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Surface characterization of gold nanoparticles for nanomaterial specific toxicity screening: FT-IR method

Caractérisation de surface des nanoparticules d'or pour criblage de toxicité spécifique de nanomatériau: méthode FT-IR



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Foreword

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Introduction

Gold nanoparticles (AuNPs) can be controlled with regard to size, shape and surface ligands, making them ideal for the study of relationships between their physicochemical properties and cytotoxicity on living bodies^{[1][2][3]}. Among the various properties of AuNPs, surface ligand characteristics, such as the chemical composition, molecular structure and quantity of bound molecules, were found to play an important role in determining the behaviour of AuNPs, e.g. the degree of aggregation or agglomeration in solution, binding with biomolecules in cell culture media and cytotoxicity to living cells^{[4][5][6][7][8][9][10][11][12]}. On the other hand, surface ligand modification is not always successful in the synthesis step, and the degree of ligand exchange should be identified prior to the property specific cytotoxicity test of AuNPs in order to obtain reliable and consistent results.

FT-IR (Fourier transform infrared) absorption spectroscopy is one of the most useful tools of NP surface ligand identification and quantification. By using the FT-IR method, the structures and relative quantities of ligand molecules bound to NP surfaces can be analysed^{[13][14][15][16][17][18][19][20]}. However, the low concentrations and aqueous environment of synthesized AuNPs will complicate the interpretation of measurement results. Low concentrations of AuNPs result in small absorbance values, which can easily be influenced by background noise or the absorbance of trace impurities. Since cytotoxicity tests are performed in aqueous environments, we should analyse what is on the surface of AuNP in aqueous solutions if we want to study the effect of the surface characteristics on cytotoxicity of AuNPs. However, water molecules strongly absorb IR light over a wide frequency range, disabling IR absorption analysis on the solutes in very low concentrations. It is necessary to develop measurement guidelines by which the above issues can be minimized. In this project, we seek to develop a Technical Specification (TS) for the observation of chemical moieties bound to the synthetic AuNP in the form of dehydrated films, which can deliver the information about the molecular species bound to AuNPs when they were in aqueous solutions. Although the standardization of FT-IR measurement procedures will be the basis for this Technical Specification, a great deal of weight will also be given to the sample preparation procedure for correct FT-IR analysis.