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# **Development in Cell-Nanotopography Interaction Applications and Its Potential for Mass Production**

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# **ABSTRACT**

Since the initial presentation of cell contact response with native topographic structure in 1911, numerous studies have been published to investigate how cells respond when interacting with micro/nano structures.. Many of the founding has potential to become applications in bio-medical or in pharmaceutical industry. Regardless of the huge prospect, these applications are still bound to the manufacturability of the micro/nano topographic structures. The introduction of nanoimprint lithography in 1995 has demonstrated that it can replicating micro/nano structures with relatively simple and low-cost equipment but with high throughput and high reliability. This paper reviews the development in cell-micro/nanotopographic interactions, the development of high throughput nanofabrication method. The nanofabrication methods in focus is nanoimprint lithography and electrospinning. This review paper also discusses the potential applications from cell-nanotopographic for mass productions. Prospectus applications such as the development in development of antimicrobial surfaces interactions and biologically inspired nanoscaffold and nanopattern suitable for tissue repair and regeneration are also discussed.

**Keywords:** *Cell, Nanotopographic, Nanoimprint*

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

Advancements in nanofabrication have unveiled a multitude of possibilities for the interaction between cells and nanotopography. According to Robert Langer's research, nanotechnology has the potential to revolutionize and reshape the biomedical and pharmaceutical sectors.[1]. The nanotechnology market in healthcare and medicine is estimated to grow to more than USD334 billion by 2025 [2]. In order to tackle potential applications that leverage cellnanotopography interactions, there is a need to create cost-effective and efficient techniques for nanofabrication Several ideas have been introduced and developed for high throughput nanofabrication. Methods relying on direct mechanical deformation, like nanoimprint lithography (NIL), are crucial in the nanotechnology-driven medical and pharmaceutical sectors due to their cost-effectiveness, repeatability, and efficiency.[3], [4].

Cells typically exist at the micro scale, and the initial exploration of cell responses to native topographic structures was conducted by Harrison in 1911 [5],[6]. Remarkably, when a cell interacts with a surface featuring dimensions smaller than itself, it exhibits a distinct response, e.g., structure on nanostructure. Cell respond in many ways with nanostructures and some of those responses are useful, and these interactions can be utilized as tools to direct the cell responses[7]–[12]. Nanostructure

that interacts with cells can be used as mechanosensory to transmit signals for cell adhesion, proliferation and differentiation[7]–[12]. Understanding the interaction between cells and nanotopographic structures is primarily contingent on knowledge about cell adhesion[13]. If the cell fails to adhere to the surface, other responses become irrelevant. Numerous studies have explored various types of nanotopographic structures in this regard. Cell interactions with nanotopography can be categorised into three groups, namely cell with precise and highly symmetrical nanostructures[14], [15], cell with randomize nanostructure[16], and cell with disorder nanostructure[17]. This paper reviews the history and recent development of these three categories.

# **2. CELL-MIRO/NANOTOPOGRAPHY INTERACTION**

Numerous investigations have been undertaken to delve into stem cells, examining their interactions with nanotopography [18]. The main objective of research in stem cell is to control the differentiation of stem cells into specific cell lineages. Utilizing the interaction between mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) and nanotopography can serve as a means to regulate their differentiation [18]– [21]. When placed on nanotopography, human embryonic stem cells (hESCs) exhibit a similar interaction. The nanotopological mechanosensory of hESCs has noteworthy effects on cell spreading, adhesion, and self-replication [22], [23]. The interaction between human embryonic stem cells (hESCs) and nanotopography holds significant potential in the realms of tissue engineering and medical applications. This is attributed to the distinctive characteristics of hESCs, particularly their pluripotency, which allows them to differentiate into various specialized human cells [24], [25]. Numerous investigations have been carried out to analyze cell interactions with TiO2 nanotubes. Cellular responses, such as adhesion, proliferation, and apoptosis, are contingent on the size of the nanotube. Park et al. [26]showed that indicates that cell adhesion and proliferation reach their peak on nanotubes with a diameter of 15 nm, while apoptosis occurs at a diameter of 100 nm. Numerous studies align on the consensus that the fate of cells is determined within the threshold nanotube size of 30-50 nm [25]. Surfaces featuring nanotube diameters exceeding 50 nm can lead to cell impairment, restricting both cell spreading and adhesion, irrespective of the specific surface characteristics [27], [28]. Although large nanotubes (diameter >50 nm) impair cells from spreading and adhere, they evoke stem cells to elongate[29], [30] The elongation of mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) induces a change in cytoskeletal structure, driven by a heightened tension state. This alteration subsequently results in the generation of osteoblast-like cells [30]–[32]. This breakthrough unveils a new avenue for advancement in nanotechnology, particularly in the field of orthopedic treatment.

Regarding the selection of nanotopography, three nanostructure options are available. The initial approach involves investigating cell interactions with symmetric and highly precise nanostructures [14], [33], [34]; The second approach entails examining cell interactions with randomly textured nanoscale roughness [16], [35] and the third approach involves adopting a middle ground between precision and randomness, known as disorder nanotopography [18]. When cells interact with precise nanotopography, the typical outcome is lower cell adhesion compared to interactions with random nanoscale roughness [14], [16], [34], [36]. Interestingly, McMurray et al. [37] stated that precisely symmetrical arrangement of nanopits has been demonstrated to maintain the phenotype and multipotency of hMSCs over an extended period, lasting up to eight weeks.

On the other hand, Dalby et al. [17] showed that the contact between disordered nanotopography and mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) leads to swift osteogenesis, comparable to the outcomes achieved using corticosteroids such as Dexamethasone as agents inducing bone formation. Table 1 present the collection of studies in cell responses to precise and highly symmetric nanostructures, Table 2 present the collection of studies in cell responses to randomize nanostructures and Table 3 present the collection of studies in cell responses to disorder/irregular nanostructures.







[a] hMSCs = human mesenchymal cells ; HCECs = human corneal endothelial cellls[b] PUA=Polyurethene acrylate, HUVECS = human umbilical endothelial cells ; PDMS = Polydimethylsiloxane; TCPS = Tissue Cultured Polystyrene ; FNC = mixture of fibronectin and collagen ; PET = polyethylene terephthalate[c] CEF = cell elongation factor [d] FA = Focal Adhesion; LC = laminin (Gibco) and chondroitin sulfate (Sigma) mixture

**Table 2** Collection of studies in cell response to randomized nanostructures





[a]  $R_q$  = rot-mean-square roughness ; d<sub>r</sub>= fiber diameter ; AR<sub>ellipse</sub>= Ellipse-shaped aspect ratio[b] vSMCs = vascular smooth muscle cells;hESCs = human embryonic stem cells ;; NCs = Nerve Cells ; NIH/3T3 = mouse embryonic fibroblast cells; MG-63 = osteoblast-like-cell ; hFOB = human fetal osteoblast [c] PLGA = poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid) ; PLLA = poly(L-lactic acid) ;Ti = Titanium; YSZ-(110) = (110) oriented yttria-stabilized zirconia single crystal ; GDC = gadolinium-doped ceria [d] S<sub>p</sub>= Maximum height ; S<sub>sk</sub>= Height distribution deviation ; S<sub>q</sub>= Root mean square deviation ; S<sub>m</sub>= Peak material volume ; S<sub>a</sub>= Arithmetic mean deviation [e] CSK = Intracellular actin cytoskeleton







[a] RGD = arginine glycine-aspartic acid SQ = square Array ; HEX = hexagonal array ; DSQ20 = disordered square array with dots randomly displaced by up to 20 nm along both axes from their positions in a true square; DSQ50 = disordered square array with dots randomly displaced by up to 50nm along both axes from their original positions in a perfectly square arrangement. ; ; RAND = pits placed randomly over a 150 μm X 150 μm field, repeated to fill a 1 cm<sup>2</sup> area [b] MSCs = Mesenchymal Cells; MC3T3-E1 = mouse osteoblastic cell line [c] PMMA = polymethylmethacrylate [d] DEX = dexamethosane

To harness the interactions between cells and nanotopography, a comprehensive understanding of cell adhesion is likely the most crucial aspect. Cells that adhere to surfaces through cellular adhesion receptors are known as integrins. Cells exhibit distinct responses to variations in mechanical force [18], surface topography[19] and surface chemistry[55]. In describing cell adhesion, Dalby et al. [13] provided an analogy, a cell can be likened to a tent, where the pegs represent integrin clusters serving as anchors that secure the tent to the ground. Nevertheless, cells have the ability to determine the location of integrin clusters by modifying their cytoskeleton. When a surface features a nanostructure with dimensions similar to those of the cell's integrin, signals can be relayed to the cell via the integrin

Cells cannot interact directly with any synthetic material. Instead, it can adhere to the protein layer adsorbed on the material surface[62]. Cell adhesion can be studied using the spatial organization of arginine-glycineaspartic acid (RGD) ligands[64]–[66]. In a previous study, Cavalcanti-Adam et al. [67] produced a threshold density (70 nm) for the RGD spacing for the focal adhesion to be formed. Cell adhesion decreases significantly when the RGD spacing is greater than 67 nm[68]–[70].

# **3. DEVELOPMENT IN NANOTOPOGRAPHY FABRICATION**

The integral part of shifting the application of cellnanotopography interaction from laboratory to industrial scale is the nanotopography fabrication. There are many methods for fabricating nanostructure from

random fabrication to precise fabrication. The applications of these methods are attributed to many factors such as cost, precision, repeatability and many more. Randomize method, such as blasting, can produce nanostructures more easily, while top down fabrication techniques, such as reactive ion etching and electron beam lithography has the capability to achieve features as small as 10 nm. [71]. Although precise techniques yield more controlled and consistent outcomes in contrast to random methods, they often entail higher costs and require expertise to attain the desired nanostructure.[72],[73]. Moreover, these methods are labor-intensive and time-consuming, rendering them impractical for large-scale production. To stimulate

innovation and propel research in cell-nanotopography technology, it is essential to develop low-cost, highthroughput, and high-resolution nanolithography techniques nanolithography[74]. The rapid progress in the semiconductor industry has notably hastened the development of micro/nanofabrication techniques. Innovations like nanoimprint lithography (NIL) and electrospinning now empower researchers to construct and fabricate nanostructures on larger substrates at a more cost-effective rate[75]. NIL was first introduced by Chou in 1995 [76] demonstrating promising potential to offer a cost-effective and high-throughput method for producing continuous high-resolution nanostructures [77]. In NIL, the mold created is transferred onto a resist using specialized printing equipment [78]. In this approach, the master mold is generated through precise fabrication techniques, such as focused ion beam or electron beam lithography [79]. The nanostructure can be replicated repeatedly by imprinting it onto a suitable substrate.



**Figure 1.** SEM images of 60nm features on quartz substrate [73].

Figure 2 depicts a difference between two types of nanoimprint Lithography (NIL) which are thermal NIL and ultraviolet (UV) NIL. In thermal NIL, the mold used for imprinting is heated just beyond the glass transition temperature,  $T_g$  of the resists. The elevated temperature softens the resist, allowing it to fill the cavities and create a reverse pattern of the mold. Subsequently, the mold is cooled to a temperature below the glass transition temperature,  $T_g$  of the resist before being disjointed. In UV NIL, the entire process, including resist UV-curing and the demolding process, is carried out at room temperature, eliminating the need for elevated temperatures. [81]. Unlike thermal Nanoimprint Lithography (NIL), which depends on phase changes corresponding to temperature adjustments, UV NIL induces resist hardening through increased cross-linking in UV-sensitive polymer [82]. UV NIL necessitates smaller imprint pressure compared to thermal NIL because it employs a less viscous photoresist. .In addition to UV NIL and thermal NIL, there are also variants of Nanoimprint Lithography (NIL) that combine both UV and thermal curing, such as (STU®) imprint technology by Obducat Technologies [85]. These techniques allow the Nanoimprint Lithography (NIL) cycle to be carried out at a constant temperature by simultaneously employing both thermal curing and UV curing. NIL based on imprint contact encompasses three variants: roll-to-roll (R2R), plate-to-plate (P2P) and rollto-plate (R2P), [Figure 3](#page-7-0) shows the differences between these three NIL methods. In terms of potential for mass production, R2R NIL holds significant promise for industry-scale applications. The R2R NIL concept is rooted in roll-to-roll manufacturing processes, enabling the continuous and high-throughput production of products.[86], [87]. Roll-to-roll (R2R) NIL presents greater advantages compared to conventional plate-toplate (P2P) NIL in terms of equipment size, imprint force and output. [88]. Wong et al. [89] has successfully demonstrated the double-sided R2R NIL which able micro or nanostructure imprinted to both side of targeted substrate. Table 4 present the collection of studies and research that using different type of NIL

Another method for producing inexpensive, relatively easy and high throughput nanostructures is

electrospinning[79]. Electrospinning has been used for mass production for decades. However, this method is not preferred compared to other spinning methods due to its lower production rate. As a result, many studies have been conducted to improve electrospinning. For instance, the Karpov Institute of Physical Chemistry used swirling air jet to form multiple solution-spinning jet[95]. A study conducted in Korea using cylinder-type multi nozzle electrospinni system showed great potential for mass production of nanofibers[96].

Cellular responses to molecular-scaled structures in contact surfaces were first proposed in 1963 by Rosenberg[97]. However, it was in 1999 when Laurencin et al. [98] reported that fibroblastic cells are adhered and realigned properly with fibers with a diameter smaller than the diameter of the cell. Numerous research have been done to investigate the behavior of cells when interacting with nanofiber scaffolds. Electrospinning is a simple method to produce nanofibrous scaffold for cell- nanotopography interactions. Electrospinning was first introduced and patented by Formalas in 1934[99]. Prior to that, researchers focused on electrospinning as a method to produce fibers which are used to reinforce composite materials, thereby improving mechanical properties[100]. Figure 4 shows the schematic set up to produce uniaxial nanofibers.

Researcher	<b>NIL</b> <b>Type</b>	Mold	<b>Resist</b>	<b>Final Product</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
Y. Chen et al. 2021 [90]	P <sub>2</sub> P	$SiO2$ (quartz) template	Polystyrene	Sub-10nm width ribbon of hexaganol graphene nanomesh (GNMS).	Sub-10 nm of ribbon width.
Potejanasak 2021	P <sub>2</sub> P	$SiO2$ (quartz) template	TR-21 from Tokyo Gosei Co. Ltd.	120 nm diameter of CoPt nanodots.	120 nm diameter of nanodot.
Ye et al. 2010 $[91]$	P <sub>2</sub> P	Hydrogensilsesquioxane(HSQ)	Polyset® epoxy siloxane nanoimprint resist from Polyset Company Inc., Mechanicville, New York, <b>USA</b>	50nm lines and dot with high aspect ratio are succuesfully replicated using PDMS soft mold.	sub-100 nm of periodic nanoline and array of nanodot.
Sousa et al. $[92]$	R2P	Thin Ni film	<b>PMMA</b>	Sub-100 nm of PMMA nanogratings.	Sub-100 nm of nanograting.
Ahn and Guo 2009 [86]	R2P	Ethylene Tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE)	Epoxysilicone	300 nm line width and 600 nm of epoxysilicone nanogratings.	300 nm line width of nanograting.
Schleunitz et al. 2011[75]	R2R	OrmoStamp coated with antisticking layer (ASL)	Celluose Acetate (CA) film	200 nm depth and width of CA. (A continous 40 m of CA printed).	200 nm line width of nanograting.
Nagato et al. 2010 [93]	R2R	Si(Silicon) template	<b>PMMA</b>	Multilayer nanograting with 800nm pitch.	300 nm depth of multilayer nanograting.
Lee et al. 2018 [94]	R <sub>2</sub> R	Polyurethane acrylate	<b>PDMS</b>	Gecko-foot-inspired hierarchical nanostructure.	
Wong et al. 2018 [89]	R2R	UV-curable resin	<b>PDMS</b>	Micro-nano structure fabricated/imprinted on both side of targeted substrate (double sided).	200nm nanopore.

**Table 4** Collection of studies that using different technique of NIL



**Figure 2.** Comparison between Thermal NIL and Ultra-Violet NIL.



<span id="page-7-0"></span>**Figure 3.** Nanoimprint lithography variation based on imprint techniques.



**Figure 4.** Schematic set up of electrospinning to collect uniaxial nanofibers.

When a high voltage is applied between the conducting syringe and conduction collector (i.e., rotating disk), the voltage bias will convert the polymer droplets on the syringe needle into a polymer jet. Nano-sized polymer jets are collected by rotating disk producing uniaxial nanofibers. The final product can vary by changing collectors. The rotating disk collector will produce uniaxial nanofiber, plate collector will produce random nanofiber, and rotating drum collector can produce uniaxial nanofiber. Random nanofiber are produced depends on the bias voltage.





# **4. CELL-NANOTOPOGRAPHY APPLICATIONS FOR MASS PRODUCTION**

The cellular reaction to the nanostructure can be harnessed for various applications. One such application that can leverage this cellular response is the development of antimicrobial surfaces. Similar surfaces can be found naturally in dragonfly wing [107] and gecko skin [108] and researcher around the world try to replicate these surfaces in antimicrobial As an example, research conducted by Ivanova and her colleagues revealed that dragonfly wings, characterized by

nanocones with dimensions of 50-70 nm in base diameter and a height of 240 nm, exhibit distinct antibacterial properties. [107]. In another study by Kelleher et al., it was observed that the nanopillars present on cicada wings demonstrate effective antimicrobial properties against gram-negative bacteria, specifically Pseudomonas aeruginosa [109]. [Table 6](#page-9-0) summarized the list of artificial nanostructured bactericidal surfaces with their preparation method. The table exhibits the artificial antibacterial surfaces with various patterns such as silicon-based surfaces, titaniabased surfaces and flexible polymer surfaces. These

artificial antibacterial surfaces were fabricated with different preparation methods such as RIE, hydrothermal process, anodization, thermal oxidation, NIL, direct laser interference patterning and EBL technique.



<span id="page-9-0"></span>

The development of bactericidal surfaces has gain traction in recent year due to fact that bacteria can develop resistance toward antibiotic [120]. COVID 19 pandemic has strengthened the need of anti-bacteria or anti-viral surfaces in our daily life. Bacterial infections start with bacteria attachment or adhesion to the surface of medical devices, hospital tools, implants, and food packaging. After bacterial attachment, bacteria will form biofilms, which is the formation that has high resistance against antibacterial agents[121], [122]. These material give preventive measure for infection by stopping adhesion of bacteria or virus

Contrary to antimicrobial application, cellnanotopography interactions can be harness to create an environment that accelerate tissue repair and wound healing. Biologically inspired nanoscaffold and nanopattern has help researcher narrow down the pattern suitable for tissue repair and regeneration[123], [124]. With the comprehensive research and suitable fabrication for mass production, these biologically inspired nanoscaffold will have advances renegeraive medicine and tissue engineering. Many studies and research have been conducted to utilizes the biophysical cues from cell-substrate interaction for cardiovascular

will effect cardiomyocyte response[125], [126]. The cell morphology changes such as increase in alignment help regional cardiomyocyte which ultimately help the arrangement of cardiac muscle fiber[125], [126]. Cell reaction from nanotopographical cues also apparent in neural tissue regeneration and repair. Many bio-inspired nano-scaffolds are proven in helping for suitable environment for regeneration of various stem cell. Klymov et al. has reported that for neuron cell, PC12 show axonal growth in contact with nanogroovess with pitch 150-1000nm and depth 30-150nm[127]. Similar study by Genchi et al. show that PC12 cell adhesion and proliferation when in contact with 1μm random PHB fiber and parallel PHB fiber[127].

disease therapy. In vitro study show that when hESC-CMs (human embryonic stem cell-derived cardiomyocytes), in contact with nano- mirco surfaces

#### **5. CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES**

In years after the cell first contact response, considerable progress has been made in establishing the fundamental of cell response to nanostructure. The future of cellnanotopography interaction applications largely depends on advancement for high-throughput, cost effective nanofabrication techniques. Method such as nanoimprint lithography and electrospinning offer potential solutions of such applications.

Parallel developments in semiconductor industry, MEMs/NEMs and polymer research help tremendously for low cost cell-nanotopography-related devices. In the wake of COVID 19, applications like antimicrobial surfaces has create awareness for an pre-emptive

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approach from infections. The combinations of research for better nanofabrication, the demand for cellnanotopographical applications and the continuous awareness campaign are hope to propel the nanotechnology implementation in health science.

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