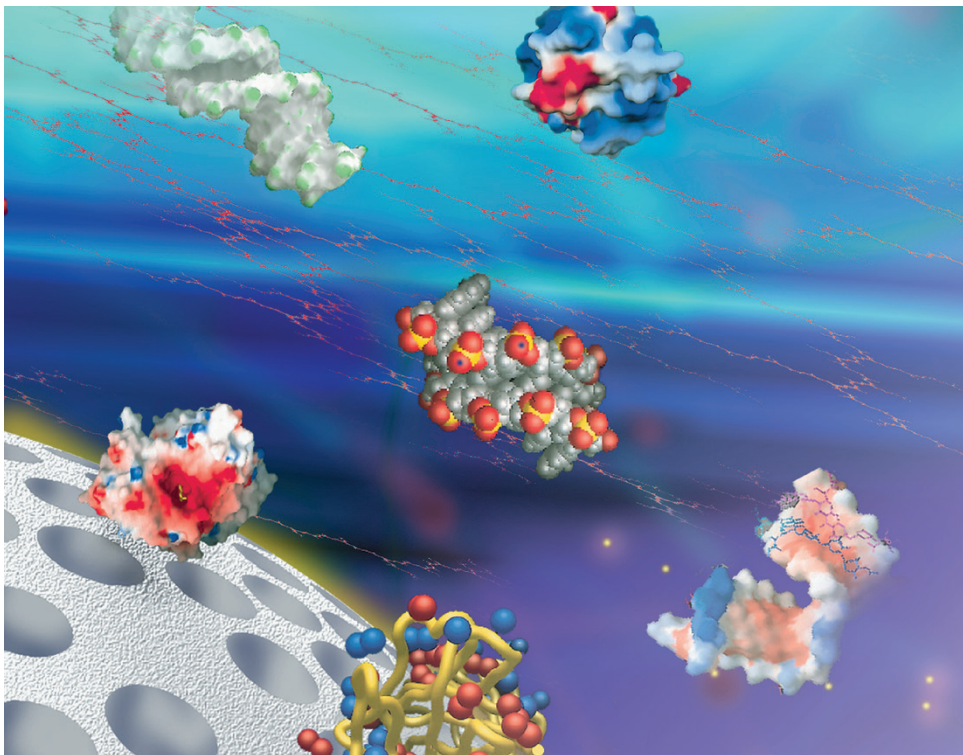




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Removal of Endotoxin from Monoclonal Antibodies



Application
Note

#03

#04

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Brendan Fish, Karen Bannister
and Emma Tribbeck,
Cambridge Antibody Technology,
Milstein Building, Granta Park,
Cambridge, CB1 6GH. UK

It is desirable to minimise endotoxins in purified protein preparations prior to their use in cell-based assays. Vivapure® centrifugal anion exchange membrane devices can remove endotoxin from research grade monoclonal antibody solutions simply with high protein recovery.

Endotoxins are lipopolysaccharides present in the cell wall of most Gram-negative bacteria, and are frequently present as contaminants in protein solutions purified in research environments. They have profound biological effects and thus must be minimised prior to use of such preparations in cell-based assays. The term EU is used to describe the activity of endotoxins, and typically the limit for endotoxin is set at 50 EU/mg for bioactive proteins destined for cell-based assays.

Achieving this low level is often a challenge in research as endotoxins are robust molecules surviving extremes of temperature and pH. Endotoxins are negatively charged under conditions commonly encountered during protein purification. This negative charge facilitates the use of anion exchange chromatography for their removal. If the binding of endotoxin can be achieved under conditions at which the protein of interest carries a net positive charge (i.e. at a pH below its isoelectric point) then the protein will be repelled from the positively charged matrix and flow through with the mobile phase, in what is often termed negative chromatography mode (Figure 1). However, this will often result in dilution of the protein, which may call for an additional concentration step.

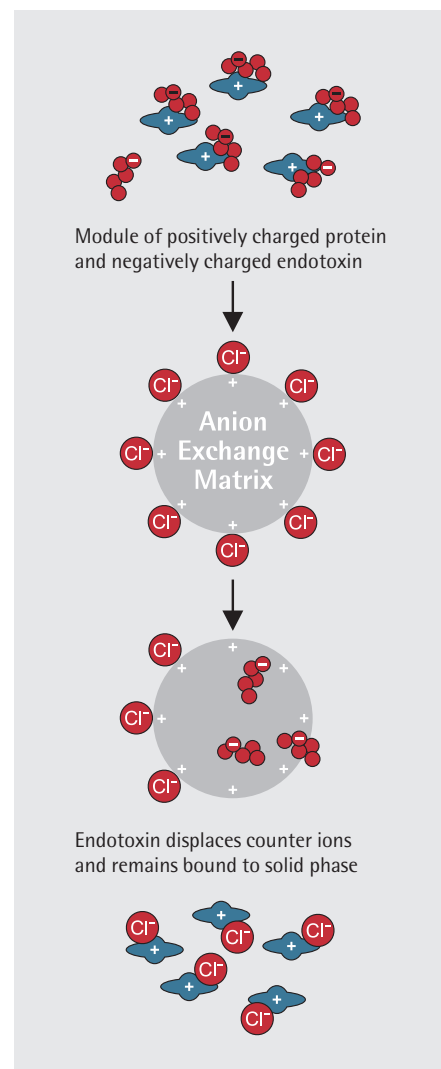


Fig. 1: Anion exchange of for endotoxin removal

Also, packing small chromatography columns and maintaining them sanitary is time consuming and requires specialist knowledge and equipment. Centrifugal ion exchange membrane spin columns offer an alternative to traditional chromatographic removal of endotoxin. They avoid the development of lengthy procedures with expensive equipment and potentially could rapidly yield high levels endotoxin-free protein.

In this report we tested the use of centrifugal anion exchange membrane devices for the removal of endotoxin from research grade antibody solutions.

Absorption of endotoxin from a basic monoclonal antibody

Vivapure® Mini Q spin columns

The monoclonal antibody used in this study has an isoelectric point of 7.5. All reagents and containers described below were supplied or prepared endotoxin free. Additionally, pH meter probes and magnetic stirrer bars were depyrogenated according to the manufacturers instruction or by soaking in 0.5 M sodium hydroxide for 1 hour. Vivapure® Mini Q spin columns were washed sequentially with 0.5 ml of water for irrigation (WFI, Baxter), 0.5 ml of 0.5 M sodium hydroxide, 2 × 0.5 ml of WFI and 0.5 ml Dulbecco's phosphate buffered saline, pH 7.2 (PBS, Gibco) by loading each solution into the device followed by centrifugation at 2,000 × g for 5 minutes.

The monoclonal antibody (115 mg in 1.3 ml PBS) was divided equally amongst four mini spin columns and centrifuged as above. The flow through from each column was then filtered through a 0.2 µm sterilising centrifugal filtration device (Corning, Costar Spin-X, 2,000 xg for 5 minutes) and pooled.

Residual monoclonal antibody was recovered by washing each Vivapure® mini column twice with 0.5 ml of phosphate buffered saline as above, collecting and combining the washes. Antibody concentration was measured in all samples using absorbance measurements at 280 nm and the known extinction coefficient. All volumes were estimated by weight assuming the density of the solutions to be 1 g/ml. Endotoxin (EU) was measured using a kinetic turbidimetric assay (Charles River Endosafe) following the manufacturers instructions.

Vivapure® Maxi H spin Q columns

The monoclonal antibody used in this study has an isoelectric point of 6.0. Vivapure® Maxi H spin Q columns were washed sequentially with 17 ml of water for irrigation (WFI, Baxter), 17 ml of 0.5 M sodium hydroxide and 3 × 17 ml of WFI and 17 ml Dulbecco's phosphate buffered saline, (Gibco, previously adjusted to pH 5.5 with the addition of concentrated hydrochloric acid) by loading each solution into the device followed by centrifugation at 500 × g for 5 minutes.

The monoclonal antibody (150 mg in 48 ml of PBS) was adjusted to pH 5.5 (i.e. below its pI) by the slow addition of dilute hydrochloric acid with constant mixing. This was then divided equally amongst four Vivapure® maxi spin columns and centrifuged as above. The flow through from each column was then pooled and adjusted to pH 7.2 by the addition of 0.5 M sodium hydroxide. The pH-adjusted pool was then filtered through a 0.2 µm sterilising filter (Millipore Stericup or Sartorius Satorlab) and stored at 4°C. Residual monoclonal antibody was recovered from the Vivapure® maxi columns by washing each with 15 ml of PBS adjusted to pH 5.5 as above, collecting and combining the washes. The concentration of monoclonal antibody and endotoxin levels in all samples was measured as described above.

Results and discussion

High recovery of antibody was achieved, for both the basic and acidic antibodies; 92 % and 91 % respectively (Tables 1 and 2). Very high clearance of endotoxin was also seen, with the levels being reduced to 1.2 and 1.3 EU/mg for both antibodies (Tables 1 and 2). The basic antibody product remained at constant concentration and was suitable for its intended use. The acidic antibody product was slightly reduced in concentration due to dilution on pH adjustment, but remained suitable for its intended use.

Conclusions

Vivapure® centrifugal anion exchange membrane devices were effective in removal of endotoxin from research grade monoclonal antibody solutions. The clearance of endotoxin was maintained in a high conductivity buffer, PBS, preventing the need for any diafiltration into low salt buffers prior to the anion exchange. This method was also applicable to acidic proteins by simple pH adjustment prior to application to the charged membrane. In addition to the high protein recovery the starting concentration of the antibody solution was maintained obviating the need for any further processing. This method is a trouble-free method for reduction of endotoxin in protein solutions and would allow for easy processing of multiple samples over a short period.

Sample	Total antibody (mg)	Antibody recovery (%)	Endotoxin (EU)
Start material	115	–	3450
Vivapure® Mini Q Flow through	93	81	112
Vivapure® Mini Q Wash #1	11	10	ND
Vivapure® Mini Q Wash #2	1	1	ND

Table 1: Monoclonal antibody recovery and endotoxin level following purification using Vivapure® Mini Q

Sample	Total antibody (mg)	Antibody recovery (%)	Endotoxin (EU)
Start material	150	–	45,500
Vivapure® Maxi Q Flow through	125	83	159
Vivapure® Maxi Q Wash	12	8	ND

ND = Not determined

Table 2: Monoclonal antibody recovery and endotoxin level following purification using Vivapure® Maxi Q

References

Petsch, D. and Anspach, F.B. (2000) Endotoxin removal from protein solutions. *Journal of Biotechnology*, 76, 97–199.

Sales and Service Contacts

For further contacts, visit www.sartorius.com

Europe

Germany
Sartorius Lab Instruments
GmbH & Co. KG
Otto-Brenner-Strasse 20
37079 Goettingen
Phone +49.551.308.0
Fax +49.551.308.3289

France & Suisse Romande
Sartorius France
2, rue Antoine Laurent de Lavoisier
ZA de la Gaudrée
91410 Dourdan
Phone +33.1.70.62.50.00
Fax +33.1.64.59.76.39

Austria
Sartorius Austria GmbH
Modecenterstrasse 22
1030 Vienna
Phone +43.1.7965760.0
Fax +43.1.7965760.24

Belgium
Sartorius Belgium N.V.
Rue Colonel Bourg 105
1030 Bruxelles
Phone +32.2.756.06.90
Fax +32.2.481.84.11

Finland & Baltics
Sartorius Biohit Liquid Handling Oy
Laippatie 1
00880 Helsinki
Phone +358.9.755.951
Fax +358.9.755.95.200

Hungary
Sartorius Hungária Kft.
Kagyló u. 5.
2092 Budakeszi
Phone +3623.457.227
Fax +3623.457.147

Ireland
Sartorius Ireland Ltd.
Unit 41, The Business Centre
Stadium Business Park
Ballycoolin Road
Dublin 11
Phone +353.1.8089050
Fax +353.1.8089388

Italy
Sartorius Italy S.r.l.
Viale A. Casati, 4
20835 Muggiò (MB)
Phone +39.039.4659.1
Fax +39.039.4659.88

Netherlands
Sartorius Netherlands B.V.
Phone +31.30.60.53.001
Fax +31.30.60.52.917
info.netherlands@sartorius.com

Poland
Sartorius Poland sp.z o.o.
ul. Wrzesinska 70
62-025 Kostrzyn
Phone +48.61.6473830
Fax +48.61.6473839

Russian Federation
LLC "Sartorius RUS"
Uralskaya str. 4, Lit. B
199155 St. Petersburg
Phone +7.812.327.53.27
Fax +7.812.327.53.23

Spain & Portugal
Sartorius Spain, S.A.
Avda. de la Industria, 32
Edificio PAYMA
28108 Alcobendas (Madrid)
Phone Spain +34.913.586.095
Phone Portugal +351.800.855.800
Fax Spain +34.913.589.623
Fax Portugal +351.800.855.799

Switzerland
Sartorius Mechatronics Switzerland AG
Ringstrasse 24a
8317 Tagelswangen (ZH)
Phone +41.44.746.50.00
Fax +41.44.746.50.50

U.K.
Sartorius UK Ltd.
Longmead Business Centre
Blenheim Road, Epsom
Surrey KT19 9QQ
Phone +44.1372.737159
Fax +44.1372.726171

Ukraine
LLS "Sartorius RUS"
Post Box 440 "B"
01001 Kiev, Ukraine
Phone +380.44.411.4918
Fax +380.50.623.3162

Americas

USA
Sartorius Corporation
5 Orville Drive, Suite 200
Bohemia, NY 11716
Phone +1.631.254.4249
Toll-free +1.800.635.2906
Fax +1.631.254.4253

Argentina
Sartorius Argentina S.A.
Int. A. AVALOS 4251
B1605ECS Munro
Buenos Aires
Phone +54.11.4721.0505
Fax +54.11.4762.2333

Brazil
Sartorius do Brasil Ltda
Avenida Senador Vergueiro 2962
São Bernardo do Campo
CEP 09600-000 - SP- Brasil
Phone +55.11.4362.8900
Fax +55.11.4362.8901

Canada
Sartorius Canada Inc.
2179 Dunwin Drive #4
Mississauga, ON L5L 1X2
Phone +1.905.569.7977
Toll-Free +1.800.668.4234
Fax +1.905.569.7021

Mexico
Sartorius de México, S.A. de C.V.
Libramiento Norte de Tepetzotlan s/n,
Colonia Barrio Tlacateco,
Municipio de Tepetzotlan,
Estado de México,
C.P. 54605
Phone +52.55.5562.1102
Fax +52.55.5562.2942
leadsmex@sartorius.com

Peru
Sartorius Peru S.A.C.
Av. Emilio Cavenecia 264 San Isidro
15073 Lima, Perú
Phone +51.1.441 0158
Fax +51.1.422 6100

Asia | Pacific

Australia
Sartorius Australia Pty. Ltd.
Unit 5, 7-11 Rodeo Drive
Dandenong South Vic 3175
Phone +61.3.8762.1800
Fax +61.3.8762.1828

China
Sartorius (Shanghai) Trading Co., Ltd.
3rd Floor, North Wing, Tower 1
No. 4560 Jinke Road
Zhangjiang Hi-Tech Park
Pudong District
Shanghai 201210, P.R. China
Phone +86.21.6878.2300
Fax +86.21.6878.2882

Hong Kong
Sartorius Hong Kong Ltd.
Unit 1012, Lu Plaza
2 Wing Yip Street
Kwun Tong
Kowloon, Hong Kong
Phone +852.2774.2678
Fax +852.2766.3526

India
Sartorius Weighing India Pvt. Ltd.
#69/2-69/3, NH 48, Jakkasandra,
Nelamangala Tq
562 123 Bangalore, India
Phone +91.80.4350.5250
Fax +91.80.4350.5253

Japan
Sartorius Japan K.K.
4th Fl., Daiwa Shinagawa North Bldg.
8-11, Kita-Shinagawa 1-chome
Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo, 140-0001 Japan
Phone +81.3.3740.5408
Fax +81.3.3740.5406

Malaysia
Sartorius Malaysia Sdn. Bhd
Lot L3-E-3B, Enterprise 4
Technology Park Malaysia
Bukit Jalil
57000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Phone +60.3.8996.0622
Fax +60.3.8996.0755

Singapore
Sartorius Singapore Pte. Ltd
1 Science Park Road,
The Capricorn, #05-08A,
Singapore Science Park II
Singapore 117528
Phone +65.6872.3966
Fax +65.6778.2494

South Korea
Sartorius Korea Ltd.
8th Floor, Solid Space B/D,
PanGyoYeok-Ro 220, Bundang-Gu
SeongNam-Si, GyeongGi-Do, 463-400
Phone +82.31.622.5700
Fax +82.31.622.5799

Thailand
Sartorius (Thailand) Co. Ltd.
129 Rama 9 Road,
Huaykwang
Bangkok 10310
Phone +66.2643.8361-6
Fax +66.2643.8367



◀ www.sartorius.com