Monitoring Antibody Oxidation at Subunit Level Using BioPharmaView™ Software

Kerstin Pohl1; Amandine Boudreau2; Annu Uppal3
1SCIEX, Darmstadt, Germany; 2SCIEX, 71 Four Valley Drive, Concord, ON, L4K 4V8 Canada; 3SCIEX, 121, Udyog Vihar, Phase IV, Gurgaon, Haryana, India

Introduction

Monitoring post-translational modifications like oxidation during the development of monoclonal antibody (mAb) therapeutic is critical for the demonstration of product’s efficacy and/or stability. The oxidation of methionine especially in the Fc region is of major concern as it can lead to immunogenicity, reduced binding affinity and short half-life of the biotherapeutic. Here, we assessed the susceptibility of methionines in the Fc region to oxidation through a combination of forced oxidation conditions and enzymatic digestion at the subunit level using a liquid chromatography mass spectrometry (LC-MS) approach. In addition, the fast and simple batch processing using BioPharmaView™ software permits rapid evaluation of domain specific oxidation levels. The subunit level analysis offers advantages by reducing the heterogeneity at the intact level. Moreover, this can be a method of choice over a conventional peptide mapping approach as this requires less sample preparation, reduces the chances of method artefacts and can be used for high throughput screening of mAb products during the development cycle.

Materials and Methods

Sample Preparation:

Humanized IgG monoclonal antibodies were obtained from the National Institute of Standards (#RM8671). Samples were incubated at 37°C for four hours using different concentrations of hydrogen peroxide (H2O2).

Methionine oxidation was subsequently quenched by adding L-methionine. Samples were digested into subunit fragments with IdeS enzyme (Genovis AB) producing a F(ab’)2 and two Fc fragments per mAb molecule (Fig. 1) prior to LC-MS measurement.

Liquid Chromatography:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>SCIEX ExionLC™</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>C4 (50x2.1 mm; 1.7 um; 30 nm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column temp.</td>
<td>75 °C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phase A</td>
<td>0.2 % formic acid in water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phase B</td>
<td>0.2 % formic acid in acetonitrile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow rate</td>
<td>0.3 ml/min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injection Vol.</td>
<td>2 μl</td>
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Mass Spectrometry:

All measurements were carried out in replicates on X500B Q-TOF (Fig. 2) coupled to a Turbo V™ ion source using large protein mode acquisition. Intact and subunit samples were measured on TOF-MS mode over a mass range from 900-4000 with optimized source parameters.

Data Processing

The complete data processing including spectral deconvolution, mass reconstruction and analysis of
oxidation levels was performed using BioPharmaView™ software.

**Results and Discussion**

Reducing complexity by analyzing subunits of proteins is a fast way to obtain detailed insight into the domain specific modifications. The chemically oxidized mAb samples after IdeS digestion were analyzed by LC-MS and processed with BioPharmaView™ software. The LC-MS profile showed two peaks corresponding to Fc and F(ab')2 fragment.

The Fc subunit contains three methionines residues which can undergo oxidation. The reconstructed spectra of the Fc peak showed a strong correlation between the percent oxidation levels and the concentration of the H₂O₂ (Fig. 3).

The BioPharmaView™ software can automatically calculate and provide the graphical representation of the oxidation levels based on total reconstructed area of Fc fragment for all the treated samples in terms of multiplicity (Fig. 4). The green histogram represents the complete oxidation of Fc subunit i.e. all the three methionines are oxidized with the highest concentration of H₂O₂ used (Fig.4).

One of the advantages of using BioPharmaView™ software is that it can also calculate the mean ratio of modifications automatically by summing the reconstruction areas for each multiplicity and converting to percent contribution for each form. As expected, the oxidation level (red bar in Fig. 5) is decreasing with decreasing concentration of oxidizing agent, while other modifications (lysine loss, glycosylations G0F, G1F, G2F) remain constant across all samples. This provides a fast and automated tool which enables the monitoring of batches and quick identification of any differences in a particular lot.

**Conclusion**

The susceptibility of mAbs to undergo chemical modifications during manufacturing, formulation and storage is one of the biggest challenge faced by the biopharmaceutical industry. This generates the necessity of having robust high-throughput workflows to monitor the stability of these biotherapeutics. The subunit mass analysis workflow demonstrated here provides a fast method of methionine oxidation determination with fast sample preparation as well as a short run time and quick
processing time, especially suitable for the high throughput analysis of a large number of samples.

The high-quality data obtained by the X500B Q-TOF System combined with fast data processing using BioPharmaView™ software were demonstrated to be reliable tools for the automated calculation of percent modifications under stress conditions, thereby facilitating the monitoring of critical quality attributes at the subunit level during the development of biotherapeutics.

References