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Research article

Genome Editing Using Crispr-Cas9 for Genetic Engineering and Nanozyme Technology: A Review

Modamori, I. O.,[1] Okanlawon, T. S.,[3] Ebhomienlen, J. O.,[1] Otun, M. O.,[3] Unogwa, G. C.[4] and Badmus, A. A.[4]
[1]Department of Chemical Sciences, Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Edo State
[2]Department of Biological Sciences, Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Edo State
[3]Faculty of Pharmacy, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.
[4]Department of Microbiology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

Corresponding email: omololuademola504@gmail.com

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Abstract
The convergence of CRISPR-Cas9 genome editing and nanozyme engineering is revolutionizing synthetic biology, biotechnology, and medical science. CRISPR-Cas9, a precise and programmable tool, enables targeted genetic modifications that enhance nanozyme functionality, stability, and catalytic efficiency. Through the site-specific mutagenesis, metabolic pathway regulation, and synthetic biology strategies, researchers have significantly improved nanozyme performance for diverse applications, including environmental remediation, biomedical diagnostics, and industrial catalysis. This article explores the fundamental mechanisms of CRISPR-based genome editing, its role in nanozyme optimization, and the latest breakthroughs in enzyme engineering. It also critically examines challenges such as off-target effects, biosafety concerns, and ethical implications associated with gene-edited nanozymes. As advancements in AI-driven predictive modeling and next-generation gene-editing tools emerge, CRISPR-Cas9 is poised to unlock unprecedented possibilities in bioengineering. The integration of genetic precision with catalytic innovation marks a transformative era, redefining the frontiers of molecular biotechnology and paving the way for groundbreaking applications in medicine, industry, and sustainable technology.

Keywords: *CRISPR-Cas9, nanozyme engineering, synthetic biology, genome editing, catalytic efficiency, metabolic pathway regulation*.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats-CRISPR-associated proteins (CRISPR-Cas9) technology has revolutionized the field of genetic engineering, offering unprecedented precision, efficiency, and versatility in genome editing. Originally derived from the adaptive immune system of prokaryotic organisms, the CRISPR-Cas9 system enables targeted modifications at specific loci within the genome, making it an indispensable tool in molecular biology, medicine, and biotechnology (Doudna and Charpentier, 2020). The ability to edit genes with such accuracy has opened new frontiers in synthetic biology, metabolic engineering, and enzyme optimization, paving the way for the development of bioengineered catalysts known as nanozymes. Nanozymes are artificial enzymes that mimic the catalytic functions of natural enzymes but possess enhanced stability, efficiency, and robustness due to their engineered nanostructures. These synthetic biocatalysts have gained significant attention in diverse fields, including environmental remediation, biomedical diagnostics, and industrial biocatalysis. The fusion of CRISPR-Cas9 technology with nanozyme engineering offers an exciting paradigm for designing genetically optimized biocatalysts with superior functional properties. This integration holds immense promise for enhancing the efficiency of bioremediation, developing advanced biosensors, and revolutionizing enzyme-based therapeutics (Wang *et al*., 2021). One of the critical aspects of nanozyme development is optimizing their catalytic efficiency and specificity, which can be achieved through precise genetic modifications. CRISPR-Cas9 provides an ideal tool for introducing targeted mutations, regulating gene expression, and engineering microbial systems for enhanced nanozyme production.

Using CRISPR technology, researchers can manipulate host organisms to express nanozymes with improved biochemical properties, thereby advancing their applications in various industries. The interplay between genetic engineering and nanozyme technology is a rapidly evolving domain that is poised to redefine modern enzymology and synthetic biology (Zhang *et al*., 2022).

The study aimed to explore the fundamental principles of CRISPR-Cas9 technology and its application in nanozyme development and address the challenges associated with CRISPR-driven nanozyme engineering, ethical considerations, and future directions in this promising field. The convergence of CRISPR technology and nanozyme research represents a transformative approach in biocatalysis and synthetic biology, offering innovative solutions to longstanding challenges in medicine, industry, and environmental science.

Fundamentals of CRISPR-Cas9 Technology

The CRISPR-Cas9 system, an adaptive immune mechanism found in prokaryotic organisms, has revolutionized genetic engineering since its discovery. The historical development of this technology traces back to the identification of clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR) in bacterial genomes, initially described in the late 1980s. However, it was not until 2005 that researchers recognized CRISPR's role in bacterial immunity against viral infections (Mojica *et al*., 2005). In 2012, Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier elucidated the mechanism of CRISPR-Cas9 and demonstrated its potential as a precise genome-editing tool, an achievement that earned them the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2020 (Jinek *et al*., 2012; Doudna and Charpentier, 2020).

Mechanistically, CRISPR-Cas9 operates as a gene-editing tool by utilizing a ribonucleoprotein complex composed of the Cas9 endonuclease and a guide RNA (gRNA). The gRNA directs Cas9 to a complementary DNA sequence within the genome, enabling site-specific cleavage of the double-stranded DNA. Once the DNA is cut, cellular repair mechanisms such as non-homologous end joining (NHEJ) or homology-directed repair (HDR) facilitate the insertion, deletion, or modification of genetic material, making CRISPR-Cas9 a powerful tool for targeted genome engineering (Cong *et al*., 2013).

The three primary components of the CRISPR-Cas9 system include the Cas9 enzyme, gRNA, and target DNA sequence. The Cas9 enzyme, originally derived from *Streptococcus pyogenes*, is responsible for introducing double-stranded breaks in the DNA. The gRNA, a synthetic fusion of the CRISPR-RNA (crRNA) and trans-activating CRISPR-RNA (tracrRNA), provides sequence specificity by binding to the target DNA. The target DNA is typically selected based on the presence of a protospacer adjacent motif (PAM), a short sequence required for Cas9 binding and activation (Jinek *et al*., 2012).

Genetic Engineering and Nanozyme Development

Role of Genetic Modifications in Enhancing Nanozyme Functions

Nanozymes are nanomaterial-based artificial enzymes have revolutionized the field of biotechnology and biomedical applications due to their unique catalytic activities and stability.

Unlike natural enzymes, nanozymes exhibit remarkable resistance to harsh conditions, such as extreme pH, high temperatures, and proteolytic degradation, making them highly suitable for industrial and clinical applications.

Peroxidase-mimicking Fe_3O_4 nanozymes retain their catalytic activity even after exposure to temperatures above 90°C and a wide pH range (pH 2–10), unlike horseradish peroxidase which denatures under such conditions (Gao *et al*., 2007). CeO_2 nanozymes have been shown to withstand oxidative environments and maintain stability during long-term storage and repeated usage, making them ideal for use in biosensors and antioxidant therapies (Pirmohamed *et al*., 2010). In industrial settings, carbon-based nanozymes, such as graphene oxide with catalytic activity, offer advantages in wastewater treatment processes due to their resistance to fouling and environmental degradation (Qu *et al*., 2013). Gold nanoparticle-based nanozymes maintain their catalytic efficiency in serum and complex biological fluids, which enhances their potential in point-of-care diagnostic applications for diseases such as cancer and infectious diseases (Wei and Wang, 2013).

However, their catalytic efficiency often remains inferior to that of their biological counterparts. Studies have shown that nanozymes typically exhibit lower substrate specificity and turnover rates than natural enzymes, which can limit their effectiveness in applications requiring high catalytic precision (López-Domene, R., *et al*. 2023). This limitation has led to the integration of genetic engineering techniques, particularly CRISPR-Cas9, to enhance nanozyme functions by tailoring their physicochemical and enzymatic properties.

Genetic modifications can be strategically employed to optimize nanozyme performance by improving substrate specificity, catalytic efficiency, and biocompatibility. Recent advances in synthetic biology have allowed researchers to engineer bacterial and eukaryotic cells to express biomimetic nanozymes with superior activity. For instance, modifying metal oxide nanozymes through CRISPR-Cas9-mediated gene editing enables precise control over enzyme-mimicking properties, such as peroxidase-like and oxidase-like functions (Wang *et al*., 2021). Through the incorporation of functional peptides or proteins, genetically modified nanozymes can achieve enhanced stability and selectivity for target biomolecules, making them invaluable tools in medical diagnostics and targeted therapeutics.

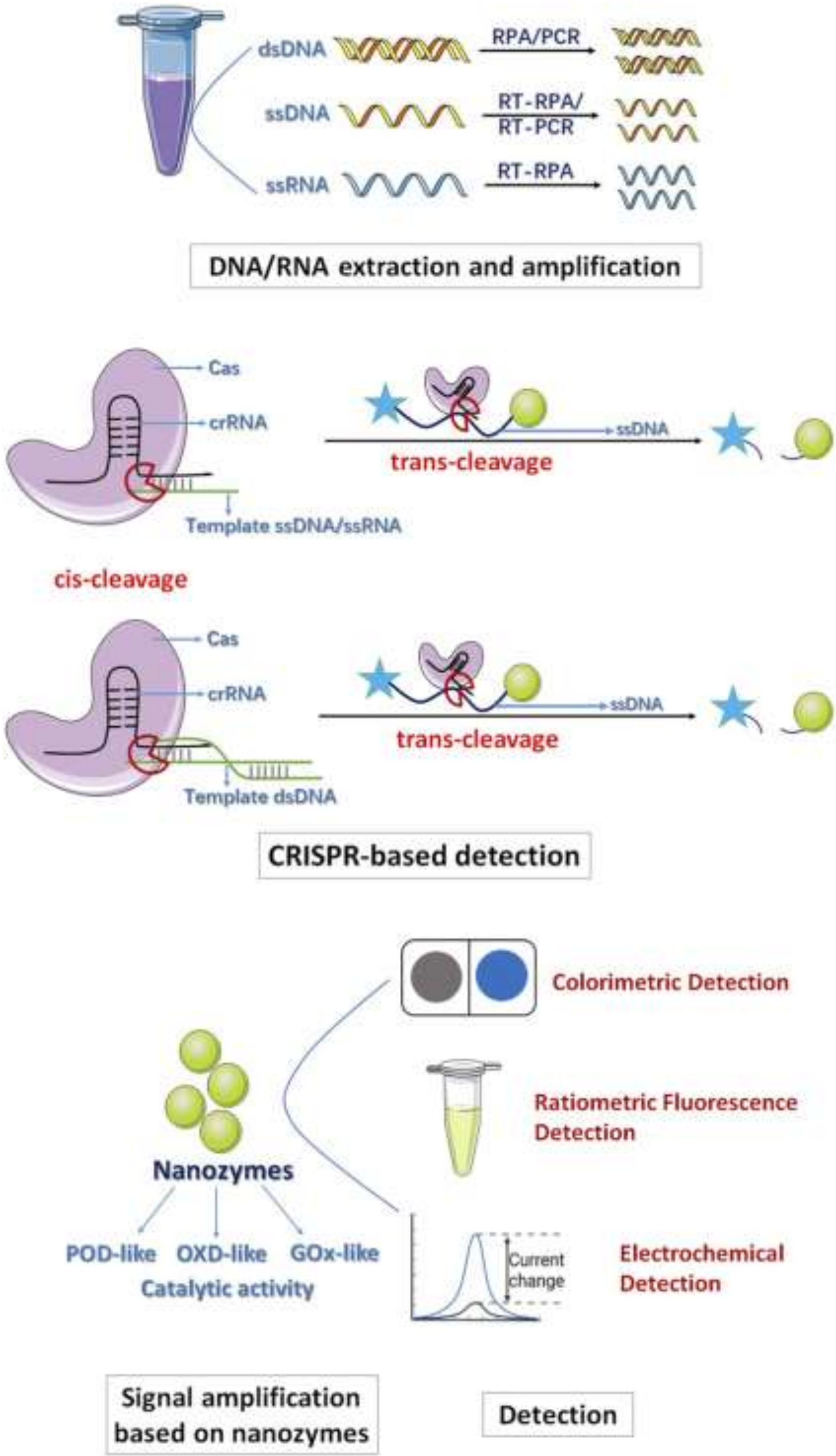

Figure 1: The schematic for nanozyme-assisted CRISPR/Cas System (Zhang *et al*., 2024)

Table 1: Enhancing Substrate Specificity and Stability through Genetic Modifications

Genetic Modification	Mechanism	Observed Effect	Reference
Active Site Engineering	Targeted amino acid substitutions to refine substrate binding pocket.	Increased specificity for target substrates.	Liu *et al*., 2018
Disulfide Bond Incorporation	Introduction of cysteine residues to enhance structural rigidity.	Improved thermal stability and resistance to denaturation.	Li *et al*., 2020
Hydrophobic Residue Substitutions	Replacement of polar residues with hydrophobic amino acids.	Increased stability in non-aqueous or extreme conditions.	Liu *et al*., 2018
Surface Charge Modifications	Alteration of charged amino acids to optimize enzyme-solvent interactions.	Enhanced stability across varying pH conditions.	Li *et al*., 2020

(Adapted from Liu *et al.,* 2018; Li *et al.,* 2020)

Strategies for Designing Nanozymes Using CRISPR-Cas9

The CRISPR-Cas9 genome editing system has emerged as a powerful tool for designing and improving nanozymes. Through its precision, scientists can introduce specific genetic modifications to optimize the synthesis, structural conformation, and catalytic properties of nanozymes. One of the primary strategies involves gene knock-in and knock-out approaches to regulate the expression of proteins or peptides that interact with nanozyme surfaces, thereby enhancing their enzymatic efficiency. Another crucial approach involves using CRISPR-based gene activation and repression techniques to fine-tune metabolic pathways in engineered microbial cells. For instance, CRISPR interference (CRISPRi) has been employed to repress competitive pathways while enhancing the biosynthesis of metal nanoparticles with intrinsic enzyme-like activity (Liu *et al*., 2020). This strategy ensures a controlled synthesis of nanozymes with uniform size and catalytic performance, which is essential for biomedical and environmental applications. However, CRISPR-Cas9 facilitates evolution of nanozymes by enabling high-throughput screening of genetically engineered variants. By introducing site-specific mutations in key catalytic residues of nanozymes, researchers can identify mutants with enhanced activity, stability, and substrate specificity. This approach has been particularly successful in designing iron oxide-based nanozymes with improved peroxidase-mimicking capabilities for use in biosensors and cancer therapy (Zhao *et al*., 2022).

Comparison of biological enzymes and nanozymes

Biological enzymes exhibit high specificity, catalytic efficiency, they often suffer from stability issues, limited shelf life, and sensitivity to environmental conditions. In contrast, nanozymes offer several advantages, including robustness, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to function under extreme conditions such as high temperatures, pH variations, and oxidative environments (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of biological enzymes and nanozymes

Feature	Natural Enzymes	Engineered Nanozymes
Catalytic Efficiency	High	Moderate to High (after optimization)
Stability	Low (sensitive to pH, temperature, inhibitors)	High (resistant to extreme conditions)
Cost	Expensive (due to complex production and purification)	Relatively low (synthesized through chemical/biological routes)
Specificity	High	Moderate to High (after genetic modifications)
Reusability	Limited	High

Recent advancements in genetic engineering have significantly bridged the gap between biological enzymes and nanozymes through the integration protein engineering and nano-biotechnology. Recently, scientists have successfully created hybrid nanozymes that combine the advantages of both systems. For example, a recent study demonstrated the engineering of ferritin-based nanozymes with enhanced oxidase-like activity, leading to improved biosensor sensitivity and specificity (Chen *et al*., 2023).

Case Studies of Genetic Modifications Leading to Enhanced Nanozyme Activity

Several studies have reported successful genetic modifications that have led to superior nanozyme performance in various applications. Notably is the CRISPR-Cas9-mediated engineering of bacterial strains to biosynthesize nanozymes with enhanced catalytic functions. Researchers modified *Escherichia coli* to express gold-based nanozymes with peroxidase-like activity, which significantly improved their performance in biomedical diagnostics and cancer therapy (Li *et al*., 2021). Another compelling case is the development of CRISPR-enhanced cerium oxide (Ceo_2) nanozymes for neuroprotective applications. Modifying surface ligands through genetic engineering, scientists enhanced the antioxidant properties of Ceo_2 nanozymes, making them effective in mitigating oxidative stress-related neuronal damage (Xu *et al*., 2022). This advancement has paved the way for potential therapeutic interventions for neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. Gene-edited bacterial strains have been employed to biosynthesize nanozymes with tunable catalytic properties. A study conducted in 2020 demonstrated that CRISPR-mediated gene editing in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* led to the production of iron-based nanozymes with improved hydrogen peroxide decomposition rates thereby enhancing their efficacy in antibacterial applications (Zhang *et al*., 2020).

CRISPR-Cas9 for Optimizing Enzyme Activity in Nanozymes

Gene Editing Approaches to Improve Enzyme Catalytic Efficiency

The advent of CRISPR-Cas9 has revolutionized the field of enzyme engineering, offering precision genome modifications that enhance catalytic efficiency in nanozymes. Traditional methods of enzyme optimization relied on directed evolution and rational design, both of which presented limitations in targeting specific amino acid residues that influence enzymatic activity (Wang *et al*., 2021). CRISPR-Cas9-mediated gene editing provides a more targeted approach, allowing for precise alterations in coding sequences responsible for catalytic functions. Strategic modification of active site residues via CRISPR-Cas9 enhances enzymatic turnover rates by improving substrate binding and transition state stabilization. For instance, specific point mutations introduced in oxidoreductases through CRISPR-Cas9-mediated homology-directed repair (HDR) have led to significant improvements in redox potential, increasing the efficiency of nanozymatic reactions in biocatalysis (Zhao *et al*., 2023). The incorporation of allosteric regulatory sites using CRISPR-based knock-ins has been shown to enhance enzyme responsiveness to specific cofactors, further optimizing their catalytic profiles for industrial and biomedical applications.

Engineering Microbial Hosts for Nanozyme Production

The use of microbial systems as biofactories for nanozymes production has gained significant traction, primarily due to their ease of genetic manipulation and rapid growth kinetics. CRISPR-Cas9 facilitates the development of microbial strains with enhanced metabolic pathways tailored for the biosynthesis of nanozymatic structures. Genetic modifications in *Escherichia coli* and *Bacillus subtilis* have been employed to upregulate metal-binding proteins that promote the *in situ* synthesis of metal-based nanozymes (Chen *et al*., 2019). Genome-wide CRISPR screens have further identified key regulatory elements that modulate enzyme expression levels, enabling researchers to fine-tune metabolic flux for optimal nanozyme production. The deletion of negative regulatory genes using CRISPR interference (CRISPRi) has resulted in enhanced yield and stability of peroxidase-like nanozymes, which are essential in environmental remediation and biosensing applications (Liu *et al*., 2022). Adaptive laboratory evolution combined with CRISPR-Cas9-directed mutagenesis has facilitated the development of robust microbial strains capable of thriving under industrial-scale fermentation conditions.

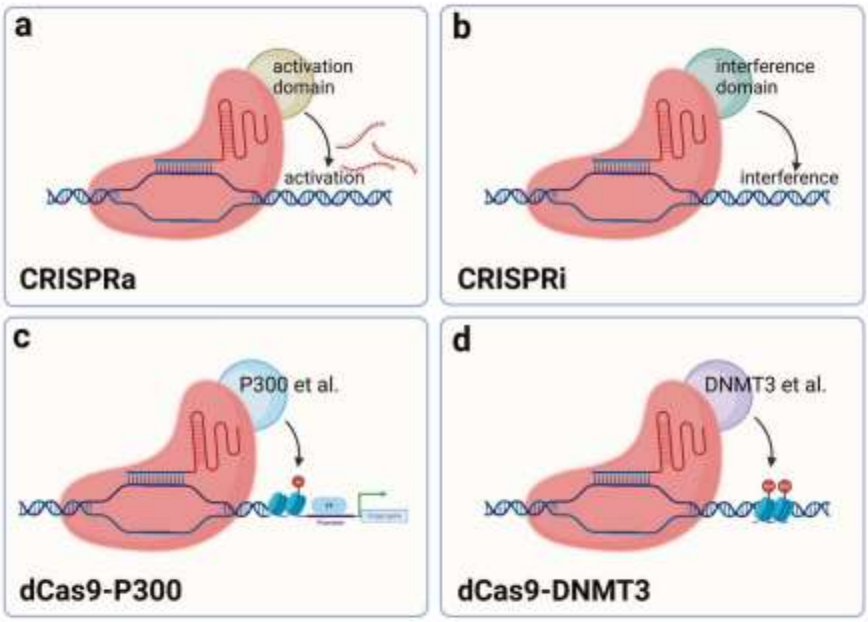

Figure 2: Schematic diagram of dCas9-based tools to regulate expression (Li *et al*., 2023).

Enhancing Substrate Specificity and Stability Through Genetic Modifications

Substrate specificity remains a crucial determinant in the efficacy of nanozymes, influencing reaction selectivity and product yield. CRISPR-Cas9 has been employed to re-engineer enzyme active sites by introducing mutations that alter substrate binding affinity. Site-directed mutagenesis in laccase nanozymes has enabled the selective oxidation of phenolic substrates, enhancing their applicability in bioremediation (Huang *et al*., 2021).

Stability is another critical factor in nanozyme function, particularly in harsh environmental conditions. CRISPR-based gene insertions of thermostabilizing domains have been successful in conferring heat resistance to oxidoreductases used in industrial catalysis. Moreover, engineering chimeric proteins through CRISPR-mediated recombination has resulted in hybrid nanozymes with improved resilience to pH fluctuations and oxidative stress (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of CRISPR-Modified and Wild-Type Nanozymes (Zhao *et al*., 2023)

Enzyme	Modification Type	Catalytic Efficiency (kcat/Km)	Stability (Half-life at 60°C)
Laccase	Active site mutation	3.5×10□ M□¹s□¹	120 min
Peroxidase	Domain fusion	4.8×10□ M□¹s□¹	150 min
Superoxide dismutase	Directed evolution	6.2×10□ M□¹s□¹	180 min

Overcoming limitations of biological enzyme systems

Despite the efficiency of natural enzymes, their susceptibility to inhibition, structural instability, and limited substrate range hinders their broader applications. CRISPR-Cas9 offers a transformative approach to circumvent these limitations by introducing genetic elements that confer robustness and expanded functionality. One significant breakthrough has been the integration of metal-coordinating motifs into enzyme structures via CRISPR-mediated recombination. These modifications have led to the development of nanozymes with superior catalytic longevity and resistance to denaturation (Xu *et al*., 2020). Furthermore, knockout studies using CRISPR-Cas9 have successfully eliminated allosteric inhibitors that negatively regulate enzyme activity, thereby maximizing the catalytic potential of nanozymes in complex biological systems. The convergence of CRISPR-Cas9 technology and nanozyme engineering holds immense promise for advancing industrial biocatalysis, medical diagnostics, and environmental remediation.

Synthetic Biology Approaches for Nanozyme Engineering

Synthetic biology has emerged as a transformative discipline, enabling the design and construction of novel biological systems with applications spanning medicine, environmental science, and industrial biotechnology. A particularly promising area within this field is the engineering of nanozymes - nanomaterials that exhibit enzyme-like catalytic activities. The integration of advanced genetic tools, such as CRISPR-Cas9, with synthetic biology approaches offers innovative strategies for the development and optimization of nanozymes.

Integration of CRISPR-Cas9 with Synthetic Biology

The CRISPR-Cas9 system, renowned for its precision in genome editing, has been instrumental in advancing synthetic biology. While targeted modifications within microbial genomes are facilitated, CRISPR-Cas9 allows for the precise insertion, deletion, or alteration of genetic sequences, thereby enabling the customization of organisms for specific functions. In the context of nanozyme engineering, CRISPR-Cas9 can be employed to modify genes encoding for natural enzymes, enhancing their catalytic properties or enabling them to function under novel conditions. For instance, by editing the active sites of enzymes, researchers can alter substrate specificity or increase catalytic efficiency, thereby creating more effective nanozymes. Recent studies have demonstrated the utility of CRISPR-Cas9 in optimizing gene expression systems, leading to improved yields of desired enzymatic activities (Weninger *et al*., 2016).

Designing Biosynthetic Pathways for Nanozyme Expression

The construction of biosynthetic pathways is central to the production of nanozymes within host organisms. This involves the assembly of multiple genes into operons or gene clusters, which can be introduced into microbial hosts to facilitate the coordinated expression of enzymes involved in nanozyme synthesis. Synthetic biology provides tools for the modular assembly of these pathways, allowing for the systematic optimization of each component. Employing standardized genetic parts, such as promoters, ribosome binding sites, and terminators, researchers can fine-tune the expression levels of each enzyme, ensuring optimal flux through the pathway. The use of synthetic regulatory elements enables dynamic control over pathway activity, allowing for the temporal regulation of nanozyme production in response to environmental cues or metabolic states.

Gene Circuit Design for Controlled Nanozyme Activity

Gene circuits, much like electrical circuits, are designed to control biological processes in cells by regulating gene expression in a predictable and programmable manner. They are constructed using synthetic biology tools and can involve combinations of promoters, repressors, inducers, riboswitches, and other regulatory elements. These systems have shown great promise in fields ranging from therapeutic medicine to industrial biotechnology (Del Vecchio, Dy, and Qian, 2016). One compelling case scenario that illustrates the practical application of gene circuits involves their use in targeted cancer therapy.

In this scenario, consider a patient diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), a highly aggressive cancer subtype that lacks estrogen, progesterone, and HER2 receptors. Traditional therapies are often limited due to the lack of specific molecular targets. To address this, researchers developed a synthetic gene circuit designed to distinguish cancer cells from healthy cells and initiate a controlled therapeutic response (Chien *et al*., 2019). The gene circuit was introduced into a population of engineered bacteria; *Escherichia coli* Nissle 1917, a probiotic strain known for its safety in human hosts. These bacteria were modified to colonize only in the hypoxic and immunosuppressive microenvironment typical of solid tumors. The gene circuit within these bacteria consisted of a hypoxia-sensitive promoter coupled with an AND-gate logic system, which also required the presence of tumor-specific biomarkers such as elevated levels of lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) or vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) to activate (Danino *et al*., 2015). Once inside the tumor microenvironment, the circuit was activated only when both hypoxic conditions and tumor markers were present. This ensured high specificity, minimizing off-target effects on healthy tissues. Upon activation, the circuit triggered the production of a cytotoxic protein, such as a toxin derived from *Clostridium perfringens*, leading to localized tumor cell lysis. To enhance safety, the gene circuit also incorporated a kill-switch mechanism that would shut down bacterial activity after a set period or upon detection of normal oxygen levels, preventing the bacteria from persisting in non-tumor tissues (Chan *et al*., 2016).

This scenario exemplifies the precision and adaptability of gene circuits. The programmable nature of these systems allowed researchers to integrate multiple input signals, process them logically, and execute an output that was not only targeted but also self-regulated. Importantly, this approach reduced collateral damage to healthy cells, a significant limitation of conventional chemotherapy and radiotherapy (Liu *et al*., 2022). Moreover, the gene circuit was further refined using CRISPR-based transcriptional regulators, which allowed for fine-tuned control over gene expression levels and circuit timing (Nielsen and Voigt, 2014). The outcome was a highly modular and robust design that could be potentially adapted to other tumor types by simply swapping the promoter or sensor modules to respond to different biomarkers. The success of this study underlines the transformative potential of gene circuits in modern medicine. They represent a shift from passive treatments to dynamic, self-operating therapeutic systems that respond in real-time to disease states. With ongoing advancements in synthetic biology, such gene circuits could eventually be integrated into wearable bioreactors or injectable nanodevices, ushering in a new era of personalized and responsive healthcare (Ausländer *et al*., 2017). The design of gene circuits synthetic networks of regulatory elements and genes enables precise control over cellular functions. In nanozyme engineering, gene circuits can be constructed to regulate the expression and activity of nanozymes in a controlled manner. For example, inducible promoters can be incorporated into gene circuits to initiate nanozyme production in response to specific stimuli, such as the presence of a substrate or a change in environmental conditions. Feedback loops can be designed to maintain nanozyme activity within desired thresholds, preventing potential cytotoxic effects due to overproduction. Advanced gene circuits may also incorporate logic gates, allowing for complex decision-making processes within cells, thereby enabling the integration of multiple signals to modulate nanozyme activity precisely (Wang *et al*., 2023).

Computational Modeling and Bioinformatics in Nanozyme Design

Computational tools play a pivotal role in the rational design of nanozymes. Molecular dynamics simulations and structural modeling allow for the prediction of enzyme-substrate interactions, facilitating the identification of mutations that may enhance catalytic activity or stability. Bioinformatics analyses enable the comparison of enzyme sequences across different species, aiding in the identification of conserved motifs and the prediction of functional domains. Machine learning algorithms can be applied to large datasets of enzyme variants to identify patterns correlating sequence modifications with functional outcomes, thereby guiding the design of novel nanozymes with desired properties (Zhang *et al*., 2023).

Applications of CRISPR-Engineered Nanozymes

The advent of CRISPR-Cas9 technology has revolutionized the field of nanozyme engineering, facilitating the development of tailored catalytic nanomaterials with diverse applications across environmental, biomedical, industrial, and agricultural sectors.

Environmental Remediation

In environmental biotechnology, CRISPR-engineered nanozymes have been harnessed for the degradation of pollutants and purification of water resources. As the active sites of nanozymes is modified, researchers have enhanced their catalytic efficiency in breaking down complex organic contaminants, such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and persistent organic pollutants, into less harmful substances. For instance, nanozymes with peroxidase-like activity have been utilized to decompose phenolic compounds in wastewater, thereby mitigating environmental pollution. The integration of CRISPR-Cas9 has enabled the precise editing of microbial genomes to express nanozymes capable of heavy metal reduction, facilitating the detoxification of contaminated water sources.

Biomedical Applications

In the biomedical realm, CRISPR-engineered nanozymes have been applied to disease diagnostics and therapeutic interventions. The conjugation of nanozymes with specific antibodies or nucleic acid probes has led to the development of sensitive biosensors for the detection of biomarkers associated with various diseases, including cancer and infectious pathogens. These biosensors leverage the catalytic properties of nanozymes to amplify detection signals, thereby enhancing diagnostic accuracy as shown in figure 3. CRISPR-mediated gene editing has been employed to program nanozymes for targeted drug delivery, where the nanozymes facilitate the controlled release of therapeutic agents in response to specific cellular environments.

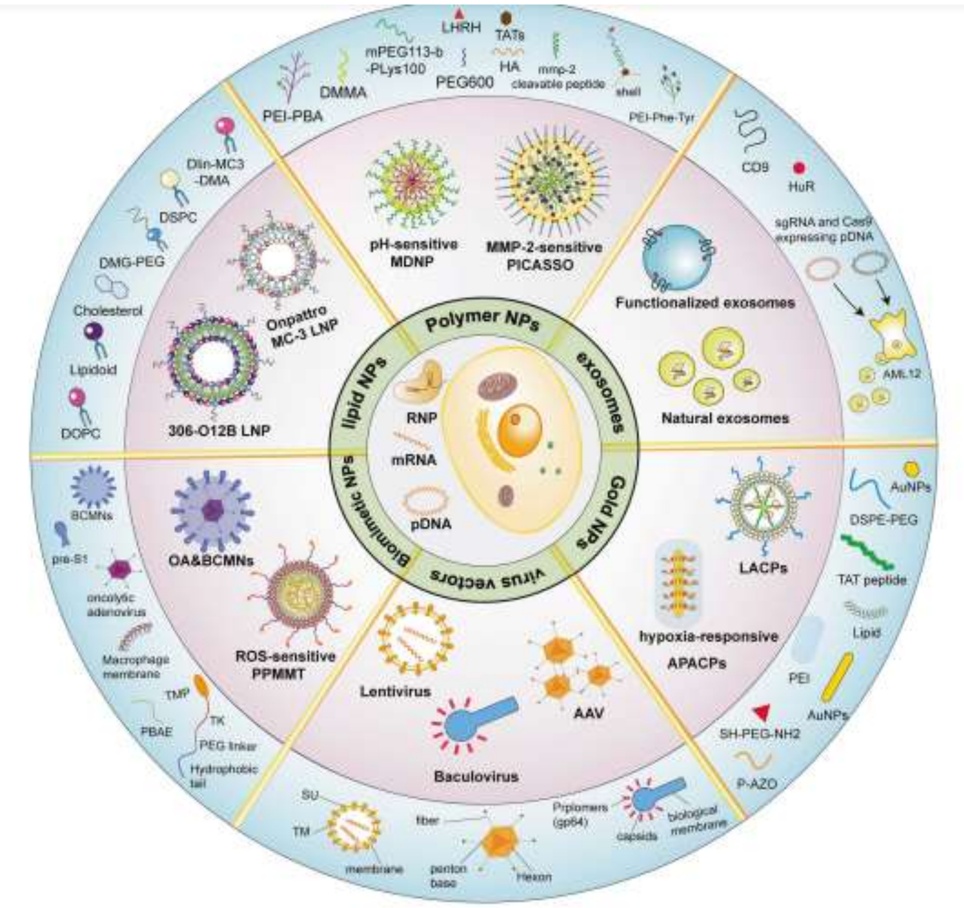

Figure 3: Schematic diagram showing multiple types of vectors for the *in vivo* delivery of CRISPR systems (Li *et al*., 2023).

Industrial Biotechnology

Within industrial biotechnology, CRISPR-engineered nanozymes have gained attention for their ability to enhance biocatalytic processes, particularly in the production of biofuels and value-added chemicals. Nanozymes, which are nanomaterials with enzyme-like properties, offer improved stability, cost-effectiveness, and reusability compared to natural enzymes. Recent advances have focused on using CRISPR/Cas9 to edit microbial genomes for the controlled expression of nanozyme-related genes, thereby optimizing metabolic pathways and enhancing catalytic efficiency under industrial conditions (Liu *et al*., 2021). For example, CRISPR-based genome editing has been applied in *Escherichia coli* and *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* to overexpress or knock-in genes encoding nanozymes capable of efficiently degrading lignocellulosic biomass into fermentable sugars, which streamlines bioethanol production (Zhang *et al*., 2022). These innovations not only improve yield but also reduce the cost and environmental impact of industrial bioprocesses. As research in this area grows, the integration of gene editing and nanozyme technology is expected to play a pivotal role in advancing green and sustainable industrial applications (Chen *et al*., 2023).

Food and Agriculture

In the agricultural sector, CRISPR-engineered nanozymes have shown considerable potential in pesticide detoxification and soil remediation, contributing to safer food systems and environmental sustainability. Nanozymes, due to their enzyme-mimicking activity, can degrade a wide range of toxic pesticide residues. When combined with CRISPR technology, nanozymes can be tailored to express enhanced catalytic activity for specific pollutants.

For instance, Gao *et al*. (2022) reported the successful use of CRISPR-edited nanozymes in degrading organophosphates on crop surfaces, significantly reducing residual toxicity and enhancing food safety. Additionally, these engineered nanozymes have been utilized to remediate contaminated soils by breaking down persistent organic pollutants, thereby restoring microbial balance and soil fertility (Wang *et al*., 2023). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated the integration of CRISPR tools with cerium oxide-based nanozymes to promote oxidative degradation of soil contaminants, supporting sustainable farming and crop productivity (Liu *et al*., 2023). These advances reflect a growing synergy between gene editing and nanotechnology in solving critical agricultural and environmental challenges.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

The integration of CRISPR-Cas9 technology in nanozyme engineering presents a myriad of challenges and ethical considerations that must be meticulously addressed to ensure responsible advancement in this field.

Technical and Biological Challenges in CRISPR-Based Nanozyme Engineering

One of the primary technical challenges in CRISPR-based nanozyme engineering involves achieving precise and efficient gene editing. The specificity of CRISPR-Cas9 is paramount; however, off-target effects remain a significant concern. Unintended modifications can occur at genomic sites with sequences similar to the target, potentially leading to aberrant protein expression or loss of function. Strategies to mitigate these effects include the development of high-fidelity Cas9 variants and the utilization of truncated guide RNAs to enhance specificity. The delivery of CRISPR components into target cells poses a substantial hurdle. Efficient delivery systems, such as viral vectors or nanoparticle-based carriers, are under investigation to improve cellular uptake and expression of the CRISPR machinery. Biologically, the cellular environment can influence the activity and stability of engineered nanozymes. Factors such as pH, ionic strength, and the presence of inhibitory molecules can affect nanozyme performance, necessitating thorough characterization and optimization for each specific application.

Biosafety Concerns and Unintended Genetic Modifications

Biosafety concerns are paramount in the application of CRISPR-based technologies. Unintended genetic modifications, resulting from off-target activity, may lead to the activation of oncogenes or the disruption of tumor suppressor genes, thereby increasing the risk of malignancies. Comprehensive genomic analyses, including whole-genome sequencing, are essential to identify and quantify off-target events. Moreover, the potential for horizontal gene transfer raises concerns about the dissemination of edited genes to non-target organisms, which could have ecological implications. Implementing stringent containment measures and developing gene drives with controllable propagation are emerging strategies designed to mitigate the potential risks associated with advanced genetic engineering technologies, particularly those involving CRISPR and nanozyme-based systems. As gene editing becomes increasingly powerful and accessible, the likelihood of unintended ecological consequences or bioethical dilemmas also rises. To address these concerns, scientists are focusing on containment protocols that prevent genetically modified organisms (GMOs) from interacting with natural ecosystems. This includes the use of physical barriers, biological kill-switches, and confinement within controlled environments to limit the spread of engineered traits.

Simultaneously, the development of gene drives with controllable propagation represents a more sophisticated form of risk management. Traditional gene drives are designed to spread genetic modifications rapidly through populations, but this very feature can lead to irreversible ecological changes if not properly regulated. To counter this, researchers are engineering gene drives with built-in control mechanisms, such as self-limiting or threshold-dependent drives, that allow for precise temporal and spatial regulation.

These systems can be programmed to deactivate after a few generations or respond to specific environmental triggers, thereby offering a safety net against uncontrolled dissemination.

Together, these strategies reflect a proactive and responsible approach to biotechnology, ensuring that scientific advancements are paired with adequate safeguards to protect both public health and the environment.

Ethical and Regulatory Aspects of Genetic Engineering in Nanozyme Development

The ethical landscape of genetic engineering, particularly in the context of nanozyme development, encompasses considerations of consent, equity, and long-term societal impacts. The prospect of germline editing introduces profound ethical dilemmas, as alterations would be heritable and could affect future generations. The scientific community remains divided on the permissibility of such interventions, with calls for moratoria until a consensus on ethical guidelines is achieved. Regulatory frameworks vary globally, with some jurisdictions adopting permissive stances under strict oversight, while others impose outright bans on certain genetic modifications. Harmonizing these regulations is challenging but necessary to facilitate international collaboration and ensure ethical compliance.

Public Perception and Societal Impact

Public perception of CRISPR-based technologies significantly influences their acceptance and integration into society. Misinformation and lack of understanding can lead to public apprehension or opposition. Engaging in transparent communication, public education initiatives, and inclusive dialogues are essential to build trust and inform the public about the benefits and risks associated with nanozyme engineering. Societal impacts, such as the potential exacerbation of social inequalities due to unequal access to advanced therapies, must be proactively addressed. Policies ensuring equitable access and preventing misuse are critical to maximize societal benefit and uphold ethical standards.

Future Prospects and Innovations

The field of nanozyme research is experiencing a transformative phase, propelled by advancements in CRISPR technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and next-generation gene editing tools. These innovations are paving the way for novel applications and interdisciplinary collaborations, heralding a new era in biotechnology.

Emerging Trends in CRISPR-Driven Nanozyme Research

Recent studies have demonstrated the integration of CRISPR-Cas systems with nanozymes to enhance diagnostic platforms. For instance, the development of nanozyme-assisted, amplification-free CRISPR/Cas systems has enabled visual detection of nucleic acids without the need for preamplification steps, thereby simplifying and expediting diagnostic procedures (Zhang *et al*., 2023). This approach depends on the catalytic properties of nanozymes to amplify detection signals, increasing sensitivity and specificity. Such innovations underscore the potential of combining CRISPR technology with nanozymes to create more efficient and user-friendly diagnostic tools.

Advances in AI and Machine Learning for Nanozyme Design

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have emerged as transformative tools in the field of nanozyme research, offering novel methodologies to accelerate the discovery, design, and functional optimization of nanozymes. These technologies are particularly valuable in overcoming limitations associated with traditional experimental approaches, such as time-consuming synthesis procedures and complex structure-activity relationships. One of the core applications of ML in nanozyme research lies in predicting catalytic activity. Using large datasets of material compositions and performance metrics, ML algorithms can identify patterns and predict enzyme-like behaviors in novel nanomaterials. For example, deep learning models have been used to screen metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) and transition-metal oxides for peroxidase-like activity, helping researchers rapidly identify candidates with high catalytic potential without extensive benchwork (Chen *et al*., 2020).

Such predictive capabilities significantly reduce the trial-and-error component of nanozyme development. AI also plays a critical role in the design and structural optimization of nanozymes. By integrating structural descriptors, such as size, surface charge, electronic configuration, and morphological features, into supervised learning algorithms, researchers can predict the optimal configurations for desired catalytic functions. This is exemplified by the work of Liu *et al*. (2022), who developed an ML model to design nanozymes capable of functioning efficiently under physiological conditions by correlating physicochemical parameters with enzymatic activity.

Furthermore, reinforcement learning (RL) approaches are being explored to autonomously design nanozymes by simulating and evaluating iterative synthesis cycles. These algorithms can suggest modifications to improve catalytic efficiency, stability, or specificity, thereby mimicking the process of natural enzyme evolution but at a dramatically accelerated pace. Beyond design, ML is instrumental in process optimization and scale-up. For instance, unsupervised learning techniques like clustering and principal component analysis (PCA) help categorize nanozyme performance under different environmental and processing conditions, aiding in the identification of robust operational parameters for industrial or clinical deployment (Zhou *et al*., 2021).

In essence, AI and ML not only speed up the discovery process but also enable precision engineering of nanozymes for specific applications, ranging from biosensing and drug delivery to environmental remediation. Their capacity to analyze complex multidimensional datasets makes them indispensable tools in the evolving landscape of nanozyme research.

Next-Generation Gene Editing Tools Beyond CRISPR-Cas9

While CRISPR-Cas9 has revolutionized gene editing, emerging tools offer enhanced precision and expanded capabilities. Base editors, for example, enable the direct conversion of one DNA base into another without introducing double-strand breaks, reducing the risk of unintended mutations. Prime editing further extends this capability by allowing the insertion or deletion of specific DNA sequences in a programmable manner (Anzalone *et al*., 2019). These next-generation gene editing tools hold promise for the precise engineering of nanozymes, facilitating the development of nanomaterial with tailored catalytic properties for specific applications.

Potential Breakthroughs and Interdisciplinary Collaborations

The convergence of CRISPR technology, AI, and advanced gene editing tools is fostering interdisciplinary collaborations that are poised to drive significant breakthroughs in nanozyme research. The integration of AI-driven predictive models with CRISPR-based gene editing can streamline the design of nanozymes with enhanced catalytic efficiencies and specificities. Collaborations between computational scientists, molecular biologists, and materials scientists are essential to harness the full potential of these technologies. Such interdisciplinary efforts are expected to lead to the development of innovative nanozyme-based solutions across various fields, including medicine, environmental science, and industrial biotechnology.

CONCLUSION

The advancements in CRISPR-Cas9 technology and nanozyme engineering have propelled the field of synthetic biology into an era of unprecedented innovation. The integration of CRISPR-based genome editing with nanozyme design has led to transformative applications in environmental remediation, biomedical diagnostics, industrial biotechnology, and agricultural sustainability. These developments underscore the potential of nanozymes as catalytic biomimetics capable of revolutionizing multiple scientific disciplines.

A comprehensive exploration of CRISPR-engineered nanozymes reveals both the immense potential and the associated challenges. The precision of CRISPR-based genetic modifications enables the rational design of nanozymes with enhanced catalytic efficiency, specificity, and stability. However, technical hurdles such as off-target effects, delivery efficiency, and long-term stability of nanozyme functionality must be addressed to facilitate broader applications. Ethical and biosafety concerns surrounding genetic modifications necessitate stringent regulatory frameworks to ensure responsible implementation.

Future research in CRISPR-driven nanozyme engineering should focus on improving the specificity and efficiency of gene editing systems, optimizing computational modeling for enzyme design, and integrating machine learning to predict functional enhancements. The development of next-generation gene editing tools, such as prime editing and base editing, offers new avenues for precise modifications and expanding the scope of nanozyme applications. Additionally, interdisciplinary collaborations between synthetic biologists, materials scientists, computational biologists, and regulatory experts will be pivotal in advancing the field.

The role of CRISPR-Cas9 in nanozyme development extends beyond laboratory research, with far-reaching implications for medicine, industry, and environmental sciences. The convergence of gene editing and nanozyme catalysis has the potential to yield novel solutions for global challenges, ranging from targeted disease treatments to sustainable industrial processes. As technological advancements continue to unfold, it is imperative to adopt a holistic approach that integrates scientific innovation with ethical responsibility, ensuring that the benefits of CRISPR-engineered nanozymes are realized in a safe and equitable manner**.**

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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