

# A Comprehensive Review of Transdermal Drug Delivery Systems - Mechanisms, Advancements, and Future Frontiers

Mayur R. Najan\*, Proff. Rani M. Deokar And Dr. Megha T. Salve

*Department of Bachelor in Pharmacy*

*Shivajirao Pawar College of Pharmacy, Pachegaon, Ahmednagar-413725.*

*\*Corresponding Author- Mayur R. Najan*

Submitted: 10-15-2023

Accepted: 20-12-2023

**ABSTRACT:** Currently, approximately 74% of medications are administered orally, but they often fall short of achieving optimal effectiveness. To address these limitations, the transdermal drug delivery system has emerged as a promising solution. This method involves delivering drugs through the skin to achieve systemic effects, distinguishing it from traditional topical drug delivery. This approach offers several advantages, such as prolonged therapeutic effects, minimized side effects, enhanced bioavailability, improved patient compliance, and convenient termination of drug therapy. The stratum corneum is recognized as the primary barrier affecting the transdermal permeation of most molecules. The process of transdermal drug delivery involves three main routes of drug penetration: appendageal, transcellular, and intercellular. Factors like skin age, condition, physicochemical properties, and environmental influences must be considered when delivering drugs through this route. Key components of transdermal drug delivery systems (TDDS) include a polymer matrix membrane, the drug itself, penetration enhancers, pressure-sensitive adhesives, backing laminates, and a release liner. Transdermal patches are categorized into reservoir systems, matrix systems, and micro-reservoir systems, each designed to introduce active ingredients into the circulatory system through the skin.

**Keywords:** transdermal drug delivery, transdermal patches, systemic blood circulation, skin.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Conventional dosage forms often result in significant fluctuations in plasma drug concentrations, leading to undesirable outcomes such as toxicity or diminished effectiveness. These issues, coupled with challenges like repetitive dosing and unpredictable absorption, spurred the development of controlled drug delivery systems. Such systems release one or more drugs

continuously in a predetermined pattern over a fixed period, either systemically or targeting a specific organ. The primary goals of controlled drug delivery are to enhance drug safety, improve efficacy, and ensure patient compliance by achieving better control over plasma drug levels and reducing dosing frequency. One prominent example of controlled drug delivery is the Transdermal Therapeutic System (TTS), which refers to self-contained discrete dosage forms applied to intact skin. These systems deliver drugs at a controlled rate through the skin to the systemic circulation. The pioneering Transdermal Drug Delivery (TDD) system, Transdermal-Scop, was developed in 1980 to treat motion sickness using scopolamine. Employing a membrane-moderated approach, this system features a microporous polypropylene film as the membrane and a drug reservoir containing a solution of the drug in a mixture of mineral oil and polyisobutylene. The controlled release is maintained over a three-day period, showcasing the potential of this innovative drug delivery technology.<sup>(1)</sup>

The Transdermal Drug Delivery System presents several advantages:

- The frequency of dosing can be significantly reduced.
- Improved bioavailability allows for a reduction in drug concentration.
- Escaping first-pass metabolism by the liver enhances drug effectiveness.
- Issues related to gastrointestinal medication absorption, such as those arising from stomach pH, enzymatic activity, and interactions with food or other orally administered pharmaceuticals, can be avoided.
- Lowering plasma concentration levels of drugs leads to decreased side effects.
- Non-invasive nature eliminates the need for parenteral therapy, streamlining the drug administration process.

- Enhanced compliance is achieved compared to previous dosage forms, as longer therapy is provided with a single application.
- Rapid termination of drug therapy is possible by simply removing the application from the skin's surface.
- Self-administration is facilitated by these systems.
- Systemic drug interactions are reduced.

- Extended duration of action is a key feature of transdermal drug delivery, offering prolonged therapeutic effects.<sup>(2)</sup>

#### Anatomy and physiology of skin-

The skin is primarily made up of three layers. The upper layer is the epidermis, the layer below the epidermis is the dermis, and the third and deepest layer is the subcutaneous tissue.

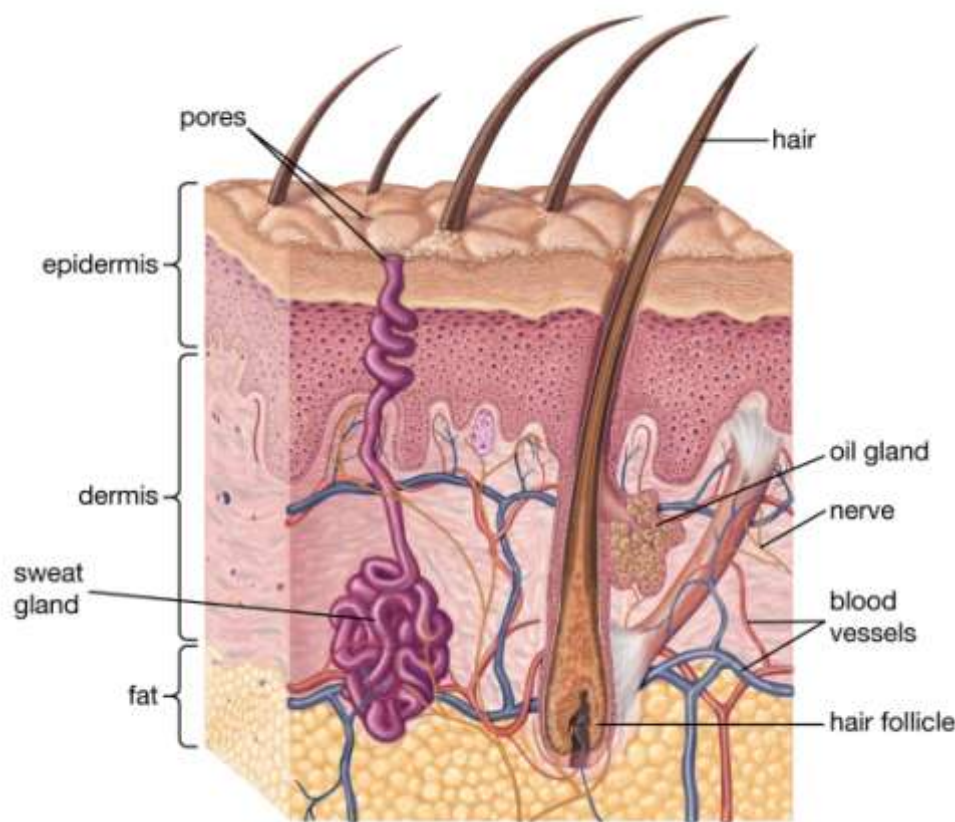


Fig 1. Structure of skin<sup>(3)</sup>

- The epidermis, the outermost layer of skin, provides a waterproof barrier and contributes to skin tone.
- The dermis, found beneath the epidermis, contains connective tissue, hair follicles, blood vessels, lymphatic vessels, and sweat glands.
- The deeper subcutaneous tissue (hypodermis) is made of fat and connective tissue.

The epidermis is further divided into five layers on thick skin like the palms and soles (stratum basal, stratum spinosum, stratum granulosum, stratum lucidum, and stratum corneum, while

in other places, the epidermis only has four layers, lacking the stratum lucidum).

The dermis is divided into two layers, the papillary dermis (the upper layer) and the reticular dermis (the lower layer).<sup>(4)</sup>

#### The functions of the skin include:

- Protection against microorganisms, dehydration, ultraviolet light, and mechanical damage; the skin is the first physical barrier that the human body has against the external environment.
- Sensation of pain, temperature, touch, and deep pressure starts with the skin.

- Mobility: The skin allows smooth movement of the body.
- Endocrine activity: The skin initiates the biochemical processes involved in Vitamin D production, which is essential for calcium absorption and normal bone metabolism.
- Exocrine activity: This occurs by the release of water, urea, and ammonia. Skin secretes products like sebum, sweat, and pheromones and exerts important immunologic functions by secreting bioactive substances such as cytokines.
- Immunity development against pathogens.
- Regulation of Temperature. Skin participates in thermal regulation by conserving or releasing heat and helps maintain the body's water and homeostatic balance.<sup>(4)</sup>

### Classification of Transdermal Drug Delivery System-

Classification of transdermal drug delivery Systems has proceeded through three generation on the basis of drug molecule Size and the presence of penetration enhances material.

**1. First-generation transdermal delivery systems-** The majority of transdermal patches currently in clinical use belong to the first generation of transdermal delivery systems. Recent advancements and increased public acceptance have led to a surge in the market availability of these first-generation patches. However, this trend is expected to slow down as drugs suitable for these systems become less available. First-generation candidates are typically low-molecular weight, lipophilic, and effective at low doses. Transdermal delivery is preferred when oral bioavailability is low, there's a preference for less frequent dosing, a need for steady delivery profiles, or other relevant factors.<sup>(5)</sup>

**2. Second-generation transdermal delivery systems-** The second generation of transdermal delivery systems acknowledges the importance of enhancing skin permeability to broaden the range of transdermal drugs. An ideal enhancer in this generation should (i) temporarily disrupt the stratum corneum structure to increase skin permeability, (ii) provide an additional force for transport into the skin, and (iii) avoid causing harm to deeper living tissues. However, methods developed in this generation, like conventional chemical enhancers, iontophoresis, and non-cavitational ultrasound, have faced challenges in finding the right balance increasing delivery across

the stratum corneum while safeguarding deeper tissues from damage.<sup>(6)</sup>

### Basic Components of Transdermal Drug Delivery Systems-

1. Polymer matrix or matrices.
2. The drug
3. Permeation enhancers
4. Other excipients

**1. Polymer Matrix:** The Polymer controls the release of the drug from the device. Possible useful polymers for transdermal devices are:

- Natural Polymers: e.g., cellulose derivatives, Zein, Gelatin, Shellac, Waxes, Proteins, Gums and their derivatives, Natural rubber, Starch etc.
- Synthetic Elastomers: e.g., polybutadiene, Hydrin rubber, Polysiloxane, Silicone rubber, Nitrile, Acrylonitrile, Butyl rubber, Styrenebutadiene rubber, Neoprene etc.
- Synthetic Polymers: e.g., polyvinyl alcohol, Polyvinyl chloride, Polyethylene, Polypropylene, Polyacrylate, Polyamide, Polyurea, Polyvinyl pyrrolidone, Polymethylmethacrylate, Epoxy etc.<sup>(7)</sup>

**2. Drug:** For successfully developing a transdermal drug delivery system, the drug should be chosen with great care. The following are some of the desirable properties of a drug for transdermal delivery.

**3. Permeation Enhancers:** These are compounds which promote skin permeability by altering the skin as a barrier to the flux of a desired penetrant. These may conveniently be classified under the following main headings:

- Solvents: These compounds increase penetration possibly by swelling the polar pathway and/or by fluidizing lipids. Examples include water alcohols – methanol and ethanol; alkyl methyl sulfoxides – dimethyl sulfoxide, alkyl homologs of methyl sulfoxide dimethyl acetamide and dimethyl formamide; pyrrolidones- 2 pyrrolidone, N-methyl, 2-pyrrolidone; laurocapram (Azone), miscellaneous solvents- propylene glycol, glycerol, silicone fluids, isopropyl palmitate.
- Surfactants; These compounds are proposed to enhance polar pathway transport, especially of hydrophilic drugs. The ability of a surfactant to alter penetration is a function of the polar head group and the hydrocarbon chain length. Anionic Surfactants: e.g. Dioctyl sulpho-

succinate, Sodium lauryl sulphate, Decodecyl-methyl sulphoxide etc. Nonionic Surfactants: e.g. Pluronic F127, Pluronic F68, etc. Bile Salts: e.g. Sodium ms taurocholate, Sodium deoxycholate, Sodium tauroglycocholate. Binary system:

- Miscellaneous chemicals: These include urea, ahydrating and keratolytic agent; N, N-dimethyl-m-toluamide; calcium thioglycolate; anticholinergic agents. Some potential permeationenhancers have recently been described butthe available data on their effectiveness sparse. These include eucalyptol, di-o-methyl-β-cyclodextrin and soyabean casein.<sup>(8)</sup>

#### 4. Other Excipients:

**a. Adhesives:** The fastening of all transdermal devices to the skin have so far been done by using a pressure sensitive adhesive which can be positioned on the face of the device and in the back of the device and extending peripherally. Both adhesive systems should fulfill the following criteria

- Should adhere to the skin aggressively, should be easily removed.
- Should not leave an unwashable residue on the skin.
- Should not irritate or sensitize the skin.

The face adhesive system should also fulfill the following criteria;

- Physical and chemical compatibility with the drug, excipients and enhancers of the device of which it is a part.
- Permeation of drug should not be affected.
- The delivery of simple or blended permeation enhancers should not be affected.

**Role of adhesion in drug delivery-** In TDDS, main principle is it selectively adhere the skin and provided drug release. Drug delivery is varied in age and gender function. Because in this system drug release is through the skin and also younger and older patient having different skin nature. Younger skin is greater dehydrated while aged skin has less moisture content so younger skin have more elastic than aged skin so we carefully select the adhering material for the drug release. This type of condition role of adhesion is very important. Here, drug absorption based on the drug partition between TDDS and skin. Good permeation and action is depending on the proper adhesion of patch. After the application of patch, the adhesion covers the particular effective area, that area only provides

greater action. And also, so many factors are affecting the drug absorption such as thickness of skin, skin temperature, bloodflow, no. of hair follicles, skin cleansing, sweat gland function, pH of skin surface, and body temperature. After the application of patch, it warms the skin temperature that lead to increase the flow of drug to skin. During the gradually increasing of skin temperature swells the polymer and sustained release of drug to stratum corneum.<sup>(9)</sup>

**b. Backing membrane:** Backing membranes are flexible and they provide a good bond to the drug reservoir, prevent drug from leaving the dosage form through the top, and accept printing. It is impermeable substance that protects the product during use on the skin e.g. metallic plastic laminate, plastic backing with absorbent pad and occlusive base plate (aluminum foil), adhesive foam pad (flexible polyurethane) with occlusive base plate (aluminum foil disc).<sup>(10)</sup>

#### Transdermal patch-

A transdermal patch is a medicated adhesive patch that is placed on the skin to deliver a specific dose of medication through the skin and into the bloodstream. An advantage of a transdermal drug delivery route over other types of medication delivery (such as oral, topical, intravenous, or intramuscular) is that the patch provides a controlled release of the medication into the patient, usually through either a porous membrane covering a reservoir of medication or through body heat melting thin layers of medication embedded in the adhesive.<sup>(11)</sup> Types of transdermal patches:<sup>(12,13,14)</sup>

**a) Single layer drug in adhesive:** In this type the adhesive layer contains the drug. The adhesive layer not only serves to adhere the various layers together and also responsible for the releasing the drug to the skin. The adhesive layer is surrounded by a temporary liner and a backing.

**b) Multi-layer drug in adhesive:** This type is also similar to the single layer but it contains an immediate drug release layer and other layer will be a controlled release along with the adhesive layer. The adhesive layer is responsible for the releasing of the drug. This patch also has a temporary liner-layer and a permanent backing.

**c) Vapour patch:** In this type of patch the role of adhesive layer not only serves to adhere the various layers together but also serves as release vapour. The vapour patches are new to the market,

commonly used for releasing of essential oils indecongestion. Various other types of vapor patches are also available in the market which are used to improve the quality of sleep and reduce the cigarette smoking conditions.

**d) Reservoir system:** In this system the drug reservoir is embedded between an impervious backing layer and a rate controlling membrane. The drug releases only through the rate-controlling membrane, which can be micro porous or non-porous. In the drug reservoir compartment, the drug can be in the form of a solution, suspension, gel or dispersed in a solid polymer matrix. Hypoallergenic adhesive polymer can be applied as outer surface polymeric membrane which is compatible with drug.

**e) Matrix system:**

i. Drug-in-adhesive system: In this type the drug reservoir is formed by dispersing the drug in an adhesive polymer and then spreading the medicated adhesive polymer by solvent casting or melting (in the case of hot-melt adhesives) on an impervious backing layer. On top of the reservoir, unmediated adhesive polymer layers are applied for protection purpose.

ii. Matrix-dispersion system: In this type the drug is dispersed homogeneously in a hydrophilic or lipophilic polymer matrix. This drug containing polymer disk is fixed on to an occlusive baseplate in a compartment fabricated from a drug impermeable backing layer.

**f) Micro reservoir system:** In this type the drug delivery system is a combination of reservoir and matrix-dispersion system. The drug reservoir is formed by first suspending the drug in an aqueous solution of water-soluble polymer and then dispersing the solution homogeneously in a lipophilic polymer to form thousands of unreachably small, microscopic spheres of drug reservoirs. This thermodynamically unstable dispersion is stabilized quickly by immediately cross-linking the polymer in situ by using cross linking agents.

**Factors affecting transdermal drug delivery-**  
(15,16,17)

**1. Skin condition-** The intact skin itself acts as a barrier, but many agents like acids and alkali cross the barrier cells and penetrate through the skin. Many solvents open the complex dense structure of the horny layer: solvents like methanol and chloroform remove the lipid fraction, forming

artificial shunts through which drug molecules can pass easily.

**2. Skin age-** It is seen that the skin of adults and young ones is more permeable than that of the older ones. But there is no dramatic difference. Children show toxic effects because of the greater surface area per unit body weight. Thus, potent steroids, boric acid and hexachlorophene have produced severe side-effects.

**3. Physicochemical factors-**

- Hydration of skin- Generally, when water saturates the skin, it swells tissues, softens wrinkles on the skin and its permeability increases for the drug molecules that penetrate through the skin.
- Temperature and pH of the skin- The penetration rate varies if the temperature varies and the diffusion coefficient decreases as the temperature falls; however adequate clothing on the body prevents wide fluctuations in temperature and penetration rates. According to pH, only unionized molecules pass readily across the lipid membrane, and weak acids and bases dissociate to different degrees according to their pH and pKa or pKb values.

**4. Environmental factors-**

- Sunlight- Because of to sunlight, the walls of blood vessels become thinner, leading to bruising, with only minor trauma in the sun-exposed areas. Also, pigmentation, the most noticeable sun-induced pigment change, is a freckle or solar lentigo.
- Cold season- The cold season often results in itchy and dry skin. The skin responds by increasing oil production to compensate for the weather's drying effects. A good moisturizer will help ease symptoms of dry skin.
- Air pollution- Dust can clog pores and increase bacteria on the face and the surface of skin, both of which lead to acne or spots, which affects drug delivery through the skin. Invisible chemical pollutants in the air can interfere with the skin's natural protection system, breaking down the skin's natural oils that normally trap moisture in the skin and keep it supple.

**US FDA approved transdermal drugs.**

This list includes transdermal patches and delivery systems approved by the FDA. Only the first approved product for a given drug or drug combination administered by a given delivery

method is shown. Topical creams, ointments, gels and sprays are not included.<sup>(18)</sup>

Table No. 1 US FDA approved transdermal drugs-<sup>(19)</sup>

Approval year	Drug	Indication	Product Name	Marketing company
1979	Scopolamine	Motion sickness	Transderm-Scop	Novartis Consumer Health (Parsippany, NJ)
1981	Nitroglycerin	Angina pectoris	Transderm-Nitro	Novartis (East Hannover, NJ)
1984	Clonidine	Hypertension	Catapres-TTS	Boehringer Ingelheim (Ridgefield, CT)
1986	Estradiol	Menopausal symptoms	Estraderm	Novartis (East Hannover, NJ)
1990	Fentanyl	Chronic pain	Duragesic	Janssen Pharmaceutica (Titusville, NJ)
1991	nicotine	Smoking cessation	Nicoderm, Habitrol, ProStep	GlaxoSmithKline (Philadelphia, PA), Novartis Consumer Health (Parsippany, NJ) Elan (Gainesville, GA)
1993	Testosterone	Testosterone deficiency	Testoderm	Alza, Mountain View, CA
1995	Lidocaine/epinephrine (iontophoresis)	Local dermal analgesia	Iontocaine	Iomed (Salt Lake City, UT)
1998	Estradiol/norethindrone	Menopausal symptoms	Combipatch	Novartis (East Hannover, NJ)
1999	Lidocaine	Post-herpetic neuralgia pain	Lidoderm	Endo Pharmaceuticals (Chadds Ford, PA)

2001	Ethinyl estradiol/norelgestromin	Contraception	Ortho Evra	Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical (Raritan, NJ)
2003	Estradiol/levonorgestrel	Menopausal symptoms	Climara Pro	Bayer Healthcare Pharmaceuticals (Wayne, NJ)
2003	Oxybutynin	Overactive bladder	Oxytrol	Watson Pharma (Corona, CA)
2004	Lidocaine (ultrasound)	Local dermal anesthesia	SonoPrep	Echo Therapeutics (Franklin, MA)
2005	Lidocaine/tetracaine	Local dermal analgesia	Synera	Endo Pharmaceuticals (Chadds Ford, PA)
2006	Fentanyl HCl (iontophoresis)	Acute postoperative pain	Ionsys	Alza, Mountain View, CA
2006	Methylphenidate	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder	Daytrana	Shire (Wayne, PA)
2006	Selegiline	Major depressive disorder	Emsam	Bristol-Myers Squibb (Princeton, NJ)
2007	Rotigotine	Parkinson's disease	Neupro	Schwarz Pharma (Mequon, WI)
2007	Rivastigmine	Dementia	Exelon	Novartis (East Hannover, NJ)

## II. CONCLUSION-

The transdermal drug delivery system (TDDS) review articles offer useful insights on the transdermal drug delivery systems and its evaluation procedure as a handy reference for the research scientist working on TDDS. The information above demonstrates that TDDS have significant potentials, since they can be used to create promising deliverable medications from both hydrophobic and hydrophilic active substances. More knowledge of the various biological interactions and polymer mechanisms is

needed to optimize this drug delivery technology. The next generation of drug delivery systems, TDDS, has a realistic, practical use.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT-

The author extends their heartfelt gratitude to Proff. Rani M. Deokar and Dr. Megha T. Salve for their invaluable guidance, unwavering support, and significant contributions during the creation of this review article.

### REFERENCE-

- [1]. Prabhakar, D., Sreekanth, J., & Jayaveera, K. N. (2013). TRANSDERMAL DRUG DELIVERY PATCHES: a REVIEW. *Journal of Drug Delivery and Therapeutics*, 3(4). <https://doi.org/10.22270/jddt.v3i4.590>
- [2]. Purushotham, K., & Vijetha, K. A. (2023). A review on transdermal drug delivery system. *GSC Biological and Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 22(2), 245–255. <https://doi.org/10.30574/gscbps.2023.22.2.0053>
- [3]. Ebling, F. J. G., & Montagna, W. (2023, November 30). Human skin | Definition, Layers, Types, & Facts. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/science/human-skin>
- [4]. Lopez-Ojeda, W. (2022, October 17). Anatomy, skin (Integument). *StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK441980/>
- [5]. Bedre Ashwini, Bhoge Durga, Pradyumna Ige (2023) Review on transdermal drug delivery system-Focus on innovativetransdermal dosage forms. *J Pharma Drug Develop* 10(2): 204
- [6]. Prausnitz, M. R., & Langer, R. (2008b). Transdermal drug delivery. *Nature Biotechnology*, 26(11), 1261–1268. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nbt.1504>
- [7]. Yewale, C., Tandel, H., Patel, A., & Misra, A. (2021). Polymers in transdermal drug delivery. In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 131–158). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-819659-5.00005-7>
- [8]. Jain.N.K. K, Controlled and novel drug delivery, first edition, CBSpublishers and distributors, New Delhi.1997.
- [9]. Jayaprakash, R., Hameed, J., & Anupriya, A. (2017). AN OVERVIEW OF TRANSDERMAL DELIVERY SYSTEM. *Asian Journal of Pharmaceutical and Clinical Research*, 10(10), 36. <https://doi.org/10.22159/ajpcr.2017.v10i10.19909>
- [10]. Bioadhesive Drug Delivery Systems: fundamentals, novel approaches, and development. (2019, June 10). *Routledge & CRC Press*. <https://www.routledge.com/Bioadhesive-Drug-Delivery-Systems-Fundamentals->
- Novel-Approaches-and-Development/Mathiowitz-III-Lehr/p/book/9780367399603
- [11]. Wikipedia contributors. (2023h, December 1). Transdermal patch. *Wikipedia*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transdermal\\_patch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transdermal_patch)
- [12]. House, L. K. (n.d.). What are Transdermal Patches and their Different Types? *Strouse*. <https://www.strouse.com/blog/what-are-transdermal-patches-types>
- [13]. Drug delivery systems. (2015). In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 87–194). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-08-100092-2.00006-0>
- [14]. Admin. (2012, February 7). TRANSDERMAL PATCHES. *PharmaTutor*. <https://www.pharmatutor.org/articles/detail-information-on-transdermal-patches>
- [15]. Rastogi, V., & Yadav, P. (2012). Transdermal drug delivery system: An overview. *Asian Journal of Pharmaceutics*, 6(3), 161. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0973-8398.104828>
- [16]. Shabbir, M., Ali, S., Shahid, M. N., & Raza, M. (2014). Formulation Considerations and Factors Affecting Transdermal Drug Delivery System-A Review. *ResearchGate*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308802974\\_Formulation\\_Considerations\\_And\\_Factors\\_Affecting\\_Transdermal\\_Drug\\_Delivery\\_System-A\\_Review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308802974_Formulation_Considerations_And_Factors_Affecting_Transdermal_Drug_Delivery_System-A_Review)
- [17]. Vanbever, R., & Pr at, V. (1995). Factors affecting transdermal delivery of metoprolol by electroporation. *Bioelectrochemistry and Bioenergetics*, 38(1), 223–228. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0302-4598\(95\)01830-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0302-4598(95)01830-8)
- [18]. Bird, D., & Ravindra, N. M. (2020). Transdermal drug delivery and patches—An overview. *Medical Devices & Sensors*, 3(6). <https://doi.org/10.1002/mds3.10069>
- [19]. Prausnitz, M. R., & Langer, R. (2008). Transdermal drug delivery. *Nature Biotechnology*, 26(11), 1261–1268. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nbt.1504>