes, and proliferation of dermal fibroblasts	Accelerated wound closure in diabetic mice	—	Geiger ⁴⁹
Human keratinocytes (hKCs)	MVs	—	—	Regulated MMP-1, MMP-3, cadherin-2, THBS1 and IL-6 protein in fibroblasts; promoted fibroblast migration and fibroblast-mediated angiogenesis	—	Activated ERK1/2, as well as JNK, Smad and p38 signalling pathways in fibroblasts	Huang ⁵⁰
Intestinal ECs	EVs	—	Annexin A1 (ANXA1)	Resealed mucosal wounds in ex vivo cultures	Accelerated recovery of murine colitis	—	Leoni ¹⁴¹
EPCs	Exos	2×10^{10} or 1×10^{11} particles/mL of Exos	—	Enhanced EC proliferation, migration and angiogenic tubule formation	Promoted wound healing in diabetic rats	Activated Erk1/2 signalling in ECs to promote angiogenesis thus facilitating cutaneous wound repair	Zhang ⁷³
EPCs	Exos	100 µg/mL	—	Enhanced EC proliferation, migration and tube formation; enhanced EC expression of angiogenic molecules (FGF-1, VEGFA, VEGFR-2, ANG-1, E-selectin, CXCL-16, eNOS, IL-8)	Accelerated cutaneous wound healing in diabetic rats	—	Li ⁷⁴
hAECs	Exos	In vitro: 25, 50, 100 µg/mL In vivo: 100 µL of 25, 50, 100 µg/mL Exos	—	Promoted fibroblasts proliferation and migration, while downregulated collagen expression	Shortened the healing time and narrowed scars in full-thickness skin wounds of SD rats	—	Zhao ⁵²
hAECs	Exos	in vivo: 100 µL of 50 µg/mL Exos	—	Promoted fibroblasts proliferation and migration, while downregulated collagen expression via RNA components	Accelerated wound healing in BALB/c mice	Exosomal miRNAs play an important role in wound healing	Zhao ⁵²
iPSCs	Exos	In vitro: 0, 10, 50, 100, or 200 µg/mL In vivo: 4 µg Exos/20 µl PBS	—	Promoted the migration and proliferation of diabetic fibroblasts	Promoted cutaneous wound healing, angiogenesis and peripheral nerve fibres regeneration in diabetic mice	—	Kobayashi ⁶¹
hiPSC-MSCs	Exos	In vitro: 50, 100 µg/mL	—	Promoted the proliferation and migration of fibroblasts and ECs; increased type I, III collagen and elastin secretion and mRNA expression by fibroblasts and tube formation by ECs	Accelerated re-epithelialisation, reduced scar widths; promoted collagen maturity; promoted the generation of newly formed vessels	Promoted cutaneous wound healing by facilitating collagen synthesis and angiogenesis	Zhang ⁶²

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Cell Origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
hASCs	Exos	In vitro: 25, 50, 100 µg/mL In vivo: intravenous injection of 200 µg Exos	—	Promoted fibroblasts migration, proliferation and collagen synthesis in a dose-dependent manner, with increased genes expression of N-cadherin, cyclin-1, PCNA and collagen I, III	hASCs-Exos can be recruited to soft tissue wound area after systemic administration, and accelerated cutaneous wound healing	—	HU ⁵⁶
hASCs	MVs	—	—	Enhanced wound healing ability of diabetic hASCs; rescued the expression of SDF-1, CXCR4, CXCR7, CCL2, and ANGPL4, genes that associated with cell migration, survival, inflammation, and angiogenesis, in diabetic hASCs	Normal hASCs MV-treated diabetic hASCs improve the wound healing ability in a mouse flap model	miR29c and miR150 was down-regulated in diabetic hASCs after treated by normal hASCs MVs	Trinh ¹⁴²
hASCs	CM Exos	10, 20 µg/mL Exos	lncRNA MALAT1	hASCs CM promoted cell migration of human dermal fibroblasts. Exosomes isolated from MALAT1-depleted CM failed to enhance cell migration	CM promoted the closure of ischaemic wounds in a rat model	Exosomal lncRNA MALAT1 is essential to stimulate fibroblast migration and angiogenesis involved in wound healing	Cooper ⁵⁸
hASCs	Exos	In vitro: 0, 25, 50 (optimal), 100 µg/mL In vivo: 200 µg of Exos in 200 µl PBS	—	hASC-Exos promoted fibroblast proliferation and migration, optimised collagen deposition and increased the level of p-Akt/Akt	hASC-Exos accelerated wound healing (1 × 1cm ²) in Balb/c mice	hASC-Exos promoted wound healing via the PI3K/Akt signaling pathway	Zhang ⁵⁷
hASCs over-expressing Nrf2	Exos	50 µg/mL	—	hASC-Exos reduced glucose-induced EPCs senescence. Nrf2-overexpressing hASC-Exos inhibited ROS and inflammatory cytokine expression	EPCs combined with Nrf2-overexpressing hASC-Exos accelerated cutaneous wound healing of rat diabetic foot ulcers	Nrf2-overexpressing hASC-Exos improved levels of SMP30 and VEGF and increased VEGFR2 phosphorylation, whereas ROS and inflammatory cytokine levels were reduced	Li ⁵⁹
rabbit ASCs & rabbit BMIMSCs	EVs	local injection of 10 × 10 ⁶ cells, or EVs obtained from equal number of cells	—	—	EVs were better than MSCs in the treatment of rabbit cutaneous wound model; ASC-EVs were better than BMIMSC-EVs	—	Pelizzo ⁵⁵
hBMIMSCs	Exos	0.1, 1, and 10 µg/mL	—	Exos caused a dose-dependent enhancement of proliferation and migration of fibroblasts derived from normal donors and chronic wound patients	—	MSC-exosomes were found to activate signalling pathways important in wound healing (Akt, ERK, and STAT3) and induce the expression of a number of growth factors (HGF, IGF1, NGF and SDF1)	Shabbir ⁸⁰

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Cell Origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
LPS- pre-treated hucMSCs	Exos	10 µg/mL	Let-7b	Activated M2 macrophages	Alleviated inflammation and benefited diabetic cutaneous wound healing	Regulated inflammation through TLR4/NF-κB/STAT3/AKT signal pathway	Ti ¹⁴³
hucMSCs & human lung fibroblasts (HFL1)	Exos	1 × 10 ⁶ cells, or 200 mg Exos	Wnt4	HucMSC-Exos inhibited heat stress-induced apoptosis of keratinocytes and promoted their proliferation compared with HFL1-Exos	HucMSC-Exos accelerated the re-epithelialisation, with increased expression of CK19, PCNA, collagen I (compared to collagen III) of skin second-deep burn injury in rats	hucMSC-Exos delivered Wnt4 to activate β-catenin nuclear trans-location and activity, and activated AKT pathway to enhance proliferation and migration of skin cells	Zhang ⁵⁴
hucMSCs	Exos	100 µg/mL	miR-21, miR-23a, miR-125b, and miR-145	hucMSC-Exos suppressed TGF-β-induced myofibroblast formation, which mainly depended on the RNA components from Exos	hucMSC-Exos suppressed myofibroblast aggregation and scar formation in a full-thickness skin defect in mice	miRNAs played key roles in suppressing myofibroblast formation by inhibiting excess αSMA and collagen deposition associated with activity of the TGFβ/SMAD2 signalling pathway	Fang ⁴⁸
GMSCs	Exos	—	—	—	Chitosan/Silk hydrogel with Exos promoted healing of skin defects in diabetic rats, with more microvessel and nerve density	—	Shi ¹⁴⁴
SMSCs over-expressing miR-126-3p	Exos	—	—	Exos promoted proliferation, migration and tube formation human dermal microvascular endothelial cells (HMEC-1)	Chitosan wound dressings with Exos accelerated re-epithelialisation, activated angiogenesis and promoted collagen maturity in full-thickness skin defect in a diabetic rat model	—	Tao ⁶⁰
PRP	Exos	—	—	PRP-Exos promoted proliferation and migration of ECs and fibroblasts to improve angiogenesis and re-epithelialisation	PRP-Exos-loaded sodium alginate hydrogel promoted healing of chronic ulcers in diabetic rat model	PRP-Exos promoted fibroblast proliferation and migration through YAP activation	Guo ⁶³
PRP	Exos	—	—	—	PRP-Exos/ZWP combination accelerated wound healing in diabetic rats comparing with either PRP-Exos or ZWP	—	Xu ⁶⁴

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Cell Origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
human umbilical cord blood (UCB)	Exos	100 µg/mL Exos (200 µg/well in a 6-well plate)	miR-21-3p	UCB-Exos could promote the proliferation and migration of fibroblasts, and enhance the angiogenic activities of endothelial cells	The local transplantation of UCB-Exos into mouse skin wounds resulted in accelerated re-epithelialisation, reduced scar widths, and enhanced angiogenesis	miR-21-3p, highly enriched in UCB-Exos, promoted angiogenesis and fibroblast function through inhibition of phosphatase and tensin homolog (PTEN) and sprouty homolog 1 (SPRY1)	Hu ⁶⁵
AGWJ of HUC	Exos	—	α2M	AGWJ-Exos promoted fibroblasts viability and cell migration	AGWJ-Exos with matrigel enhanced skin wound healing on the back of C57/BL6 mice	α2M was highly expressed in AGWJ-Exos, and enhanced cell proliferation, migration and cell viability	Bakhtyar ⁶⁶

Abbreviations: AGWJ of HUC, acellular Wharton's jelly (AGWJ) of the human umbilical cord (HUC); CM, conditioned medium; ECs, endothelial cells; EV, extracellular vesicle; Exo, exosome; GMSCs, gingival mesenchymal stem cells; hAECs, human amniotic epithelial cells; hASCs, human adipose-derived stem cells; hEPCs, human endothelial progenitor cells; HGF, hepatocyte growth factor; hiPSC-MSCs, human induced pluripotent stem cell-derived mesenchymal stem cells; HSP, heat shock protein; hucMSCs, human umbilical cord MSCs; IGF, insulin-like growth factor; iPSCs, induced pluripotent stem cells; MSCs, mesenchymal stem cells; NGF, nerve growth factor; PRP, platelet-rich plasma; SDF, stromal-derived growth factor; SMSCs, Synovium mesenchymal stem cells; STAT, signal transducer and activator of transcription; TGF, transforming growth factor; α2M, alpha-2-macroglobulin; αSMA, α-smooth muscle actin.

findings suggest that EVs from MSCs could potentially minimise scar tissue formation and promote skin tissue regeneration by facilitating vascularisation in the wound sites.

Exosomes derived from various body fluids can also accelerate wound healing. PRP-derived exosomes not only accelerate proliferation and migration of fibroblasts to stimulate re-epithelialisation, but also promote proliferation and migration of ECs to improve angiogenesis, thus benefiting wound healing.^{63,64} Mechanically, PRP exosomes promote fibroblast proliferation and migration through YAP activation.⁶³ In addition, human umbilical cord blood (UCB) exosomes can also promote the proliferation and migration of fibroblasts, as well as exerting proangiogenic effects on ECs through miR-21-3p which inhibit PTEN and sprouty homolog 1 (SPRY1).⁶⁵ Exosomes derived from acellular Wharton's jelly (AGWJ) of the human umbilical cord promote fibroblasts viability and cell migration and accelerate wound healing through alpha-2-macroglobulin (α2M).⁶⁶

4.3 | EVs in neovascularisation

Angiogenesis is well recognised to be essential in various tissue regenerative processes, including bone regeneration, skin and wound healing, and nerve regeneration. Just as bone remodelling and wound healing, vascularisation is also a dynamic and balanced process basing on communications between vascular endothelial cells (ECs) and their surrounding environment. During this angiogenic process, EC proliferation, migration and tube formation are the basis of new blood vessel formation.

Extracellular vesicles released by ECs and endothelial progenitor cells (EPCs) have been documented as effective mediators of neovascularisation (Figure 2C, Table 3). Microvesicles (MVs) or shedding vesicles from ECs, containing proenzyme forms of matrix metalloproteinases, including matrix metalloproteinase-2 (MMP-2) and MMP-9, promote the formation of capillary-like structures by other ECs. Extracellular factors, such as serum, FGF2 and VEGF, help to stimulate the shedding of MMPs as vesicle components.⁶⁷ Extracellular vesicles generated by ECs under interleukin-3 (IL3) stimulation promote vascularisation via the delivery of miR-126-3p and pSTAT5 into the recipient ECs thus activating Erk1/2 signalling.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, EPCs, a group of progenitor cells that play an important role in postnatal neovascularisation, have higher angiogenic potential compared with mature ECs. Therefore, EVs derived from EPCs have been recognised as potent regulators for neovascularisation. Hypoxic EPC-conditioned medium (CM), highly enriched in angiogenic factors (angiogenin, PDGF-BB and VEGF-A), is as effective as EPC-based cell therapy for tissue revascularisation and muscle function.⁶⁹ Microvesicles of EPCs were reported to contain microRNAs (miR-126, miR-296)^{70,71} and mRNAs (MAPKAPK2, eNOS, BCL-XL, CTNNB1),⁷² and can be internalised by ECs via integrins α4 and β1 on the surface of EPC-derived MVs. EPC-derived MVs stimulate EC proliferation and new blood vessel formation by activation of the PI3K-Akt and eNOS signalling pathways in ECs mainly depending on their RNA component.⁷⁰⁻⁷² Meanwhile, exosomes from EPCs

TABLE 3 Summary of researches on extracellular vesicles in neovascularisation

Origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
HUVECs	MVs	—	MMP-2, MMP-9 proenzyme forms	Promoted the formation of capillary-like structures by HUVECs	—	Serum, FGF2 and VEGF stimulated the shedding of MMPs as vesicle components	Taraboletti ⁶⁷
HUVECs	EVs	—	miR-126-3p pSTAT5	IL-3 (Inflammatory stimuli) increased EV secretion and improved proangiogenic capability of EVs	—	Transferred miR-126-3p and pSTAT5 into recipient ECs thus activating Erk1/2 signalling	Lombardo ⁶⁸
HUVECs	CM	1.5×10^4 hASCs in 100 μ L CM	—	EC-CM promoted hASCs proliferation, migration, invasion and angiogenesis	—	—	Luo ¹⁴⁵
hEPCs	MVs	10 μ g/mL	mRNA of BCL-XL, CFL1, CTNNA1, EDF1, MAPKAPK2, PTPRT, eNOS, POLR2B	Integrins $\alpha 4$ and $\beta 1$ on MVs' surfaces mediated the incorporation of MVs into ECs MV promoted ECs survival, proliferation and organisation in capillary-like structures	MV-stimulated human ECs organised in patent vessels in SCID mice	RNAs in MVs played an important role in angiogenesis MV induced the activation of the PI3K-Akt and eNOS signalling pathways in ECs	Deregibus ⁷²
hEPCs	CM	250 μ L EPC-CM, or 1×10^6 EPCs	IL-8/CXCL8, SDF-1/ CXCL12, HGF, Angiogenin, PDGF-BB, VEGF-A increased in CM after 72h of hypoxia	Secretion of growth factors by EPCs was increased by hypoxia EPC-CM inhibited apoptosis of mature ECs and promoted angiogenesis in a rat aortic ring assay	Intramuscular injection of EPC-CM was as effective as EPC transplantation for promoting tissue revascularisation and functional recovery	—	Di Santo ⁶⁹
hEPCs	MVs	10 μ g/mL	miR-126, miR-296	EPC-MVs enhanced human islet vascularisation MVs pretreated with RNase or derived from Dicer-knocked-down EPCs showed a reduced angiogenic effect	EPC-MVs favoured insulin secretion, survival and revascularisation of islets transplanted in SCID mice	MVs induced the activation of the PI3K-Akt and eNOS signalling pathways in islet endothelium	Cantaluppi ⁷⁰
hEPCs	MVs	intravenous injection of 50 μ g MVs	miR-126 and miR-296	—	EPC-MVs improved neovascularisation and favoured re-generation in severe hindlimb ischaemia induced in SCID mice	RNAs in MVs played an important role in angiogenesis	Ranghino ⁷¹
hEPCs	Exos	2×10^{10} or 1×10^{11} particles/mL of Exos	—	EPC-Exos enhanced ECs proliferation, migration and angiogenic tubule formation	EPC-Exos enhanced proangiogenic and wound healing effects in streptozotocin-induced diabetic rats	EPC-Exos promoted angiogenesis of ECs by activating Erk1/2 signalling	Zhang ⁷³

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
hEPCs	Exos	100 µg/mL	—	EPC-Exos enhanced the proliferation, migration and tube formation of vascular ECs	EPC-Exos transplanted accelerated cutaneous wound healing in diabetic rats	FGF-1, VEGFA, VEGFR-2, ANG-1, E-selectin, CXCL-16, eNOS and IL-8 were upregulated in ECs stimulated with EPC-Exos	Li ⁷⁴
hEPCs	Exos	In vitro: 100 µg/mL In vivo: 30 µg Exos intravenous injection	—	EPC-Exos enhanced the proliferation and migration of ECs	EPC-Exos accelerated the re-endothelialisation in the early phase after endothelial damage	—	Li ⁷⁵
hMSCs	CM	—	—	hMSCs-CM inhibited hypoxia-induced apoptosis and promoted tube formation of ECs	—	CM from hypoxic hMSCs activated the PI3K-Akt pathway and increased p-Akt; increased the levels of pERK, but had minimal effect on pSTAT3	Hung ⁷⁶
MSCs after 24h serum-free or hypoxia	CM	—	—	MSCs exhibited resistance to hypoxia which induced increased secretion of VEGF and decreased levels of other cytokines, including SDF-1	Factors secreted by mesenchymal stem cells and endothelial progenitor cells had complementary effects on angiogenesis in vitro	—	Burlacu ⁷⁷
Peripheral blood-derived MSCs	CM	—	Activin A, angiotensin 1, ET1, IGFBP2, IL-8, PDGF-AA, uPA, VEGF	Promoted proliferation and tube-like formation of ECs	—	ET1, IL-8, PDGF-AA, and IGFBP2, but not uPA, stimulated tube formation of ECs	Bussche ¹⁴⁶
BMMSCs	CM	—	Cysteine-rich protein 61 (Cyr61)	MSC CM promoted morphogenesis of ECs	ECs with matrigel cultured in MSC-CM implanted subcutaneously in athymic mice induced neovascularisation	—	Estrada ¹⁴⁷
Mouse BMMSCs	CM	—	VEGF, MCP-1, MIP-1α, MIP-1β, MIG	Promoted angiogenesis; MCP-1 and MIP-1α increased MSCs migration while VEGF reduced it; increased p-Akt (Thr308) in rat neonatal H9c2 myoblasts	—	Both MCP-1 and PI3K-Akt were involved in the protective effect, independent of each other; MCP-1 displayed a protective effect by reducing caspase-3 activity	Boomsma ¹⁴⁸
hBMMSCs	MVs	In vitro: 1, 20, 50 µg/mL In vivo: 1 µg/µL	—	Promoted proliferation, migration and tube formation of HUVECs	MV-alginate-PCL constructs enhanced vessel formation and tissue-engineered bone regeneration	—	Xie ¹⁹

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
hBMIMSCs	Exos	5, 10, 20 µg/mL	Proteomic analysis showed increased level of factors related to PDGF, EGF, FGF	Promoted tubule formation of HUVECs	—	NFκB signalling was a key mediator of MSC-Exos induced angiogenesis in ECs	Anderson ⁷⁸
rat BMIMSCs	Exos	10 µg/mL	—	Enhanced the tube formation of ECs, and impaired T-cell function by inhibiting cell proliferation	Enhanced the density of new functional capillary and recovered blood flow in rat myocardial infarction model	—	Teng ⁷⁹
hASCs	EVs	10k, 100k, and total 100k fractions of b-EVs and PDGF-EVs	c-kit, SCF in PDGF stimulated the secretion of EVs, changed protein composition and enhanced the angiogenic potential	ASC-EVs induced vessel-like structure formation of ECs. PDGF stimulated the secretion of EVs, changed protein composition and enhanced the angiogenic potential	Promoted vessel formation of ECs when injected subcutaneously within Matrigel in SCID mice	—	Lopatina ⁸²
ASCs	MVs	—	—	Promoted EC proliferation, migration and tube formation	—	—	Pascucci ¹⁴⁹
hASCs	Exos	25, 50, 100, 200 µg/mL	miR-125a	Promoted ECs angiogenesis	—	Exosomal miR-125a repressed the angiogenic inhibitor DLL4	Liang ⁸¹
hASCs	MVs	30 µg/mL	miR-31; more small RNA (77.8%) in MVs compared with ASCs (7.5%)	Promoted the migration and tube formation of ECs	—	miR-31 contributed to MV-triggered angiogenesis by targeting FKH1 in ECs	Kang ¹⁵⁰
hucMSCs after hypoxia	MVs	10 µg/mL	—	Promoted proliferation, tube formation of ECs	Promoted new vessel formation in a limb ischaemic model	—	Zhang ⁸⁴
hucMSCs	MVs	—	Angiogenin, VEGF, MCP-1, VEGF R2, UPAR, VEGF, IGF, Tie-2/TEK, IL-6	Under hypoxic condition, most cytokines were expressed in greater quantity than normoxic in MSCs, while in MVs there was no significant difference except UPAR, Angiogenin, VEGF, IGF, Tie-2/TEK and IL-6	—	—	Chen ⁸⁵
hucMSCs	Exos	80, 160 µg/mL in vitro; 200 µg in vivo	Wnt4	Promoted the proliferation, migration and tube formation of ECs	Promoted angiogenesis in a cutaneous burn model	Promoted angiogenesis by activating Wnt4/β-Catenin pathway	Zhang B ⁸⁶
hucMSCs	EVs	—	RNA VEGF	EVs delivered VEGF to renal tubular epithelial cells, and all beneficial effects of EVs were abrogated by RNase except for the delivery of VEGF	Improved renal function, up-regulated VEGF and down-regulated HIF-1α	—	Zou ¹⁵¹

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Origin	Kind of secretome	Dose	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
hucMSCs overexpressing Akt	Exos	100 µg/mL in vitro; 400 µg in vivo	PDGF-D	Accelerated EC proliferation and migration, tube formation	promoted blood vessel formation	PDGF-D, upregulated in Akt-Exo. was important for the angiogenesis	Ma ⁸⁷
PlaMSCs	Exos CM	—	—	Both CM and Exos promoted migration and tube formation of ECs	Both CM and Exos promoted angiogenesis in ischaemic injury model, but Exo-depleted CM did not	—	Komaki ¹⁵²
Platelet microvesicles	MVs	10, 20, 50 µg/mL	—	Promoted EC tube formation in a dose-dependent manner; promoted EC migration	—	Upregulated MMP-2 and MMP-9 in ECs	Sun ⁸⁹
Monocytes	MVs	—	miR-150	Promoted EC migration and tube formation	Promoted angiogenesis	miR-150 inhibited c-Myb in ECs	Li ⁸⁸

Abbreviations: ECs, endothelial cells; EGF, epidermal growth factor; EPCs, endothelial progenitor cells; ERK, extracellular signal-regulated kinase; FGF, fibroblast growth factor; hEPCs, human endothelial progenitor cells; hucMSCs, human umbilical cord mesenchymal stem cells; HUVECs, Human umbilical vein endothelial cells; MCP, monocyte chemoattractant protein; MIG, monokine induced by IFN- γ ; MIP, macrophage inflammatory protein; PDGF, platelet-derived growth factor; PlaMSCs, human placenta-derived mesenchymal stem cells; SCID mice, severe combined immunodeficient mice; SDF, stromal-derived factor; UPAR, urokinase-type plasminogen activator; VEGF, vascular endothelial growth factor.

mediate their angiogenic effects by activating Erk1/2 signalling in vascular ECs, leading to upregulation of VEGFA, VEGFR-2, ANG-1, FGF-1, E-selectin, CXCL-16, eNOS and IL-8 in ECs.⁷³⁻⁷⁵ Therefore, CM, MVs and exosomes from EPCs all have the capacity to stimulate blood vessel formation, while the angiogenic effects of EVs mainly depend on their RNA component, as verified by EVs with RNAase showed significantly decreased activity in angiogenesis.

Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) also secrete EVs as important mediators to interact with ECs and EPCs to regulate angiogenesis. MSCs have potent proangiogenic properties attributed to their secretion of paracrine factors, and the functionality of the MSC secretome is strongly influenced by the microenvironment, such as hypoxia, inflammation or other chemical inducers. Conditioned medium from MSCs on hypoxia stimulation is angiogenic by increasing the level of p-Akt and pERK in ECs, activating PI3K-Akt pathway with minimal effect on pSTAT3.^{76,77} Extracellular vesicles from BMMSCs carry proangiogenic proteins related to PDGF, EGF and FGF, and promote neovascularisation and restrain the inflammation response of ECs through NF κ B signalling and the transfer of transcriptionally active STAT3.^{25,78-80} Exosomes derived from ASCs are also shown to promote angiogenesis in vitro and in vivo, due to the delivery of miR-125a targeting δ -like 4 (DLL4), an angiogenic inhibitor.⁸¹ PDGF treatment changes EV protein composition, with an enrichment of c-kit, SCF (stem-cell factor), and metalloprotease content to stimulate angiogenesis more effectively.⁸² ASCs cultured in endothelial differentiation medium tend to release more MVs with proangiogenic properties by shuttling miR-31 to inhibit HIF-1 α .⁸³ Small RNAs take the majority (77.8%) of the composition of EVs compared with ASCs (7.5%). EVs from ucMSCs are also proangiogenic. Similarly with BMMSCs and ASCs, hypoxia stimulates MV secretion of hucMSCs with greater quantity and increased level of proangiogenic factors, including angiogenin, VEGF and IGF.^{84,85} Exosomes released from hucMSCs promote angiogenesis by transferring Wnt4 and activating Wnt4/ β -Catenin pathway in ECs.⁸⁶ Akt-overexpressing hucMSCs secrete exosomes carrying platelet-derived growth factor-D (PDGF-D), another key protein composition in EVs to stimulate angiogenesis.⁸⁷

Extracellular vesicles derived from immune cells also actively participate in vascular homeostasis. Microvesicles from monocytes carry miR-150 to inhibit c-Myb in ECs, thus facilitating the proliferation and migration of ECs in vitro and angiogenesis in vivo.⁸⁸ Moreover, platelet MVs isolated from healthy donors are proangiogenic via delivery of cytokines, such as VEGF, FGF-2 and PDGF, to activate PI3 kinase, src kinase and ERK.⁸⁹

4.4 | EVs in peripheral nerve regeneration

Peripheral nerve injury in oral maxillofacial region as results of tumour or trauma, leading to partial or complete sensory and motor nerve dysfunction, severely influences the life quality of patients. However, current therapies have remained limited and unsatisfied because of poor functional recovery.⁹⁰ Usually, larger neurologic defects are extremely difficult to repair, because the axons of neurons can only outgrow about 1 mm per day after injury.⁹¹ Although tissue

TABLE 4 Summary of researches on cell secretome in nerve regeneration

Origin	Kind of secretome	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
rat Schwann cells	CM	nerve growth factor (NGF)	Both SC-CM and noncontact co-culture of SCs promoted dorsal root ganglia (DRG) neurite outgrowth	—	—	Hu ⁹²
rat Schwann cells	Exos	—	Promoted DRG axonal regeneration after axotomy, and promoted growth cone extension	Enhanced axonal regeneration after local injection into crushed sciatic nerves	—	Lopez-Verrilli ⁹⁹
OECs & B104 neuroblastoma cells	CM	—	Promoted neurogenic differentiation of ASCs	—	—	Lo Furno ⁹⁴
OECs	CM	—	—	BMMSCs induced by OEC-CM promoted nerve fibre regeneration following spinal cord injury	—	Feng ⁹⁵
OECs	CM	—	—	Improved the functional recovery and promoted the axonal regeneration around the injury epicentre	—	Gu ⁹⁶
Astrocytes	CM	NTAK (NRG2)	Promoted survival and neurite outgrowth of neurons	—	NTAK bound to ErbB3, stimulated phosphorylation of ErbB3 in neurons	Nakano ¹⁵³
Human foetal neural stem cells (hNSCs)	CM	—	—	Helped to set up a contour neural circuit via secretory factors after spinal cord injury	—	Liang ¹⁵⁴
Rat BMMSCs	CM	IGF-1, HGF, VEGF, TGF- β 1	Promoted survival and neurite outgrowth of neurons	—	—	Nakano ¹⁰⁷
Rat BMMSCs cultured in brain extracts after ischaemia	Exos	miR-133b, cel-miR-67	Increased the neurite branch number and total neurite length of neurons	—	—	Xin ¹¹⁵
Rat BMMSCs	Exos	miR-133b	—	Improved neurite remodelling and functional recovery after stroke	miR-133b inhibited connective tissue growth factor (CTGF) and RhoA	Xin
Rat BMMSCs	CM	Anti-apoptotic factors: VEGF-A, TIMP-1, etc Pro-inflammatory: TLR4, CINC-3, etc Proangiogenic	Protected neurons from apoptosis; activated macrophages to secrete pro-inflammatory cytokines, IL-1 β , IL-6, TNF α ; proangiogenic effect	Improved motor recovery after spinal cord contusion	—	Cantineaux ¹⁰⁸

(Continues)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Origin	Kind of secretome	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
Rat BMMSCs from normal or cerebral ischaemia rats	CM	—	—	Improved recovery of neurological function by improving neurogenesis and attenuating microglia/macrophage infiltration	—	Tsa ¹⁰⁹
hBMMSCs	EVs	—	—	Induced long-term neuroprotection, enhanced angiogenesis and modulated peripheral post-stroke immune responses	—	Doepfner ¹¹⁰
Human menstrual MSCs, chorion MSCs, hucMSCs, hBMMSCs	CM MVs Exos	—	The contact of MSCs with neurons inhibited neurite outgrowth, while CM enhanced it; Exos enhanced, but MVs inhibited neurite outgrowth; menstrual-MSC-Exos showed best effects on cortical neurons and had a comparable effect to BMMSC-Exos on DRG neurons	—	—	Lopez-Verrilli
Rat BMMSCs	Exos	miRNA-17-92 cluster	Promoted axonal growth of cortical neurons	Enhanced neuroplasticity and functional recovery	Activated the PTEN/mTOR signalling pathway	Zhang ¹¹³
Rat BMMSCs	Exos	miRNA-17-92 cluster	—	Enhanced neuroplasticity and functional recovery after stroke	Activated PI3K/PKB signalling, inhibited GSK-3 β activity	Xin ¹⁵⁵
BMMSCs overexpressing miR-133b	Exos	miR-133b	—	Improved neural plasticity and functional recovery after stroke with a contribution from a stimulated secondary release of neurite-promoting exosomes from astrocytes	—	Xin ¹¹⁴
Rat BMMSCs overexpressing miR-133b	Exos	miR-133b	—	Decreased neuronal apoptosis and neurodegeneration in brain tissues after intracerebral haemorrhage (ICH)	Inhibited RhoA expression, promoted ERK1/2/CREB phosphorylation	Shen ¹¹⁶
Rat BMMSCs	CM	—	Promoted growth of DRG neurons	Improved functional recovery of spinal cord injury; decreased levels of IL-2, IL-6 and TNF in spinal cord extracts after localised intrathecal CM injection	—	Cizkova ¹¹¹
hASCs	CM	CXCL5	Promoted major pelvic ganglia (MPG) neurite growth	—	Activated JAK/STAT concentration-dependently in Schwann cells	Zhang ¹¹⁷

(Continues)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Origin	Kind of secretome	Content profile	In vitro effect	In vivo effect	Mechanisms	Ref.
hASCs	CM	—	Reduced damages of cortical neurons	—	Regulated energy metabolism by increasing the levels of GAP-43, ATP, NAD ⁺ , NADH and the ratio of NAD ⁺ /NADH expression	Hao ¹¹⁸
Rat ASCs	MVs	—	—	Rest-MSC MVs and anti-inflammatory-MSC MVs improved the nerve regeneration compared with pro-inflammatory-MVs	—	Raisi ¹⁵⁶
Rat ASCs	Exos	GDNF, FGF-1, BDNF, IGF-1 and NGF transcripts	Increased neurite outgrowth	Enhanced regeneration after sciatic nerve injury	—	Bucan ¹¹⁹
M2 Macrophage	MVs	miR-223	Improved SCs migration and proliferation; up-regulated NGF and laminin	Increased SCs infiltration and axon number in sciatic nerve injury rats	—	Zhan ⁹⁷

Abbreviations: BDNF, brain-derived neurotrophic factor; Ch-SCs, Chorion MSCs; FGF, fibroblast growth factor; GDNF, glial cell–derived neurotrophic factor; HGF, hepatocyte growth factor; IGF, insulin-like growth factor; IGF, insulin-like growth factor; MenSCs, menstrual MSCs; NTAK, neural- and thymus-derived activator for ErbB kinases, also known as neuregulin-2 (NRG2); olfactory ensheathing cells (OECs); SCs, Schwann cells; TGF, transforming growth factor; VEGF, vascular endothelial growth factor.

engineering techniques for peripheral nerve regeneration are easier to be accepted for the patients compared with autologous nerve grafting, the outcomes are still suboptimal. Recently, it has been recognised that exosomes play critical regulatory functions during nerve repair, with accumulating evidences indicating that exosomal miRNAs are critical for nerve regeneration. Cellular secretome, including CM and exosomes, from Schwann cells,^{92,93} olfactory ensheathing cells (OECs),^{94–96} M2 macrophages⁹⁷ and MSCs,⁹⁸ has been considered to be beneficial for peripheral nerve regeneration (Figure 2D, Table 4).

Schwann cells (SCs), divided into myelinating type and non-myelinating type, dedifferentiate to a progenitor-like state, provide nutrition to support axon outgrowth, and guide axons to their original target tissues after peripheral nerve injury. Direct cell contact and soluble factors from paracrine effect contribute to the interactions between SCs and neurons during axonal regeneration.⁹⁹ Schwann cell proliferation, migration and axon myelination post-injury can be regulated by microRNAs, and microRNA Let-7,¹⁰⁰ miR-sc3,¹⁰¹ miR-1¹⁰² and miR-340¹⁰³ were reported to benefit this process. Meanwhile, SCs themselves can also deliver microRNAs by EVs to other SCs and neurons to improve the peripheral nerve repair. Schwann cell microRNA expression is drastically altered after peripheral nerve injury, and many injury-regulated SC microRNAs, such as miR-221 and miR-222 cluster (miR-221/222), facilitate proliferation and migration of SCs.¹⁰⁴ Conditioned medium or exosomes from SCs and noncontact co-culture of SCs with neurons promote dorsal root ganglia (DRG) neurite outgrowth by secretion of nerve growth factor (NGF),^{92,93} and local injection of SC exosomes effectively drives axon growth after nerve crush injury.^{93,105} Together, the content profile of SCs changed after injury, and microRNAs delivered by SC EVs are important mediators of SCs' regenerative response following nerve injury. However, existing researches are based on rat SCs. To obtain human SC exosomes, the necessity of harvesting SCs via sacrifice of normal nerve tissue has remained to be a major disadvantage for their clinical application.

Besides low regenerative rate of axons, inflammatory reactions and degenerative debris after peripheral nerve injury turn to be another obstacle for nerve regeneration, which always block the elongation of regenerating axons to reach their target sites. Macrophages play a critical role in modulating the inflammatory responses. The moment nerve damage occurs, damaged myelin will activate the macrophages to release pro-inflammation cytokines, thus mediating the removal of debris from apoptotic axons and myelins through macrophage phagocytosis, and also accelerate the recruitment and migration of other macrophages at the injury site.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, M2 macrophages were reported to secrete MVs highly expressing miR-223 to improve migration and proliferation of SCs and increase the expression level of NGF and laminin, thus promoting peripheral nerve repair in sciatic nerve injury rats.⁹⁷

MSCs and their secretome are well recognised to improve functional recovery following nerve injury.^{91,98} MSCs from various origins, such as menstrual MSCs (MenSCs), BMMSCs, ASCs and ucMSCs, have been reported to benefit the survival and neurite outgrowth of

neurons. BMMSCs secretome have been attracted the most attentions in the field of nerve regeneration. CM from BMMSCs contains various trophic factors, such as transforming growth factors $\beta 1$ (TGF- $\beta 1$), vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), insulin-like growth factor (IGF) and hepatocyte growth factor (HGF).^{107,108} BMMSC CM and EVs protect neurons from apoptosis, promote neurite outgrowth, attenuate inflammations and exert proangiogenic effect, leading to improved recovery of neurological function.¹⁰⁸⁻¹¹² Exosomes derived from BMMSCs delivered miRNA-17-92 cluster to promote axonal growth of cortical neurons and facilitate functional recovery after stroke by activating the PTEN/mTOR¹¹³ and PI3K/PKB¹¹⁴ signalling. MiR-133b is also highly expressed in BMMSC-derived exosomes, and miR-133b target and inhibit connective tissue growth factor (CTGF) and RhoA to improve neurite remodelling and functional recovery.¹¹⁵ Tailored exosomes from BMMSCs overexpressing miR-133b decrease neuronal apoptosis and neurodegeneration, as well as exert a secondary release of neurite-promoting exosomes from astrocytes, through inhibition of RhoA expression and enhancement of ERK1/2/CREB phosphorylation.^{114,116} In addition, CM from ASCs, enriched in CXCL5, can also promote neurite growth, reduced neuron damage by regulating energy metabolism, and activate JAK/STAT signalling in a concentration-dependent manner in Schwann cells.^{117,118} Exosomes from ASCs are found to shuttle transcripts of glial cell-derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF), fibroblast growth factor-1 (FGF-1), brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1) and NGF to promote nerve regeneration after sciatic nerve injury.¹¹⁹ When comparing different MSCs on nerve regeneration, menstrual-MSC exosomes show best effects on cortical neurons and have a comparable effect to BMMSC exosomes on DRG neurons compared with chorion MSCs and hucMSCs. Interestingly, the direct contact of MSCs with neurons inhibits neurite outgrowth, but CM from MSCs promotes growth of neurons. Exosomes from menstrual MSCs enhance neurite outgrowth, but MVs inhibit this effect on the contrary.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the paracrine factors from MSCs may provide a neurogenic niche more importantly than the cells themselves, and trophic factors in CM and microRNAs in exosomes play critical roles in nerve regeneration by protecting neurons from degradation, attenuating inflammatory responses, facilitating angiogenesis and promoting axonal growth.

4.5 | EVs in tooth-related tissue regeneration

Tooth itself is such a complex organ which consists of hard tissues (enamel, dentin and cementum) and soft tissues (dental pulp with blood vessels and nerves, and periodontal ligament), that genuine tooth regeneration is considerably challenging. The process of tooth development may provide us information for realising tooth regeneration. Tooth development is precisely controlled by the crosstalk between epithelium and mesenchyme, and exosomes have been documented to play an important role in this process.^{120,121} Extracellular vesicles derived from dental-related cells are preferential choices for tooth regeneration. Exosomes from hDPSCs cultured under odontogenic differentiation conditions promote odontogenic differentiation of recipient hDPSCs and hBMMSCs through activation of P38

mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) pathway.¹²² Conditioned medium from odontoblast promotes differentiation and mineralisation of cementoblasts.¹²³ Schwann cells in dental pulp secrete EVs to maintain the multipotency of hDPSCs,^{124,125} suggesting that nervous system may also play an important role in tooth regeneration. In turn, exosomes from human exfoliated deciduous teeth (SHEDs) protect neurons from apoptosis and have neurogenic capabilities.¹²⁶ Furthermore, MSCs from other tissue may also be potential candidates for tooth regeneration. Adipose-derived stem cells could be induced to cementoblasts,¹²⁷ while CM from BMSCs promotes periodontal tissue regeneration.¹²⁸

4.6 | Perspectives and challenges

In the first place, the safety of EV local injection and systematic administration should be systematically evaluated. Therefore, EV biodistribution and clearance dynamics, content profiles and regulatory mechanisms are two essential indexes for safety evaluation. Extracellular vesicle labelling and tracking techniques are the bases for studies on biodistribution of EVs, and fluorescent reporter systems,¹²⁹⁻¹³¹ magnetic labelling observed by MRI^{132,133} and radiolabelling observed by SPECT/CT¹³⁴ have been reported. Basing on existing researches, EV biodistribution depends on the cellular origin of EV, as well as dose, method and location of administration.^{131,135} Meanwhile, the half-life time for exogenous EVs in vivo is around 30 minutes.¹²⁹ After intravenous injection via tail vein in the mice, EVs are detected to undergo a rapid distribution phase in the spleen, followed by the liver, and then the lungs and kidneys. Extracellular vesicles are eliminated through liver and kidney within six hours, albeit a very small percentage (~0.01% of total dose) of EVs are detected in brain, heart and muscles.¹²⁹ Moreover, intraperitoneal and subcutaneous injection significantly lowers the amount of EVs in liver and spleen, whereas increases the accumulation in pancreas and gastrointestinal tract.¹³¹ Therefore, a criterion for the optimal route of EV delivery targeting different regenerative or therapeutic goals is urgently to be established in order to enhance the therapeutic efficacy of EVs. Moreover, no matter which kind of reporter system we choose, there is a risk that the signals originate from the free label itself, rather than the labelled EVs; therefore, control experiments using the label itself should also be analysed and tracking methods with less false-positive signals are expected.

Also basing on safety considerations, the content profiles and regulatory mechanisms of EVs should be systematically evaluated before its clinical application. The horizontal transfer of genetic information by EVs within and even across species boundaries^{136,137} may risk uncontrolled transfer of genetic information among individuals or across species. Therefore, a rigorous, overall and genome-wide detection of all genetic elements (non-coding RNAs, mRNAs, etc) shuttled within candidate exosomes has become a prerequisite before clinical application.

In addition, the effectiveness of EV-based therapy is expected to be studied systematically. Although accumulating evidences have supported the efficacy and advantages of EV therapies, the

comparison between EV and traditionally well-recognised efficient methods should be conducted. For example, in the field of tissue engineering, the regenerative effects of EVs and stem cells are expected to be systematically compared, but difficult to realise due to lack of studies and the heterogeneity between researches.

Finally, tailored EVs, either bioengineered or generated from modified cells, are promising selections for precision medicine. To realise this goal, unravelling the composition of EVs and their underlying regulatory mechanisms is indispensable. Moreover, development in biomaterial science and nanotechnology may provide us a bright future for bioengineered EVs.

5 | CONCLUSION

Extracellular vesicles are effective and beneficial for various tissue regeneration, including bone, skin, blood vessels and nerve, thus contributing to their promising roles in oral rehabilitation. Whether EVs can be a total surrogate for stem-cell therapy should be evaluated carefully by more systematic studies for comparison. Tailored or bioengineered EVs with higher safety and efficiency are expected in the foreseeable clinical application.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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