

SEPARATIONS FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY

2

Edited by D.L.PYLE

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D. L. PYLE

Biotechnology Group, University of Reading UK



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SEPARATIONS FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY

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Papers presented at the Second International Symposium on 'Separations for Biotechnology' held at the University of Reading, UK, 10–13 September 1990

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Preface

The challenge of bioseparations is to isolate and purify identified products from the dilute product broth produced from cell culture. Innovation in bioseparations technology is increasingly driven by the requirements imposed by the growing importance of production on a process scale of injectable-grade products, and economic pressures to improve the efficiency of downstream processing. As in other areas of technical change, science does not necessarily precede new technology: progress results from a complex and messy mixture of advances in understanding, ingenious ideas, novel techniques and chance discoveries. What is certain is that close interaction between academics and practitioners, biological scientists and process engineers is needed to solve the problems of bioseparations. The Second International Conference on Separations for Biotechnology at Reading, UK, in September 1990 set out to provide a critical multidisciplinary forum for the discussion of bioseparations. This volume contains the papers presented at the meeting.

The meeting was organised around six themes with oral and poster presentations on the science and practice of bioseparations technology, and the same structure has been kept for this book. We have also included the texts of the keynote review paper by Professor Alan Michaels and the introductory review papers specially commissioned for the conference. Within each part of this book the review paper is followed by the contributed papers grouped alphabetically by their first author. All the original papers published here were accepted for publication after scientific refereeing.

This book would not have been possible without the help, unsung and invariably unpaid, of many colleagues. I am especially grateful to the SCI, the Organising Committee—the session chairmen in particular—and to the many anonymous reviewers. I owe a special debt to Tom Arnot and Gary Lye for their sterling work on the index and, finally, to Jean Davis for her outstanding and patient secretarial support in creating order out of paperwork whose complexity rivalled the biological soup which provides the basis for this volume.

D. L. PYLE

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	v
--------------------------	---

Plenary Paper

Frontiers of Bioseparations Technology: Unsolved Problems and Novel Process Concepts	3
<i>A. S. Michaels</i>	

Part 1: Cell Disruption and Removal of Insolubles

Cell Disruption and Removal of Insolubles (<i>Review Paper</i>)	11
<i>J. A. Asenjo</i>	
Differential Product Release from Yeast Cells by Selective Enzymatic Lysis	21
<i>B. A. Andrews, R.-B. Huang and J. A. Asenjo</i>	
Conceptual Design of a Novel Flocculation Device	29
<i>M. H. J. Ashley</i>	
The Effect of Culture History on the Disruption of <i>Alcaligenes eutrophus</i> by High Pressure Homogenisation	38
<i>S. T. Harrison, J. S. Dennis and H. A. Chase</i>	
Separation by Biopolymers: Separation of Suspended Solids by Microbial Flocculant	48
<i>R. Kurane</i>	
Protein Release from the Yeast <i>Pichia pastoris</i> by Chemical Permeabilization: Comparison to Mechanical Disruption and Enzymatic Lysis	55
<i>T. J. Naglak and H. Y. Wang</i>	
The Concentration of Yeast Suspensions by Crossflow Filtration	65
<i>M. Pritchard, J. A. Scott and J. A. Howell</i>	
Heterologous Flocculation of <i>Escherichia coli</i> and Yeast	74
<i>R. G. Protheroe, R. H. Cumming and A. J. Matchett</i>	

Lateral Migration: A Laminar Fluid Flow Mechanism Suited to Biotechnology Separations	83
<i>G. J. Purdom and C. A. Lambe</i>	
The Dewatering of Biological Suspensions in Industrial Centrifuges	93
<i>P. N. Ward and M. Hoare</i>	

Part 2: Concentration Processes

Concentration and Selectivity in Bioseparations (<i>Review Paper</i>)	105
<i>D. L. Pyle</i>	
A Model for Emulsion Liquid Membrane Extraction of Organic Acids	112
<i>J. B. Chaudhuri and D. L. Pyle</i>	
Vortex Flow Filtration for Ultrafiltration of Protein Solutions	122
<i>C. L. Cooney, U. Holeschovsky and G. Agarwal</i>	
Membrane Filtration: <i>a priori</i> Predictions of the Ideal Limiting Flux	132
<i>R. Field</i>	
Clarification of Tissue Culture Fluid and Cell Lysates Using Biocryl® Bioprocessing Aids	142
<i>K. Fletcher, S. Deley, R. J. Fleischaker Jr, I. T. Forrester, A. C. Grabski and W. N. Strickland</i>	
Economic Fabrication and Utilisation of Agar Composites in Bioselective Recovery in Fixed and Fluidised Beds	152
<i>N. B. Gibson and A. Lyddiatt</i>	
Electromagnetic Separation of Small Particles in the Dielectric Regime	162
<i>K. Goossens and L. Van Biesen</i>	
Reactive Solvent Extraction of Beta-Lactam Antibiotics.	172
<i>T. A. J. Harris, S. Khan, B. G. Reuben, T. Shokoya and M. S. Verrall</i>	
Aqueous Two-Phase Fractionation: Practical Evaluation for Productive Biorecovery	181
<i>J. G. Huddleston, K. W. Ottomar, D. Ngonyani, J. A. Flanagan and A. Lyddiatt</i>	
Urease Immobilized on an Acrylic Carrier for Enzymatic Removal of Urea	191
<i>B. Krajewska, M. Leszko and W. Zaborska</i>	

Solid Phases for Immunoaffinity Adsorption	200
<i>S. B. Mohan, J. M. Malhotra and A. Lyddiatt</i>	
The Relationship between Protein Partition Coefficient and Polymer Concentration in Aqueous Two-Phase Systems	210
<i>G. W. Niven, S. J. Smith, P. G. Scurlock and A. T. Andrews</i>	
Protein Fouling and its Implications for Selection of Ultrafiltration Membranes	217
<i>I. M. Reed and J. M. Sheldon</i>	
Purification by Two-Phase Partitioning of a Hepatitis Core Protein–Pertussis Epitope Fusion, Expressed in Yeast	227
<i>V. Riveros-Moreno and J. E. Beesley</i>	
Separation of Low-Molecular Organic Compounds from Complex Aqueous Mixtures by Extraction	238
<i>K. Schügerl, W. Degener, P. v. Frieling, L. Handojo and I. Kirgios</i>	
Extraction of Citric Acid Using a Supported Liquid Membrane	245
<i>T. Sirman, D. L. Pyle and A. S. Grandison</i>	

Part 3: High Resolution Separations

The Future of High Resolution Purification (<i>Review Paper</i>)	257
<i>H. A. Chase</i>	
Stable Synthetic Affinity Ligands for Use in Protein Fractionation.	265
<i>S. J. Burton, J. C. Pearson and D. L. Stewart</i>	
The Utility of Polymeric Reversed Phase Packings for the Purification of Peptides, Proteins and Antibiotics	275
<i>P. G. Cartier, K. C. Deissler, J. J. Maikner and M. Kraus</i>	
Batch Stirred Tank Adsorption of Impurity of Cephalosporin C, Desacetylcephalosporin C, Using Modified Amberlite XAD-2 Resin	285
<i>J. L. Casillas, J. L. Garrido, J. Aracil, M. Martinez, F. Addo-Yobo and C. N. Kenney</i>	
Modification of Microfiltration Membranes as Dye-Ligand Adsorbents for the Isolation of Enzymes from Crude Extracts	295
<i>B. Champluvier and M.-R. Kula</i>	
Adsorption–Desorption of Proteins in RP-HPLC RNase on C ₄ Supports	305
<i>E. D’Addario, M. Patrissi, M. Masi, G. Storti and S. Carrá</i>	

Affinity Separations Using Microcapsules	315
<i>A. J. Daugulis, C. P. Wight, M. F. A. Goosen and K. E. Chesney</i>	
Modelling of Protein Adsorption in Liquid Fluidized Beds	325
<i>N. M. Draeger and H. A. Chase</i>	
Affinity Separation of Proteins in Aqueous Two-Phase Systems	335
<i>T. Franco, B. A. Andrews, O. Cascone, C. Hodgson, A. T. Andrews and J. A. Asenjo</i>	
Effect of pH on Polygalacturonase Adsorption in CM-Sephadex Gels	345
<i>S. Harsa, D. L. Pyle and C. A. Zaror</i>	
Purification and Characterisation of Sarcosine Dehydrogenase	355
<i>R. J. Hinton, T. Atkinson, C. P. Price and M. D. Scawen</i>	
Separation of Some Sulphated Olivanic Acids Using Immobilised Cyclodextrins	364
<i>M. J. Hudson, S. Hemmings and M. S. Verrall</i>	
Separation with Porous Glass Membranes and Controlled Pore Glass (CPG) Chromatography	371
<i>P. Langer and R. Schnabel</i>	
Performance on Anion-Exchange Cellulose at Process-Scale	381
<i>P. R. Levison, S. E. Badger, D. W. Toome, D. Carcary and E. T. Butts</i>	
High Speed Analytical and Preparative Separations of Biological Macromolecules	390
<i>L. L. Lloyd and F. P. Warner</i>	
Purification and Characterisation of Gentamicin Acetyl Transferase	400
<i>J. Miller, H. C. Morris, C. P. Price, T. Atkinson and P. M. Hammond</i>	
Affinity Purification Using Radial Streaming Affinity Chromatography	409
<i>Y. Planques and H. Pora</i>	
Multi-component Adsorption of Proteins to Ion Exchangers	418
<i>G. L. Skidmore and H. A. Chase</i>	

Part 4: Product Finishing

The Manufacture of Proteins for Human Therapeutic Use (<i>Review Paper</i>)	431
<i>C. R. Hill</i>	

Immunoaffinity Purification of Guar Alpha-Galactosidase Using Mild Elution Conditions	444
<i>M. J. Berry, J. Piron, M. M. Gani and P. Porter</i>	
Purification of Mouse IgG1 on Protein A and the Measurement of Contaminating Protein A	452
<i>K. Beyzavi and H. C. Wood</i>	
Analyses of Purity and Homogeneity in Production Processes	462
<i>K. Biedermann, P. K. Jepsen, J. Pedersen and B. R. Nielsen</i>	
Purification of Monoclonal Antibodies for Human Clinical Use: Validation of DNA and Retroviral Clearance.	472
<i>D. Brady, J. Bonnerjea and C. R. Hill</i>	
Analysis of Recombinant Human IFN-Gamma Produced in CHO Cells: Effects of Glycosylation and Proteolytic Processing on Product Heterogeneity	481
<i>E. Curling, P. Hayter, A. Baines, A. Bull, P. Strange and N. Jenkins</i>	
Validation of the Re-use of Protein A Sepharose for the Purification of Monoclonal Antibodies	491
<i>R. Francis, J. Bonnerjea and C. R. Hill</i>	
Process Design for the Inactivation of Viruses in the Manufacture of Pharmaceutical Proteins	499
<i>R. V. McIntosh and P. R. Foster</i>	
Investigations of Apparent Homogeneity and Stability of Recombinant HuIFN-Alpha 1	506
<i>R. H. Wondraczek, A. Stelzner and B. Glück</i>	

Part 5: Integrated Processes

The Rational Design of Large Scale Protein Separation Processes	519
<i>J. A. Asenjo</i>	
Downstream Processing of Extracellular Enzymes of <i>Aspergillus niger</i>	529
<i>M. J. Bailey and H. Ojamo</i>	
Ethanol Production by Extractive Fermentation: A Novel Membrane Extraction Technique	539
<i>S. Bandini and C. Gostoli</i>	
Continuous Chromatographic Bioreaction–Separation	549
<i>P. E. Barker, G. Ganetsos, J. Ajongwen and A. Akintoye</i>	

Thermodynamic Analysis of Separation Process Alternatives	558
<i>D. E. Essien and D. L. Pyle</i>	
Secondary Metabolites by Extractive Fermentation	567
<i>D. Hollmann, U. Merrettig-Bruns, U. Müller and U. Onken</i>	
Cloning and Expression as a Tool to Easily Purify a New Highly Thermostable Archaeobacterial β -Galactosidase	577
<i>M. Moracci, M. De Rosa and M. Rossi</i>	
Part 6: Downstream Systems Design and Control	
Downstream Process Design and Bioproduct Quality Control (<i>Review Paper</i>)	585
<i>H. Y. Wang</i>	
Biosafety in Downstream Processing	592
<i>A. M. Bennett, J. E. Benbough and P. Hambleton</i>	
Automated Multi-stage Chromatographic Systems for Production of Biotherapeutics	601
<i>G. E. Chapman, P. Matejtschuk, J. E. More and P. Pilling</i>	
Applications of Molecular Size Detection in Column Chromatography .	611
<i>P. Claes, S. Fowell, A. Kenney, P. Vardy and C. Woollin</i>	
The Monitoring and Control of Protein Purification and Recovery Processes	622
<i>M. Niktari, S. Chard, P. Richardson and M. Hoare</i>	
A Study of Permeability and Hydrodynamic Dispersion under Conditions of Chromatographic Flow	632
<i>K. Östergren and C. Trägårdh</i>	
Simple Diagnostic Guidelines for Adsorption Column Performance .	642
<i>N. Thomas</i>	
<i>Index of Contributors</i>	653
<i>Subject Index</i>	655

Plenary Paper

**FRONTIERS OF BIOSEPARATIONS TECHNOLOGY:
UNSOLVED PROBLEMS AND NOVEL PROCESS CONCEPTS**

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INTRODUCTION

The unique properties, and formidable processing problems associated with the isolation and purification of bioactive proteins and other biologically derived substances have become a major challenge to the chemical and biochemical engineer. The extraordinarily high standards of purity demanded of such products to satisfy regulatory requirements of safety, coupled with their dependence upon precisely controlled tertiary and quaternary structure for proper biological activity, require the development and use of separation/purification techniques uncommon to traditional bioprocessing practices, and of novel processing concepts which call upon the collective expertise of life scientist and engineer.

The basic separation strategies employed for bioproduct recovery are well-recognized, and generally observed in all bioprocessing operations today. These comprise (1) separation of the product(s) of interest in relatively impure form and low concentration from the biomass (either intact cells or cell debris) which produced them; (2) concentration of the product-bearing extract; (3) separation of the product in relatively high purity and still higher concentration from the majority of the adventitious impurities; and (4) isolation of the product from all but miniscule amounts of inactive or potentially toxic biologically-derived impurities. However, of the alternative technologies available for pursuing these strategies today, few are ideal for these purposes. Their limitations include poor product yield, inadequate separation selectivity, loss in product bioactivity due to denaturation or other structural change, inadequate process biosafety, or excessive processing cost. Efforts to circumvent these limitations have involved both attempts to

modify existing separations processes, and development of radically new processes better suited to meeting these stringent requirements. Some recent examples of these efforts as summarized below.

RECOVERY OF INSOLUBLES

In the area of solid/liquid separations for recovering extracellular bioproducts from whole cell suspensions, or intracellular products from dispersions of lysed cell fragments, UF/MF membrane separation processes continue to receive much attention. The recent development of surface-modified microfiltration/ultrafiltration membranes which resist fouling by biopolymers and colloids has been noteworthy, as has the development of novel fluid-management strategies (e.g., pulsatile flow, rotating-cylinder devices) which markedly improve the flux-performance, separation efficiency, and service lifetime of UF/MF separation systems. Of particular promise has been the development of ceramic and ceramic/metallic composite MF/UF membranes, which display unique fouling resistance, facile cleanability and sterilizability, and extraordinary durability.

Where genetically engineered proteins form inclusion bodies within recombinant organisms, and conventional solid/liquid separations are ineffective, it has been found that, by carefully controlled cell lysis, appropriate control of suspension pH and ionic strength, and precisely monitored centrifugation, efficient recovery of the inclusion bodies with relatively little contamination by cell fragments and other contaminants can be accomplished.

A novel process which involves treatment of a whole fermentation broth by fluidization with a selective particulate adsorbent permits efficient simultaneous recovery and purification of an extracellular metabolic product without need for any dewatering step. This process lends itself particularly well to cell-recycle, and semicontinuous whole broth extraction.

A unique single-step combination of membrane filtration and adsorption has been demonstrated: This makes use of a hollow fiber membrane ultrafiltration module, the shell space of which is filled with a particulate selective adsorbent; a cell-suspension containing a low concentration of desired protein is recirculated through the fiber lumens, with a small permeate stream being removed from the shell space. The cell-free, protein-bearing permeate is stripped of protein by the adsorbent; when the adsorbent is saturated, the shell-space of the module is flushed free of permeate, and eluted with saline or other displacing mixture to release and permit recovery of the purified protein.

EXTRACTION OF PROTEINS

Two-phase aqueous separation techniques for recovery of proteins from whole broths and lysed cell slurries continue to receive intensive study. A broadening selection of water soluble polymers and hydrocolloids, which yield improved selectivity and phase partitioning, and are economically practicable, should make this technology increasingly useful for large-scale protein recovery. The use of surfactants which micellize in non-aqueous media, and which in the micellar state are capable of sorbing specific proteins from aqueous solution, are the basis for the novel process of "inverse micelle" liquid/liquid separation for protein recovery and purification. When combined with the relatively new process of "membrane solvent extraction", which utilizes microporous membranes to greatly facilitate liquid/liquid extraction of "dirty" or emulsion-forming feedstreams, these techniques may constitute an important new dimension in bioproduct recovery.

ADSORPTIVE SEPARATIONS

A simple procedure for removal and isolation of a single protein species from a complex biopolymer mixture remains a major goal of modern separation technology. While preparative elution chromatography continues to be the preferred procedure from the standpoint of ultimate product purity, the complexity, tediousness, and high cost of the process are powerful deterrents to its use for industrial scale applications. Moreover, in many cases where column chromatography does permit efficient product recovery, the conditions of loading or elution often result in complete or partial denaturation of the protein of interest; this is tantamount to winning the battle and losing the war. The problems of restoring a denatured protein to its active, natural conformation (about which more below) are sufficiently apprehending to encourage the process engineer to seek other less drastic alternatives.

Recently, there has been rapidly increasing interest in the use of functionalized, selective solid-phase adsorbents for treatment of aqueous multicomponent protein solutions for the sorptive removal of one (or several members of a common class of) protein. In this process (sometimes termed "flash chromatography" or "bind/release"), the solution is contacted with the adsorbent until the solid is virtually saturated with the adsorbate, the solid phase flushed free of unadsorbed solutes, and then treated with a desorbing solution which displaces the adsorbed species in concentrated form, and regenerates the adsorbent. The solid phase may be functionalized in a number of ways: Attachment of ionogenic functions renders it an ion exchanger, which can differentiate between proteins of differing isoelectric points; attachment of "generic" affinity ligands such as triazine dyestuffs can render it selectively sorptive for certain classes of enzyme; attachment of cell