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Synthetic Peptides as Molecular Probes in Biochemical Research: Design, Optimization, and Emerging Applications

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Abstract

Synthetic peptides have emerged as versatile molecular probes in biochemical research, offering high specificity, tunability, and adaptability for applications in diagnostics, therapeutics, and fundamental biology. This review explores the design, synthesis, and optimization of synthetic peptides, emphasizing techniques such as Solid-Phase Peptide Synthesis (SPPS), orthogonal protection strategies, and chemical modifications including non-proteinogenic amino acid incorporation, cyclization, and hydrocarbon stapling to enhance stability, permeability, and functionality. Key applications are discussed, including probes for protein-protein interactions (PPIs), post-translational modifications (PTMs), enzyme kinetics, and molecular imaging modalities like fluorescence, PET/SPECT, and multimodal systems. Comparative analyses highlight peptides' advantages over small molecules and antibodies, while addressing biopharmaceutical challenges such as metabolic instability and immunogenicity. Future directions underscore the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and computational tools for accelerated discovery. Overall, synthetic peptides bridge chemical biology and clinical translation, paving the way for personalized medicine and targeted therapies.

Keywords Synthetic Peptides, Molecular Probes, Solid-Phase Peptide Synthesis (Spps), Peptide Cyclization, Hydrocarbon Stapling, Protein-Protein Interactions (Ppis), Post-Translational Modifications (PTMs), Molecular Imaging, Theranostics, Artificial Intelligence (Ai) In Drug Discovery

1. Introduction

Peptides are organic compounds consisting of short chains of two or more amino acids covalently linked by amide bonds. While the precise demarcation between a peptide and a protein can vary, regulatory definitions often classify alpha amino acid polymers with a defined sequence exceeding

40 amino acids as proteins. Bioactive peptides typically fall within the low molecular weight range, often containing fewer than 50 amino acids (Landi et al., 2022).

Synthetic peptides have become essential tools in chemical and biochemical research due to their unique properties. They exhibit inherently high affinities and specificity for biological targets, frequently showing functional activity at nanomolar concentrations. This high selectivity is coupled with physical characteristics that confer advantages over larger macromolecules. (Chen et al., 2020). The relatively low molecular weight of peptides facilitates superior biodistribution profiles, characterized by efficient penetration into target tissues and rapid clearance from the bloodstream. This kinetic efficiency is functionally critical for diagnostic applications, particularly in rapid imaging techniques, as it yields high signal to noise ratios by minimizing background accumulation in non-target organs (Samadzadeh et al., 2025). The fundamental utility of synthetic peptides as molecular probes is rooted in their chemical adaptability. They can be synthesized not only as exact copies of endogenous protein fragments but also with extensive chemical modifications. This capability includes the incorporation of a large range of non-proteinogenic amino acids, as well as systematic modification of the peptide backbone itself, providing a degree of tunability that is unmatched by solely biologically derived reagents (Ding et al., 2020).

The strategic application of synthetic peptides mandates overcoming their intrinsic biopharmaceutical liabilities, such as poor metabolic stability, low permeability, and unfavorable pharmacokinetics. The discipline of chemical biology provides the necessary platform to systematically address these deficiencies through tailored structural alterations. (Tang et al., 2021). By engineering structural enhancements including cyclization, backbone stapling, and the use of unnatural amino acids researchers can transform inherently labile natural sequences into robust, stable, and deliverable molecular probes suitable for complex biological systems and eventual clinical translation. This capacity to chemically manipulate the peptide sequence establishes the platform's versatility across diagnostics, therapeutics, and fundamental research (Xiao et al., 2025).

2. Chemical Engineering of Peptide Probes: Synthesis and Modification

2.1 Foundational Synthesis Techniques

The robust generation of synthetic peptides relies upon efficient and reproducible chemical synthesis methods, the cornerstone of which is Solid-Phase Peptide Synthesis (SPPS) (Cai et al., 2025).

Solid-Phase Peptide Synthesis (SPPS)

SPPS, pioneered by Robert Bruce Merrifield, is the established standard for producing synthetic peptides. This methodology allows for the rapid, stepwise assembly of the peptide chain on a polymeric resin support that is macroscopically insoluble but solvent-swollen. The synthesis process typically proceeds in a defined sequence, starting with the carboxyl end (C-terminus) of the first amino acid and advancing toward the amino-terminus (N-terminus) (Kadakeri et al., 2020).

The key advantage of SPPS is operational efficiency. The resin support consists of small polymeric beads (approximately 50 micron diameter) functionalized with reactive groups that covalently attach the growing peptide. Since the peptide remains tethered to the solid support throughout the reaction cycles, excess reagents and soluble side products can be eliminated simply by washing and filtration (Ferrazzano et al., 2022). This capability eliminates the need for time-consuming product isolation steps required in traditional solution phase techniques, thereby enabling reproducible chemical structures and simplifying the large scale synthesis crucial for clinical and industrial applications (Lovato et al., 2021).

Advanced Methods and Environmental Considerations

While SPPS is dominant, techniques like Native Chemical Ligation (NCL) are vital for synthesizing unusually long peptide sequences, up to 100 amino acids. NCL involves bonding two unprotected peptide segments one with a C-terminal thioester group and the other with an N-terminal cysteine residue using the thiol moiety of the cysteine to react with the thioester, followed by a spontaneous rearrangement to form a native peptide bond (Spears et al., 2023). It must be noted that traditional synthetic strategies often utilize toxic, polluting solvents and reagents, contributing to a very high environmental factor (E-factor) in pharmaceutical production. The increasing development and adoption of methods like NCL and the focus on greener synthetic procedures represent a necessary evolution, driven by the dual goals of optimizing efficiency and meeting modern sustainability standards in manufacturing (Hegab et al., 2023).

2.2 Principles of Orthogonal Protection

Successful SPPS necessitates sophisticated control over the chemical reactivity of the multiple functional groups present in amino acids (Sharma et al., 2022).

The Orthogonal Strategy

The foundation of robust peptide assembly is the orthogonal protection scheme. This strategy requires that the N-alpha protecting group, necessary for controlling the chain elongation cycle, and the side chain protecting groups, required to prevent undesirable side reactions, must be selectively removable under entirely different chemical conditions (D'Ercole et al., 2021).

The industry-standard approach employs the base-labile Fluorenylmethyloxycarbonyl (Fmoc) group for N-alpha protection and acid-labile groups (such as t-butyl or trityl derivatives) for side chain protection (Conda-Sheridan et al., 2019). This differential lability allows for the selective removal of the N-alpha group for coupling the next amino acid residue without disturbing the side chain protecting groups. This orthogonality is essential for facilitating specific chemical manipulations, such as the selective labeling or site specific cyclization of a side chain prior to the final cleavage step (Scinto et al., 2021).

Mechanistic Control and Side-Product Mitigation

A major concern during the acid-mediated final deprotection step is the formation of tert-butyl carbonium ions. Highly nucleophilic amino acids like tryptophan (Trp), cysteine (Cys), or methionine (Met) can react with these cations, leading to the formation of undesired peptide side products. This risk necessitates the meticulous use of chemical scavengers, such as 0.5% dithioethane (DTE), which are added to the cleavage solution to intercept and neutralize the tert-butyl cations, thereby preventing detrimental side reactions with the sensitive peptide residues (Zhang et al., 2023).

2.3 Enhancing Stability and Function through Chemical Modification

Synthetic alteration is key to transforming inherently unstable peptide sequences into pharmacologically relevant probes. (Zheng et al., 2025).

Non-Proteinogenic Amino Acid Incorporation

A core strength of synthetic chemistry is the ability to incorporate non-natural or non-proteinogenic amino acids (nnAAs), which include D-amino acids, β-amino acids, and various N-alkylated or bicyclic derivatives. The primary purpose of this strategy is to enhance resistance to proteolytic degradation (Nowak et al., 2021). Since nnAAs are not typically recognized as cleavage sites by native enzymes, their inclusion significantly extends the metabolic stability and plasma half-life

of the resulting probe. This versatility in synthetic incorporation and modification of the peptide backbone represents the fundamental chemical superiority of these materials over peptides produced via biological expression (Song et al., 2021).

Peptide Cyclization

The imposition of a macrocyclic structure is one of the most effective methods for enhancing a peptide's stability, selectivity, and potency. Chemical methods, particularly click chemistry, have streamlined this process (Bechtler et al., 2021). The copper-catalyzed azide-alkyne cycloaddition (CuAAC) is widely favored for cyclization due to its high yield, robustness, and the absence of byproducts, making it highly convenient for on-resin cyclization procedures where residues do not require prior deprotection. Furthermore, rapid cyclization is achievable using thiol-ene photoreactions involving strained alkenes (e.g., norbornene), which can lead to high yields in approximately 20 minutes for on-resin reactions (McLean et al., 2021).

2.4 Conformational Constraints and Structural Mimicry

Molecular probes are often designed to mimic the bioactive conformations of native ligands. Achieving this requires chemically rigidifying the peptide structure (Lombardi et al., 2025).

Stabilized alpha-Helices (Stapled Peptides)

Peptide probes designed to interfere with protein-protein interactions (PPIs) frequently rely on maintaining a stable alpha-helical conformation, which is often unstable in isolation. Hydrocarbon stapling, using chemical cross linkers, locks the peptide into the desired helical structure, improving structural rigidity (Li et al., 2025). Researchers have determined that rigid cross-linkers are most effective at stabilizing the helix, enabling the design of potent and selective inhibitors, such as calpastatin-based probes targeting calpain (Cheng et al., 2023).

A significant functional consequence of stapling is its synergistic effect on cellular delivery. The structural rigidity not only enhances stability and binding affinity but also fundamentally improves the cellular permeability of the peptide. For instance, a fluorescently-labeled stapled peptide targeting HIV-1 integrase was readily internalized by various cell lines, whereas its linear, unstapled analogue was not taken up (Markovic et al., 2024). This transformation allows stapled peptides to function as effective intracellular biochemical probes or 'nanoneedles' for elucidating intracellular interactions. Further enhancements involve conjugating cyclic cell-penetrating peptides (CPPs) to the stapled core to ensure highly efficient cell-permeability for previously impermeable targets (Desale et al., 2021)

β-Turn Mimetics

Beyond helices, β-turns are critical structural components for molecular recognition, particularly for ligands binding G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs). Synthetic -turn mimetics utilize chemically accessible templates, such as trans-pyrrolidine-3, 4-dicarboxamide, to stabilize this specific conformation (Bucci et al., 2021). This structural mimicry has been validated in screening campaigns against GPCRs, identifying high-affinity, selective ligands for receptors like the kappa-opioid receptor (KOR). By using a template to mimic the geometry of the natural turn, the library synthesis can be drastically simplified while enabling the identification of novel side chain combinations that provide enhanced receptor binding selectivity's (Breinbauer et al., 2022).

3. Peptides in Structural and Functional Biology

3.1 Probes for Protein-Protein Interaction (PPI) Dissection

PPIs regulate an immense and intricate number of cellular pathways, making their selective control a major objective in medicinal and biological sciences. Peptides are intrinsically well-suited as starting points for designing PPI modulators because they possess the requisite high specificity to mimic the complex interaction interfaces of native partners. While small molecules often lack selectivity, peptides commonly exhibit favorable specificity for their targets (Ershov et al., 2022).

The identification of sequences relevant to PPIs has been greatly enhanced by high-throughput platforms. An optimized proteomic peptide-phage display library, known as the human disorderome (HD2), tiles all disordered regions of the human proteome. This allows for the screening of approximately 1,000,000 overlapping peptides in a single assay, enabling the unbiased discovery of interactions driven by Short Linear Motifs (SLiMs) (Meyer et al., 2020).

Structural context is paramount in optimizing these interactions. Structural databases, such as PeptiSite, provide a comprehensive representation of biologically and structurally characterized peptide-binding sites, detailing multimeric protein assemblies, cofactors, and conserved interaction motifs (Liu et al., 2023). The confluence of rapid, high-resolution structural techniques (like Cryo-EM) and computational prediction tools (like AlphaFold) has significantly catalyzed this area. This availability of atomic level detail allows researchers to move beyond random screening to the rational optimization of peptide sequences, leading to improved ligand efficiency and target selection (Chang et al., 2024).

3.2 Probes for Post-Translational Modification (PTM) Analysis

Post translational modifications introduce structural elements into a polypeptide chain after translation, transforming its function. PTMs such as glycosylation, phosphorylation, and acetylation are critical for signaling pathways (Yang et al., 2023).

Synthetic peptides containing PTM analogs are indispensable for dissecting these regulatory events. By synthesizing peptides that incorporate modifications like phosphoserine or acetyl-lysine, researchers create probes capable of mimicking the native modified protein (Keenan et al., 2021). These probes are utilized to identify and validate binding interactions with domains specifically designed to recognize PTMs (e.g., SH2 domains for phosphotyrosine) and to map novel substrates or regulators of the enzymes responsible for these modifications (Kasembeli et al., 2025).

Chemical strategies also allow for pan-specific labeling of PTMs with affinity groups, enabling the enrichment and subsequent analysis of low-abundance modified proteins by mass spectrometry (MS). Critically, the ability to synthesize peptides with precise PTMs allows researchers to study complex biological regulation, including *cooperative PTM events*, thereby confirming the mechanistic role of multiple modifications in directing molecular recognition, which is essential for target validation (Shukri et al., 2023).

3.3 Enzyme Kinetics and Activity-Based Profiling

Synthetic peptides are widely used to characterize enzyme activity and binding kinetics, providing data essential for understanding biological function and developing therapeutic agents. (Farasati et al., 2023).

Activity-Based Probes (ABPs)

Peptidyl Activity-Based Probes (ABPs) are mechanism-based reagents used to study enzymes, especially proteases, which constitute approximately 2% of the human genome. Proteases catalyze the hydrolysis of peptide bonds and are crucial in pathways such as blood coagulation. ABPs are

substrate-related chemical molecules designed to covalently label the active site of the enzyme, facilitating the detection and visualization of active enzymes within the complex proteome and enabling the characterization of their specific activities. (Conda-Sheridan et al., 2019).

Advanced Kinetic Characterization

Traditional surface-based kinetic methods, while advanced, often require immobilized samples, which can introduce artifacts and prevent the study of interactions under native conditions. To address this limitation, techniques that study biomolecules in solution are necessary. Flow-Induced Dispersion Analysis (C-Jump) represents a necessary paradigm shift, allowing accurate measurement of protein-peptide kinetics while eliminating the need for surface immobilization (Willmer et al., 2025). The method induces a rapid concentration change (C-Jump) in a controlled microfluidic environment, enabling the accurate determination of rates. Furthermore, C-Jump is robust enough to measure interaction rates in complex native media, such as human serum, ensuring the resulting kinetic data are highly representative of biological mechanisms (Koirala et al., 2021).

4. Peptide Probes in Diagnostics and Molecular Imaging

4.1 Optical and Fluorescent Imaging Agents

Synthetic peptide-based fluorescent probes are highly valued over protein sensors due to their enhanced stability, ease of site-specific modification, and synthetic accessibility. They are widely used for direct detection and monitoring of biomolecules in live cells and aqueous media. (Sharma et al., 2022).

In the clinical and preclinical settings, fluorescently labeled peptides offer significant performance advantages, including higher signal-to-noise ratios and lower background signals compared to traditional dyes. Their small size makes them particularly effective for high-resolution imaging modalities, such as super-resolution techniques (dSTORM), where they are superior to antibodies for identifying and clustering specific membrane proteins. Mechanisms such as aggregation/assembly-induced retention (AIR) further enhance their accumulation at the target site (Ren et al., 2022).

These probes are rapidly translating into clinical diagnostics, particularly for image-guided surgery. For example, AVB620, a fluorescent protease-activated peptide, is being developed as an *in vivo* surgical diagnostic agent for breast cancer, allowing surgeons to visualize and identify critical cancer margins and lymph nodes in real time using a fluorescence imaging camera (Chaturvedi et al., 2024).

4.2 Radionuclide Imaging: PET and SPECT Tracers

Peptides serve as highly efficient targeting vectors for nuclear imaging modalities, including PET and SPECT (Yan et al., 2022).

Somatostatin Receptor Targeting

Radiolabeled somatostatin analogs (SST) have historically been the gold standard for peptide-receptor imaging. The current standard is the use of Gallium-68 (Ga-68) labeled DOTA-peptides, such as Ga-68-DOTATATE, for PET/CT imaging. Ga-68-DOTATATE PET/CT is highly sensitive and is now the preferred method for detecting and characterizing neuroendocrine tumors (NETs) that overexpress SSTRs (Merola et al., 2023).

This application provides a classic illustration of the theranostic principle, where a single, highly specific peptide vector serves a dual purpose. Because DOTATATE selectively targets SSTRs, it can be radiolabeled with either a diagnostic radionuclide (Ga-68) or a therapeutic radionuclide

(Lutetium-177 (Lu-177)), allowing for sequential molecular diagnosis and Peptide Receptor Radionuclide Therapy (PRRT). The diagnostic data is crucial for assessing tumor heterogeneity and guiding optimal patient management (Bodei et al., 2020).

Integrin Targeting

Cyclic RGD peptides are high-affinity ligands that target alpha-v beta-3 integrins, which are biomarkers of tumor angiogenesis. Optimization efforts, often involving combinatorial technologies like OBOC and structure-activity relationship studies, have led to highly specific and potent cyclic RGD analogs, such as LXW64 (Ludwig et al., 2021). These peptides are readily radiolabeled with clinically important isotopes, including Fluorine-18 (F-18) and Gallium-68 (Ga-68), through established radiochemistry routes. These RGD-based compounds are typically safe PET tracers with dosimetry profiles comparable to F-18-FDG (Javid et al., 2024).

4.3 Multimodal and Paramagnetic Probes

The high specificity of synthetic peptides makes them excellent ligands for constructing dual- or multimodal imaging probes, combining the strengths of different techniques (e.g., PET/MRI, MRI/Optical) (Willmer et al., 2025).

Designing these complex probes requires sophisticated bioconjugation chemistry to link the peptide vector to multiple imaging moieties, which may include fluorescent dyes, radionuclides, and paramagnetic agents. The targeting peptide serves as the specific delivery vehicle, linked via chelators (like DOTA for Copper-64 (Cu-64)) or spacers (Keenan et al., 2021).

An example of this approach is the RGD-RFP-LBT-Gd(3+) molecular probe, which incorporates the RGD targeting peptide, a red fluorescent protein (RFP), and a sequence (LBT) for binding the paramagnetic agent Gadolinium(3+) (Gd3+). This system allows for comprehensive, multi-parameter diagnostics, yielding both high-resolution MRI and strong fluorescent signals, demonstrating good stability and effective tumor targeting (Gong et al., 2025).

4.4 Strategies for Targeted Delivery and Cellular Permeability

The intrinsic impermeability of many large or polar peptides necessitates delivery strategies, primarily involving Cell-Penetrating Peptides (CPPs). CPPs function by transporting tethered cargo molecules across cellular membranes non-invasively (Sharma et al., 2022).

A major technical challenge for CPP-mediated delivery is the "endosomal escape problem," where the cargo is successfully endocytosed but remains trapped within endosomes, failing to reach the cytosol. Strategies to overcome this include combining CPPs with agents like polyethyleneimine (PEI), which possesses a "proton sponge" capability to promote endosomal rupture, or using specialized CPP-adaptor systems based on calmodulin (Willmer et al., 2025).

To improve delivery specificity and reduce off-target effects, the field is moving toward Targeting CPPs (e.g., iRGD) that possess intrinsic targeting abilities, interacting with specific cell surface receptors only at the desired site.[41] While this modification enhances specificity and reduces non-targeted accumulation, it significantly increases the complexity, difficulty, and cost of peptide synthesis, requiring a critical evaluation of the specificity-cost trade-off (Ershov et al., 2022).

5. Comparative Analysis and Biopharmaceutical Challenges

5.1 Peptides vs. Small Molecules and Antibodies

Synthetic peptides occupy an optimal molecular weight range (0.5–10 kDa) that allows them to bridge the gap between small molecules and large therapeutic antibodies they retain the high specificity characteristic of biologics but gain the improved tissue penetration and rapid clearance

kinetics associated with smaller agents. This unique positioning allows them to modulate complex, large-surface PPIs that are generally difficult for traditional small molecules (Landi et al., 2022). Furthermore, synthetic peptides offer key manufacturing advantages over biological reagents. While antibody production is prone to batch variability and high cost, synthetic peptides can be produced with high chemical reproducibility and greater stability, which can be further enhanced through cyclization or PEGylation (Chen et al., 2020).

Table 1: Key Performance Metrics: Synthetic Peptides Versus Traditional Molecular Modalities

Metric	Synthetic Peptides	Small Molecules	Therapeutic Antibodies
Molecular Weight	Low to Medium (approx. 0.5–10 kDa) [2]	Very Low (< 1 kDa)	High (> 150 kDa)
Target Selectivity	Very High [22]	Variable	Exceptional
Synthesis/Cost	Chemical (High reproducibility) [2]	Chemical (Variable)	Biological (High Cost, batch variability) [13]
Cell Penetration	Modifiable (via CPPs/Stapling) [18]	Generally Excellent	Generally Poor
Metabolic Stability	Poor; Requires optimization (nnAAs, cyclization) [4]	Variable	Excellent (Long half-life)

5.2 Overcoming Biopharmaceutical Liabilities

Optimization efforts in peptide chemistry focus on enhancing stability and permeability, addressing the high polarity and inherent metabolic instability of natural peptide scaffolds. Lead optimization typically involves strategic sequence truncation, N- and C-terminal capping, and the incorporation of peptidomimetics. Macrocyclization is highly effective in this context, as it drives potency and selectivity while combating metabolic degradation (Su et al., 2024).

Development pathways must also address safety concerns rigorously. For peptides exhibiting cell-permeating properties or incorporating non-natural amino acids, comprehensive *in vitro* and *in vivo* genotoxicity testing is essential. Furthermore, predicting immune response early in development remains complicated, as traditional metrics like chain length do not reliably predict immunogenicity, necessitating focused attention on immune response and its impact on pharmacodynamic activity (Opolka-Hoffmann et al., 2021).

A critical challenge for the broader adoption of peptide-based agents involves overcoming lingering commercial skepticism. Despite offering highly effective and safe therapeutic options, misconceptions regarding high cost, unfavorable pharmacodynamics, and complex delivery options persist.[5] Chemical biology must actively engage in both refining the suboptimal parameters of peptides and educating investors and commercial developers to ensure peptides are fully recognized as viable alternatives to small molecules. (Bechtler et al., 2021).

5.3 The Strategic Evolution to Peptidomimetics

A major direction in peptide drug design is the strategic transformation of peptides into small molecule peptidomimetics. This approach leverages the exceptional high affinity and selectivity achieved by the peptide structure, using it as a scaffold template for minimization and conversion into a molecule with superior physicochemical attributes, such as improved oral activity and cell permeability. By merging the advantages of both moieties, this strategy offers a portable and

efficient solution for optimizing high-value biological targets identified by the initial peptide probe (Jesky et al.,m 2025).

6. Future Directions and Computational Drug Discovery

6.1 The Integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Deep Learning

The complexity arising from the vast sequence space of potential peptide candidates represents a major bottleneck for traditional experimental discovery. High-throughput screening (HTS) facilitates the rapid testing of compounds, often processing over 100,000 compounds per day, but requires input from rational design to be maximally efficient (Cronk et al., 2021).

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Deep Learning (DL) is now revolutionizing the generation and optimization of peptide probes. DL models, including Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) and Variational Autoencoders (VAEs), are utilized for the *de novo* generation of novel peptide sequences with desired functional properties (Hashemi et al., 2024).

Computational design plays a direct role in enhancing probe properties. By allowing for the rational supervision of binding mechanisms at the atomistic level, computational models accurately predict binding affinities, explore complex conformational landscapes, and enable the *a priori* selection of specific binding sites on the target protein to enhance selectivity. (Zheng et al., 2025).

This AI integration streamlines the discovery process by efficiently navigating the sequence space and generating peptides with improved drug-like properties *in silico*. This capability reduces the overall risk of failure and accelerates the identification of optimal peptide leads, directing experimental HTS campaigns towards sequences with the highest probability of therapeutic success (Chang et al., 2024).

7. Conclusion

Synthetic peptides have been firmly established as powerful and versatile molecular probes, fundamentally transforming biochemical research and clinical diagnostics. This success is a direct result of advanced chemical engineering, particularly the mastery of Solid-Phase Peptide Synthesis and sophisticated post-synthetic modifications. Chemical techniques such as macrocyclization, hydrocarbon stapling, and the strategic incorporation of non-natural amino acids have effectively minimized historical liabilities related to stability and permeability, enabling peptides to successfully target notoriously difficult interfaces, such as intracellular PPIs (Kasembeli et al., 2025).

In application, peptides demonstrate unparalleled utility, serving as high-resolution probes for dissecting enzyme kinetics, structural biology mechanisms (PTMs, PPIs), and acting as specific ligands for multimodal clinical imaging. The success of theranostic agents like Ga-68-DOTATATE exemplifies the platform's capacity to integrate high-specificity diagnosis with targeted therapy. (Ferrazzano et al., 2022).

The field is now poised for a disruptive phase of innovation, driven by the synergy between computational design and experimental platforms. The integration of AI and deep learning promises to accelerate the rational design and optimization of novel sequences. (Merola et al., 2023). To ensure continued clinical translation, ongoing efforts must prioritize addressing biopharmaceutical challenges, particularly regarding genotoxicity and immunogenicity, while actively positioning synthetic peptides as essential tools in the rapidly evolving landscape of personalized and targeted molecular medicine. (Cronk et al., 2021).

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