

# Radiosensitization effects of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> and gold nanoparticles in proton therapy of pancreatic tumors: A Monte Carlo study

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective(s):** This study investigates the potential of barium titanate (BaTiO<sub>3</sub>) nanoparticles to enhance the therapeutic efficacy of proton therapy for pancreatic tumors in comparison to gold nanoparticles through both macroscopic and microscopic simulations.

**Materials and Methods:** Using the MCNP6.1 Monte Carlo code, we modeled a 3cm pancreatic tumor in the head of the pancreas loaded with clusters of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> and gold nanoparticles using a lattice model. Proton beam (SOBP, 135 MeV) interactions were simulated to evaluate the dose enhancement factor (DEF) within the tumor, the non-tumor pancreas, and Organs At Risks (OARs). Additionally, microscopic dosimetry was conducted to study the dose deposition in the vicinity of the clusters containing nanoparticles.

**Results:** The gold nanoparticles present DEF of 1.21 and BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles present DEF of 1.14 in the tumor site. The OARs remained mainly unaffected. Also, on a microscopic scale, DEF values of 1.7-1.83 in the presence of gold nanoparticles and 1.42-1.51 in the presence of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles were calculated. The microscopic DEFs were more than the macroscopic DEF.

**Conclusion:** Both gold and BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles enhanced proton dose deposition, with gold nanoparticles producing greater macroscopic and microscopic DEFs. The results also show that microscopic dose enhancement exceeds macroscopic dose enhancement, confirming that most proton-induced dose enhancement occurs in the close vicinity of nanoparticles. Because this study is based on Monte Carlo simulations with a uniform nanoparticle distribution and without biological modeling, further experimental studies are needed to validate these findings.

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## Introduction

Pancreatic cancer remains one of the most lethal malignancies due to its aggressive nature, late diagnosis, and complex anatomical location near critical organs (1). Proton therapy has emerged as an effective treatment modality, offering superior dose conformity and sparing of healthy organs compared to conventional photon therapy, primarily due to the Bragg peak phenomenon that allows protons to deposit most of their energy at a specific depth (2). However, achieving sufficient tumor control in pancreatic cancer remains challenging because of its radioresistance and the need to limit doses to surrounding organs at risk (OARs). Nanoparticles, defined as particles with dimensions less than 100 nm, possess a high surface-to-volume (S/V) ratio and exhibit effective cellular uptake (3). Various nanoparticles, including metallic and metal oxide nanoparticles (such as several ceramic oxides), have been investigated for their radiosensitization potential in proton therapy (3-6). Metallic nanoparticles such as gold (Au), owing to their high atomic number and density, facilitate increased local energy deposition within tumors (7). Most radiosensitization

studies have focused on high-Z metals like gold. However, alternative materials to metal nanoparticles have been less studied with respect to cost and biocompatibility. BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles have high potential for use in targeted cancer therapy (8). Studying the radiosensitization potential of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles, an inorganic ceramic compound known for its ferroelectric and biocompatible properties, could be beneficial in introducing an alternative to gold. Barium (Z=56) contributes significantly to ionization events through Coulomb interactions with protons.

Monte Carlo modeling enables the optimization of nanoparticle type, size, and proton beam parameters before experimental and clinical studies, facilitating safer and more effective treatment planning. Monte Carlo codes such as MCNP6 provide detailed modeling of particle transport and interactions in heterogeneous geometries, offering insight into dose distributions at both macroscopic and microscopic scales (9). Actually, MCNP6 has merged the legacy code of two previous versions, MCNP5 and MCNPX, incorporating high-energy particles and light ions. Unlike MCNPX, MCNP6.1 can transport electrons below 1 keV.

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MCNP6 has extended the minimum energy cutoff for photon transport down to 1 eV. These simulations are indispensable for studying nanoscale phenomena such as dose enhancement by nanoparticles, especially when experimental methods are limited by resolution or ethical constraints.

In this study, we performed a detailed MCNP6.1 simulation of a pancreas tumor loaded with gold and BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles and irradiated it with a monoenergetic therapeutic proton beam. The model geometry includes surrounding OARs. Also, in this study, by comparing absorbed doses with and without nanoparticle inclusion, the macroscopic and microscopic DEF is calculated to evaluate the potential of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles for enhancing the therapeutic ratio in proton therapy for pancreatic cancer compared to gold nanoparticles.

The results of this study, by providing a detailed analysis of proton interactions with BaTiO<sub>3</sub> and comparing them with those of gold, establish a solid foundation for the design and optimization of radiosensitizers, paving the way for future studies ranging from clinical simulations to biological evaluations. These findings support further preclinical validation and eventual clinical translation, offering a pathway toward more effective, personalized proton therapy for pancreatic cancer.

## Materials and Methods

### Simulation platform

All simulations were conducted using MCNP6.1 (Monte Carlo N-Particle Transport Code, Los Alamos National Laboratory), a widely validated Monte Carlo code capable of simulating detailed particle transport (10). Its capacity to handle complex geometries and dose tallies makes it highly suitable for studying dose enhancement factors (DEF) induced by nanoparticles (NPs) in proton therapy. In MCNP6, the Coulomb diffusion and the energy straggling of protons, as well as elastic and inelastic scatterings, were taken into account.

### Geometry and organ definition

Simplified MCNP6 surface and cell cards were used to

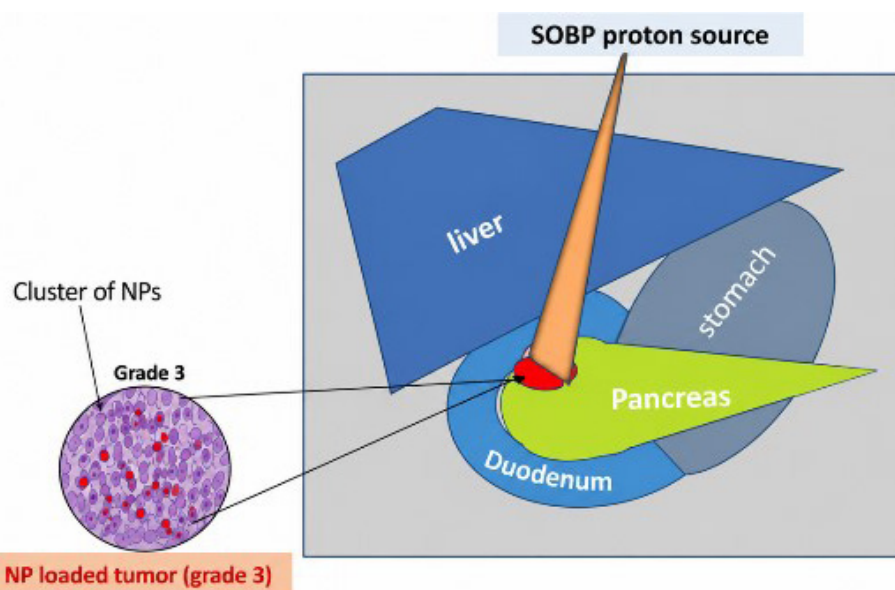
**Table 1.** Simulated organ characteristics and anatomical parameters used in the MCNP6 model

| Organ    | Density (g/cm <sup>3</sup> ) | Dimensions    |
|----------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Pancreas | 1.04                         | 12×3×2.5 (cm) |
| Liver    | 1.06                         | 15×12×10 (cm) |
| Stomach  | 1.02                         | 10×6×4 (cm)   |
| Duodenum | 1.02                         | 3.5×25 (cm)   |
| Kidney   | 1.05                         | 11×6×4 (cm)   |

approximate the pancreas and adjacent organs at risk (OARs): liver, duodenum, and stomach (Figure 1). These structures were placed based on anatomical proximity, with spatial separation approximating real human anatomy to evaluate dose distributions (pancreas (length: 12 cm, head diameter: 3 cm, width:2.5); liver (length:15 cm); stomach (diameter 6 cm, length:10 cm and width 4 cm); kidney (11 cm (length), 6 cm (width), and 4 cm (depth); duodenum (length:25 cm, diameter:4.5 cm). A grade 3 pancreatic tumor (~3.5 cm diameter) was embedded within the head of the pancreas. The density of the non-tumor pancreas was 1.04 g/cm<sup>3</sup>. Also, the density of the OARs is: (liver:1.06 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, stomach: 1.02 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, duodenum:1.02 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, kidney:1.05 g/cm<sup>3</sup>) (11). The simulated organ characteristics are presented in Table 1.

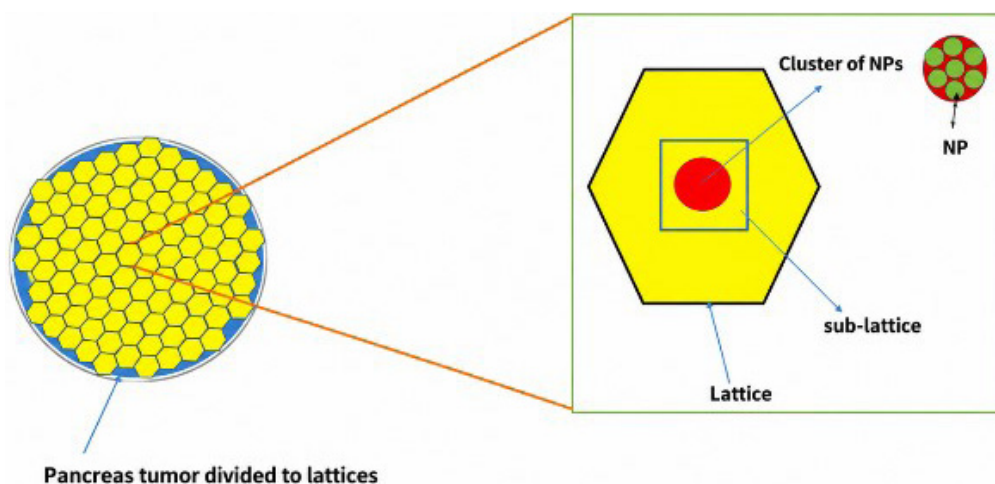
### Proton beam and SOBP configuration

A 135 MeV monoenergetic proton beam source was modeled as a monodirectional disk-shaped source (0.5 cm radius) located above the pancreas tumor center. It is assumed that the proton current used for therapy is 1 μA, and the dose required to kill cancer cells is 35 Gy. A Spread-Out Bragg Peak (SOBP) was implemented by convoluting monoenergetic proton energies to ensure a uniform dose across the entire tumor volume. Nuclear interaction data for protons and secondary particles were taken from the TENDL-2021 library, which provides evaluated cross sections for proton-induced reactions up to 200 MeV.



**Figure 1.** Geometry of simulation

A pancreatic tumor (3 cm) located in the head of the pancreas is exposed to a 135 MeV SOBP proton source (35Gy). Also, organs at risk are presented. SOBP: Spread-out bragg peak



**Figure 2.** Macroscopic and microscopic view of a pancreatic tumor divided into lattices ( $10 \mu\text{m}^3$ )

To provide a 10 mg/g concentration of nanoparticles in the tumor, each lattice contains a cluster of gold or barium titanate nanoparticles with 540 gold nanoparticles and 520 barium titanate nanoparticles in each cluster. Also, the dose deposition was calculated in a cubic ( $1.25 \mu\text{m}^3$ ) sub-lattice located in each lattice, which contains the cluster.

NP: Nanoparticle

Atomic and electromagnetic data (stopping powers, scattering, ionization) were obtained from MCPLIB and validated against NIST PSTAR data for proton energy loss in tissue and nanoparticle material.

### Nanoparticle modeling

Two groups of nanoparticles—gold (Au:  $Z=79$ ,  $\rho = 19.3 \text{ g/cm}^3$ ) and barium titanate ( $\text{BaTiO}_3$ : Ba ( $Z=56$ ), Ti ( $Z=22$ ), O ( $Z=8$ ),  $\rho = 6.02 \text{ g/cm}^3$ )—were modeled using a nanolattice distribution within the tumor. Nanoparticles were placed in a structured array to simulate local clustering (inter-particle spacing  $\sim 15 \text{ nm}$ ). Spherical clusters with a nominal diameter of 200 nm contained nanoparticles of 10 nm.

In Monte Carlo radiation transport codes, a lattice is a regularly repeating array of identical or parametrized unit cells used to model complex and periodic geometries efficiently. In this study, a lattice structure with a hexagonal 3D array of spherical nanoparticle clusters was placed in the center of the tumor to interact with the microscopic beam transporting through the tumor. A nanoparticle cluster is a localized aggregation of multiple nanoparticles that are spatially grouped within a small region rather than being uniformly dispersed.

Based on the literature review, the concentration of nanoparticles was set to 10mg/g of the tumor (12, 13). The lattice model enabled us to provide a homogeneous distribution of nanoparticles, because the concentration of nanoparticles in the tumor is 10mg/g tumor tissue. To provide the nanoparticle concentration of 10 mg/g of tumor tissue, the tumor volume was divided into three-dimensional lattices ( $10 \mu\text{m}^3$ ). Each lattice contains a 200 nm cluster of nanoparticles, with 540 gold nanoparticles and 520 barium titanate nanoparticles in each cluster. Also, to score dose deposition in the vicinity of the nanoparticle clusters, a cubic ( $1.25 \mu\text{m}^3$ ) sub-lattice was placed in each lattice (Figure 2). In this study, a lattice structure with a hexagonal 3D array of spherical nanoparticle cluster was placed in the center of the tumor to interact with the microscopic beam transporting through the tumor. A nanoparticle cluster is a localized aggregation of multiple nanoparticles that are spatially grouped within a small region rather than being uniformly dispersed.

In this study, the main goal was to compare the radiosensitization properties of barium titanate and gold nanoparticles in proton therapy. Although the heterogeneous distribution is more realistic, the homogeneous distribution was simpler and achieved the objectives of this research.

### DVH and source distance analysis

Dose-volume histograms (DVH) were extracted from mesh tally data using post-processing scripts. To achieve tumor coverage, source-to-tumor distances of 7.5–15 cm were simulated. The goal was to find the optimal tumor-source distance to achieve maximum V90%  $\sim 100\%$  (volume receiving  $\geq 90\%$  of the prescribed dose) within the tumor.

### Dose tally and DEF calculation

Dose deposition was tallied using F6 (MeV/g) in MCNP6 across the tumor, non-tumor pancreas, and OARs. The deposited energy (MeV/g) was converted to absorbed dose (Gy) by multiplying the energy by  $1.6 \times 10^{-10}$ .

The DEF was calculated using the equation below:

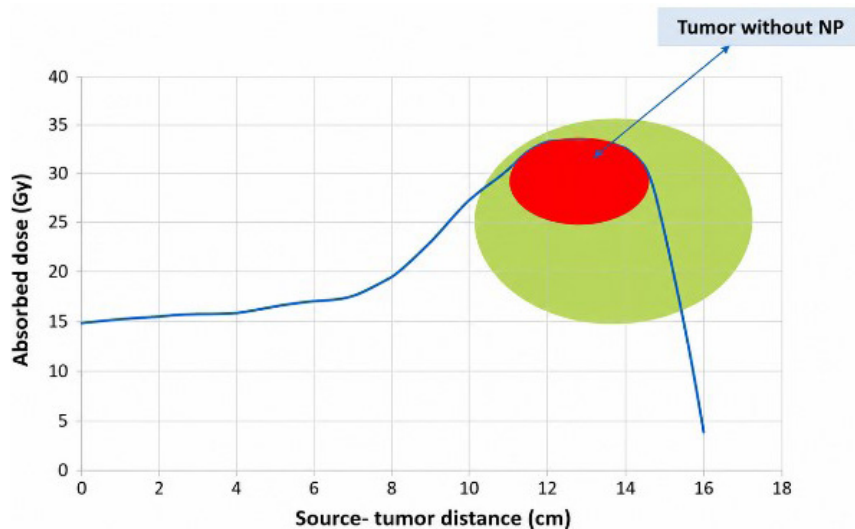
$$\text{DEF} = \frac{\text{absorbed dose of radiation in the presence of NPs}}{\text{absorbed dose of radiation in the absence of NPs}}$$

Therefore, the dose enhancement factor shows the efficacy of nanoparticles in dose absorption with radiation. The macroscopic dose enhancement was calculated in the tumor. Also, the microscopic dose deposition was calculated in lattices and cubic ( $1.25 \mu\text{m}^3$ ) sub-lattices which are located in the center of each lattice (Figure 2).

Each simulation was run with  $\geq 10^8$  proton histories, ensuring statistical uncertainties  $\leq 2\%$  in all regions.

## Results

To achieve optimum tumor coverage, source-to-tumor distances up to 15 cm were considered. The goal was to achieve V90%  $\sim 100\%$  (volume receiving  $\geq 90\%$  of the prescribed dose) within the tumor and find the suitable distance. Figure 3 shows that at a 13.5 cm source-to-tumor distance, 98.78% of the tumor receives  $\geq 90\%$  of the prescribed dose. The homogeneity index (HI) is about 100%, and the conformity index (CI) is 98.76%. The  $D_{\text{Max}}$  is 34.89

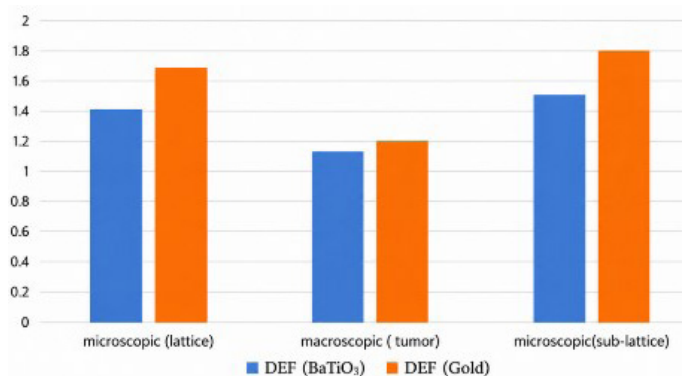


**Figure 3.** In proton SOBP source-tumor distance of 13.5 cm, 98.87% of the tumor volume receives more than 90% of the treatment dose  
SOBP: Spread-out bragg peak

Gy, and Dmean is 34.45 Gy. Thus, we used the source-to-tumor distance of 13.5 cm to study the dose enhancement effect of Au and BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles.

Figures 4 a and b show the results of DEF values in the tumor, non-tumor pancreas, and organs at risk irradiated by a proton beam with an energy of 135 MeV SOBP when the pancreas is loaded with BaTiO<sub>3</sub> or gold nanoparticles. As the results show, both nanoparticles show a measurable increase in absorbed dose within the tumor when nanoparticles are incorporated into the pancreas tumor, while OARs remain significantly unaffected. The gold nanoparticles present a DEF of 1.21, and barium titanate nanoparticles present a DEF of 1.14 at the tumor site. The increase in absorbed dose in the non-tumor pancreas was 4% in the presence of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> and 5% in the presence of gold nanoparticles. Also, the absorbed dose in OARs was increased by 0.5% to 3% in the presence of gold nanoparticles and by 0% to 2% for BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles.

Figure 5 shows the microscopic and macroscopic DEF values. The results show that dose absorption is increased in the vicinity of clusters of both barium titanate and gold nanoparticles. Microscopic (lattice) values of 1.7 and 1.31 were calculated for barium titanate and gold nanoparticles, respectively. Also, microscopic DEF (sub-lattice) values of

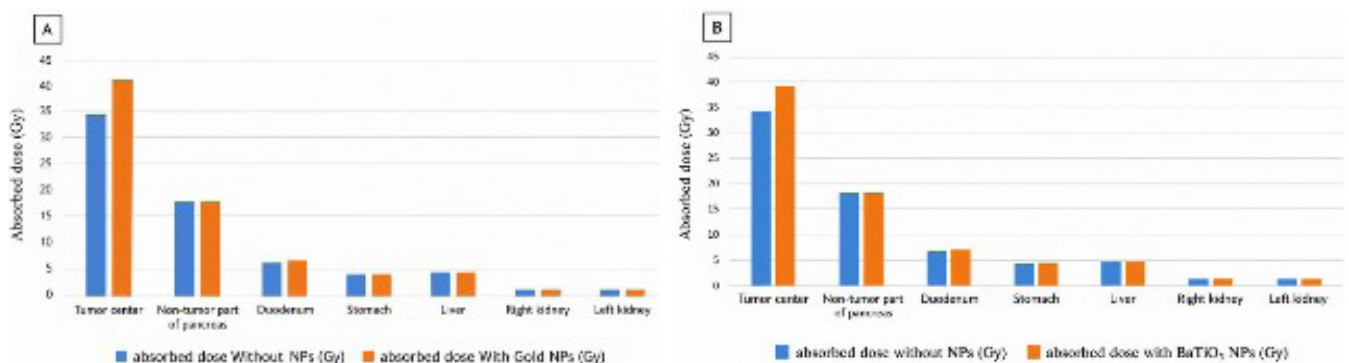


**Figure 5.** Comparison of macroscopic (pancreatic tumor) and microscopic (lattice and sub-lattice) DEF values for gold and BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles in proton therapy  
DEF: dose enhancement factor; BaTiO<sub>3</sub>: Barium titanate

1.83 and 1.51 were calculated for barium titanate and gold nanoparticles, respectively.

## Discussion

Based on the results, both gold and barium titanate nanoparticles have radiosensitization potential, with gold showing a higher dose enhancement effect than the BaTiO<sub>3</sub>



**Figure 4.** Macroscopic DEF values for the center of the tumor, the non-tumor part of the pancreas, and organs at risk  
A) in the presence of gold nanoparticles. B) in the presence of barium titanate nanoparticles.  
DEF: dose enhancement factor

nanoparticle (7%). Gold nanoparticles under proton beams amplify the local dose primarily through ionization and emission of proton-induced X-rays and Auger electrons resulting from Coulomb interactions between protons and extranuclear electrons of target atoms. The produced Auger electrons may further interact with electrons from adjacent atoms, leading to the generation of secondary electrons through multiple scattering events in the nanoscale vicinity of the nanoparticle. BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles, although lower in atomic number than gold, still demonstrated a measurable dose enhancement. Their effect arises from a similar mechanism. The superior dose enhancement observed with gold nanoparticles compared to barium titanate under 135 MeV proton irradiation is primarily attributable to gold's high atomic number ( $Z=79$  vs.  $Z_{\text{eff}} \approx 38$ ), which substantially increases stopping power and secondary electron production. Electronic interactions dominate energy deposition (~95% of total dose), with gold exhibiting ~60% higher mass stopping power than BaTiO<sub>3</sub> according to Bethe-Bloch theory (14, 15). Critically, Auger electron emission—scaling approximately as  $Z^4$ —is dramatically enhanced in high-Z materials, delivering a highly localized nanoscale dose particularly effective for inducing clustered DNA damage (16). Additionally, energetic delta-rays (secondary electrons) generated from ionization events propagate further in gold-loaded regions, extending dose deposition beyond the nanoparticle immediate vicinity (17). While nuclear fragmentation contributes <5% to total dose at therapeutic energies, the synergistic electronic mechanisms account for the observed superiority of gold nanoparticles in dose enhancement (18). Cho *et al.* (19) investigated the radioenhancement mechanisms of gold nanoparticles under proton beams. They found that particle-induced X-ray emission (PIXE) and particle-induced gamma-ray emission (PIGE) contribute less to dose deposition, while secondary electrons are the main contributors. Importantly, BaTiO<sub>3</sub> is well known for its excellent biocompatibility and low cytotoxicity in various biological models, making it a safer option for clinical translation compared to gold nanoparticles, which may elicit dose- and size-dependent toxicity and immunogenicity (8).

Several studies have confirmed the dose enhancement effect of metallic nanoparticles on proton therapy outcomes (3). Gold nanoparticles act as radiosensitizers by amplifying the generation of secondary electrons and reactive oxygen species upon proton irradiation. A study by Cunningham *et al.* (20) confirmed the radiosensitization potential of gold nanoparticles in proton therapy. A simulation study by Tabbakh *et al.* (21) reported the dose enhancement effect of gold nanoparticles in proton therapy. They found that the slowed-down protons by gold nanoparticles are the main contributors to the obtained extra dose. In contrast, the secondary electrons emitted from the gold nanoparticles contribute one order lower. Ceramic nanoparticles were studied as radiosensitizers in proton therapy. A Monte Carlo study by Ganjeh *et al.* (22) demonstrated the radioenhancement potential of Ta<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> as a ceramic material in proton therapy. In a simulation study by McKinnon *et al.* (23), the radiosensitization potential of ceramic nanoparticles of Ta<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> and CeO<sub>2</sub> in proton therapy was evaluated. The results showed a 14% to 17% enhancement in energy deposition for protons of 5 to 50 MeV. Engels *et al.* (24) conducted a Monte Carlo study based on experimental findings and showed that the nanoparticle shell of Ta<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>

induced highly localized physical dose enhancements during radiotherapy.

Based on the results, microscopic DEF values are higher than macroscopic physical DEF values in the tumor, confirming that proton-irradiated nanoparticles deposit their energy in proximity to themselves. The 10–20% macroscopic dose enhancement means that with the same exposed radiation, the delivered dose is increased 10–20% in the tumor. Clinically, this could allow for lower physical proton doses to achieve equivalent or superior tumor control, potentially widening the therapeutic window beyond reduction of OAR dose and side effects of proton therapy. High-Z nanoparticles exhibit substantially increased interaction cross-sections with incident protons, generating cascades of low-energy secondary electrons with short ranges ( $\leq 10 \mu\text{m}$ ) that deposit energy in highly localized regions around the nanoparticle surface. Additionally, protons undergo intensive Coulomb scattering near nanoparticle interfaces, creating non-uniform dose distributions with localized hotspots that remain undetectable at macroscopic scales. At microscopic dimensions, the breakdown of charged particle equilibrium occurs because secondary electron ranges become comparable to the region of interest. Furthermore, nuclear interactions and atomic relaxation processes in High-Z materials generate Auger electron cascades with nanoscopic ranges that deposit energy exclusively in the immediate nanoparticle vicinity. In alignment with our study, a Monte Carlo study by Wälzlein *et al.* (6) showed that the physical dose enhancement effect of platinum nanoparticles under proton beams is the result of Auger cascades and secondary electron production, which is confined to a localized dose enhancement in a short range of a few nanometers from the nanoparticle. A Simulation study by Lin *et al.* (15) indicated that proton therapy can be enhanced significantly only if the gold nanoparticles are in proximity to the biological target. Cho *et al.* (19) found that proton-induced dose enhancement is up to 17 in the close vicinity (<100 nm) of gold nanorods, while the dose enhancement was about 1% in the whole of the simulated vial. They also found that particle-induced X-ray emission (PIXE) and particle-induced gamma-ray emission (PIGE) contribute less to dose deposition, while Auger electrons are the main contributors. Kwon *et al.* (25) simulated a single gold nanoparticle within water exposed to a proton beam and calculated the radial dose distribution due to secondary electrons. They found that the dose distribution due to the presence of gold nanoparticles is extended over several nanometers in the radial direction. Lin *et al.* (26) studied the enhancement mechanisms of proton beams in the presence of gold nanoparticles. They found that the highest enhancement for proton beams is closer to the nanoparticles (DEF=2 to 3 close to the nanoparticle and ~1.4 at a far distance).

The results of this study confirm the fact that both gold and barium titanate radioenhancement mainly remains localized to the tumor site. This selective enhancement improves the therapeutic index, increasing tumor dose without exceeding tolerances for surrounding healthy tissue. Proton beams with different interaction mechanisms produce dense ionization with high LET localized at the tumor region, providing a highly conformal dose distribution (27). Nanoparticles enhance proton therapy outcomes by amplifying the production of delta electrons and Auger electrons, which have a high LET (linear energy

transfer) with an extremely short range, typically on the order of nanometers (28). These electrons are responsible for enhanced local dose deposition at the nanoscale, increasing the likelihood of DNA damage within tumor cells and boosting cancer cell destruction, particularly in the Bragg Peak region. A key finding of this study is the preferential enhancement of dose within the tumor volume, with minimal impact on surrounding healthy pancreatic tissue and OARs. In a simulation study using the MCNP6 code, Rahmawati *et al.* (29) simulated the lung with a 3 cm tumor surrounded by OARs irradiated by proton beams. Their results show that OARs are safe in proton therapy.

Several nanoparticles, such as hafnium oxide and gadolinium-based ones, have advanced to clinical trials (5). In an *in vivo* study by Filimonova *et al.* (30), they showed that bismuth nanoparticles injected directly into the tumor enhanced the antitumor effects of proton therapy. An *in vitro* study by Liu *et al.* (31) confirmed the radiosensitization effect of gold nanoparticles in proton therapy, evidenced by a considerable reduction in the survival fraction of EMT-6 and CT26 cell lines. Kim *et al.* (32) investigated the radioenhancement effect of gold and iron nanoparticles in proton therapy with a 40 MeV therapeutic proton beam. They reported a 37% to 62% increase in complete CT26 tumor regression in mice when the Bragg peak was located in the tumor center. An experimental study on prostate tumor cells exposed to 160 MeV protons demonstrated a 15% to 20% increase in prostate tumor cell killing when gold nanoparticles were applied (33). BaTiO<sub>3</sub> is a ferroelectric ceramic, meaning it has internal electric fields that may influence biological systems at the nanoscale, leading to the generation of oxidative stress and apoptosis in cancer cells. Although the mechanism of therapeutic enhancement of nanoparticles in proton therapy is still under discussion, investigations based on proton radiobiology show a proton beam-induced generation of nanoradiators and reactive oxygen species (ROS) and their subsequent action on cancer cells, leading to DNA damage and apoptosis (34). Baluchamy *et al.* (35) found that oxidant and antioxidant levels in cells can be altered by proton irradiation. Titanium dioxide is known as a low-Z metal oxide nanomaterial characterized by a high surface-to-volume ratio and a notable biological inertness (36). Gerken *et al.* (37) showed that irradiation of titanium dioxide by proton beams leads to the generation of a significant amount of ROS and 290% radioenhancement. The nuclear reaction that occurs when titanium interacts with protons, specifically through the reaction  $^{48}\text{Ti}(p, x)^{48}\text{V}$ , results in the formation of the radioactive isotope  $^{48}\text{V}$ , which emits positrons (38). This phenomenon may be linked to the markedly enhanced radiobiological effects of titanium dioxide under proton irradiation. Ahamed *et al.* (39) demonstrated that BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles could significantly elevate reactive oxygen species (ROS) production, cause DNA damage, and activate apoptosis pathways in lung carcinoma cells. Abdul Rashid *et al.* (27) studied the radiosensitization efficacy of gold, bismuth, iron oxide, and platinum nanoparticles on HCT116 colon carcinoma cells exposed to 150 MeV protons. Their results show that nanoparticles could enhance ROS production and dose deposition, leading to a reduction in cell viability. Also, their results indicate that bismuth has the highest ROS production ability, followed by gold, platinum, and iron oxide, respectively.

#### Study limitations and suggestions

In this study, the homogeneous nanoparticle distribution

was assumed to provide a controlled framework for comparing gold and BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles under identical conditions. However, nanoparticle uptake is heterogeneous *in vivo* and may result in localized variations in DEF. Future studies should incorporate more realistic nanoparticle distributions to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of dose enhancement.

This simulation study reveals the physical radiosensitization potential of barium titanate nanoparticles compared to gold nanoparticles, which limits the results of this study to the direct effects of the proton beam, not considering the indirect effects. Notably, ROS production is normally found to correlate with the level of radiosensitization and plays an essential role in the radiosensitization mechanisms; further simulation and experimental studies are needed on the physicochemical dose enhancement (ROS production) and biological radioenhancement effects of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles under proton irradiation.

#### Conclusion

This nanolattice-based simulation framework provides a novel approach to modeling nanoparticle distributions within tumors. In this study, the physical dose enhancement potential of barium titanate and gold nanoparticles loaded in a pancreatic tumor under proton beam irradiation was investigated. Both gold and BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles demonstrate promising macroscopic and microscopic DEF values, with gold nanoparticles showing a higher dose enhancement effect than barium titanate nanoparticles. Also, the results show that the microscopic dose enhancement value is higher than the macroscopic dose enhancement value, confirming that most proton-induced dose enhancement occurs in the close vicinity of nanoparticles. Further simulation studies on the physicochemical dose enhancement (ROS production) of BaTiO<sub>3</sub> nanoparticles and experimental studies are suggested.

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#### Authors' Contributions

E M conceived the study, performed the simulations, analyzed the data, and prepared the original draft of the manuscript. P M supervised the study and contributed to the scientific and language editing of the manuscript. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

#### Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

#### Declaration

We acknowledge the use of ChatGPT to enhance the figures quality.

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