

Clinical Translation of Nanomedicine in Oncology: Advances, Challenges, and Future Directions in Hepatic, Renal, Breast, and Brain Malignancies

Govind Sharma^{1*}

¹Kamla Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, SSPU, Durg, Chhattisgarh, India

*Corresponding Author E-mail: govindsharma10aug@gmail.com

Abstract:

Nanomedicine has emerged as a transformative approach in oncology, offering the potential to enhance therapeutic efficacy, minimize systemic toxicity, and enable precision diagnostics. This systematic review synthesizes evidence from ongoing and completed clinical trials investigating nanomedicine platforms including liposomes, polymeric nanoparticles, micelles, dendrimers, inorganic nanocarriers, and biomimetic systems across four major malignancies: hepatic, renal, breast, and brain cancers. Data were extracted from ClinicalTrials.gov, PubMed, Embase, and WHO ICTRP following PRISMA guidelines, with inclusion limited to Phase I–III interventional trials. Breast cancer demonstrated the greatest clinical translation, supported by regulatory approvals for liposomal doxorubicin, albumin-bound paclitaxel, and polymeric micelles, which showed improved safety and survival outcomes compared to conventional therapies. In hepatic and renal malignancies, nanomedicine trials highlighted advances in tumor-specific targeting, improved drug tolerability, and innovative theranostic platforms, though confirmatory Phase III survival benefits remain limited. For brain tumors, particularly glioblastoma, novel nanocarriers demonstrated enhanced blood–brain barrier penetration and favorable tolerability, yet translation remains constrained by small-scale, early-phase studies. Across all malignancies, persistent challenges include heterogeneous pharmacokinetics, immunogenicity, manufacturing complexity, and regulatory ambiguity. Despite these hurdles, advances in multifunctional and personalized nanomedicine, integration with immunotherapy, and adoption of theranostic platforms underscore the growing translational promise of nanotechnology in oncology. This review highlights both the achievements and limitations of current clinical trials, while outlining future strategies necessary for advancing nanomedicine from bench to bedside.

Keywords: Nanomedicine, Oncology, Clinical Trials, Liposomes, Polymeric Nanoparticles, Hepatic Cancer, Renal Cancer, Breast Cancer, Brain Cancer, Targeted Therapy, Theranostics

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nanomedicine has revolutionized the landscape of oncology by introducing innovative strategies for cancer diagnosis and treatment that leverage nanoscale materials and systems¹. These nanomedicines, typically ranging from 1 to 100 nanometers in size, are designed to improve the selective delivery of therapeutic agents to tumor sites, thereby enhancing drug efficacy while minimizing adverse effects associated with conventional chemotherapy. Over recent years, the clinical translation of nanomedicine has gained significant momentum, as evidenced by an increasing number of clinical trials exploring a variety of nanocarrier platforms such as liposomes, polymeric nanoparticles, dendrimers, micelles, and inorganic nanoparticles²⁻³. These platforms not only facilitate targeted drug delivery but also enable controlled drug release, enhanced imaging, and multimodal therapeutic interventions⁴.

The focus of this systematic review on hepatic, renal, breast, and brain malignancies is especially pertinent given their substantial contribution to global cancer morbidity and mortality. Hepatic cancer is among the leading causes of cancer-related deaths worldwide, with limited effective systemic therapy options⁵⁻⁶. Renal malignancies present unique challenges due to their resistance to conventional therapies and complex tumor microenvironment. Breast cancer remains the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women and benefits from ongoing efforts to reduce toxicity and overcome resistance via targeted approaches. Brain malignancies, such as glioblastoma, are notoriously difficult to treat due to the protective blood-brain barrier, which restricts the delivery of many therapeutic agents. Nanomedicine's unique properties offer promising avenues to circumvent these barriers and improve therapeutic outcomes in these challenging cancers⁷⁻⁸.

Nanomedicine clinical trials, as defined in this review, include all registered clinical investigations that employ nanotechnology-based formulations or delivery systems designed to improve the diagnosis, treatment, or monitoring of cancer. This encompasses trials assessing various nanomedicine classes, including lipid-based carriers (e.g., liposomes), polymeric nanoparticles, metal or inorganic nanoparticles, dendrimer conjugates, and other nanoscale constructs. The trials assessed range from early-phase investigations (Phase 1), which primarily focus on safety and dosage determination, through to Phase 3 trials that evaluate therapeutic efficacy and compare with standard treatments⁹⁻¹⁰. Figure 1 illustrates the categorization of these nanomedicine platforms, emphasizing their diverse physicochemical properties and mechanisms of action that are actively explored in oncology trials¹¹.

The systematic review covers trials initiated or completed between January 2019 and August 2024, providing an up-to-date synthesis of the clinical progress and challenges in nanomedicine translation within oncology. Table 1 outlines the rigorous definitions and inclusion criteria applied to capture relevant clinical trials, ensuring a focused and systematic approach to data collection. These criteria standardize the scope of the review, focusing on trials with well-

defined nanomedicine interventions targeting hepatic, renal, breast, and brain cancers, regardless of trial phase or status (ongoing or completed).

The primary objectives of this review are multifold. Firstly, it seeks to compile and critically appraise the current landscape of nanomedicine clinical trials in these four malignancy types, highlighting trends in trial design, therapeutic strategies, and targeted delivery mechanisms. Secondly, it aims to analyze reported outcomes, including safety profiles, pharmacokinetic behavior, and clinical efficacy, to assess the real-world translational potential of these nanomedicine approaches¹²⁻¹³. Thirdly, the review identifies translational challenges such as biological barriers, manufacturing complexities, regulatory hurdles, and clinical endpoint variability that may impede successful clinical implementation. Lastly, it proposes future directions and recommendations to optimize nanomedicine development and integration into standard oncology care¹⁴.

Table 1: Definitions and Inclusion Criteria for Nanomedicine Clinical Trials Reviewed

Criteria	Description	Reference
Nanomedicine Type	Nanoscale drug delivery systems including liposomes, polymeric nanoparticles, dendrimers, micelles, and inorganic nanoparticles	15
Trial Phase	Clinical trial phases 1, 2, and 3	16
Cancer Types	Malignancies of the liver (hepatic), kidney (renal), breast, and brain	17
Trial Status	Ongoing or completed between January 2019 and August 2024	18
Study Objectives	Safety, efficacy, pharmacokinetics, therapeutic outcomes, and diagnostic applications	19

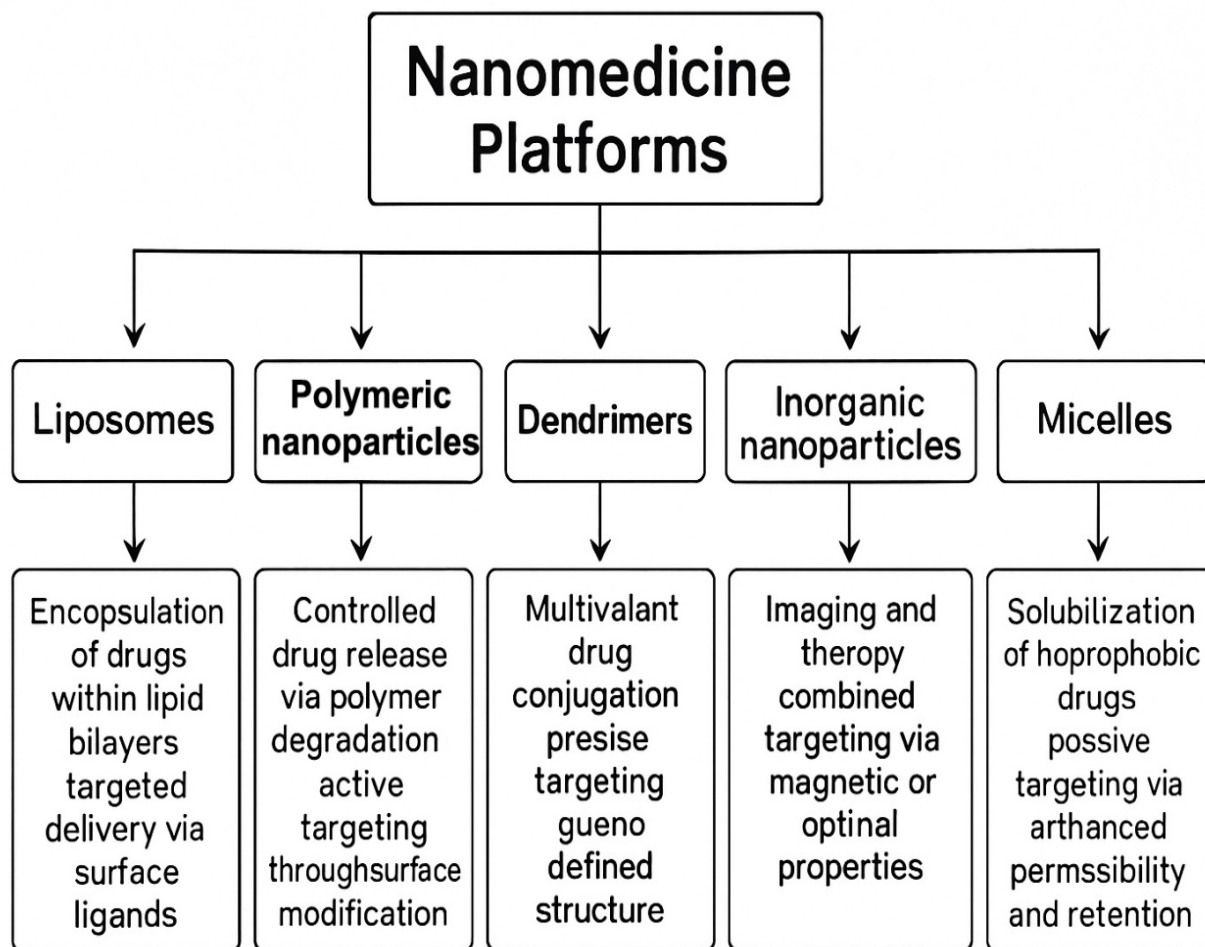


Figure 1: Classification of nanomedicine platforms commonly investigated in oncology clinical trials. This schematic categorizes nanocarrier systems by their composition and functional properties, highlighting liposomes, polymeric nanoparticles, dendrimers, inorganic nanoparticles, and micelles as major types with distinct mechanisms for drug delivery and targeting.

2. Methods

The methodology employed in this systematic review was designed to comprehensively capture and analyze clinical trials focusing on the translation of nanomedicine in oncology from January 2019 to August 2024. A structured search strategy was implemented across multiple reputable databases, including ClinicalTrials.gov, PubMed, Embase, and the World Health Organization International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (WHO ICTRP). The search utilized a combination of keywords and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms such as nanomedicine, nanoparticles, liposomes, dendrimer, clinical trial, oncology, alongside specific

cancer types: hepatic cancer, renal cancer, breast cancer, and brain cancer. Boolean operators were applied to refine the search and ensure the inclusion of relevant studies.

Inclusion criteria were carefully defined to select studies that met the scope of this review. Eligible trials had to involve nanomedicine formulations or delivery systems used for diagnostic, therapeutic, or theranostic purposes in patients diagnosed with hepatic, renal, breast, or brain malignancies. Trials needed to be in phases 1, 2, or 3, and the status could be completed or ongoing within the specified timeframe. Exclusion criteria removed studies that involved non-nanoparticle-based interventions, preclinical or animal studies, observational studies without an interventional component, or trials outside the date range.

The study selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Initial search results were screened by title and abstract to exclude irrelevant studies. Full-text reviews were then conducted for remaining records to confirm eligibility. Figure 2 presents the PRISMA flow diagram illustrating this selection process, including numbers of records identified, screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the final analysis.

Data extraction captured detailed variables for each eligible trial, including trial phase, nanomedicine type (e.g., liposomal, polymeric, inorganic), targeted cancer type, study design, number of participants, treatment regimens, primary and secondary endpoints, reported outcomes on safety and efficacy, and trial status. Additionally, information on administration routes, combination therapies, and biomarkers used were documented when available to provide a comprehensive dataset.

To evaluate the quality and reliability of the included trials, a risk of bias assessment was conducted using the Cochrane Collaboration's tool for randomized trials and the ROBINS-I tool for non-randomized studies. Domains such as selection bias, performance bias, detection bias, attrition bias, and reporting bias were assessed. Trials were categorized as having low, unclear, or high risk of bias based on these criteria to inform the interpretation of results and overall strength of evidence in the review.

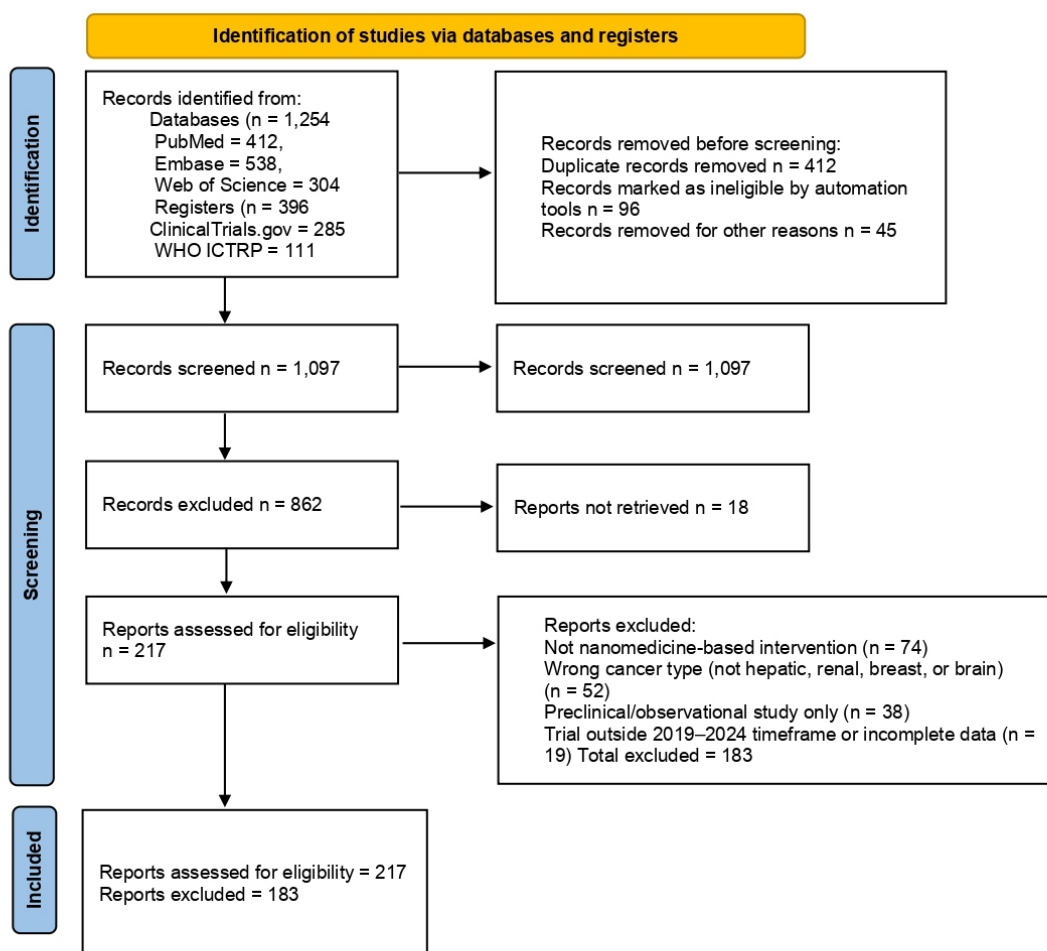


Figure 2: PRISMA flow diagram showing the process of study identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion in the systematic review. This figure visualizes the comprehensive search and selection strategy followed to ensure methodological rigor.

3. Nanomedicine Clinical Trials: Overall Landscape

The overall landscape of nanomedicine clinical trials in oncology from 2019 to 2024 demonstrates remarkable growth in both the number and diversity of studies, reflecting the maturation of nanotechnology as a tool for cancer therapy and diagnosis. During this period, there has been a steady increase in clinical trial registrations globally, driven by the expansion of nanoparticle technologies and the ongoing demand for safer, more effective cancer treatments²¹⁻²³. Trials on nanomedicines are prominently registered in databases such as ClinicalTrials.gov and WHO ICTRP, consistently featuring studies on liposomal formulations,

polymeric nanoparticles, dendrimer-based systems, and emerging theranostic nanodevices ²⁴⁻²⁵.

Geographically, the distribution of nanomedicine oncology trials is notably uneven. Major research hubs in North America, Europe, and East Asia dominate trial sites, with the United States and China leading global trial activity. Within Europe, countries like Italy show a concentration in cities such as Milan and Naples, while rural and nonmetropolitan regions across all continents face limited access to clinical trial opportunities despite significant cancer burdens. This disparity underscores an ongoing challenge: ensuring equitable access for diverse patient populations and optimizing trial site representation ²⁶⁻²⁷.

Nanomedicine technologies explored in these trials are multifaceted. Liposomal chemotherapeutic agents, such as liposomal doxorubicin, have set clinical benchmarks through improved progression-free survival and reduced toxicity in breast cancer and other solid tumors. Polymeric nanoparticles loaded with drugs like camptothecin or cisplatin are widely investigated for enhanced local and systemic delivery in colorectal, kidney, and other cancers, addressing clinical hurdles like multidrug resistance and nephrotoxicity. Emerging platforms include gold and magnetic nanoparticles, prominent in image-guided and photothermal therapies, and nanocarrier constructs for biomarker detection and personalized diagnostics (e.g., CD24-gold nanocomposites). Targeted nanoparticles conjugated with ligands specific to tumor markers illustrate ongoing innovation for personalized, minimally invasive interventions and enhanced tumor localization. Figure 3 visualizes the distribution of nanomedicine technologies assessed, highlighting their diversity and shares in current oncology clinical trials ²⁸⁻³⁰.

In summary, the period from 2019 to 2024 reflects dynamic research and clinical progress in nanomedicine for cancer, characterized by rising trial initiation, geographical concentration in research-rich countries, and the exploration of several advanced nanoformulations for targeted therapy, imaging, and multimodal intervention ³¹⁻³². These trends underlie ongoing efforts to optimize cancer care and broaden clinical outcomes through nanotechnology (Table 2) ³³.

Table 2: Nanomedicine Technologies in Oncology Clinical Trials

Technology Type	Features	Illustrative Indications	Reference
Liposomal Nanomedicines	Improved drug delivery, reduced toxicity	Breast, pancreatic cancer	34
Polymeric Nanoparticles	Versatile drug encapsulation, MDR overcoming	Colorectal, kidney cancer	35

Gold/Magnetic Nanoparticles	Theranostic, image guidance, photothermal	Prostate, salivary gland cancer	36
Targeted Nanoparticles	Ligand-conjugation, tumor-specific delivery	Multiple solid tumors	37

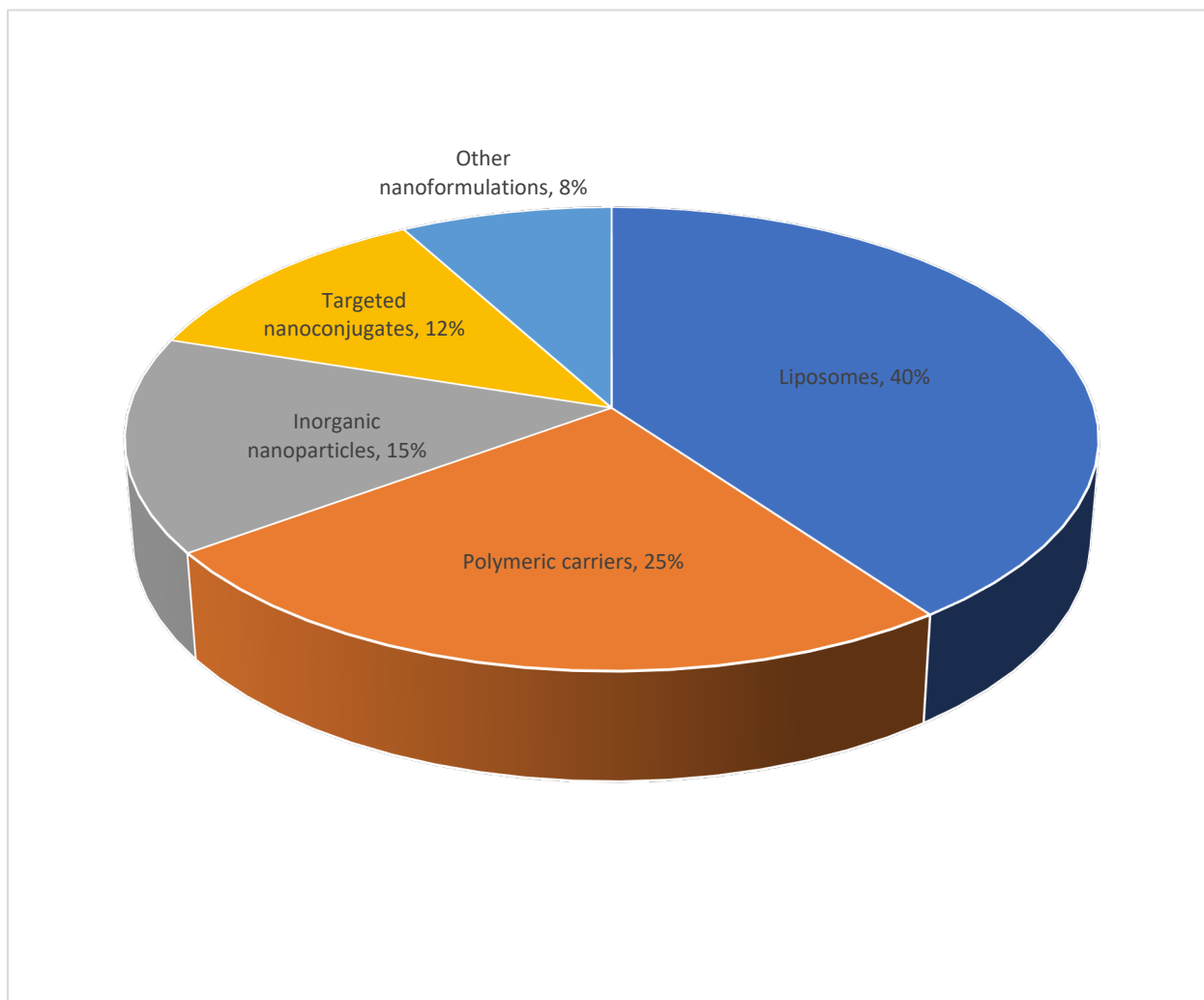


Figure 3: Distribution and major categories of nanomedicine technologies explored in oncology clinical trials worldwide (2019–2024). This figure demonstrates the proportional shares of different nanoformulation platforms, including liposomes, polymeric carriers, inorganic nanoparticles, and targeted nanoconjugates, involved in ongoing translational research.

4. Hepatic Malignancies

Ongoing and completed clinical trials in hepatic malignancies over the past five years have increasingly explored nanomedicine platforms for both diagnostic and therapeutic purposes,

with most research centering on hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) the most prevalent primary liver cancer³⁸⁻⁴⁰. The trials span a range of delivery technologies and nanocarriers, including liposomal drug formulations, polymeric nanoparticles, nano-microbubbles, and inorganic particles such as superparamagnetic iron oxide for enhanced imaging⁴¹.

Among notable therapeutic trials, doxorubicin-loaded nanoparticles have been evaluated in large-scale, randomized controlled studies. The most extensive trial to date, comprising 397 patients (RELIVE, 2019), tested doxorubicin nanoparticles against advanced HCC after sorafenib failure and revealed no significant improvement in overall survival, suggesting that while nanomedicine formulations may enhance drug delivery, actual survival benefit still faces limitations in this setting⁴²⁻⁴³. Other trials have explored mitoxantrone-loaded nanoparticles and nano-knife systems, with the former demonstrating improved drug safety profiles and the latter showing promise in ablation strategies, particularly in Chinese cohorts with moderate sample sizes⁴⁴.

Diagnostic innovations include the use of superparamagnetic iron oxide nanoparticles as MRI contrast agents. Recent phase II studies have reported that iron oxide nanoparticle injections are safe and effective for the detection of HCC, offering improved imaging sensitivity in a limited cohort of patients⁴⁵⁻⁴⁶. Nano-microbubbles have also been applied for ultrasound-mediated drug delivery, showing enhanced therapeutic targeting but requiring further validation due to small sample sizes. (Table 3)

Findings of these trials highlight several advances:

- Nanomedicine carriers consistently improve drug stability, prolong circulation times, and enable targeted drug accumulation at the tumor site, driven by passive and active targeting mechanisms.
- Enhanced safety profiles, particularly reduced systemic toxicity compared to conventional chemotherapy, have been observed with liposomal and polymeric nanodrug formulations.
- Imaging advancements via nanoparticle contrast agents enable more precise tumor localization, which is crucial for earlier detection and surgical planning.
- Multifunctional nanoparticles, combining diagnostic and therapeutic modalities (theragnostics), are being increasingly explored, though their regulatory pathway remains complex and adoption in routine practice limited.

However, several limitations remain. Major hurdles include inconsistent clinical efficacy in phase III trials, challenges with immune system interactions (such as unintended immune responses or aggregation in the bloodstream), complexity of manufacturing scalable and reproducible nanocarriers, and the need for further research to fully elucidate safety,

biodistribution, and clearance profiles⁴⁷⁻⁵⁰. Despite promising advances, few nanomedicine products for HCC have reached routine clinical application or regulatory approval. (Figure 4)

Table 3: Nanomedicine Clinical Trials for Hepatic Malignancies

Nanomedicine Type	Application	Cases	Outcomes	Reference
Doxorubicin-loaded nanoparticles	Therapy (Phase 3)	397	No improvement in OS after Sorafenib	51
Mitoxantrone-loaded nanoparticles	Therapy (RCT)	108	Better safety profile	52
Nano-knife system	Therapy (Phase 2)	152	Enhanced ablation, moderate sample	53
Superparamagnetic iron oxide	MRI/Imaging (Phase 2)	52	Improved HCC detection	54
Nano-microbubbles	Drug Delivery	36	Enhanced targeting in HCC	55

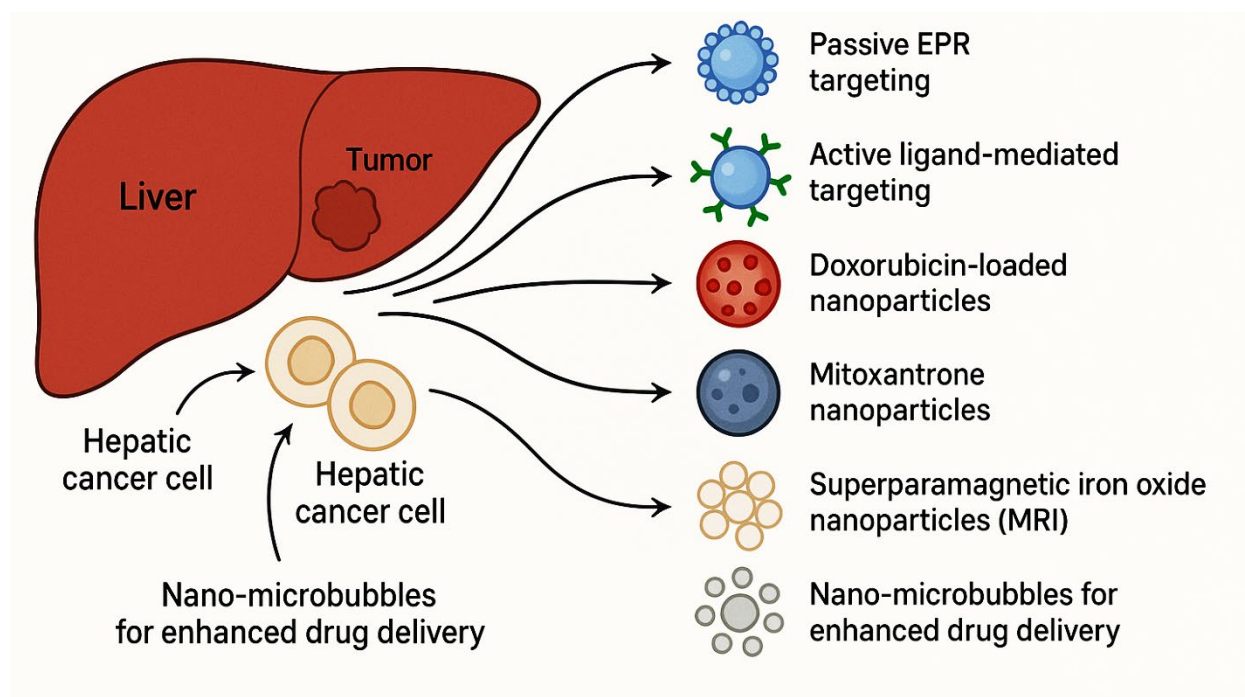


Figure 4: Mechanisms and applications of nanomedicine drug delivery systems in hepatic malignancies. This figure depicts the processes of passive and active targeting, as well as the range of nanocarriers utilized for hepatic cancer therapy and imaging enhancement.

5. Renal Malignancies

Clinical trials for renal malignancies, primarily renal cell carcinoma (RCC), have demonstrated growing sophistication in nanomedicine applications between 2019 and 2024. These trials incorporate both established and innovative drug delivery systems, targeting the unique biological barriers and therapeutic challenges present in kidney cancers⁵⁶⁻⁵⁷. The predominant characteristics of these trials include early-phase designs with molecular targeting, use of combination therapies, and exploration of nanocarrier biocompatibility and biodistribution⁵⁸⁻⁵⁹.

Innovative approaches have focused on boosting the efficacy of tyrosine kinase inhibitors (TKIs) and immunotherapies through nanocarrier platforms such as thermosensitive liposomes triggered by focused ultrasound for localized drug release, and nanoparticles engineered for active targeting using ligands or membrane coatings⁶⁰⁻⁶¹. New insights into nanomedicine mechanisms show that nanoparticles penetrate kidney tumors not only through the long-accepted enhanced permeability and retention (EPR) effect, but also via a Caveolin1 (Cav1)-mediated transcellular route, allowing for even more precise delivery in vessel-rich cancers. Exosomes and exosome-related pathways have become a focus for both therapy and imaging, as research has revealed promising roles in both intercellular communication and as vehicles for miRNA or CRISPR-based gene therapies. Major reported outcomes highlight steady progress⁶²⁻⁶⁴. Trials using siRNA-loaded nanoparticles, gold nanorods for photothermal ablation, and carrier systems loaded with conventional or novel agents have demonstrated improved tumor localization, synergistic effects when combined with existing treatments, and a reduction in therapy resistance. Mesoporous silica nanoparticles cloaked with RCC cell membranes have offered enhanced immune evasion and antiproliferative activity under laser stimulation, indicating a new horizon for combinatory therapeutics. Biomarker-based advances include microfluidic platforms for circulating tumor cell detection and nanotechnologies used for femtomolar biomarker quantification in liquid biopsies, promoting early diagnosis and precision medicine for RCC⁶⁵⁻⁶⁷.

The challenges, however, remain formidable. Many nanomedicines exhibit suboptimal pharmacokinetics for renal distribution, risking accumulation or rapid clearance, while instability, cytotoxicity, and the potential for immune or inflammatory reactions still limit clinical utility for patients especially those with underlying renal dysfunction. Manufacturing complexity and regulatory hurdles, including scale-up consistency and biosafety, persist as bottlenecks between bench research and routine clinical adoption⁶⁸⁻⁷⁰. Opportunities lie in better ligand design for improved targeting, more sophisticated nanoparticle engineering for biodistribution control, and integration of multimodal imaging with nanomedicine therapy to personalize approaches⁷¹. (Figure 5)

Table 4: Nanomedicine Innovations and Trial Outcomes in Renal Malignancies

Nanomedicine Type	Mechanism/Innovation	Major Outcomes	Reference
TKI/TSL w/ ultrasound	Localized drug release, enhanced accumulation	Tumor regression, improved effectiveness	72
Cav1-mediated nanoparticles	Transcellular targeting, high precision	Suppressed Cav1 enhances NP delivery	73
Exosome-based delivery	miRNA, gene therapy, biomarker image-guided	Proliferation/migration inhibition	74
Mesoporous silica w/ membrane cloak	Immune evasion, combinatory therapy	Enhanced tumor suppression, laser-boosted antiproliferative action	75
Gold nanorod photothermal	Synergy with TKI, selective tumor ablation	Tumor shrinkage, sunitinib-resistance overcome	76
Microfluidic/SERS platforms	Liquid biopsy, real-time tumor mapping	Biomarker detection, improved diagnosis	77

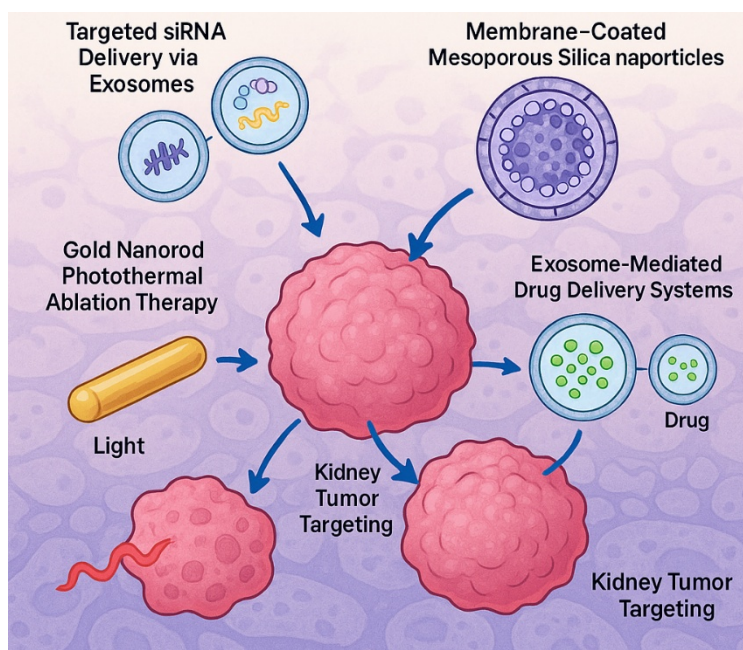


Figure 5: Schematic illustrating breakthrough nanomedicine platforms in RCC treatment from targeted siRNA delivery and membrane-coated nanoparticles to photothermal ablation and exosome-mediated therapies.

6. Breast Malignancies

Clinical trials for breast malignancies utilizing nanomedicine from 2019 to 2024 reflect robust global research across multiple phases and platforms. The number of registered trials has expanded, with numerous ongoing and completed Phase I, II, and III studies comparing nanomedicine-based therapies with traditional chemotherapeutics, focusing especially on metastatic, triple negative, and HER2-positive breast cancer subtypes⁷⁸⁻⁸⁰.

Approved and investigational types of nanomedicines include:

- **Liposomal doxorubicin (Caelyx, Myocet):** These have improved pharmacokinetics, reduced cardiotoxicity, and enhanced tolerability in both adjuvant and metastatic settings. **Nanoparticle albumin-bound paclitaxel (Abraxane, nab-paclitaxel):** Demonstrates superior efficacy over conventional paclitaxel, particularly for triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), and is used extensively in neoadjuvant, adjuvant, and metastatic trials.
- **Polymeric micelles (Genexol-PM, Nanoxel M, NK105):** Offer sustained, targeted delivery of paclitaxel with reduced neuropathy and adverse events, as evidenced by phase III trial results.
- **Antibody-drug conjugates and targeted nanoparticles (BIND-014, ELU001):** Investigational platforms targeting specific markers or receptors, showing promise in phase I/II trials.
- **Lipid nanoparticles for mRNA delivery (mRNA-2752, MT302):** Emerging approaches aiming to induce immune responses and personalized therapy, with ongoing early-phase trials.

Safety and efficacy data have generally been encouraging. Nanomedicine approaches consistently report improved safety profiles, with significantly lower rates of severe (grade 3/4) toxicity compared to conventional chemotherapy most notably reduced cardiotoxicity (liposomal doxorubicin), sensory neuropathy (NK105), and febrile neutropenia (albumin-bound paclitaxel). Efficacy endpoints such as pathological complete response (pCR), progression-free survival (PFS), and overall survival (OS) have improved or matched conventional treatments, particularly in randomized trials for TNBC and HER2+ patients. Noteworthy, a multicenter phase II trial (NCT00110695) involving albumin-bound paclitaxel achieved a 29% pCR rate overall and 58% in HER2+ patients validating enhanced outcomes for select subgroups⁸¹⁻⁸³.

Regulatory progress for breast cancer nanomedicines is well-demonstrated by multiple global approvals (e.g., Abraxane, Caelyx, Genexol-PM), and increasing integration of these drugs into treatment guidelines. However, translational hurdles persist. Chemical scalability, complex biodistribution, and cost remain significant challenges for broad clinical implementation. The

regulatory approval process is complicated by the need for standardized characterization of nanomedicines, clarity in defining endpoints, and risk assessment for long-term safety. (Table 5) Additionally, limited availability in rural and resource-limited settings impedes equitable access⁸⁴⁻⁸⁵. (Figure 6)

Table 5: Representative Nanomedicines and Clinical Trial Status for Breast Cancer

Nanomedicine	Properties/Mechanism	Trial Phase	Results	Reference
Abraxane (nab-paclitaxel)	Albumin-bound, EPR targeting	Approved; II–III	pCR↑, PFS↑, low toxicity	86
Caelyx (liposomal doxorubicin)	Reduced cardiotoxicity	Approved	OS↑, adverse events	87
Genexol-PM	Polymeric micelle, paclitaxel	Approved; III	Neuropathy	88
NK105	Micellar nanoparticle paclitaxel	III	Neuropathy↓, efficacy=control	89
BIND-014	Polymer nanoparticle, docetaxel	I	Good tolerability	90
mRNA-2752, MT302	Lipid nanoparticle mRNA	I/II	Early-phase results	91

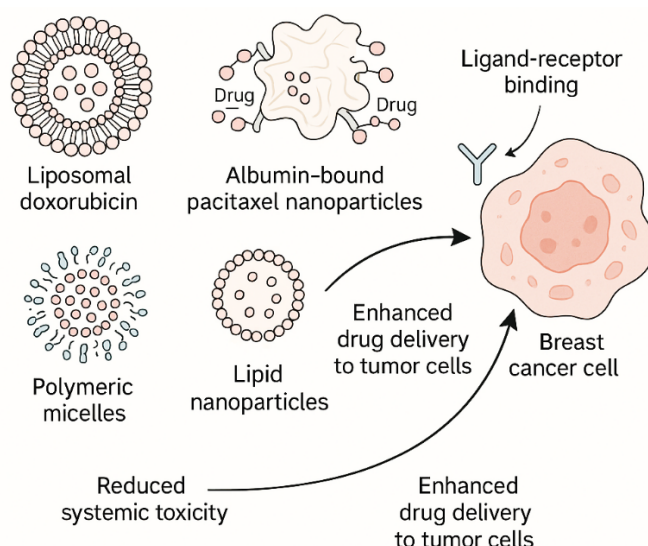


Figure 6: Overview of nanomedicine platforms utilized in breast cancer therapy. This figure shows common types of nanoparticles used (liposomes, albumin-bound, polymeric micelles)

and highlights their mechanisms for enhancing delivery, reducing systemic toxicity, and achieving tumor targeting.

7. Brain Malignancies

The clinical trial landscape for nanomedicine in brain malignancies (2019–2024) has been defined by a focus on overcoming the formidable blood-brain barrier (BBB) and achieving targeted delivery to aggressive tumors, such as glioblastoma multiforme (GBM). Numerous phase I and II trials have investigated advanced nanoparticle drug delivery systems (NDDS), including liposomal doxorubicin, liposomal irinotecan, and smart nanoparticles designed to ferry cytotoxic agents or therapeutic genes directly into malignant cells while sparing healthy tissue. Trials with PEGylated liposomes, magnetic nanoparticles, and gold nanoparticle conjugates have sought to exploit BBB penetration through passive and active targeting mechanisms, such as size optimization, PEGylation, antibody-mediated transport, and external fields⁹²⁻⁹⁴.

Penetration and targeting strategies employ either passive targeting (exploiting enhanced permeability and retention) or active targeting, where nanoparticles are conjugated with ligands for transferrin receptors, EGFR, HER2, or glucose transporters to facilitate BBB crossing and tumor cell recognition. Magnetic nanoparticles, for example, have demonstrated the ability to navigate the BBB under a static magnetic field, allowing for localized drug release and imaging. Liposomes remain prominent due to their robust BBB transport capabilities and favorable tolerability, particularly for hydrophobic drug formulations. Novel approaches also include extracellular vesicles and biomimetic nanocarriers, which mimic endogenous particle structures to evade immune detection and facilitate efficient brain entry⁹⁵⁻⁹⁷.

The patient outcomes in these trials show significant progress, yet several limitations remain. While liposomal doxorubicin and irinotecan have demonstrated encouraging activity, the majority of evidence points to benefit in specific settings, such as breast cancer with brain metastases when used in combination (e.g., with temozolomide). Overall survival (OS) improvement has been modest, with only one trial reaching phase III investigating etirinotecan pegol for breast cancer patients with brain metastases which did not show a significant advantage over conventional chemotherapy. Combination regimens, such as ADI-PEG 20 plus temozolomide and radiotherapy, report encouraging preliminary OS in phase I studies. Adverse event profiles are generally better than standard treatments, with grade 3/4 toxicities rare, but trial sample sizes remain limited and long-term safety data scarce. Some promising results have been reported for decreased neurotoxicity and improved tolerability, but confirmatory, large-scale results are awaited⁹⁸⁻⁹⁹. (Table 6)

Several gaps remain in the clinical translation of nanomedicine for brain malignancies. Most clinical trials are early phase, with limited patient numbers and variable endpoints, and few

have advanced to confirmatory phase III investigation. Manufacturing and regulatory challenges around reproducibility, characterization, and biosafety also persist, alongside issues of cost and patient access. The efficacy of many innovative strategies requires demonstration in larger, more diverse populations. Future directions include accelerating NDDS optimization, advancing targeted ligand specificity, expanding combinatorial approaches, and integrating nanomedicine platforms with multimodal imaging and immunotherapy to improve drug delivery, tumor recognition, and overall patient outcomes¹⁰⁰⁻¹⁰¹. (Figure 7)

Table 6: Representative Nanomedicine Clinical Trials and Outcomes in Brain Malignancies

Nanomedicine Platform	Targeting Strategy	Clinical Phase	Outcomes/Limitations	Reference
PEGylated Liposomes	Passive, EPR, BBB	I-III	Imaging/therapy, OS modest↑, safety good	102
Magnetic Nanoparticles	Active/SMF, BBB	I-II	Local delivery, promising results, small cohorts	103
Antibody-Conjugated Nanoparticles	Ligand-mediated, BBB	I-II	Improved targeting, limited data	104
ADI-PEG 20 + Temozolomide	Combination, immunomod.	I	OS preliminary↑, safety favorable	105
Etirinotecan Pegol	Phase III, BM focus	III	No significant OS benefit	106
Extracellular Vesicle/Biomimetic NPs	Immune evasion, bio-mimic	I	Enhanced brain entry, safety favorable	107

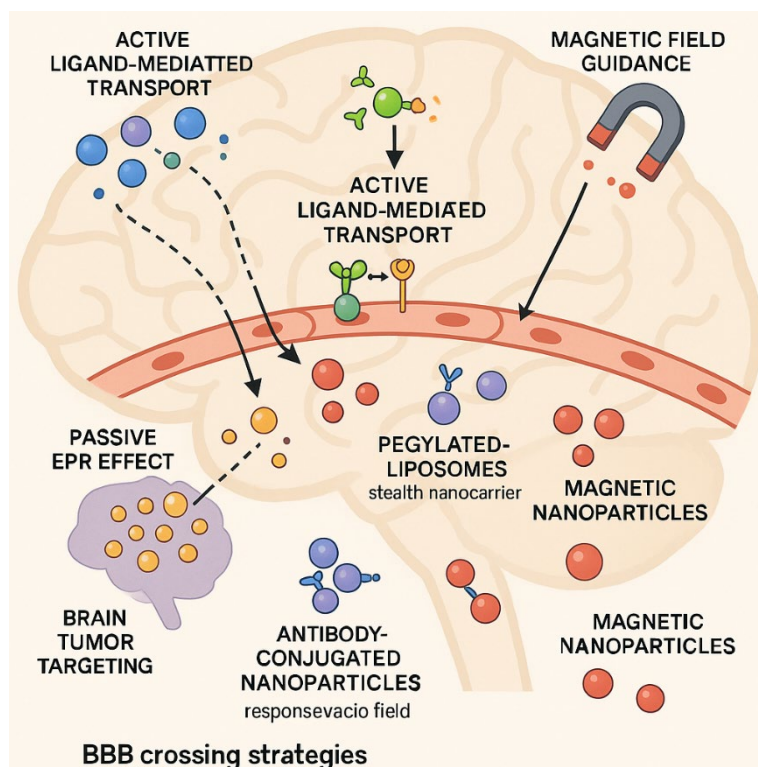


Figure 7: Schematic of nanomedicine penetrative and targeting mechanisms across the blood-brain barrier in brain malignancies. The figure illustrates passive (EPR effect) and active (ligand-mediated, magnetic field) transport, highlighting strategies employed to enhance nanoparticle crossing and localization to tumor tissue.

8. Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis of nanomedicine clinical trials from 2019 to 2024 across hepatic, renal, breast, and brain malignancies reveals both convergent and divergent features in trial design, clinical outcomes, and translational progress¹⁰⁸. Across all cancer types, most trials favored early-phase formats (I/II), focusing on safety, pharmacokinetics, and preliminary efficacy. Breast cancer research stands out with the largest number of late-phase (III) and already-approved nanomedicine agents e.g., liposomal doxorubicin (Caelyx), albumin-bound paclitaxel (Abraxane), and micellar paclitaxel (Genexol-PM), all of which feature in multicenter, randomized settings and have established real-world clinical impact¹⁰⁹.

In hepatic and renal malignancies, trial designs generally consist of single-center, non-randomized, and pilot studies, often with smaller sample sizes and focused endpoints. HCC and RCC trials frequently investigate the feasibility of advanced targeting strategies via multifaceted nanoparticles, such as ligand-conjugated, magnetic, and biomimetic nanocarriers,

reflecting ongoing struggles with tumor heterogeneity, drug resistance, and difficult microenvironments. Brain tumor studies predominantly targeting glioblastoma are complex due to the blood-brain barrier, relying heavily on penetration and precision targeting via engineered liposomes, antibody-ligand conjugates, and magnetic nanoparticles, but remaining largely in phases I and II with limited phase III confirmation ¹¹⁰.

Clinical outcomes illustrate clear advancements in safety, tolerability, and targeted delivery, particularly in breast cancer where nanomedicine products have shifted toxicity profiles, improved tolerability, and, in select subgroups, enhanced progression-free and pathological complete response rates ¹¹¹. In hepatic and renal cancers, improvements have been seen in drug safety and tumor targeting, but phase III trials often fail to show marked survival improvements, limiting widespread clinical adoption and regulatory approval. Brain cancer trials report modest survival benefit and lower neurotoxicity with nano therapies; however, their effectiveness remains unproven at scale, and results are often preliminary ¹¹².

Translational challenges are pervasive across all malignancy types: suboptimal pharmacokinetic profiles, heterogeneity in nanoparticle biodistribution, immunogenicity, scalability, reproducibility, and the need for standardized endpoints hinder clinical progress. The path from preclinical success to broad clinical utility remains fraught with manufacturing complexity, regulatory ambiguity for novel constructs, and gaps in long-term safety data ¹¹³. (Table 7)

Regulatory and ethical considerations loom large. Trials involving breast cancer nanomedicines have offered regulatory models for approval, thanks to robust phase III data and clear risk-benefit ratios. Yet, for hepatic, renal, and brain malignancies, regulatory pathways remain complicated by variable nanoparticle characterization, evolving clinical endpoints, and biosafety/bioequivalence challenges. Ethical considerations particularly patient selection, risk disclosure, and equitable access are increasingly recognized, especially for rural or nonmetropolitan patient populations who often lack access to these innovative trials ¹¹⁴. Data sharing, transparent reporting, and postapproval pharmacovigilance are essential for maintaining patient safety and advancing the field responsibly ¹¹⁵.

Table 7: Comparative Features of Nanomedicine Clinical Trials by Cancer Type

Cancer Type	Trial Design	Outcomes	Translational Challenges	Regulatory Progress	Reference
Hepatic	Early-phase, small scale	Drug safety↑, OS MS	Efficacy, manufacturing, scale	Limited, ongoing	116

Renal	Pilot/nonrandomized	Tumor targeting↑	PK, immune reactions, distribution	Few approvals	117
Breast	Multicenter, phase III	Tolerability↑, PFS↑, pCR↑	Accessibility, cost, endpoint clarity	Multiple approvals	118
Brain	Early-phase, exploratory	Neurotoxicity↓, OS modest↑	BBB, targeting, reproducibility	Mostly investigational	119

9. Discussion

The past five years have witnessed significant advances in the clinical translation of nanomedicine across hepatic, renal, breast, and brain malignancies. Major breakthroughs include improved drug delivery systems that enhance tumor targeting, reduce systemic toxicity, and extend circulation time, as exemplified by liposomal and polymeric nanoparticles. Breast cancer has demonstrated the most substantial clinical progress, with several nanomedicine products achieving regulatory approval and integration into treatment guidelines, thereby improving patient outcomes in terms of efficacy and safety¹²⁰. In hepatic and renal cancers, advances in multifunctional nanocarriers and targeting strategies have shown promise in early-phase trials, particularly in improving safety and imaging, though confirmatory survival benefits remain elusive. For brain malignancies, innovative approaches addressing the blood-brain barrier challenge demonstrate encouraging preclinical and early clinical evidence of improved drug delivery and tolerability, albeit with limited large-scale efficacy data to date¹²¹⁻¹²².

Despite these advances, pervasive challenges continue to hinder the broader clinical adoption of nanomedicine in oncology. Issues include inconsistent pharmacokinetics and biodistribution, manufacturing complexities tied to reproducibility and scale-up, the immune response elicited by some nanomaterials, and regulatory uncertainties owing to the lack of standardized characterization and clear approval pathways. Furthermore, trial designs often feature small sample sizes and a predominance of early-phase investigations, limiting definitive conclusions on long-term efficacy and safety. Equitable access remains a critical ethical concern, as most trials and approved therapies are concentrated in developed regions, leaving gaps for patients in resource-limited settings¹²³⁻¹²⁴.

The implications for oncology practice are multifaceted. Nanomedicine presents an opportunity to enhance targeted therapies, especially in tumors difficult to treat with conventional methods, and may foster personalized treatment paradigms through theranostic applications. However, oncology practitioners must balance optimism with caution and

advocate for rigorous, large-scale clinical trials to validate efficacy and ensure patient safety. Continued interdisciplinary collaboration among clinicians, nanotechnology researchers, regulatory bodies, and industry stakeholders is vital to advance these promising technologies toward routine clinical implementation¹²⁵⁻¹²⁶.

This review's scope was limited to clinical trials registered between 2019 and August 2024 and focused on four major malignancies. While comprehensive, this timeframe excludes earlier influential studies and emerging data beyond August 2024. In addition, heterogeneity in trial design, reporting standards, and outcome measures across studies posed challenges to data synthesis and comparison. Publication bias toward positive results and underreporting of negative or inconclusive findings may influence overall interpretations. Finally, the review did not extensively address cost-effectiveness or healthcare system integration, which are critical factors for real-world adoption¹²⁷⁻¹²⁸.

In conclusion, while nanomedicine has demonstrably advanced oncology treatment across multiple cancer types, overcoming persistent challenges through robust clinical validation, regulatory clarity, and equitable access remains essential for fulfilling its transformative potential in cancer care¹²⁹.

10. Future Perspectives

The future of nanomedicine in oncology is set to be shaped by several emerging trends that promise to enhance precision, efficacy, and safety. Personalized nanomedicine, which involves tailoring nanocarrier designs to individual tumor genetics and microenvironments, is expected to revolutionize cancer treatment by improving therapeutic outcomes through customized drug delivery¹³⁰⁻¹³². Advances in molecular profiling and high-throughput technologies will support this transition, enabling nanomedicines optimized for specific patient subgroups¹³³. Alongside personalization, combinatorial approaches that integrate nanomedicine with immunotherapy, radiotherapy, or conventional chemotherapy are gaining traction as strategies to overcome tumor resistance and heterogeneity, thereby boosting treatment effectiveness¹³⁴⁻¹³⁶. Another exciting development lies in theranostic nanoplatforms, which combine therapeutic and diagnostic functions, allowing clinicians to monitor drug delivery in real-time and make more informed treatment decisions. The incorporation of artificial intelligence and machine learning is also anticipated to accelerate nanomedicine design and clinical translation by improving prediction of nanoparticle behavior and optimizing clinical trial data analysis¹³⁷⁻¹⁴⁰.

To facilitate clinical translation, several recommendations emerge. Early-phase clinical trials should adopt adaptive protocols and incorporate validated biomarkers to streamline the identification of promising candidates¹⁴¹. Collaboration across disciplines including nanotechnology developers, clinicians, pharmacologists, and regulatory authorities is essential for overcoming developmental barriers and expediting the bench-to-bedside journey.

Addressing manufacturing challenges through standardized characterization and production methods will ensure scalable, reproducible nanomedicine products ready for wider clinical use¹⁴²⁻¹⁴⁴. Additionally, implementing robust pharmacovigilance and long-term safety monitoring frameworks will be crucial to safeguard patients post-approval. Expanding clinical trial access to diverse and non-metropolitan patient populations will help achieve equitable healthcare delivery¹⁴⁵⁻¹⁴⁶.

Future clinical trials should emphasize large, randomized, multicenter phase III studies to generate definitive evidence of efficacy and safety. These studies should include translational endpoints such as pharmacogenomic profiles, imaging biomarkers, and immune response indicators to deepen understanding of mechanisms. Comparative effectiveness trials against current standards of care will be important for establishing clinical and economic value¹⁴⁷⁻¹⁴⁸. Furthermore, explorations of novel combination regimens involving nanomedicine with emerging therapies like checkpoint inhibitors and gene editing technologies will help address treatment resistance. Research into nanomedicine applications for rare or treatment-refractory cancers will also be critical for fulfilling unmet clinical needs. Altogether, these advances and recommendations highlight a promising path forward in optimizing nanomedicine to transform cancer therapy and improve patient outcomes¹⁴⁹⁻¹⁵⁰.

11. Conclusion

The clinical translation of nanomedicine in oncology has advanced considerably over the past five years, particularly in breast cancer where multiple nanoformulations have gained regulatory approval and are now integrated into routine practice. Across hepatic, renal, and brain malignancies, nanomedicine platforms have demonstrated improvements in safety, tumor targeting, and diagnostic capabilities; however, consistent survival benefits in large, late-phase trials remain elusive. Common challenges including heterogeneous biodistribution, variable pharmacokinetics, immune interactions, and manufacturing and regulatory complexities continue to limit widespread clinical adoption. Despite these barriers, nanomedicine holds clear promise for reshaping cancer care through personalized, multifunctional, and theranostic approaches. To realize its full clinical potential, future efforts must prioritize robust phase III trials, standardized characterization protocols, scalable manufacturing, and equitable trial access. Ultimately, overcoming these hurdles will be pivotal to transforming nanomedicine from an experimental innovation into a mainstream pillar of precision oncology.

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