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Editorial

Persistent Antimicrobial Activity in Piezocatalytic Nanoparticles: The Critical Role of Synthesis Design

Karzan Qurbani [1] . Safin Hussein[1] *

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Traditional antimicrobial strategies depend on the sustained presence of active agents. Once these agents degrade or are removed, their therapeutic effects rapidly diminish. However, recent advances in nanomaterial engineering challenge this paradigm. Piezocatalytic systems, when synthesized under carefully optimized conditions, exhibit enduring antimicrobial activity that persists well beyond the period of external stimulation (Amiri et al., 2025).

This emerging phenomenon of temporal persistence is rooted in the manipulation of synthesis parameters. Thermal treatment—especially calcination—plays a crucial role in shaping crystalline architectures that enhance long-term energy retention. Specific temperature regimes create defect structures and piezoelectric domains that serve as reservoirs, allowing for the sustained conversion of mechanical energy into reactive oxygen species (ROS) even after mechanical input has ceased (Sengupta et al., 2023). These features reframe how we conceptualize antimicrobial function—not as a transient event, but as a programmable material property.

Equally important are mechanical activation parameters, such as ultrasonic treatment during synthesis, which influence the internal energy storage capacity and structural integrity of piezocatalytic frameworks. Additionally, environmental factors during post-synthesis handling—such as light exposure, humidity, and storage atmosphere—can either preserve or degrade these temporal properties. Therefore, material efficacy depends not only on the synthesis process but also on a continuum of processing and preservation conditions.

The implications are profound. In healthcare settings, piezocatalytic surfaces could remain bactericidal through routine vibrations or contact, reducing reliance on chemical disinfectants. In water treatment systems, mechanical agitation from fluid flow alone may be sufficient to maintain continuous bacterial inactivation (Adegbola, 2025). These possibilities represent a paradigm shift from chemical dependence toward self-renewing, physically activated antimicrobial platforms.

✉ Safin Hussein
Safin.hussein@uor.edu.krd

Karzan Qurbani
karzan.qurbani@uor.edu.krd

[1] Department of Biology, College of Science, University of Raparin, Rania, 46012, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq

* Corresponding author: Safin Hussein, Department of Biology, College of Science, University of Raparin, Rania, 46012, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, Safin.hussein@uor.edu.krd , Tel number: +9647501124797

Perhaps most crucially, such systems offer strategic advantages against multidrug-resistant (MDR) organisms. Unlike antibiotics, which apply selective pressure and accelerate resistance evolution, physically driven mechanisms—such as ROS-mediated membrane damage—target cellular processes that are less amenable to genetic adaptation (Qurbani et al., 2025). The sustained nature of this activity prevents microbial recovery and reduces opportunities for resistance development.

Optimizing synthesis parameters, therefore, is not merely a technical refinement but a central strategy for achieving durable, effective antimicrobial performance. The integration of multimodal mechanisms—piezocatalytic, photocatalytic, and thermocatalytic—offers further potential, provided synthesis conditions are balanced to maintain synergy without compromising longevity (Qurbani et al., 2024).

As we confront the limitations of existing antimicrobial tools, the ability to design materials with persistent, stimulus-free activity signals a transformative approach. Through strategic synthesis design, nanomaterials can be engineered not only for immediate effect but for sustained performance—offering new hope in the global effort to overcome antimicrobial resistance

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