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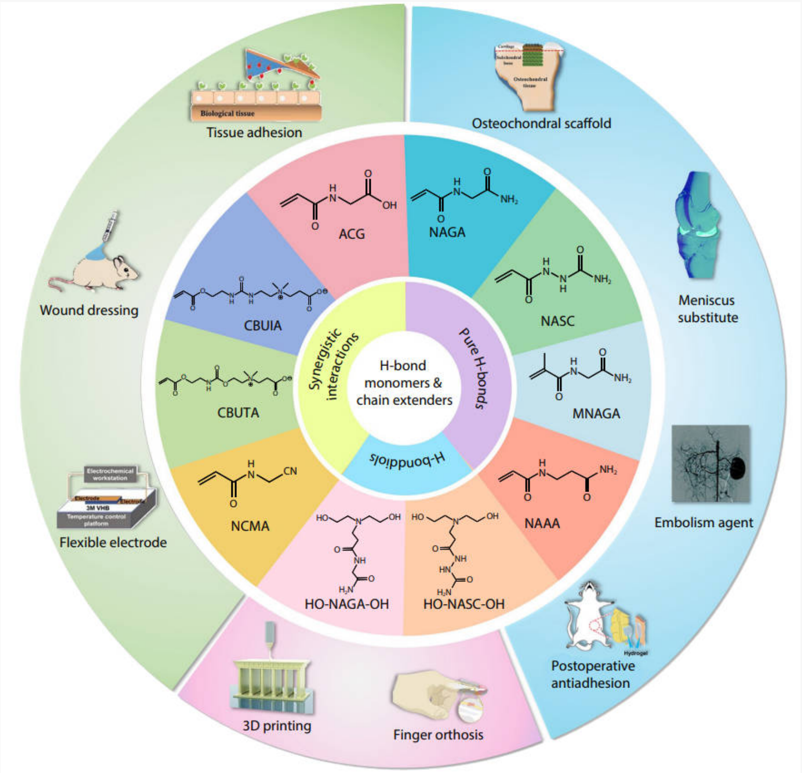
Supramolecular polymers: the future of biomedical and engineering solutions

GA, UNITED STATES, February 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new study has unveiled the potential of hydrogen-bonding crosslinked supramolecular polymer materials derived from N-acryloyl glycinamide (NAGA). These innovative materials exhibit exceptional mechanical strength, self-healing properties, and tunable functionalities, positioning them as versatile solutions for industries ranging from biomedical engineering to flexible electronics and energy storage. Through careful manipulation of NAGA-derived units, researchers have created a diverse array of materials, including high-strength hydrogels for tissue engineering, thermoreversible gels for 3D printing, and self-healing elastomers for wearable devices. This research not only tackles critical material stability challenges but also opens the door for revolutionary advancements across multiple sectors.



Molecular structures of NAGA derivative H-bond units and the applications of PNAGA-derived supramolecular polymer materials.

Hydrogen bonds are fundamental to the stability of complex biological molecules like proteins and DNA. Drawing inspiration from these natural processes, scientists have been working to develop hydrogen-bonding crosslinked polymers for various applications. However, existing materials often fall short in terms of stability and mechanical strength. In response, researchers have focused on N-acryloyl glycinamide (NAGA)-derived polymers, which harness the power of multiple hydrogen bonds and offer remarkable tunability in their properties. The need for advanced research in this area is crucial to overcome the limitations of current materials and expand their potential applications.

A team of researchers from Tianjin University has published a comprehensive review (DOI: 10.1007/s10118-024-3204-7) in the Chinese Journal of Polymer Science on September 13, 2024, detailing the design principles and applications of NAGA-derived supramolecular polymer materials. This extensive study offers insights into how these polymers can be tailored for a wide range of applications, from biomedical scaffolds to flexible electronics, showcasing their versatility and potential to transform industries.

The research dives deep into the design and application of NAGA-based supramolecular polymers, categorizing them into three distinct groups based on their hydrogen-bonding units. These include monomers with solely cooperative hydrogen bonds, those with synergistic hydrogen bonds and other physical interactions, and diol chain extenders featuring cooperative hydrogen bonds. Each group has its own set of properties and applications. For example, PNAGA-based hydrogels stand out for their impressive mechanical strength and anti-swelling behavior, making them ideal for use in tissue scaffolds and flexible electronics. Thermoreversible gels, such as PNAGA-PCBAA, offer exciting possibilities for injectable biomaterials and 3D printing, as they transition smoothly between solid and liquid states at body temperature. Additionally, materials like PACG-based hydrogels, which are pH-responsive, show promise for applications in drug delivery and tissue regeneration. The study also highlights the development of ultra-stiff PNASC-based hydrogels, which exhibit outstanding toughness and fatigue resistance, and discusses how these materials can be further tailored for specific uses through copolymerization or blending with other monomers. Another notable advancement is the creation of self-healing elastomers from NAGA-derived diols used as chain extenders in polyurethane networks, combining high mechanical performance with excellent processability.

“By precisely adjusting the chemical structures of NAGA-derived units, we can create materials with a wide range of properties,” said Professor Wen-Guang Liu, a leading expert in the field. “This level of versatility opens up a wealth of opportunities for developing advanced materials that can meet the diverse needs of various industries.” His insight underscores the potential of NAGA-based polymers to revolutionize material science.

The implications of this study are vast, particularly in the development of next-generation materials. The tunable properties of NAGA-derived polymers make them ideal for numerous applications, including biomedical scaffolds, flexible electronics, and energy storage devices. Beyond these, the materials show promise in areas such as tissue regeneration, wound healing, and drug delivery, offering the potential to improve patient outcomes and pave the way for innovative medical treatments in the near future.

DOI
10.1007/s10118-024-3204-7

Original Source URL
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10118-024-3204-7

Funding information
This work was financially supported by National Key Research and Development Program (No. 2018YFA0703100), the National Nature Science Foundation of China (No. 51733006) and China Postdoctoral Science Foundation (No. 2023M732578).

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