

Review

Antibody production, design and use for biosensor-based applications

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Available online 4 February 2009

Keywords:
Recombinant antibodies
Biosensor
Transduction
Ribosome display
Phage display

ABSTRACT

Currently, the reliable detection and quantification of a multitude of different analytes is crucial in many applications and settings. Biosensors have revolutionised diagnostics for use in point-of-care testing (POC), the detection of food and environmental contaminants, biological warfare agents, illicit drugs and human/animal disease markers. Antibodies continue to play a pivotal role in many sensor devices due to their exquisite specificity for their cognate antigens. In this review current biosensor platforms employing antibodies for molecular recognition are briefly described. The use of molecular biological techniques for the generation and improvement of antibodies is critically examined. Such recombinant antibodies possess improved attributes for use in biosensor development in terms of design, stability, affinity and specificity.

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Abbreviations: Ab, antibody; Ag, antigen; AP, alkaline phosphatase; ARM, antibody-ribosome-mRNA; BSA, bovine serum albumin; BW, bulk wave; CDR, complementarity determining region; CH, constant heavy chain (1, 2 and 3); DNA, deoxyribonucleic acid; DTT, dithiothreitol; Fab, fragment antigen binding; FET, field effect transistor; Fv, variable fragment; Gly, glycine; HRP, horseradish peroxidase; Ig, immunoglobulin; ISFET, ion-selective field effect transistor; K_d , dissociation constant; LAPS, light addressable potentiometric sensors; LED, light emitting diode; mRNA, messenger ribonucleic acid; MW, molecular weight; OWLS, optical waveguide lightmode spectroscopy; PBS, phosphate buffer saline; PDI, protein disulphide isomerase; pM, picomolar; QCM, quartz-crystal microbalance; RfS, reflectometric interference spectroscopy; RI, Refractive index; RT-PCR, reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction; SAF, supercritical angle fluorescence; SAW, surface acoustic wave; scAb, single chain antibody; scFv, single chain variable fragment; Ser, serine; SHM, somatic hypermutagenesis; SIP, selectively infective phage; SPR, surface plasmon resonance; TIR, total internal reflection; TIRE, total internal reflection ellipsometry; TIRF, total internal reflection fluorescence; TSM, thickness shear mode.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Biosensors overview

A biosensor can be described as a transducer that incorporates a biological recognition component as the key functional element. It consists of three main components as illustrated in Fig. 1: the biorecognition element, the transducer and the signal display or readout [1]. The interaction of the analyte with the biorecognition element is converted to a measurable signal by the transduction system. The signal is then converted into a readout or display.

Biosensors are powerful tools for the analysis of biomolecular interactions in clinical, biochemical and environmental analyses [2]. In the context of a medical setting, biosensors have the potential to provide rapid, real-time and accurate results in accident and emergency departments or at the physician's office. A typical example of this is the *in vitro* measurement of capillary glucose (near patient) in diabetic patients [3]. For the purposes of this review, the area of antibody-based biosensors will be evaluated with emphasis on improvements in antibody production and their implications for the design of biosensors.

1.2. Antibody overview

1.2.1. The immune system

The immune system functions as a surveillance mechanism against infectious organisms and/or their toxic products [4]. It can be categorised by two mechanisms; non-adaptive (innate) and adaptive (acquired) immunity [5]. Non-adaptive immunity is a general non-specific response to foreign molecules and includes systems such as phagocytosis (macrophages), cell lysis (natural killer cells) and a host of chemical and physical elements [4,5]. The key difference between non-adaptive and adaptive immunity is the ability of the adaptive immunity to improve following exposure to specific molecules. Adaptive immunity is mediated by lymphocytes (specifically white blood cells) that are responsible for the secretion of immunoglobulins (antibodies). B-cells are terminally differentiated to give rise to memory B-cells that immediately recognise the antigen post primary exposure, and plasma cells, which are responsible for secretion of specific antibodies in response to the antigen [5–7].

1.2.2. Antibody structure

The basic structure of an immunoglobulin is outlined in Fig. 2. The antibody molecule has four polypeptide chains, two heavy (H) chains with molecular weights of 50 kDa and two light (L) chains (25 kDa molecular weight) linked by disulphide bonds. The chains have both constant (C) and variable (V) regions. The H chain has one variable region (V_H) that is responsible for antigen binding and three constant regions (C_{H1} , C_{H2} and C_{H3}). The light chain has one variable region (V_L), which is an important part of the antigen-binding site, and one constant region (C_L) [8].

There are five classes of immunoglobulin which are distinguished by their heavy chains: IgA, IgG, IgM, IgD and IgE. Class switching of the heavy chain during gene rearrangement gives

rise to the isotype of the immunoglobulin. There are two types of light chains, κ and λ , which combine with heavy chains to form a complete antibody molecule. IgG is the predominant class of antibody produced during the matured immune response and is the most widely targeted for immune library construction [8]. The Fc region consists of three domains, C_{H1} , C_{H2} and C_{H3} that confer effector functions, such as complement activation, on the antibody. Antigen binding is mediated by the variable light (V_L) and heavy (V_H) domains which bring together the hyper-variable regions of the antibody, known as the complementarity determining regions (CDRs). The antibody constant regions are generally conserved with only small differences in sequence being found in the various antibody classes. However, the CDRs exhibit a high level of sequence diversity.

1.2.3. Antibody diversity

The diversity of antibodies in the immune system is achieved by gene recombination and somatic hyper-mutagenesis of the encoding genes [9]. The encoding gene segments are outlined in Fig. 3. In vertebrate genomes, there are 11 Constant (C_H), 123–129 Variable (V_H), 27 Diverse (D_H) and 9 Joining (J_H) gene segments that combine to encode the heavy chains. During B-cell development, the immunoglobulin loci undergo rearrangements [10]. Within the heavy chain locus, the V_H - D_H - J_H rearrange and this exon becomes linked to a combination of C_H segments during transcription. Subsequently, the mRNA is translated into the immunoglobulin isotype that is specific to the lymphocyte. A similar chain of events occurs for the λ and κ loci, with the absence of D segments.

The diversity introduced into the immune system by these rearrangements is increased further by somatic hypermutation (SHM) [11]. SHM introduces errors into the genes encoding the variable regions of individual B-cells. During the narrow time frame in the proliferation of B-cells, the locus undergoes an extremely high rate of mutation, predominantly base substitution [11], approximately 1 million times higher than the spontaneous rate of mutation across the genome [12]. The introduction of random mutations gives rise to antibodies that lose their affinity for the antigen and undergo cell death, or generates those advantageous antibodies, where there is an affinity increase and subsequent proliferation of the associated antibody-producing clone of lymphocytes.

2. Biosensors

2.1. Introduction

The “Enzyme Electrode” was demonstrated by Clark and Lyons in 1962 as the first biosensor. It coupled glucose oxidase to an amperometric electrode for monitoring oxygen in blood [13]. In 1987, Vo-Dinh and co-workers showed that antibodies could be utilised *in situ* for the detection of a chemical carcinogen in a fibre optic-based immunosensor [14]. Antibodies have since proven their worth as powerful tools for diagnostic applications, as illustrated in Table 1. Essentially, the selectivity or specificity of the biosensor is dependant on the biorecognition element, which is capable of “sensing” the presence of an analyte [1,2]. Immunosensors utilising

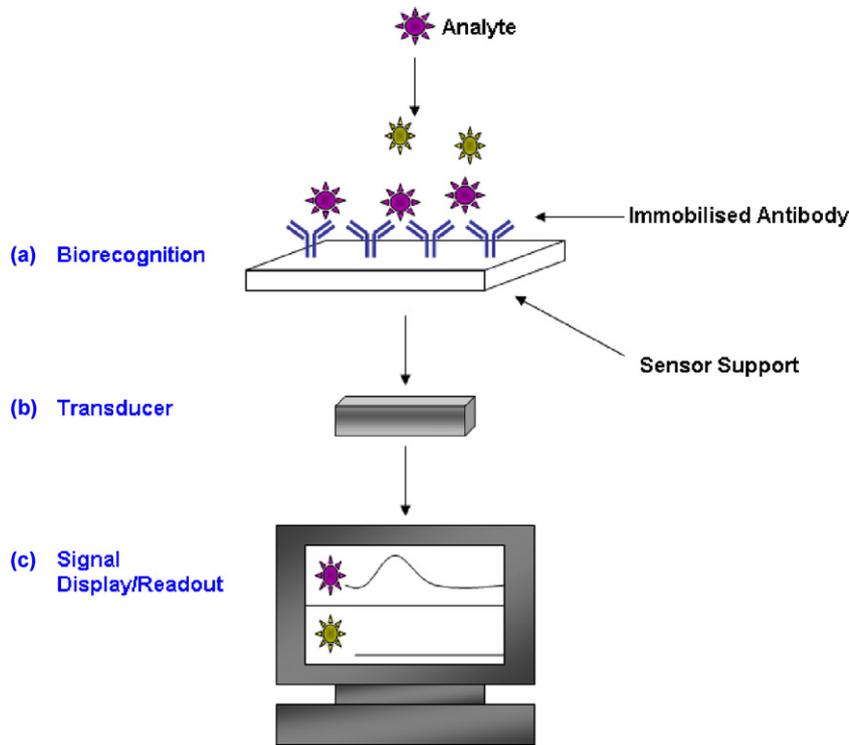


Fig. 1. Biosensor components. (a) Analyte interaction with biorecognition element: this is facilitated by the specificity of the immobilised antibody for its cognate antigen (purple). Other biorecognition elements include enzymes, lectins, receptors and microbial cells. (b) Signal transduction: converts the interaction of the analyte molecule and analyte into a quantifiable signal. (c) Readout or display: shows the specific signal generated by interaction with the analyte of interest. Yellow: non specific analyte.

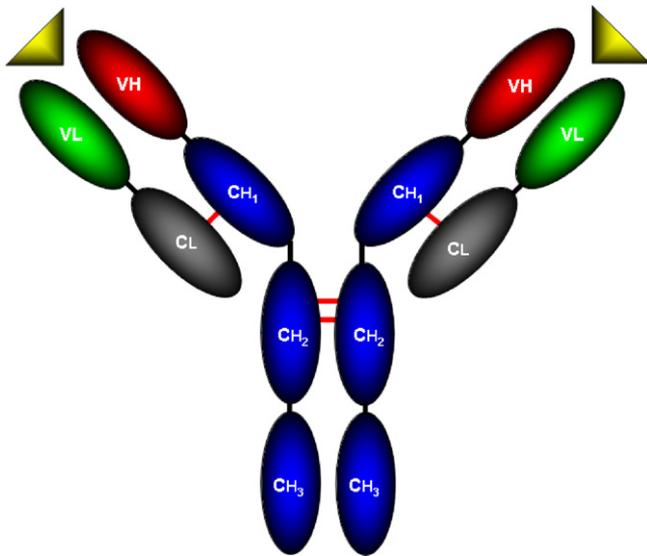


Fig. 2. Typical IgG molecule structure. Antibody molecule (~150 kDa). The antigen binding sites are indicated by the triangles and the disulphide bridges are indicated by red lines.

antibody-based recognition elements, have been developed on a wide range of transduction platforms for a multitude of analytes. The transducer element translates the selective recognition of the analyte into a quantifiable signal and thus, has major influence on sensitivity [15]. Transduction approaches include electrochemical, piezoelectric and optical systems [16].

2.2. Transduction platforms

This section briefly introduces some of the transduction platforms commonly exploited in biosensors incorporating antibody-based biorecognition. Monoclonal and polyclonal antibodies have been successfully employed and are the predominant antibody form used in biosensors. However, as discussed later, the importance of recombinant antibodies for biosensor applications is gaining increasing significance. Table 1 lists several examples of transduction elements, utilising both polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies for the detection of various analytes. The references also provide additional detailed information on the principles underpinning each of the transduction methods and are comprehensively reviewed by Jiang and co-workers [15] with respect to pesticides and both Luppa and co-workers [17] and D’Orazio [13] with respect to clinical uses.

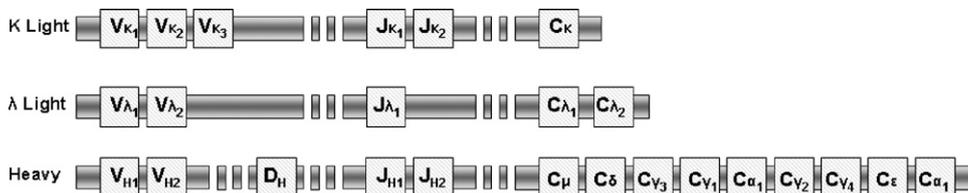


Fig. 3. Genes encoding human antibodies. Immunoglobulin loci: Heavy chain (chromosome 14), κ light chain (chromosome 2) and λ light chain (chromosome 22). Variable (V), Constant (C), Joining (J) and Diverse (D) segment genes are shown. In immature B cells V-D-J segments are rearranged and linked to C_{μ} to produce mRNA encoding for IgM or C δ to give mRNA encoding for IgD. mRNA encoding IgG is produced by recombination resulting in the bringing together of C_{γ_2} , C_{γ_4} C ϵ and $C\alpha_2$ by the deletion of the five C_H segments. This figure was adapted from [8,10].

Table 1

Examples of polyclonal and monoclonal antibody-based sensors their associated analytes and transducers.

Transducer	Analyte detected	Antibody type ^a	Ref.	
Electrochemical	<i>Potentiometric</i>	Terbutylazine	Monoclonal	[39]
		Hepatitis B surface antigen	Not specified	[40]
		Diphtherotoxin	Monoclonal	[41]
	<i>Amperometric</i>	<i>E. coli</i> 0157:H7	Polyclonal	[42]
		Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA)	Not specified	[43]
		Aflatoxin M1	Monoclonal	[44]
		Progesterone	Monoclonal	[45]
	<i>Impedance</i>	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> (Internalin B)	Polyclonal	[24]
	Piezoelectric	<i>E. coli</i> 0157:H7	Polyclonal	[46]
		Canine IgG Isoforms	Monoclonal	[47]
Cocaine/derivative (BZE-DADDO)		Polyclonal	[48]	
Atrazine		Monoclonal	[49]	
<i>Bacillus anthracis</i>		Polyclonal	[50]	
<i>Francisella tularensis</i>		Polyclonal	[51]	
Optical	<i>SPR</i>	Urediniospores	Monoclonal	[52]
		Polychlorinated biphenyls	Monoclonal	[53]
		Vitellogenin (Carp)	Monoclonal	[54]
		<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>	Polyclonal	[55]
		<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	Monoclonal	[56]
	<i>Resonant mirror</i>	Okadaic acid	Polyclonal	[57]
		<i>L. monocytogenes</i>	Monoclonal	[58]
	<i>TIRF</i>	Testosterone (also RfS)	Monoclonal	[59]
		Carbohydrates (maltose and panose)	Monoclonal	[32]
	<i>RfS</i>	Estrone	Polyclonal	[60]
		Tuberculosis (also interferometry)	Monoclonal	[61]
	<i>OWLS</i>	Cell adhesion	Monoclonal	[27]
		Trifluralin	Polyclonal	[62]
	<i>Interferometry</i>	Sulfamethazine	Not specified	[63]
		Atrazine	Monoclonal	[28]
	<i>Ellipsometry</i>	Hepatitis B virus surface antigen	Not specified	[64]
		Mycotoxin T-2 (TIRE also QCM)	Mono- and polyclonal	[65]
	<i>Fibre optic</i>	<i>Salmonella typhimurium</i>	Monoclonal	[66]
		<i>L. monocytogenes</i> (Imaging)	Polyclonal	[67]
<i>B. anthracis</i> (Evanescent wave FO)		Not specified	[68]	
	Raptor™—biothreat (e.g. <i>B. anthracis</i>)	Various monoclonal	[69]	

^a Not specified—where the type of antibody is not stated.

2.2.1. Electrochemical methods

Electrochemical transducers are the oldest and most commonly used. They offer high specificity, low-detection limits, relative freedom from matrix interference and low cost. However, some challenges remain including high performance and cost-effectiveness [15]. Electrochemical transduction may be divided into three types: potentiometric, amperometric and impedance.

2.2.1.1. Potentiometric. Potentiometric transduction measures the change in the potential of a system based on the Nernst equation. Changes in potential are related to specific ion activity [17]. This arises when a binding event between antigen (free) and antibody (immobilised) electrode is compared against a reference electrode [15,18]. Ion-selective electrodes use ion-selective membranes to achieve charge separation between the sample and the sensor surface. The sensor consists of a perm-selective outer layer and a bioactive material, e.g. an enzyme [18]. This perm-selective outer layer maximises the sensor selectivity by reducing interference from any electroactive species in the sample [19]. The enzyme-catalysed reaction generates or consumes a species that is detected by the ion-selective electrode and generates a logarithmic concentration-dependent signal [18]. The development of semiconductors, e.g. field effect transistors (FET) has had significant influence on potentiometric sensor design [20]. FET monitors charges at the surface of an electrode which have built up on its metal gate between the source and the drain [17]. This facilitates the detection and measurement of the potentiometric signal produced by a binding event at the gate of the FET (i.e. changes

in surface charge) [18,21,22]. A further development is the ion-selective field effect transistor (ISFET) where the gate is replaced by an ion-sensitive membrane [22] and a local potential is generated by surface ions which modulate the current flow across the silicon semiconductor [20]. The so-called 'ImmunoFET' typically has the antibody immobilised at the gate. The formation of the Ag–Ab complex results in modification in the surface charge distribution (due to the electrical charge carried by molecules) and, consequently, a modulation in the drain current is observed [22,23]. This type of direct potentiometric sensor is ideal as it allows 'label-free' measurement of the analyte. However, some fundamental limitations have given rise to the indirect ImmunoFET-based immunoenzymatic assay [22]. In this case the antigen or antibody is labelled by an enzyme such as urease [21,22]. Light addressable potentiometric sensors (LAPS) involve the immuno-reaction occurring at the insulating layer resulting in potential changes at the silicon (n-type) layer, which is then detected by differential charge distribution between the two layers. LAPS measures the alternating photocurrent generated by a light source (e.g. LED) resulting in changes of potential recorded as voltages per time differentials [16,18]. Both ISFET and LAPS would facilitate potential miniaturisation of potentiometric biosensors [20,22].

2.2.1.2. Amperometric. Amperometric sensors measure the current flow generated by an electrochemical reaction. Most analytes are unable to act as redox partners in an electrochemical reaction and hence, there are few applications of direct amperometric sensors [17]. Amperometric sensors thus, employ electroactive labels [17]

to generate current. This current is generated when an electro-active species is oxidised or reduced at the working electrode to which the analyte binds specifically in comparison to the reference electrode where no specific binding should occur. The current has a linear relationship with the electro-active species concentration [21]. Reference electrodes are typically composed of Ag/AgCl whilst working electrodes commonly incorporate noble metals, graphite and modified forms of carbon or conducting polymers to which the antibody is immobilised [18]. A major advantage of this kind of sensor is its performance in complex (i.e. turbid) matrices. However, amperometric biosensors are sometimes disadvantaged by the necessity for labelling and separation of free from bound labelled antibody which may be alleviated by the use of porous membranes [13].

2.2.1.3. Impedance. Impedance (including capacitance/conductance) immunosensors detect changes in the electric field due to Ag–Ab binding and are attributed to changes in electrical conductivity or capacitance on the electrode surface [15]. Electric impedance spectroscopy (EIS) detects the electrical response generated after a periodic small amplitude AC current is applied. Variation in impedimetric transduction arises due to Ag–Ab interactions at the surface of electrically conducting polymers [24].

2.2.2. Piezoelectric methods

Piezoelectric sensors employ materials that resonate on the application of an external alternating electrical field [15,21]. Typically, quartz crystals are utilised and the frequency of oscillation in the field is a function of the crystal mass [16]. Shifts in the frequency of the oscillation occur as a result of mass changes at the crystal surface. Therefore, the interaction of an analyte with an antibody immobilised on the quartz crystal leads to a mass change and, thus, an oscillation frequency change [16]. Piezoelectric crystal devices are advantageous as they facilitate direct measurement without the need for labelling [25]. Piezoelectric sensors can be further categorised into bulk and surface acoustic wave instruments. Bulk wave (BW) instruments are applied in gravimetric devices known as quartz-crystal microbalances (QCM), which are related to mass sensitivity of the crystals, or thickness shear mode (TSM) resonators, which describe the motion of the crystals vibration [18]. In BW devices the immobilised Ab–Ag interaction occurs at the surface of the crystal, which is within an oscillating circuit, so that changes in mass lead to a decrease in resonant frequency [16,21]. Surface acoustic wave (SAW) instruments transmit an acoustic wave along a crystal face from one location to another [18]. The transducer here acts as the transmitter and the receiver. The excited wave travels across the surface of the crystal and changes due to mass loading on the acoustic path alter the phase-wave frequency [21].

For piezoelectric sensors the effects of viscoelastic and electro-acoustic interference due to the sample liquid and absorbed films must be taken into account. Advances in piezoelectric sensors include the use of QCM's and micro-cantilevers [26].

2.2.3. Optical methods

2.2.3.1. Introduction. Optical immunosensors consist of a light source, components to generate light with specific characteristics, a modulating agent, a sensing area and a photodetector. Optical sensors are advantageous due to their low signal-to-noise ratio and low-reagent volume requirements [15]. Direct optical sensors are most useful for biosensor applications due to the lack of requirements for labelling of either the analyte or the antibody and the ability to work effectively in complex matrices. However, indirect optical sensors are also very valuable and are generated by incorporation of a suitable label, such as a fluorophore [13].

Techniques commonly employed in optical biosensors include reflectometric interference spectroscopy (RIfS), interferometry,

optical waveguide lightmode spectroscopy (OWLS), total internal reflection fluorescence (TIRF), surface plasmon resonance (SPR), resonant mirrors, fibre optics, ellipsometry, fluorescence and ultra violet/visible (UV/vis) spectroscopy.

2.2.3.2. Principles of optical transduction. The principle of each optical transduction technique is briefly outlined in this section.

RIfS is a 'label-free' time-resolved technique which facilitates the monitoring of biomolecular interactions [27]. The technique is based upon the incidence of white light on an interface between two media of differing refractive indices. The light is reflected in part and these interacting beams produce a characteristic interference pattern. Differences in the interference pattern occur due to an increase in the optical thickness of the immobilised molecules, for example, due to an Ag–Ab-binding event [15,27]. RIfS is temperature dependant, however, it has a greater depth of penetration into the solution [27] than surface plasmon resonance.

Waveguides are typically glass, quartz or polymer films of high-refractive index (RI) imbedded in materials of lower RI. A linear laser beam is then incident and constrained within the waveguide by total internal reflection (TIR) resulting in an evanescent wave [17]. The evanescent wave generated is due to the excitation of the light itself in the dielectric layer. Some of this light penetrates the biolayer and is reflected back into the waveguide after undergoing a phase shift which interferes with the transmitted light. As a result, changes in the interference pattern can be interpreted as changes in the biolayer [17]. Interferometry is based on changes in refractive index profile within the evanescent field volume of a waveguide due to an Ag–Ab interaction. Waveguide systems such Mach-Zehnder interferometry (MZI) are exploited for this type of immunosensor [15,17,28]. OWLS is an advance in the dielectric waveguide area that exploits the science of light guided in structures smaller than its wavelength [29]. OWLS utilises linearly polarised light that is coupled by a diffraction grating into a thin waveguide [13,15]. 'Incoupling' is a resonance phenomenon that occurs at a defined angle of incidence which is defined by the RI of the medium covering the waveguide [15]. Within that waveguide the light is directed by TIR and is detected by photodiodes at the edges [15,30].

TIRF is a useful technique for the analysis of molecular interactions at an interface. Within two media of different RI, light at a specific angle incident onto the sensor surface, undergoes TIR and results in the propagation of an evanescent wave into the medium of lower RI [17]. Molecules within the sensing layer interact with this wave resulting in attenuation of the reflected light [17]. In TIRF, fluorescent molecules in the evanescent field are excited by the incident light to produce a fluorescent evanescent wave which can then be measured [13,17]. TIRF-based immunosensors have received considerable attention [31,32] and offer robustness, versatility and portability, but their main constraint is the requirement for labelled reagents [15]. TIRF is comprehensively reviewed by Dominici and co-workers [33].

Supercritical angle fluorescence (SAF) is a method for the detection of surface-localised fluorescence. Parabolic elements are currently being investigated for the efficient collection of SAF and the detection of a single fluorescent molecule has been demonstrated using a confocal detection scheme [34]. Fluorescence occurs upon the excitement of an electron, by the absorption of light, from the ground state to the excited singlet state, where upon relaxation to the lower state the molecule emits a photon with less energy at longer wavelength than the incident photon.

Fibre optic (FO) biosensors often involve the immobilisation of an antibody to the distal end of the fibre. Incident light, introduced at the proximal end, travels through the fibre by TIR causing excitation of the fluorophores [16] attached to either the antigen or an associated antibody depending on the assay configuration.

Ellipsometry employs linearly polarised light reflected at oblique incidence from a surface, resulting in elliptically polarised reflected light. Changes in the shape and orientation of the reflected light are dependant on the direction of incident light and reflective surface properties [17]. Variants include total internal reflection ellipsometry (TIRE) and imaging ellipsometry.

SPR is a phenomenon that occurs when light is incident on a metal surface. SPR was described as the charge density oscillation at the interface between two media with oppositely charge dielectric constants [18]. The resultant resonant excitation is provided by compatible light energy photons. The amplitude of the resulting evanescent wave is maximal at the metal (plasmon-generating). The emergent medium being of lower refractive index (typically aqueous) allows the penetration of an evanescent wave. This phenomenon facilitates the study of interactions at the metal surface as the evanescent wave propagates to a depth of approximately one wavelength [18]. The most notable application of SPR is in the GE Healthcare Biacore™ systems [35–37].

Resonant mirror biosensors marry the simplicity of SPR-based sensors with the sensitivity of a waveguide device. The sensor comprises of the biosensing layer, high-RI dielectric resonant layer, low-RI coupling layer and a prism [38].

3. Antibodies and their significance for biosensor development

3.1. Antibodies as biological reagents

Antibodies are ideal biorecognition elements due to their exquisite specificities and strong affinities for cognate antigens. Fig. 4 shows an overview of the generation of polyclonal [70,71], monoclonal [71,72] and recombinant antibodies [73,74] from immunised repertoires.

Antibodies have numerous successful applications in the area of diagnostics with monoclonal and polyclonal antibodies being successfully exploited in many biosensors, as shown in Table 1.

Table 2

Characteristics of polyclonal, monoclonal and recombinant antibodies.

Characteristic	Polyclonal	Monoclonal	Recombinant
Ease of production	++++	+++	+++
Cost (low)	++++	+++	++
Stability ^a	+++	++	++
Commercial availability	++++	+++	+
Ease of immobilisation	++++	++++	++++
Sensitivity-affinity	+++	++++	++++
Capacity for engineering affinity	–	–	++++

(Can be converted to rAb)

^a Stability of rAb is dependent on the format.

Polyclonal antibodies are derived from multiple plasma cells and monoclonal antibodies are derived from a single clonal hybridoma, all of which have terminally differentiated in response to an antigen [7,70]. Recombinant antibodies, discussed at length in the following sections, are the product of genetic manipulation of antibody genes. The specific characteristics of polyclonal, monoclonal and recombinant antibodies are outlined in Table 2.

Some key parameters exist for antibodies in biosensor applications. These include sensitivity, selectivity, stability, immobilisation (hence, orientation on the surface), labelling and antibody size (impacts on the density of biolayer of the sensor). Recombinant antibodies present a viable means to optimise these factors. Primarily genetic modification facilitates improvements in selectivity, stability, size (Sections 3.2, 3.3 and 4) and, in addition, such novel antibody fragments aid effective immobilisation [75]. High-throughput screening (Section 5) and display libraries facilitate improvements in sensitivity due to the ability to screen much larger recombinant libraries (Section 3.4). The use of coupling chemistries and/or genetic insertion of tag's for immobilisation (Section 4.3) are useful methods to assist the orientation and immobilisation of novel recombinant antibodies.

Monoclonal antibody generation, using hybridoma technology, was described in 1975 [76] and, in combination with advances in our

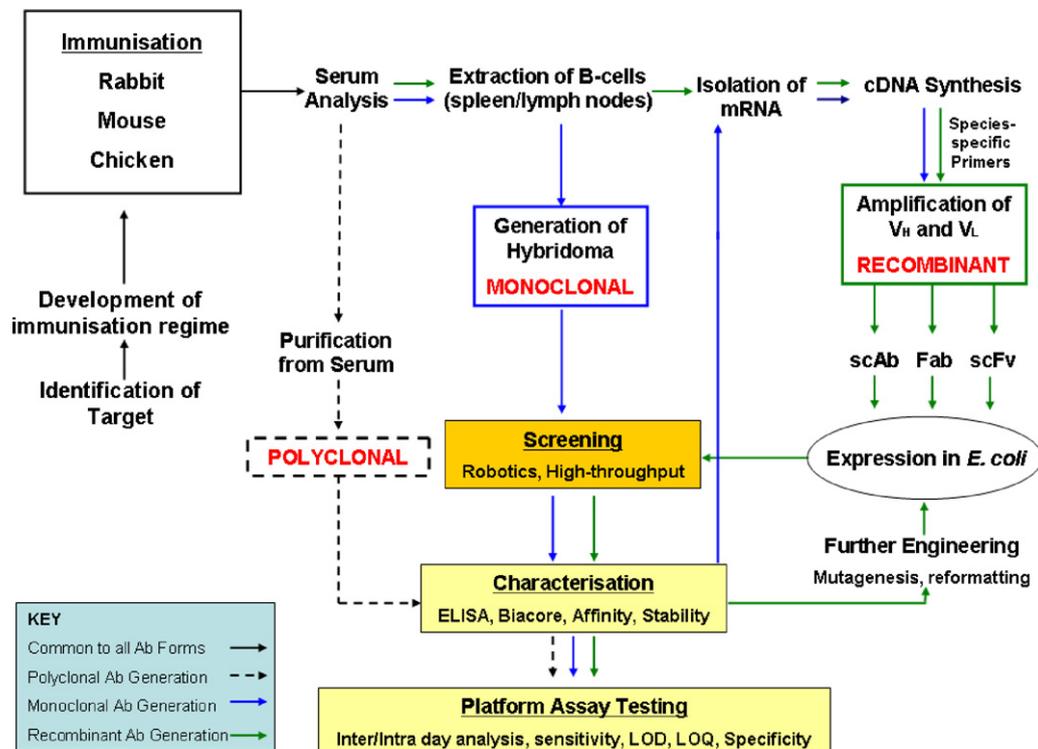


Fig. 4. Overview of antibody generation, screening and characterisation. This flow diagram illustrates the overall steps in the generation of polyclonal, monoclonal and recombinant antibodies. LOD, limit of detection; LOQ, limit of quantitation.

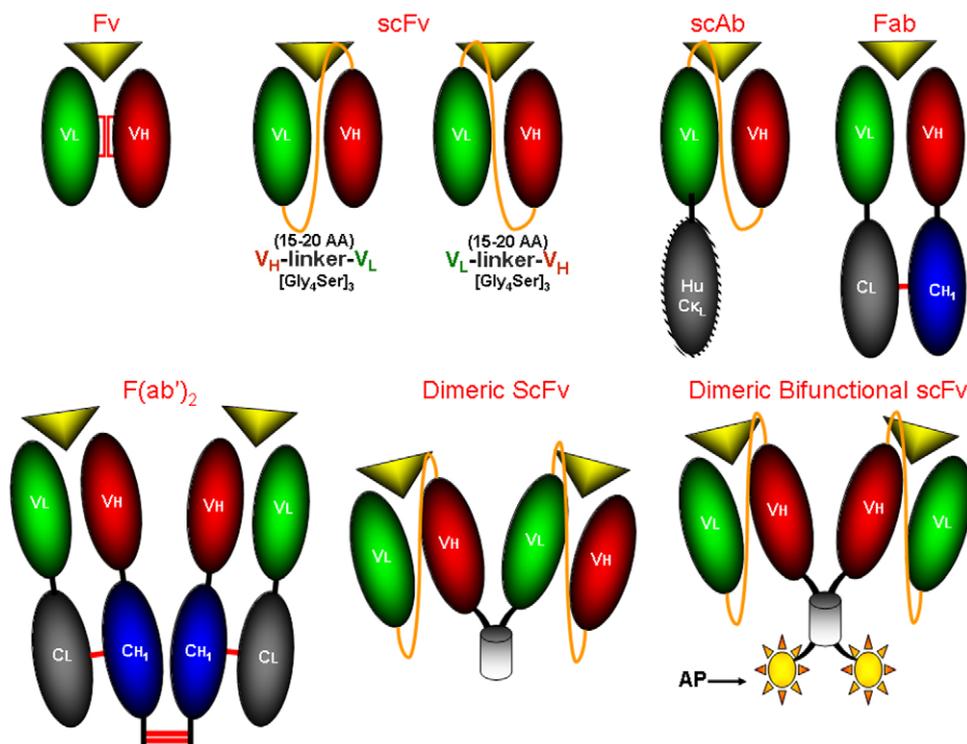


Fig. 5. Recombinant antibody formats. The Fv consists of the V_H (red) and V_L (green) chains. The scFv consists of the Fv with a flexible linker joining the terminal ends of either the V_H to V_L (or V_L to V_H). A scAb incorporates a human constant κ light chain added to the terminal of V_L . The Fab contains the Fv with both constant heavy and light chains. $F(ab')_2$ involves linking the two Fabs by disulphide bonds (can also be achieved by proteolytic cleavage of an IgG molecule). A dimeric scFv is generated by a fusion of two scFvs via a naturally occurring dimeric protein. A dimeric bifunctional scFv incorporates alkaline phosphatase (AP) labelling to facilitate direct detection. Antigen-binding sites are indicated by the yellow triangles.

knowledge of immunoglobulin structure and DNA-based recombination [77], has facilitated the genetic manipulation of antibodies to become widely practiced. The ability to alter properties such as the size and affinity of antibodies has led to the development of novel antibodies for use in diagnostics and therapeutics. Some examples of commercially available monoclonal antibody-based biosensors for the diagnosis of cardiovascular disease include: Abbott's i-STAT® (cTnI) [78] and Roche's CARDIAC proBNP assay [79].

The specificity, and to a large degree the sensitivity, of all immunosensors is dictated by the biorecognition element [15,17] and hence, the ability to develop more sensitive and robust systems is reliant on the modification of antibodies to improve these attributes. This section comprehensively reviews the area of recombinant antibodies with respect to their selection, modification and subsequent applications in biosensors.

3.2. The emergence of recombinant antibodies

It was shown in the late 1980s that the use of vectors in bacterial expression systems could generate correctly folded antibody fragments [80,81]. Since then, recombinant antibody fragments have been produced in mammalian [82,83], insect [84,85], yeast [86], plant [87] and in 'cell-free' systems [88]. A factor limiting several of these expression systems is the inability to express large amounts of active protein and the relative advantages and disadvantages of each expression system is reviewed by Verma and co-workers [89].

There are two main sources of antibody genes: V-gene repertoires rearranged from animal or human donors and synthetic antibody V-gene repertoires constructed *de novo, in vitro* [73]. The cloning of antibody fragments into such systems begins with the isolation of mRNA coding for the V-genes from donor B-cells [90,91] (see Fig. 4). Such sources of mRNA include hybridomas, peripheral blood lymphocytes, spleen and bone marrow cells [92]. The

mRNA is in turn reverse transcribed into cDNA [91]. The subsequent amplification of the antibody genes is then carried out by PCR-based methods. This method of recombinant antibody generation in theory clones all mRNA encoding for antibody genes present in the mRNA pool. For cloned antibodies to be useful it is imperative that the antibody genes be cloned reliably [92]. Hoogenboom and co-workers [73] and Azzazy and co-workers [91] have provided comprehensive reviews of recombinant antibody libraries and their screening.

3.3. Antibody fragments and formats

Prior to the development of recombinant antibody technologies, antibody fragments could only be generated by proteolytic cleavage yielding $F(ab')_2$ and Fab (Fig. 5). The ability to generate fragments of antibodies that retain their stability and specificity is the basis of recombinant antibody generation. Recombinant technologies have allowed the generation of a number of distinct antibody fragments (Fig. 5) with desirable affinities and specificities for use in diagnostic applications.

The smallest fragment of the whole antibody practically used is the Fv which comprises of the V_H and V_L domains that are associated via a disulphide bond. Stability problems at lower concentrations were overcome by incorporating a flexible peptide linker into the Fv fragment resulting in a single chain Fv (scFv) [93,94]. Typically, a flexible (Gly₄Ser)₃ linker is used due to its tendency not to form secondary structures and the fact that it is found naturally in M13 pIII protein and, therefore, is well tolerated in phage display. However, it was demonstrated that selection based on linker mutations can influence production, stability and recognition properties of the scFv [95]. Diabody production is achieved by incorporating a shorter polypeptide linker (5–12 amino acids) forcing the association of two scFv molecules [96]. Genetically

encoding alkaline phosphatase (AP) as a fusion to the scFv have been reported [97,98] from which direct detection of bound antibody fragments can be achieved. Dimeric scFv's consist of two scFv fragments brought together via a naturally dimeric protein [92,99]. An interesting variation on the dimeric scFv, which facilitates direct detection, is a bifunctional scFv comprised of AP-labelled scFv's [91,92,100]. Once these antibody fragments are generated, an appropriate or tailored selection method is used to isolate high-affinity antibodies from a vast library.

3.4. Antibody libraries

These libraries mirror what would naturally be present in individuals allowing them to generate antibodies against antigens that might be encountered during normal everyday life. This is the basis of our immune response and allows our survival despite the prevalence of many pathogens, toxins and life-threatening infections.

The availability of combinatorial libraries is of major importance in antibody engineering. These libraries may be generated from immunised hosts (animal or human) or are available from academic or industrial sources (naïve or non-immunised libraries). The isolation of antibodies from such libraries is based on non-covalent interaction between the library member and its cognate antigen. Efficient high-throughput screening [101,102] has enabled scientists to screen large libraries thus, enhancing the probability of enriching for highly specific antibodies. This capability has also allowed engineering of antibodies with improved affinity, stability and prompted an era of 'tailor-made' antibodies for a wide range of applications.

3.4.1. Advantages of display technology

The advent of display techniques has allowed the generation of very large antibody libraries, which has introduced a viable and efficient method for the development of recombinant antibodies. The library size was demonstrated to have a major impact on the characteristics of selected antibodies, with increased library size increasing the probability of selecting antibodies with high affinity and specificity [103].

In phage display, the antibody fragment is fused to the phage coat protein which is linked to the encapsulated genetic information [104]. This physical link between the phenotype and genotype allows the selection of binders in the antibody library. In contrast, in ribosome display the mRNA, ribosome and nascent antibody form a stable, stalled antibody-ribosome-mRNA (ARM) complex allowing for RT-PCR-mediated recovery of specific binders [88,105]. Table 3 outlines the attributes of phage (plasmid library) and ribosome display (mRNA/PCR fragment) [106]. Other display technologies include yeast [107,108], bacterial [109] and mRNA display [110,111].

A major advantage of the use of combinatorial display libraries is the generation of an immunised repertoire of antibodies from practically any species compared to hybridoma technology which has been most successfully applied to rodents [116]. However, hybridoma technology have also been used with rabbit [117], cow

Table 3

Phage display and ribosome display compared [106].

	Phage display	Ribosome display
Largest library size reported	10 ¹⁰ [112]	10 ¹³ [73]; Potentially 10 ¹⁴ [113]
Recovery of selected binders	Various (Fig. 7)	RT-PCR (Fig. 10)
Diversification	Mutagenesis	Mutagenesis
Transformation and cloning	Required	Not required
Highest affinity Ab reported (M)	10 ⁻¹² [114]	10 ⁻¹⁵ [115]

Table 4

Examples of recombinant antibodies generated to specific targets.

Target	Analyte	Ref.
Human conditions		
Cardiac disease	Cardiac troponin	[132]
	C-reactive protein	[102]
Hormones	Thyroid stimulating hormone	[133]
Haptens		
Environmental contaminants	Atrazine	[134]
Illicit drugs	Morphine-3-glucuronide	[75,135]
Animal disease		
Foot-and-mouth	Non-structural protein 3ABC	[136]
Security		
Biological warfare pathogen	<i>Brucella melitensis</i>	[137]
Contaminants		
Foodstuffs	Aflatoxin B1	[74]

[118], chicken [119] and human [120] lymphocytes. The ability to generate antibodies recognising human epitopes, e.g. in biomarkers of diseases, is essential for many diagnostic tests and for therapy. Generally this can be achieved in a range of species, but the antigenicity is often dependent on how phylogenetically distant the species are from humans [121]. Antibody libraries have been generated for a number of species including human [122], murine [123], chicken [121,124], rabbit [125,126], camelids [127], shark [128], bovine [129] and sheep [130]. The availability of naïve and synthetic repertoires facilitates the generation of antibodies without the need for animal use as such libraries can recognise a wide range of antigens [131]. The ability to generate recombinant antibodies to target specific antigens, for example those demonstrated in Table 4, is crucial for the development of the biorecognition element of biosensors.

3.4.2. Phage display

3.4.2.1. Introduction. Phage display has become a widely used selection platform for antibodies since it was first described in 1985 by Smith and co-workers [138]. Use of the novel bacteriophage lambda expression system, which allows rapid identification of antibodies, was suggested as a method to supersede hybridoma technology [139]. McCafferty and co-workers isolated an antibody from a large combinatorial library [140], and, due to its robust nature, phage display has become the 'work-horse' of antibody isolation [141]. Library diversities of up to 10¹⁰ have been achieved [73]. Antibody selection methods based on the use of immobilised antigen [142,143], antigen-coated magnetic beads in solution [144–146], Biacore™ [147,148], surface-displayed targets [149,150], mammalian tissue culture [151] and *in vivo* approaches [151,152] have all been applied successfully in phage display.

3.4.2.2. Principle. Filamentous phage particles contain single stranded DNA (ssDNA) and are capable of infecting *Escherichia coli* cells. Filamentous phage, illustrated in Fig. 6, infect and replicate without killing the host cell [153], unlike lytic phage (e.g. T4). The phage coat contains 5 different proteins (pIII, pVI, pVII, pVIII and pIX) [141,154] where the pVIII (~50 amino acids) is the major coat protein and covers the surface of the phage cylinder. The hydrophobic 33 amino acid pVII (5 particles) and the 32 amino acid pIX proteins are located at one end of the phage. The other end contains the pVI (112 amino acids) and pIII (406 amino acids) [154]. The pIII consists of the N1, N2 and CT domains. The interaction of the phage with the cell is facilitated by the pIII protein (specifically N1 and N2 domains) and phage biology is well understood and documented [141,155]. The N1 domain is required during infection of the cell and facilitates translocation of DNA into the cytoplasm [141]. The N2 region is responsible for binding to F pilus [141,154]. The

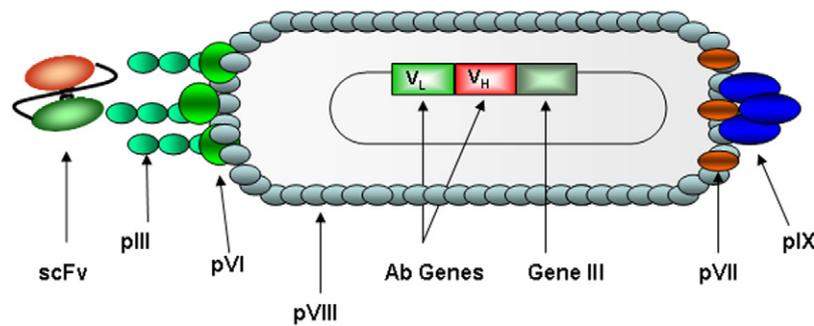


Fig. 6. Phage displaying scFv. ScFv displayed as a fusion to the pIII phage coat protein. The phage is still infective to *E. coli* via pIII-mediated attachment to F pili. pIII proteins contain N1 and N2 domains responsible for interaction with the F pilus of the cell and insertion of DNA into the cytoplasm.

CT domain is essential for the formation of a stable phage particle [154]. Antibodies consist of heterodimeric heavy and light chain variable domains that combine to form the antigen-binding site. For the phage display of scFv (Fig. 6) the two domains are linked using a polypeptide linker and integrated into the phage genome as a fusion to the gene of the pIII protein.

The development of phagemid vectors [142] has taken over from initial use of phage vectors [139] due in part to the simplistic transition to soluble expression of the antibody fragment, using an amber stop codon mutation between the geneIII and the antibody chain [91,156]. This means that the antibody fragment can be expressed without continued fusion to phage particle by use of non-suppressor strains of *E. coli* [91,156,157]. Phage systems are also limited as fusions of large polypeptides to the amino acid terminus of the coat protein, lead to compromised protein function [158]. Phagemid systems permit the display of polypeptides that could not be displayed in simple phage systems by fusion to an additional coat protein gene encoded on the phagemid vector. This attenuates effects of the fusion protein as the wild-type coat proteins are available from the helper phage [158]. Table 5 outlines considerations to be taken into account with choosing phage or phagemid methods of recombinant antibody production.

Phagemid vectors contain *E. coli* and phage origins of replication. The phagemid DNA is packaged in the phage coat and propagation is achieved by super-infection with helper phage [141]. This infection step allows the phagemid vector in the cell to be packaged into the phage particle in an identical way to phage DNA. The helper phage serves to provide the proteins and enzymes necessary for phage replication and also the structural proteins required for encapsulation. To prevent over expression of the helper phage genome, commercially available helper phage contain a defective origin of replication (M13KO7 or VCSM13) and/or packaging signal [141,153,154].

Table 5
Considerations when choosing phage or phagemid system for antibody production (this table was adapted from [154,159]).

Phage	Phagemid
Better suited to peptide display	Suited to antibody display
Large proteins effect pIII production and assembly	Carries the fusion-coat protein to be displayed (e.g. pIII)
Large proteins present on the pIII can affect infectivity	Large inserts are better maintained
Lower transformation efficiency	Higher transformation efficiency
Misfolding of large protein fusions are likely	Multiple copies of gene inserts per phage particle (valency)
No requirement for helper phage	Requires helper phage to select
Avidity effects—lower affinity antibodies	Monovalent display—higher affinity antibodies
Sub-cloning required for soluble antibody expression	Direct expression of soluble antibody
Not suited for affinity maturation	Suited for affinity maturation

Selection is achieved by multiple rounds of binding to a target which selectively enriches phage with the relevant cognate antibody fragment expressed on its surface (Fig. 7) [157]. Specific phage are eluted and re-infected into *E. coli* for subsequent sequential rounds of panning [141] or soluble expression of antibody in non-suppressor strains which facilitates downstream purification and characterisation of the selected antibody fragments [91].

3.4.2.3. Selection considerations. Despite phage display being widely practiced and mainstream in many molecular laboratories [73], the successful selection of specific antibodies remains a challenge [107]. The influence of selection conditions (Fig. 7) is a major factor determining the quality of the selected antibody fragment. Not all standard conditions lead to the selection of phage particles displaying antibody specific to a particular antigen. Selection is aimed at isolation of high-affinity antibodies, however, the level of display may preferentially recover the antibody with the highest display level (avidity) on an individual phage particle. Monovalent display has been utilised to combat this phenomenon [73,153,159].

After transformation, the phage selection cycle (steps 2–6) is sequentially reiterated in order to isolate phage displaying specific antibodies. In theory, only one round of selection from a phage library is necessary, however, in practice non-specific binding of “sticky” phage limits the enrichment that can be achieved. Typically between two to five rounds of biopanning are required to isolate specific antibody-displaying phage as the ratio of binders to non-binders before and after each round of selection varies from 5- to 1000-fold [159].

Extensive research has demonstrated the need to evaluate selection conditions for individual libraries. Conditions such as elution strategy, stringency of washing, solid or solution phase methodologies for panning, antigen form and number of cycles (increasing cycles leading to decreased diversity) have been evaluated [160,161].

Antigen presentation is of particular importance and several presentation strategies are illustrated in Fig. 7. Conformational changes due to direct immobilisation on solid supports [91] or use of peptide antigens can result in the selection of antibodies that cannot recognise native epitopes in the context of the whole target molecule. One particular publication showed that affinity-driven selections of mutated scFv on immobilised antigen preferentially selected spontaneously dimerising scFv, with higher apparent K_d values, due to avidity effects compared to selection on biotinylated antigen with streptavidin magnetic beads [143]. Lowering antigen concentration in successive rounds of selection enriches for higher affinity antibodies similar to B-cell selection *in vivo* [73,159]. Low-concentration selections are utilised to select antibodies with the highest affinity avoiding multimer formation [159]. Selection can also be tailored to favour affinity or

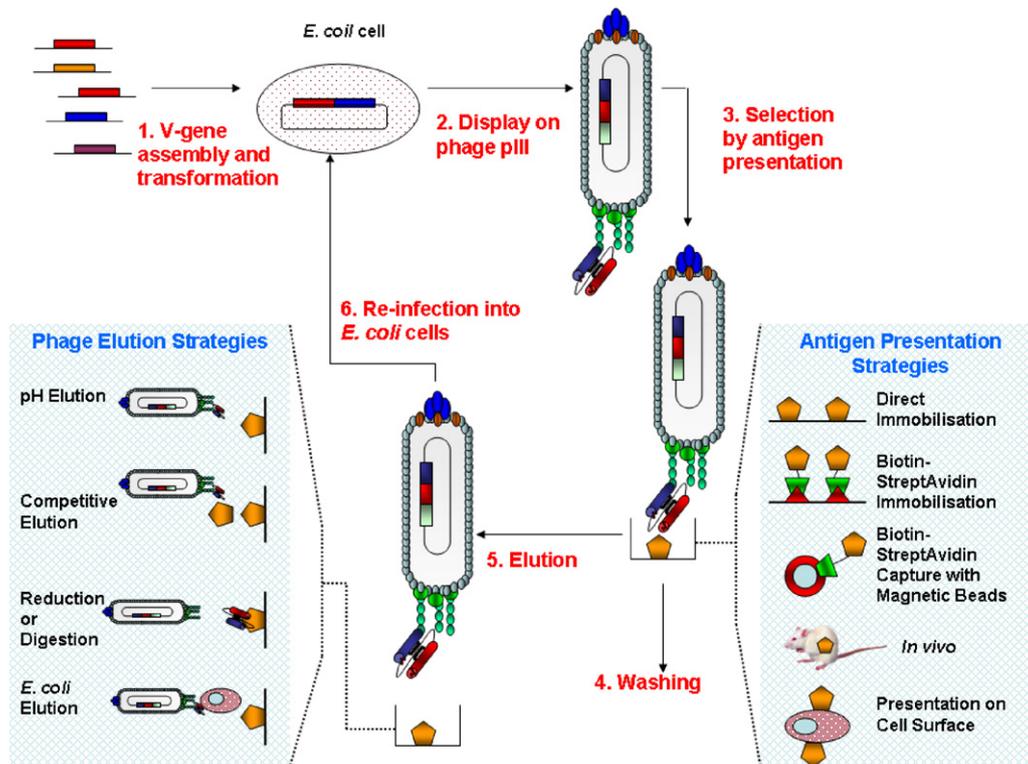


Fig. 7. Phage selection strategy. Iterative selection shown here is a multistep process. V gene assembly by PCR allows cloning of the recombinant antibody (scFv is shown) library into *E. coli* cells. Subsequent rescue by helper phage allows for the propagation of the phage antibody library. Antigen presentation is a key consideration and there are many modes of antigen-phage antibody interaction. Serially increasing the stringency of washing after antigen presentation selects those phage displaying antibodies with highly specific binding properties. Elution strategies are also illustrated. This figure was adapted from [107].

'off-rate' kinetics by gradual limitation of available antigen [157], limiting interaction time of phage with the antigen, performing solution phase selection or competitive interaction with free antigen.

The first round of selection should be regarded as an enrichment step, as excessive stringency leads to a decrease in the library diversity. The multiplicity of infection of helper phage is also of considerable importance. It is imperative to add sufficient phage (10–20:1) to infect the whole library [162]. Failure to do so in the initial amplification of the library leads to a reduction in diversity.

Suitable blocking agents to reduce non-specific binding are required and typical agents are semi-skimmed milk powder and BSA. Inclusion of detergents such as Tween-20 in washing steps and in phage preparation helps to reduce non-specific interaction also [159]. Initially, each phage is represented in low numbers and washing should be less stringent to allow recovery of all antigen-bound phage. After the initial cycle, the stringency can be increased as the phage are present in higher numbers and it is necessary to exert selective pressure to isolate strong binders [159]. When panning with immobilised antigen, washing can be performed, by rinsing the wells or the immunotube, with an increasing number of washes per round with a wash solution, e.g. PBS containing Tween-20 (0.05%, v/v) [161]. Panning in solution, usually involves using magnetic beads coated with the biotinylated antigen to capture phage-displaying antibodies [159]. Subsequently, the beads are washed and then recovered using a magnet. Panning by cell surface display (e.g. surface/membrane proteins) requires centrifugation and re-suspension in wash solution [159].

Elution can be achieved in a number of ways (Fig. 7). Elution by altering pH uses acidic (e.g. glycine-HCl, pH 2.2 [163,164]) or basic (e.g. triethylamine [160,165]) solutions followed by immediate neutralisation with a suitable reagent. Neutralisation is critical

to prevent protein denaturation. It is also very necessary to optimise elution as increasingly stringent elution may be required as affinity increases [148]. Elution, without breaking the antigen-antibody interaction, can be facilitated by trypsin [166], cleavage of a protease-sensitive site [167], NHS-SS-biotin cleavage by DTT [168] or use of commercially available paramagnetic beads containing a nuclease-cleavable DNA linker between the bead and streptavidin [169]. These methods of specific site cleavage provide a means of decreasing background phage elution. Interaction between the phage and the *E. coli* cell can also be utilised to elute phage through the natural affinity for F pili [165].

Dual recognition panning can be useful allowing for selection against a particular peptide in solid or solution phase using biotin capture and a second selection step presenting the peptide in its natural form displayed on a protein captured by polyclonal or monoclonal antibody (Fig. 8). This re-use of the eluted phage without amplification for the next round of selection may prove useful to diminish high-background problems as described for protease inhibitors (fast screen method) [170].

Other advanced display methods include 'Pathfinder' [171] and selectively infective phage (SIP) [172]. Pathfinder is based on the *in situ* biotinylation of phage bound to target antigen using antigen-specific antibodies conjugated to HRP in the presence of biotin tyramine and results in the recovery of tagged phage [171]. SIP displays the antibody library on non-infective phage particles due to the deletion of part of the pIII protein (N1 or N2 or both regions) [172]. The infectivity of the phage is restored by interaction of the antibody with the antigen fused to the region of the pIII responsible for infection with F pili [157]. Fusions of peptide antigen to the F pilus, which abrogates wild type phage infection, have also been exploited [173]. Infectivity is then restored by interaction of scFv-displaying phage with the peptide.

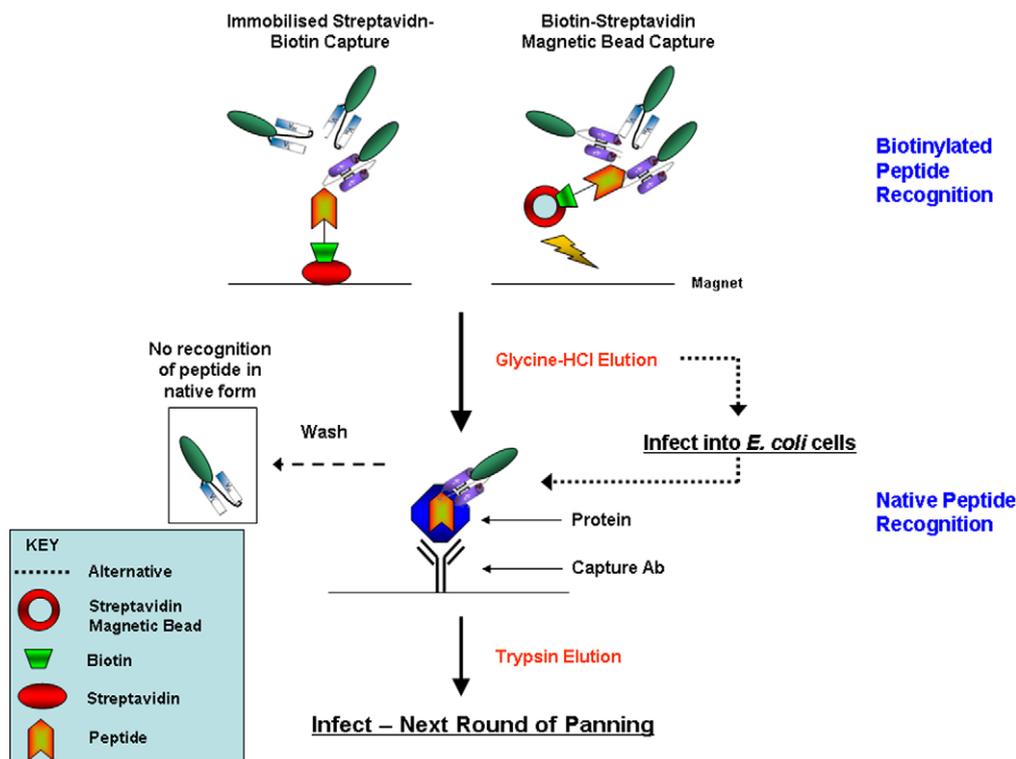


Fig. 8. Dual recognition panning. Panning against peptide and protein in native form. The strategy shown here involves dual recognition in one round of biopanning. Initially, antibody-displaying phage with specificity for the peptide are isolated and immediately challenged against the peptide in its native form on the protein. This strategy is quite stringent and may be modified by alternative rounds of peptide panning followed by panning against the peptide in its native form, thus, allowing phage to enrich before the second selection step.

4. Designing and developing recombinant antibodies

4.1. Mutagenesis

Mutagenesis introduces errors or changes in genetic material which gives rise to modified proteins, products or functions. Mutagenesis was successfully adopted as a method of directed molecular evolution. Evolution *in vitro* was proven to be a powerful tool for protein generation and refinement, with improvements in binding affinity, folding efficiency and enhanced thermodynamic stability being demonstrated [174].

Mutagenesis of genes is generally carried out using two main strategies. Site-directed mutagenesis introduces errors focused in a particular region (e.g. CDR or antibody conserved regions). Random mutagenesis causes scattered mutations across the gene in a stochastic manner and utilises error prone PCR and/or DNA shuffling. Fig. 9 outlines mutagenesis strategies for improvement in affinity of selected antibodies by manipulation of the V genes [175].

4.2. Ribosome display

4.2.1. Introduction

Ribosome display is a totally 'cell-free' method of selection and evolution of proteins that is not limited by any cell-based translation steps [175–178]. It is an *in vitro* selection method for the isolation of proteins and peptides from large libraries [179] that was successfully applied to the affinity maturation of antibodies using eukaryotic or prokaryotic systems. The use of ribosome display overcomes current limitations for protein selection technologies as diversity is not limited by transformation efficiency but by the physical number of ribosomes present and different mRNA molecules available [179] *in vitro*. Ribosome display couples the individual emerging protein (phenotypes) with its corresponding mRNA

(genotype) by the formation of stable protein–ribosome–mRNA (PRM) complexes, and, after selection, the amplification of corresponding DNA for concurrent selection or diversification [180].

4.2.2. Principle

The generation of antibody–ribosome–mRNA (ARM) complexes [105] was developed based on two experimental achievements: (i) the production of single chain antibodies *in vitro* using rabbit reticulocyte lysate [181] and (ii) the experimental demonstration that nascent proteins can remain stably associated with their mRNA as a polypeptide–ribosome–mRNA complex in the absence of a stop codon [182,183] or with the inclusion of antibiotics [183]. The generation of the ARM complex is illustrated in Fig. 10, and allows for the stalled complex to be selected by interaction of the nascent protein with cognate antigen. This captured complex permits the recovery of the genetic information directly from the ribosome-bound mRNA [105].

Ribosome display (Fig. 10) has two important functions: (i) it allows selection, using proofreading polymerases and antigen-coated beads or plates [184] and (ii) evolution of antibody affinity. The combination of both of these functions allows for the selection of specific antibodies, from a combinatorial library, whilst simultaneously evolving the protein by successive diversification of the pool with each round [88,110,185,186].

The ribosome display construct generally is composed of the T7 promoter, a ribosome-binding site, a translational enhancer, such as the β -globin gene of *Xenopus laevis*, a translational initiation signal, such as Shine-Dalgarno (prokaryotic–*E. coli*) or Kozak (eukaryotic–rabbit reticulocyte) sequence [183,186,188] and an open reading frame (ORF) in which the library is fused to a C-terminal polypeptide spacer containing no stop codon sequence [177]. The absence of a stop codon is crucial as it facilitates recovery of the intact, stalled ARM complex. Spacer length is of importance

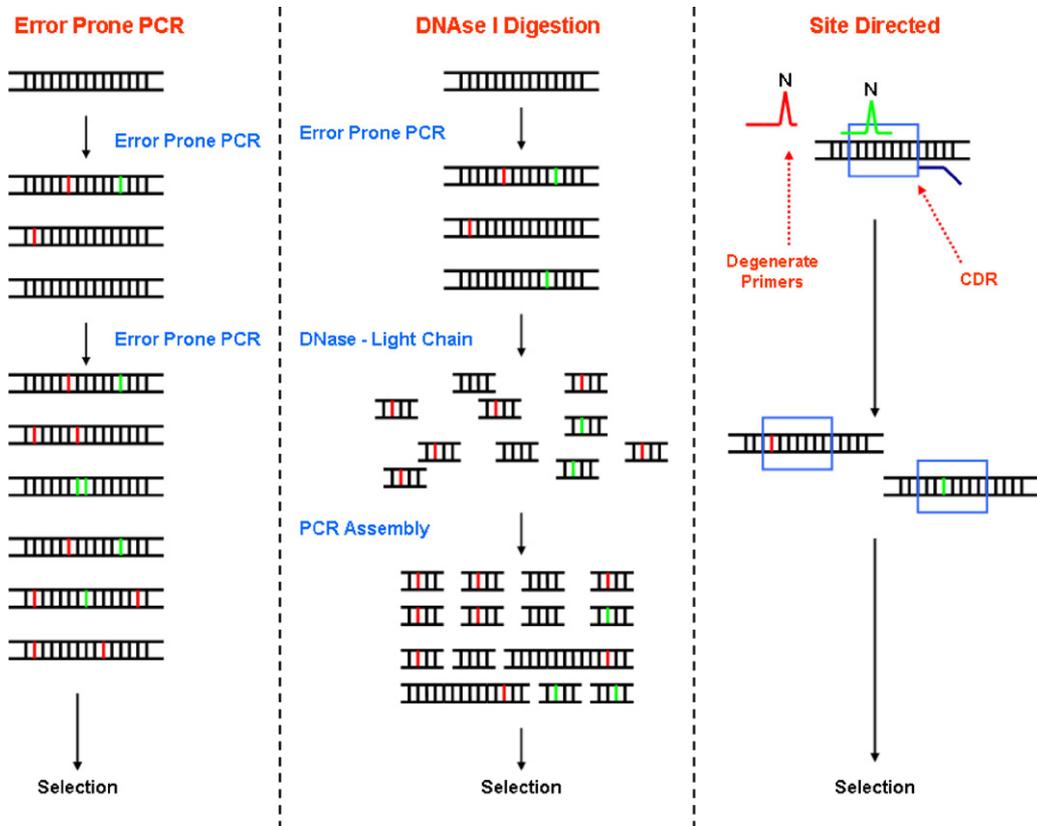


Fig. 9. Mutagenesis strategies. Strategies for the introduction of mutations for improving affinity of recombinant antibodies. Advantageous mutations (red) and deleterious mutations (green) are shown. Error prone strategies introduce mutations randomly across the gene. With increasing number of PCR cycles more mutations are introduced. The useful mutations can be masked by deleterious mutations and DNA shuffling of the light chains offers a solution by cleaving the gene with DNase I digestion and allowing the gene to reassemble randomly. Site-directed mutagenesis of the CDR regions can also be achieved using degenerate primers to introduce mutations in the antigen recognition sites. This figure was adapted from [174].

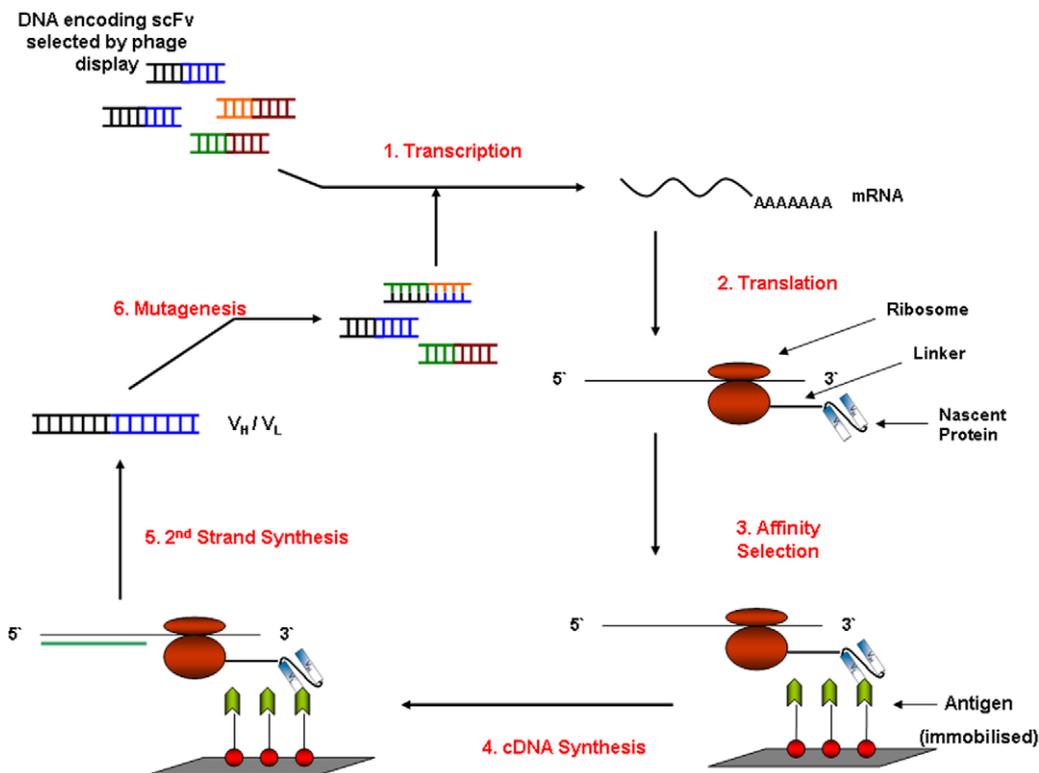


Fig. 10. Overview of eukaryotic ribosome display–selection and evolution of affinity. Selection based on ARM complex formed by stalling the ribosome. The complex can then be isolated by affinity interaction with biotinylated antigen. RT-PCR then allows for the *in situ* recovery of the mRNA encoding for specific ARM complexes. Affinity evolution can be facilitated via error prone PCR (random) light chain shuffling (random) or CDR mutagenesis (directed). This figure was adapted from [105,180,187].

Table 6
Effect of translational factors on efficiency [88,175,186,187,190].

Translational factor	Effect
Temperature	Enzymatic activity of polymerase. Degradation of mRNA by RNases. Folding efficiency of synthesised protein.
Time	Longer translational times in eukaryotic versus prokaryotic systems. Critical in uncoupled systems as mRNA is continually produced. Accumulation of small MW molecules from hydrolysis of triphosphates with longer translation times. Inactivation of α -subunit of initiation factor 2 (eIF-2) by Ca^{2+} .
Additives	PDI (Protein disulphide isomerase) catalysing formation of disulphide bonds. 10sRNA inhibition by anti-sense DNA-oligonucleotides.

as it facilitates the nascent protein folding into its correct conformation by ensuring exit from the ribosomal tunnel. Typically, at least 20–30 amino acids are required and a spacer of 116 amino acids was shown to be more efficient in displaying proteins [189]. The spacer also provides a known sequence for designing primers for the RT-PCR recovery of the selected library [180]. Commonly used spacer sequences include human Ck and filamentous geneIII [177,189]. The inclusion of 5' and 3' stem loop structures was demonstrated to improve mRNA stability by protecting it against RNases [186,187].

4.2.3. Considerations

For antibody generation it was shown that folding efficiency is affected by the inclusion of transcription stabilisers, as transcription requires reducing conditions whilst translation requires oxidising conditions. Hence, the enzymatic activity of transcription (T7 RNA polymerase) requires monitoring in the absence of reducing reagents and, where reducing agents are used for transcription, oxidising conditions are required for the subsequent translational step [187,190].

Time, temperature and the inclusion of various additives for *in vitro* translation each impact the yield and efficiency of ribosome display. These effects are summarised briefly in Table 6.

4.3. Genetically coded tag's for biosensor development

The inclusion of certain peptide tags in recombinant antibody expression vectors offers a rapid and reliable method of purification and characterisation. These tags may also prove useful as capture sites in biosensor development. Oligohistidine tagging of antibody fragments is hugely beneficial for the purification process [191] but may also be useful in non-covalent coupling of the antibody to the sensor surface using anti-histidine monoclonal antibodies [192], or potentially direct coupling to sensor surfaces, as demonstrated by Lori and co-workers [193].

FLAG (DYKDDDDK) residues incorporated into antibody fragments have also been demonstrated as a useful “capture” method for recombinant protein characterisation, as demonstrated by Mersich and co-workers, where the detection of FLAG-tag fusion proteins using anti-FLAG monoclonal antibodies in a SPR-based system was performed [194].

The AviD tag is a neutravidin- (or avidin)-specific moiety that has useful applications in the immobilisation and purification of recombinant proteins [195]. Despite the absence of examples of biosensors utilising this specific AviD tag, there have been reports of the use of avidin, streptavidin and neutravidin surfaces immobilising biotinylated antibodies for use in biosensors [196–198].

Purification using streptavidin-binding peptide (SBP tag) has also been demonstrated as a useful approach [199]. The SBP tag

interacts specifically with streptavidin but is a weaker interaction than between biotin and avidin. Hence, dissociation can be controlled and this SBP tag was utilised in surface preparation as demonstrated in both SPR- [200] and TIRF-based [201] systems.

5. High-throughput screening

The real value of these large and highly diverse recombinant libraries can only be efficiently exploited if the most judicious and discriminatory selection and enrichment regimes are employed. This is particularly true in the case of extremely large ribosome displayed libraries and especially following focused *in vitro* directed evolution campaigns that can generate large pools of closely related yet heterogeneous clones. In order to exhaustively ‘mine’ such libraries it is important to ensure that a suitably comprehensive number of individual clones, rather than a small representative subset, are analysed. Interestingly, some of the most useful means of accomplishing such high-throughput data-rich ranking of binding interactions is provided by the newest generation of multiplexed SPR-based biosensors. Currently the GE Healthcare Biacore® A100 instrument offers extremely high-sensitivity kinetic ranking of ligand interactions [102,202]. It can accommodate multiple 96- or 384-well plates in a temperature-controlled integrated rack housing. Four flow cells, each containing five interaction spots, employ hydrodynamic addressing to control interaction flow paths. Dedicated LIMS integration software facilitates compatibility with existing LIMS systems that are now increasingly established in high-throughput screening labs. The ProteOn XPR36 system from Bio-Rad is a unique 6 × 6 multichannel SPR platform that enables automated multiplex analysis of up to 36 biomolecular interactions in one experiment [203–205]. Such systems are anticipated to become mainstream in antibody screening laboratories in the coming years.

6. Applications of antibody-based biosensors

Whilst numerous useful diagnostic kits exist for a multitude of disease states, such as cardiac disease [206] (James and co-workers evaluate commercially available monoclonal antibody-based kits) and biological threat detection, e.g. Raptor™ [69,207,208], few biosensor devices based on recombinant antibody technology are commercially available. Biosensors have huge potential in the areas of clinical diagnosis/monitoring, environmental and food safety, biothreat analysis on the battlefield and counter terrorism [209]. In addition, POC testing can remove the need for long delays by providing relatively short testing times. However, for POC and other biosensor-based detection devices to become mainstream, current biological formats require reductions in size, sample and reagent volume requirements coupled with significant advances in reliability, ease-of use multi-analyte and high-throughput capabilities [210]. Table 7 outlines some examples of recombinant antibody-based biosensors that incorporate the platforms mentioned in Section 2.2.

A search of the literature only yields a few recombinant antibody-related biosensor publications, however, we would predict that this will change dramatically in the near future. Much of the initial investigation into biosensor transduction elements utilise commercially available antibodies (typically monoclonal or polyclonal) to demonstrate the technology and generate useful diagnostic systems. Merging the field of antibody generation/characterisation with transduction, surface and engineering sciences, nanotechnology and microfluidics will propel the applications of recombinant antibody-based sensors forward rapidly. Key factors are the ability to enhance specificity, sensitivity, stability and orientation/immobilisation for optimised antibody performance. The employment of highly specific and sensitive antibodies capable

Table 7
Recombinant antibody-based biosensors.

Analyte	Antibody form	Transducer	Ref.
Disease			
HIV-1 virion infectivity factor	scFv (VH and VHD)	Piezoelectric	[211]
<i>L. monocytogenes</i>	scFv	SPR	[212]
SARS virus	scFv	Imaging ellipsometry	[213]
<i>L. monocytogenes</i>	scFv (phage bound)	Amperometric	[214]
Biowarfare			
Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus	scFv	Potentiometric	[215]
<i>B. anthracis</i> S-layer protein	scFv	Resonant mirror	[216]
Haptens			
Morphine-3- β -glucuronide	scFv	SPR	[217]
Contaminants			
Aflatoxin B1	scFv (mono- and dimeric)	SPR	[218]
Parathion (insecticide)	scFv	Piezoelectric	[219]
Atrazine	scab	Amperometric	[220]

of deployment on nano-devices with the capacity to determine pM concentrations in nanoliter volumes, for the determination of cancer or cardiac disease-related markers, is the ultimate challenge.

Acknowledgements

All authors are supported by *Science Foundation Ireland* under CSET Grant no. 05/CE3/B754. PJC is also supported by *Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET)* Embark Scholarship.

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