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(54) **Nucleic acid purification**

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Purification d'acides nucléiques

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WO-A-02/42317 WO-A-96/36706

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EP 1 245 674 B9

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a process for purifying plasmid DNA, more particularly to a process for purifying pharmaceutical grade plasmid DNA.

Background to the Invention

[0002] The use of genetic information in the treatment of disease is one the most promising avenues of medical research. There are different approaches of delivering genetic information to a patient; most prominently among them viral vectors of different origins and "naked" DNA vectors propagated in bacteria. The use of viral vectors has been discredited of late because of safety considerations.

[0003] The use of bacterially derived plasmids in the clinic increases the importance of effective and economical means and methods of manufacturing and purifying large amounts of plasmid DNA to very high standards of purity. In order to satisfy the criteria of pharmaceutical manufacturing adopted by most authorities, a method for the purification also needs to yield reproducible and validated results.

[0004] A number of methods have been reported for the purification of pharmaceutical grade plasmid DNA. Most of them follow a similar scheme, involving a first lysis step, in which the bacteria are broken down, a subsequent denaturation step that destroys nucleic-acid interactions with proteins, and finally a procedure by which the target nucleic acid content is derived in a sequence of precipitation steps and at least one chromatographic step.

[0005] The quality obtained by these purification methods is variable. One feature, however, is that certain substances present in the bacterial biomass, among them polysaccharides derived from the bacterial cell wall, lipopolysaccharides and RNA, are difficult to remove without several chromatographic steps, and tend to contaminate the standard DNA preparations. Some of these bacterially derived contaminants are extremely potent effectors of various defence systems of higher eukaryotes, possibly because of their intrinsic function as a signal of bacterial infection. The elimination of these contaminants is a major problem in the manufacture and purification of plasmid DNA.

[0006] Ultrafiltration of biological products is known. A method for obtaining a protein from tissue fluid by diafiltration is shown in WO 98/54195. Many methods for the isolation and purification of nucleic acids are also known and taught in different patents and patent applications. For example, WO98/05673 describes a process for producing highly purified DNA which involves a combination of diafiltration and chromatography steps. Diafiltration is used before and after ion exchange chromatography primarily to ensure that the nucleic acid containing sample is in the correct buffer. A key feature of this proposal is that the diafiltration uses an open-channel or hollow fibre ultrafiltration unit to prevent turbulence at the ultrafiltration membrane so as to obtain a gel layer.

[0007] EP0517515 discloses a method for purifying plasmid DNA and/or cosmid DNA which can be carried out easily without time-consuming centrifugation and without using a toxic reagent.

[0008] WO99/29832 discloses a method for purifying plasmid DNA from a mixture containing plasmid DNA and genomic DNA.

[0009] WO02/42317 forms part of the state of the art under Article 54(3) and (4) EPC. It discloses a method of separating extra-chromosomal DNA from other cellular components.

[0010] EP0964057 discloses a method for separating nucleic acids by hydrophobic interaction chromatography.

[0011] AU 723817 (derived from WO98/30685) also concerns a method for producing a highly purified plasmid DNA. In this method, two column chromatography steps are used; a Q-sepharose® chromatography step followed by a hydroxylapatite chromatography step. The eluate from the hydroxylapatite chromatography step is subjected to crossflow filtration which is stated in the disclosure to be essential. This step is used to remove salt and other contaminants from the column eluate.

[0012] WO00/05358 is primarily directed to the use of a static mixer to obtain a lysed cell solution in a method for purifying plasmid DNA. This, too, relies upon an ion exchange chromatography step to purify plasmid DNA and diafiltration by tangential flow using an open channel ultrafiltration unit is employed to ensure that the plasmid DNA is in the correct buffer.

[0013] US 4,623,723 is directed to the separation of crude nucleic acid solutions using hollow fibre ultrafiltration membranes. It is proposed to separate RNA from DNA using diafiltration against deionised water. No data are given as to the effectiveness of the method.

[0014] In order to achieve highly purified pharmaceutical grade plasmid DNA, each of the above methods is primarily reliant upon a chromatographic step to remove contaminants. This can increase the time for purification, especially where multiple chromatographic steps are required, and will increase the cost involved as well.

Summary of the Invention

[0015] The present invention aims to overcome the drawbacks in the prior art.

[0016] The present invention provides a process for purifying plasmid DNA from a nucleic acid containing sample comprising plasmid DNA and contaminants including RNA, which process comprises a step of contaminant removal, comprising:

- (a) treating the sample to form a nucleic acid solution having a concentration of monovalent cations;
- (b) contacting the nucleic acid solution with an ultrafiltration membrane having a molecular weight exclusion limit of at least 30kDa under conditions in which the formation of a gel-layer is prevented and in which the concentration of monovalent cations is at least about 0.35M for a time sufficient to remove substantially all RNA and form a retentate containing plasmid DNA; and
- (c) collecting the retentate.

[0017] It has surprisingly been found that a combination of particular type of ultrafiltration membrane unit and sufficient exposure to monovalent cations can remove contaminants from a plasmid DNA containing solution provided that substantially no gel layer forms on or adjacent to the ultrafiltration membrane. In this way it is found that contaminant removal, especially RNA contaminant removal is particularly effective. This avoids the need for multiple column chromatography steps thereby keeping to a minimum the extent to which chromatography is used to purify the plasmid DNA. In the present invention a single chromatography step is sufficient to achieve the required purity of DNA. Other contaminants removed by the step of contacting the nucleic acid solution with the ultrafiltration membrane may include endotoxins and cellular proteins. This enables a relatively speedy and efficient plasmid DNA preparation capable of producing a product which is suitable for pharmaceutical application.

[0018] The monovalent cation concentration used in the present process and the time over which the nucleic acid solution is contacted with the ultrafiltration membrane in the presence of the monovalent cations may be determined empirically. Standard methods are available to determine the amount of RNA or other contaminant remaining in a test sample applied to the ultrafiltration membrane. According to the invention, the monovalent cation concentration is at least about 0.35M, although lower concentrations may be used with a loss of some effectiveness. Generally, the monovalent cation concentration does not exceed about 2M. The monovalent cations are typically alkali metals and preferably comprise sodium or potassium. Chloride is a suitable counterion to the cations. However, lithium chloride is not found to be effective in the invention and so lithium is not a preferred monovalent cation.

[0019] Typically, the molecular weight exclusion limit of the ultrafiltration membrane does not exceed 100kDa and is preferably at least about 50kDa. It is not currently completely understood why the combination of elevated monovalent cation concentration and selection of molecular weight cut-off of membrane enables such effective purification of DNA from contaminants such as RNA. In the case of separating DNA from RNA, without wishing to be bound by theory, one may speculate that the molecular shape or physicochemical characteristics of RNA are altered under the process conditions such that it is able to permeate the ultrafiltration membrane whereas the plasmid DNA, especially of a size 2Kb or larger, is unable to permeate the membrane under these conditions.

[0020] Step (b) may be conveniently used to reduce the volume of the nucleic acid solution and a volume reduction in the range of 4 to 10 fold or more is readily achievable. Advantageously, at least step (b) comprises a step of diafiltration. Conveniently, the concentration of monovalent cations may be introduced into the nucleic acid solution by diafiltration as well. The conditions of diafiltration must be such, however, that substantially no gel-layer formation occurs. Gel-layer formation in this context is generally considered to be formation of a thin gelatinous layer of biomolecules on or in the ultrafiltration membrane. An important aspect of the present invention is a realisation that such a gel-layer may block the pores of the ultrafiltration membrane thereby reducing the efficiency and speed of filtration and causing an increase in the concentration of impurities remaining in the retentate. In practice, a good way of avoiding such gel-layer formation is to ensure that there is a degree of turbulence in the region of the ultrafiltration membrane. This may be achieved by using the ultrafiltration membrane in a screen channel ultrafiltration unit. Flow channel ultrafiltration units are typically configured so that the sample flow is in a direction normal to the direction of flow through the membrane. A screen channel ultrafiltration unit includes a separator positioned between a pair of membranes so that turbulence is generated in the retentate, in contrast to more open structures such as open channel or hollow fibre ultrafiltration units, which are not suitable for the present invention because of gel-layer formation.

[0021] Whilst the step (b) of contacting the nucleic acid with the ultrafiltration membrane may be performed at room or ambient temperature, it is preferred that an elevated temperature is used because this allows a speeding up of the filtration process. A temperature in the range 30°C to 60°C is preferred, most preferably around 50°C. It is also thought that elevated ultrafiltration temperatures help to decrease or prevent the formation of a gel-layer on the surface of the membrane.

[0022] Ultrafiltration may be performed at higher temperatures than 60°C, provided that the performance of the ultrafiltration membrane is not adversely affected at such high temperature. 60°C is the highest temperature generally recommended by ultrafiltration manufacturers. The temperature must not be so high that plasmid DNA melting or denaturation begins. At temperatures as high as 60°C, ultrafiltration of plasmid DNA is found not to influence its quality, nor its

subsequent use in molecular biological or gene transfer procedures. Elevated temperature is also found to be beneficial in the removal of lipopolysaccharide contamination. It is thought that a combination of high temperature, monovalent cations and other components such as calcium ions and detergent may disrupt lipopolysaccharides in aqueous solutions.

[0023] The step of contacting with the ultrafiltration membrane may be carried out once or a number of times in order to achieve the contaminant removal. Usually, a pressure gradient in the range 15 to 30psi is adequate for the process, preferably around 20psi.

[0024] A number of other steps may be incorporated into the process for purifying plasmid DNA in accordance with the present invention in addition to the step of contaminant removal. For example, the retentate may be subjected to a step (d) of further purification. This may conveniently be achieved by a step of chromatography typically to purify the plasmid DNA further from minor or trace contaminants. Only one such step is normally necessary although further steps can improve product DNA purity. Ion exchange chromatography is preferred, most preferably anion exchange chromatography. It is also possible use hydrophobic chromatography. A typical procedure comprises:

- (i) contacting the retentate an anion exchange resin under conditions to bind plasmid DNA;
- (ii) optionally washing the resin to remove impurities from the plasmid DNA; and
- (iii) eluting the plasmid DNA.

[0025] In a preferred arrangement a step of hydrophobic chromatography is also employed, especially before the step of ion exchange chromatography, so as to remove endotoxin and cellular protein contamination from the plasmid DNA-containing retentate.

[0026] The nucleic acid containing sample used in the process of the present invention may be prepared from a crude nucleic acid solution containing plasmid DNA and RNA. This crude nucleic acid solution is preferably treated to provide a calcium ion concentration sufficient to precipitate a majority of the large molecular weight RNA; and a solution phase is separated therefrom (M. Mukhopadhyay and N.C. Mandal - Anal.Biochem. 1983, 133, 265-270). The solution phase comprises the nucleic acid containing sample used in the step of contaminant removal. A useful calcium ion concentration is in the range 0.1M to 0.3M, preferably around 0.2M. In this way, host RNA can be substantially eliminated from the crude nucleic acid solution so as to leave of the order of 40-60% RNA in the total nucleic acid amount. Whilst this is a significant amount for pharmaceutical grade plasmid DNA preparation, in combination with the step of fine RNA removal a plasmid which is substantially RNA-free may be obtained. In practical terms, purified plasmid DNA which is RNA-free can otherwise be obtained commercially using RNase. However, for use as a therapeutic, it is essential that RNase is eliminated from the plasmid DNA purification process because RNase is an animal-derived enzyme whose use in the purification procedure introduces a possibility of contamination with infectious agents. It is also thought that the presence of calcium ions in the nucleic acid containing sample subjected to contaminant removal may assist the elimination of lipopolysaccharide and host cell protein contamination.

[0027] The crude nucleic acid solution used in the step of calcium ion precipitation is typically prepared by providing a cell free extract comprising plasmid DNA and RNA; and concentrating the extract, for example, by ultrafiltration. The extract may be concentrated by passage through an ultrafiltration membrane unit having a suitable molecular weight exclusion limit, typically of at least 30kDa, to form the crude nucleic acid solution as a retentate. The molecular weight exclusion limit of this ultrafiltration membrane is preferably no greater than about 100kDa and more preferably at least 50kDa. Advantageously, passage through the ultrafiltration membrane unit is performed at a temperature in the range 30°C to 60°C, preferably around 40°C. Such elevated temperature has the advantages discussed above in relation to the step of contaminant removal. The extract may be passed through the ultrafiltration membrane unit once or a number of times to achieve the desired concentration. This may be carried out at a pressure gradient in the range 15psi to 30psi, preferably around 20psi. A reduction in volume in the range 3 to 15 fold is achievable. It is advantageous in this step to include the step of diafiltration against any suitable solution for use in the subsequent step of calcium precipitation of the RNA.

[0028] In a preferred embodiment, this step of ultrafiltration is carried out in the presence of a detergent, preferably an ionic detergent, more preferably in the presence of an anionic detergent such as an alkali metal dodecylsulphate such as sodium dodecylsulphate. Maintenance of a suitable concentration of the detergent, typically around 0.1%, during this step improves elimination of cellular polysaccharides and other contaminants.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0029] The invention will now be described in further detail, by way of example only, with reference to the following Examples and accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows a flow chart for plasmid purification according to the invention;

Figure 2 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA following high temperature ultrafiltration in

step 7 of the process;

Figure 3 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA following room temperature ultrafiltration in step 7 of the process;

Figure 4 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA after fine RNA removal using diafiltration at 50°C;

Figure 5 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA after fine RNA removal using diafiltration at room temperature;

Figure 6 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA after fine RNA removal using diafiltration at 50°C;

Figure 7 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA after fine RNA removal using diafiltration at room temperature;

Figure 8 shows the results of agarose gel electrophoresis on plasmid DNA purified in accordance with the invention;

Figure 9 shows the results of silver stained polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis to assess elimination of protein (A) following high temperature ultrafiltration, and (B) following room temperature ultrafiltration;

Figure 10 shows the results of agarose gel electrophoresis analysis of diafiltrate and filtrate following fine RNA removal in the presence of 0.70M sodium chloride;

Figure 11 shows the results of agarose gel electrophoresis analysis of diafiltrate and filtrate following fine RNA removal in the absence of 0.70M sodium chloride;

Figure 12 shows the results of agarose gel electrophoresis analysis of diafiltrate and filtrate following fine RNA removal using a screen channel ultrafiltration unit;

Figure 13 shows a flow chart for plasmid purification according to a further embodiment of the invention;

Figure 14 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA following high temperature ultrafiltration with SDS in step 7 of the process;

Figure 15 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA following high temperature ultrafiltration without SDS in step 7 of the process;

Figure 16 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA after fine RNA removal using diafiltration at 50°C;

Figure 17 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA after fine RNA removal using diafiltration without SDS;

Figure 18 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA after fine RNA removal using diafiltration with SDS;

Figure 19 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA after fine RNA removal using diafiltration without SDS;

Figure 20 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA following fine RNA removal and concentration, with SDS; and

Figure 21 shows a chromatographic profile and analysis of plasmid DNA following fine RNA removal and concentration, without SDS.

Detailed Description of the invention

[0030] The method of purification of plasmid DNA presented below is capable of providing a number of advantages, including the extremely effective elimination of host cell protein and RNA prior to anion exchange chromatography step and the possibility to avoid the use of high volumes of organic solvents and exogenous animal derived proteins in the plasmid purification process. The method is adaptable to production for large-scale production of plasmid DNA, the purity of which meets therapeutic uses. The process speed is significantly higher compared to that of other industrially used pharmaceutical grade plasmid purification technologies.

Example 1

1. Fermentation

[0031] *Escherichia coli* JM109 strain (ATCC 53323) with the following genotype: *F' traD36 proA⁺B⁺ lacI^q Δ(lacZ)M15/ e14⁻(McrA⁻) Δ(lac-proAB) endA1 gyrA96 (NaI^r) thi-1 hsdR17 (r_k⁻ m_k⁺) glnV44 relA1 recA1* or another suitable strain was transformed with the control 4276 bp size model plasmid (pMB1 replication origin, Km^R) that is to be produced, according to routine laboratory techniques. The resulting strain was characterized by the acquired resistance to kanamycin in addition to other phenotypic features described for a host strain. The presence of the transformed control plasmid in the transformed strain was tested by an alkaline extraction and gel electrophoresis. A transformant clone of the strain carrying the plasmid, which has been selected on a basis of the maximal production of control plasmid DNA with a correct

restriction map, was used to prepare Master Cell Bank (MCB) and Working Cell Bank (WCB).

[0032] The fermentation process was performed as 1001 batch fermentation in M9 modified medium containing 15 µg/ml antibiotic kanamycin in a BIOSTAT™ U-100 (B. Braun Biotech International GmbH, Melsungen, Germany) pilot scale fermenter. An aliquot of 1 ml from a frozen WCB tube was thawed at ambient temperature and quickly transferred into the 21 flask containing 11 of M9 modified medium: 20g/l Na₂HPO₄, 4g/l KH₂PO₄, 1g/l NH₄Cl, 0.5g/l NaCl, 10g/l yeast extract, 2ml/l glycerol, 1.5g/l casamino acids, 1mM MgSO₄, 15 µg/ml kanamycin, pH 7.3, for inoculate preparation. The flask was shaken at 37°C and 200rpm for 18 hours. The 11 of prepared inoculate with 4.0 AU optical density was transferred into a 1001 Braun fermenter containing 801 of M9 modified medium: 20g/l Na₂HPO₄, 4g/l KH₂PO₄, 1g/l NH₄Cl, 0.5g/l NaCl, 10g/l yeast extract, 2ml/l glycerol, 1.5g/l casamino acids, 1mM MgSO₄, 15 µg/ml kanamycin, pH 7.3. The fermentation was processed under an automatic control of process parameters such as: temperature - 37°C, pO₂ - 30% from saturation, pH 7.3, and stirring speed - 100rpm. After 5-7 hours of fermentation 20l of 96°C preheated medium were added to the fermenter and the temperature of the medium was increased by steam heating to 45°C for thermal shock execution. The stirring speed was increased to 500 rpm and fermentation was continued until the stationary phase of cell proliferation was reached. The medium optical density was 10 AU. The fermentation broth was cooled and cells were harvested by centrifugation. The centrifuged cell biomass was weighted and washed once with suspension buffer: 25mM Tris-HCl, pH8.0, 10mM EDTA, 50mM glucose. 900 g of washed cell paste was stored overnight on ice and submitted to plasmid DNA purification or frozen at -20°C immediately after cell paste washing.

2. Plasmid DNA purification

[0033] A step-by-step flowchart and a detailed protocol for purification of control plasmid of *E.coli* cells are presented in Fig. 1. This example of process of plasmid DNA purification is elaborated below.

Step 1. Biomass suspension preparation:

[0034] 250g of *E.coli* cell paste was resuspended in suspending buffer (25 mM Tris-HCl, pH8.0, 10 mM EDTA, 50 mM glucose) at a ratio 1 gram of wet cell biomass/5ml buffer and mixed to receive homogeneous suspension of cells.

Step 2. Alkaline lysis of E.coli cell:

[0035] 1500 ml of resulting suspension from step 1 was added to 3125 ml of lysis buffer (0.2 M NaOH, 1% SDS, 0.1 M glucose) in a glass vessel and gently stirred with mixer for 5 minutes at room temperature.

Step 3. Precipitation by neutralization with sodium acetate:

[0036] To the 4625 ml of lysed cell suspension, 2375 ml of 1.5M CH₃COONa, pH 4.8 solution was added and mixed for 20 minutes to form a uniform suspension with precipitated cellular debris. The precipitated cellular debris suspension was left for additional 20 minutes to form debris sedimentation.

Step 4. Cell debris removal:

[0037] The cellular cell debris was submitted to centrifugation at 8000 rpm for 20 minutes at room temperature and 6520 ml of supernatant were collected into appropriate volume plastic bottle. Obtained nucleic acids solution was neutralised to pH 7.7+/-0.5 by adding 650 ml of 2.5 M Tris base solution. The final solution volume was 7170 ml. The NA solution was split into two portions and taken into hot and cold ultrafiltration processes in parallel.

Step 5. Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration (in high temperature):

[0038] 4000 ml of neutralized nucleic acid (NA) containing solution pH 7,7+/-0,5 were concentrated using three 100 kDa MWCO screen channel ultrafiltration Miniset Systems Cassettes with Omega Membrane (PALL FILTRON, USA) installed in Miniset Lab Tangential Flow System (PALL FILTRON, USA) ultrafiltration device. Total area of filtration was 0.21 sq. m. For NA concentration 30kDa or 50kDa, or 70 kDa, or 100kDa MWCO screen channel cassettes with ultrafiltration membranes may be used. For plasmids less than 4000 bp in size the use of membranes up to 70kDa MWCO is preferred in order to avoid the plasmid loss in the filtrate. The NA solution neutralization prior to concentration with Tris base solution up to pH 8.0 is preferable. The temperature of filtrated NA solution in the experiment was +40+/-2°C, solution supply speed was 1100+/-50ml/min and the pressure in the ultrafiltration unit was 20+/-2psi. Average filtrate flow speed was 120+/-5 ml/min.

[0039] The initial volume of neutralized NA solution was more than tenfold reduced by ultrafiltration up to 400 ml and

800 ml of 10mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA (TE buffer) were subsequently added to dilute the concentrated NA solution threefold. The NA diafiltration/concentration cycles were repeated two more times. The final diafiltrate was decanted, the system was flushed with TE buffer to collect a residual NA and flush solution was pooled with decanted diafiltrate. Resulting 600 ml of pool volume were taken into initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl_2 .

Step 5. Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration (in room temperature):

[0040] 3170 ml of neutralized nucleic acid (NA) containing solution pH 7,7+/-0,5 were concentrated using the same technology as in ultrafiltration in the elevated temperature, except that ultrafiltration was performed at the room temperature. The NA solution neutralization prior to concentration with Tris base solution up to pH 8.0 prior to concentration is preferable.

[0041] Ultrafiltration of NA solution was performed in the room temperature, since at the temperatures lower than 15-17°C SDS/protein complex begins to precipitate out of solution, blocking this way the ultrafiltration membrane and significantly decreasing the process speed. Like in the previous example (high temperature) solution supply speed was 1100+/-50ml/min and the pressure in the ultrafiltration unit was 20+/-2psi. However, the average filtrate flow speed was only 58+/-5 ml/min. The initial volume of neutralized NA solution was more than tenfold reduced by ultrafiltration up to 315 ml and 630 ml of TE buffer were added to dilute concentrated NA solution volume up to threefold. The volume of NA solution was fourfold reduced by the next step of diafiltration. The diafiltration/concentration cycles were repeated twice. The final diafiltrate was decanted and the system was flushed with TE buffer to collect a residual NA that was pooled with decanted diafiltrate. 520 ml of pool volume was taken into initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl_2 .

Step 6. Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl_2 :

[0042] 600 ml of the NA solution resulting from the high temperature ultrafiltration procedure and 520 ml obtained in the room temperature ultrafiltration were adjusted to 0.2M CaCl_2 concentration by adding 150 ml and 130 ml, respectively, of 1M CaCl_2 solution at room temperature. Obtained suspension was maintained without stirring for approx. 60 minutes prior to subsequent centrifugation.

Step 7. Crude plasmid DNA solution recovery:

[0043] The plasmid DNA containing supernatant after centrifugation at 8000 rpm for 20 minutes at room temperature was collected into the measuring cylinders. Both plasmid DNA samples were analysed in parallel by ion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP. Chromatographic profiles and analysis results are presented in figures 2 and 3.

[0044] Fig. 2 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA containing supernatant after Step 7 using high temperature ultrafiltration: "mini-prep" of anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP XK-16 column; column volume - 6 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, λ =66mS/cm, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.90 M NaCl, λ =84mS/cm, flow rate - 80cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Ret ml	Area/Peak area (volume) %	Height mAU
1	RNA/polysaccharides	8.03	42.08	29.210
2	relaxed forms of plasmid DNA	39.17	3.09	5.190
3	supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	42.62	54.83	35.420

Total area = 182.2107 mAU*ml

Area in evaluated peaks = 163.2895 mAU*ml

Ratio peak area / total area = 0.896158

Total peak width = 18.57 ml

Calculated from : pmokmil4 05:1_UV2_260nmv

Baseline : pmokmil4 05:1_UV2_260nm@02, BASE

Peak rejection on:

Maximum number of peaks: 5

Current peak filter settings:

Maximum number of peaks: 20

[0045] Fig. 3 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA containing supernatant after Step 7 using room temperature ultrafiltration: "mini-prep" of anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP XK-16

EP 1 245 674 B9

column; column volume - 6 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, λ =66mS/cm, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.90 M NaCl, λ =84mS/cm, flow rate - 80cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Ret ml	Area/Peak area (volume) %	Height mAU
1	RNA/polysaccharides	8.06	38.83	23.660
2	relaxed forms of plasmid DNA	37.95	2.89	3.830
3	supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	41.63	58.28	32.980

Total area = 148.9238 mAU*ml

Area in evaluated peaks = 141.9435 mAU*ml

Ratio peak area / total area = 0.953129

Total peak width = 19.55 ml

Calculated from : pmokmil4 06:1_UV2_260nm

Baseline : pmokmil4 06:1_UV2_260nm@02, BASE

Peak rejection on:

Maximum number of peaks: 5

Current peak filter settings:

Maximum number of peaks: 20

Step 8. Fine RNA removal (in high temperature):

[0046] Before RNA removal, 725 ml of the plasmid DNA solution was twofold diluted up to 1450 ml with 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, λ =65mS/cm (loading buffer solution for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP) and heated up to 50+/-2°C. Plasmid DNA containing solution was diafiltrated by using three 100kDa MWCO screen channel ultrafiltration Minisette Systems Cassettes with Omega Membrane (PALL FILTRON, USA), installed in Minisette Lab Tangential Flow System (PALL FILTRON, USA) ultrafiltration device. Total filtration area was 0.21 sq. m. Loading buffer for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP containing high NaCl concentration and high temperature were used for additional RNA removal by diafiltration of plasmid DNA solution. Diafiltration in the loading buffer solution for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP facilitates the process transition to the following anion exchange chromatography step, since the composition of plasmid DNA buffer solution after diafiltration coincides with that used for equilibration of sorbent, this way any undesirable ion concentration effects in the sorbent may be avoided during the chromatography.

[0047] The initial volume of DNA solution was six times reduced up to 250 ml by ultrafiltration and loading buffer was added to restore the initial 1450 ml volume. Five cycles of diafiltration at +50+/-2°C were performed. The diafiltrate was decanted and the system was flushed with buffer to collect a residual plasmid DNA that was pooled with decanted diafiltrate. 550 ml of pooled volume was taken into anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP.

[0048] Plasmid DNA obtained in the high temperature diafiltration process was analysed by anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP. Chromatography profile and analysis results are presented in the figure 4.

[0049] Fig. 4 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at +50°C temperature: "mini-prep" of anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP XK-16 column; column volume - 16 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, λ =64mS/cm, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.90 M NaCl, λ =84mS/cm, flow rate - 120cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Ret ml	Area/Peak area (volume) %	Height mAU
1	polysaccharides	8.44	0.84	17.720
2	RNA	19.70	2.11	19.690
3	relaxed forms of plasmid DNA	84.17	4.16	56.220
4	supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	92.61	92.89	569.890

EP 1 245 674 B9

(continued)

No	Peak name	Ret ml	Area/Peak area (volume) %	Height mAU
5	Total number of detected peaks = 32			
	Total area = 4725.6799 mAU*ml			
	Area in evaluated peaks = 4704.8508 mAU*ml			
	Ratio peak area / total area = 0.995592			
	Total peak width = 100.47 ml			
10	Calculated from : pMOKmIL4 04:1_UV2_260nm			
	Baseline : pMOKmIL4 04:1_UV2_260nm@02, BASE3			
	Peak rejection on:			
	Maximum number of peaks: 20			
	Current peak filter settings:			
15	Maximum number of peaks: 20			

Step 8. Fine RNA removal (in room temperature):

[0050] Before RNA removal, 618 ml of the plasmid DNA solution was twofold diluted up to 1240 ml with 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=65\text{mS/cm}$ (loading buffer solution for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP) at room temperature. Plasmid DNA containing solution was diafiltrated using 100kDa MWCO screen channel ultrafiltration Minisette Systems Cassettes with Omega Membrane (PALL FILTRON, USA), installed in Minisette Lab Tangential Flow System (PALL FILTRON, USA) ultrafiltration device. Loading buffer for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP containing high NaCl concentration was used for additional RNA removal and diafiltration of plasmid DNA solution in the room temperature. The initial volume of DNA solution was six times reduced up to 200 ml by ultrafiltration and loading buffer was added to restore the initial 1200 ml volume. Five cycles of diafiltration at room temperature were performed. The diafiltrate was decanted and the system was flushed with buffer to collect a residual plasmid DNA that was pooled with decanted diafiltrate. 410 ml of pooled volume was taken into anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP. Plasmid DNA obtained in the room temperature diafiltration process was analysed by anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP. Chromatography profile and analysis results are presented in the figure 5.

[0051] Fig. 5 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at room temperature: "mini-prep" of anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP XK-16 column; column volume - 16 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=64\text{mS/cm}$, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.90 M NaCl, $\lambda=84\text{mS/cm}$, flow rate - 120cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Ret ml	Area/Peak area (volume) %	Height mAU
1	polysaccharides	8.47	1.05	21.780
2	RNA	19.19	5.26	47.310
3	relaxed forms of plasmid DNA	84.52	2.56	44.780
4	supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	92.70	91.13	573.800

Total area = 4825.3857 mAU*ml
Area in evaluated peaks = 4777.7240 mAU*ml
Ratio peak area / total area = 0.990123
Total peak width = 104.03 ml
Calculated from : pMOKmIL4 03:1_UV2_260nm
Baseline : pMOKmIL4 03:1_UV2_260nm@02, BASE
Peak rejection on:
Maximum number of peaks: 20
Current peak filter settings:
Maximum number of peaks: 20

Step 9. Anion exchange chromatography:

[0052] 430 cm³ of Q Sepharose HP (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Sweden) in chromatographic column XK-50 (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Sweden) connected to AktaExplorer 100Air chromatographic system (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Sweden) were equilibrated with 10mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=65$ mS/cm at a flow rate 46 cm/h until stable electric conductivity curve appeared in a monitor or recorder. Chromatographic process was controlled by Unicorn 3.00 software for Windows NT. Chromatographic purification of both plasmid sample preparations was performed using the same column at the same process parameters, by regenerating the sorbent before each chromatography. Both plasmid DNA solutions obtained in either high temperature or room temperature ultrafiltration were applied on an anion exchanger at a flow rate 46 cm/h. Elution of the adsorbed plasmid DNA with 8 columns volume length of a linear increasing gradient from 0.70M to 0.90M of NaCl in TE buffer, pH 8.0 at a flow rate 43 cm/h was carried out.

[0053] Electric conductivity of a buffer solution was increased from 65 mS/cm to 84 mS/cm. Fractions of 45 ml were collected. Chromatographic fractions were analysed by 1% agarose gel electrophoresis. Fractions containing supercoiled plasmid DNA were pooled and the following final volumes plasmid DNA were obtained: 495 ml of plasmid DNA from high temperature ultrafiltration process and 450 ml of plasmid DNA from room temperature ultrafiltration process. Chromatographic profiles of both plasmid DNA solutions are presented in figures 6 and 7.

[0054] Fig. 6 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at +50°C temperature. Semi preparative anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP XK-50 column; column volume - 430 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=66$ mS/cm, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.90 M NaCl, $\lambda=84$ mS/cm, gradient flow rate - 43 cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Ret ml	Area/Peak area (volume) %	Height mAU
1	RNA/polysaccharides	699.15	1.51	49.930
2	relaxed forms of plasmid DNA	3491.40	6.44	396.430
3	supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	4095.21	92.05	4774.220

Total area = 1504886.5008 mAU*ml

Area in evaluated peaks = 1501728.1830 mAU*ml

Ratio peak area / total area = 0.997901

Total peak width = 2085.54 ml

Calculated from : pMOKmIL4 01:1_UV2_260nm

Baseline : pMOKmIL4 01:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASE1

Peak rejection on:

Maximum number of peaks: 25

Current peak filter settings:

Maximum number of peaks: 20

[0055] Fig. 7 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA received after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at room temperature. Semi preparative anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP XK-50 column; column volume - 430 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=66$ mS/cm, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.90 M NaCl, $\lambda=84$ mS/cm, gradient flow rate - 43 cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Ret ml	Area/Peak area (volume) %	Height mAU
1	RNA/polysaccharides	833.15	3.02	110.160
2	relaxed forms of plasmid DNA	3390.77	6.38	294.960
3	supercoil form of plasmid DNA	4029.57	90.60	3890.120

(continued)

	No	Peak name	Ret ml	Area/Peak area (volume) %	Height mAU
5		Total area = 1083119.1953 mAU*ml Area in evaluated peaks = 1083112.7265 mAU*ml Ratio peak area / total area = 0.999994 Total peak width = 1874.38 ml Calculated from : pmokmil4 02:1_UV2_260nm			
10		Baseline : pmokmil4 02:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASE Peak rejection on: Maximum number of peaks: 25 Current peak filter settings: Maximum number of peaks: 20			
15					

Step 10. Pooled plasmid DNA diafiltration and DNA concentration:

[0056] The pooled plasmid DNA solutions from both plasmid preparations were diafiltrated in parallel using one 100kDa MWCO screen channel ultrafiltration Miniset Systems Cassettes with Omega Membrane (PALL FILTRON, USA), installed in Miniset Lab Tangential Flow System (PALL FILTRON, USA) ultrafiltration device. 0.22 μ m filtrated TE buffer was used for diafiltration of the plasmid DNA solutions. The initial volume of DNA solution was six times reduced by ultrafiltration and TE buffer was added to restore the initial volume. Three cycles of diafiltration were performed. Plasmid DNA diafiltrate volume in the last diafiltration cycle was reduced to obtain DNA concentration in the range of 4-5mg/ml. Diafiltrate was decanted and the ultrafiltration system was flushed with TE buffer volume to collect the residual plasmid DNA and dilute DNA up to 1.8-2.2 mg/ml concentration.

Step 11. Bulk plasmid DNA preparation:

[0057] The plasmid DNA solution at a final concentration was prepared and submitted to the sterile filtration into apyrogenic containers. Samples for quality control were taken. Containers were labelled with a description of the product lot #, volume, concentration, date of production and were stored frozen.

[0058] Yields of test plasmid DNA after purification processes described above are presented in Table 1 for high temperature ultrafiltration and in Table 2 for room temperature ultrafiltration, RNA elimination course monitored by electrophoresis 1% agarose gel is presented in Fig. 8, host protein elimination course monitored by 10% SDS-PAGE, silver stained, is shown in the Fig. 9.

[0059] Fig. 8 shows a plasmid DNA purification course monitored by 1% agarose gel electrophoresis: lane 1 - GeneRuler™ DNA Ladder Mix (#SM0331, Fermentas AB, Lithuania). Size of fragments (bp): 10000, 8000, 6000, 5000, 4000, 3500, 3000, 2500, 2000, 1500, 1200, 1031, 900, 800, 700, 600, 500, 400, 300, 200, 100.

[0060] Lanes 2-8 of the Figure represent high temperature ultrafiltration method: lane 2 - Nucleic acid (NA) solution after Cell debris centrifugation step, lane 3 - nucleic acid solution after NA concentration and diafiltration step, lane 4 - filtrate after NA concentration and diafiltration, lane 5 - NA solution after Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl_2 , lane 6 - NA solution concentrate after Fine RNA removal step, lane 7 - filtrate after Fine RNA removal step, lane 8 - pooled plasmid DNA fractions after anion exchange chromatography. Lanes 9-15 represents room temperature ultrafiltration method: lane 9 - Nucleic acid (NA) solution after Cell debris centrifugation step, lane 10 - NA solution after NA concentration and diafiltration step, lane 11 - filtrate after NA concentration and diafiltration, lane 12 - NA solution after Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl_2 , lane 13 - NA solution concentrate after Fine RNA removal step, lane 14 - filtrate after Fine RNA removal step, lane 15 - pooled plasmid DNA fractions after anion exchange chromatography.

[0061] Fig. 9 shows a protein elimination course during high and room temperature ultrafiltration plasmid DNA purification steps by silver stained 10% PAGE electrophoresis.

[0062] According to the Figure, panel A shows protein remaining on high temperature ultrafiltration; panel B shows protein remaining on room temperature ultrafiltration:

lane 1 - nucleic acid solution after Cell debris centrifugation step, lane 2 - concentrate of nucleic acid solution after Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration step, lane 3 - filtrate after Nucleic acid concentration and diafiltration step, lane 4 - NA solution after Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl_2 step, lane 5 - filtrate after first diafiltration cycle during Fine RNA removal step, lane 6 - filtrate after second diafiltration cycle, lane 7 - filtrate after third diafiltration cycle, lane 8 - filtrate after fifth diafiltration cycle, lane 9 - pooled final filtrate after Fine RNA removal step, lane 10 - final NA solution concentrate after Fine RNA removal step, lane 11 - plasmid DNA after Anion exchange chroma-

tography step, lane 12 - Protein Molecular Weight Marker (#SM0431, Fermentas AB, Lithuania), kDa: 116.0, 66.2, 45.0, 35.0, 25.0, 18.4, 14.4.

[0063] It is evident from the presented data that temperature elevation from room temperature (20°C) to 40°C during the concentration of NA solution (Step 5) allowed to increase the ultrafiltration speed (average filtrate flow speed) about two times, i.e. from 58 to 120 ml/min in described experiment, while maintaining the same parameters of ultrafiltration process, namely, the NA solution supply speed (1100ml/min) and the pressure in the ultrafiltration unit (20 psi), and subsequently reduced the duration of concentration step at least twice.

[0064] Diafiltration and concentration of NA solution in TE buffer in step 5 when followed by subsequent CaCl₂ treatment allows the elimination of the majority of *E. coli* RNA, genomic DNA, cell proteins and large amounts of lipopolysaccharides. DNA electrophoretic analysis (lanes 3 and 5 in Fig. 8) and SDS PAGE analysis (lanes 2 and 4 in Fig. 9) as well as plasmid DNA chromatographic analysis (Fig. 2 and 3) indicate that concentration and diafiltration of NA solution increased the efficiency of the subsequent CaCl₂ treatment and effectively reduced the amount of contaminants. According to our data CaCl₂ treatment performed immediately after the acetate neutralisation step (Step 3, 4) is not that efficient and significantly higher amounts of contaminants of *E. coli* origin, such as different RNAs and their degradation products, are retained in the solution.

[0065] RNA diafiltration at 50°C temperature and high (0,70 M) NaCl concentration in step 8 allowed to reduce the amount of RNA/polysaccharide/protein contaminants to 1,51% according to absorption at 260 nm, while the same step performed at the room temperature reduced the total amount of contaminating substances to 3,01% according to semi preparative anion exchange chromatography data (Fig. 6, 7). Having in mind that usually polysaccharides constitute about 30% of RNA/polysaccharides peak (data from Fig. 4, 5) the final RNA amount in the plasmid DNA solution after Fine RNA removal step at 50°C temperature constituted only about 1% from the total absorption at 260nm. Fine RNA removal step carried out at room temperature was quite efficient as well, however, the final RNA amount constituted 2%. According to SDS-PAGE (Fig. 9) analysis results, the cell proteins remaining after the Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl₂ step are effectively eliminated during diafiltration at step 8 (lanes 4 and 10). Moreover, experimental data indicate that diafiltration at 50°C results in the lower amount of contaminating proteins than the same procedure performed at the room temperature (Fig. 9, lane 10). Fig. 10 shows the effectiveness of the fine RNA removal procedure, in the presence of 0.70M NaCl. The results shown are of electrophoretic analysis of diafiltrate and filtrate, obtained by filtering NA solution through screen channel 100 kDa MWCO: Lane 1 - GeneRuler™ DNA Ladder Mix (#SM0331, Fermentas AB, Lithuania), lane 2 - plasmid DNA standard, lane 3 - initial RNA/DNA solution (NA solution), lanes 4 and 5 - NA solution concentrate (retentate) and filtrate (permeate) after I diafiltration cycle, respectively, lanes 6 and 7 - after II cycle, lanes 8 and 9 - after III cycle, lanes 10 and 11 - after IV cycle, lanes 12 and 13 - after V cycle, lanes 14 and 15 - pooled final NA solution (retentate) and filtrate (permeate). The results indicate that it is preferred to use several diafiltration cycles in the presence of high salt in order to obtain complete fine RNA removal.

[0066] In contrast, Fig. 11 shows that fine RNA removal procedure without 0.70M NaCl is ineffective. The results shown are of electrophoretic analysis of diafiltrate and filtrate obtained by filtering NA solution through screen channel 100 kDa MWCO: Lane 1 - initial RNA/DNA solution (NA solution), lanes 2 and 3 - NA solution concentrate (retentate) and filtrate after I diafiltration cycle, respectively, lanes 4 and 5 - after II cycle, lanes 6 and 7 - after III cycle, lanes 8 and 9 - after IV cycle, lanes 10 and 11 - after V cycle, lanes 12 and 13 -after VI cycle, lanes 14 and 15 - pooled final NA solution (retentate) and filtrate (permeate), lane 16 GeneRuler™ DNA Ladder Mix (#SM0331, Fermentas AB, Lithuania) . Without salt there is no low molecular weight RNA elimination during the process.

[0067] Fig. 12 provides evidence that the fine RNA removal procedure in the presence of 0.70M NaCl proceeds without gel-layer formation when using a screen channel ultrafiltration unit. The results shown are of electrophoretic analysis of diafiltrate and filtrate, obtained by filtering NA solution through screen channel 300 kDa MWCO: Lane 1 - GeneRuler™ DNA Ladder Mix (#SM0331, Fermentas AB, Lithuania), lane 2 - initial RNA/DNA solution (NA solution), lanes 3 and 4 NA solution concentrate (retentate) and filtrate (permeate) after I diafiltration cycle, respectively, lanes 5 and 6 - after II cycle, lanes 7 and 8 - after III cycle, lanes 9 and 10 - after IV cycle, lanes 11 and 12 - after V cycle, lanes 13 and 14 - after VI cycle, lanes 15 and 16 - pooled final NA solution (retentate) and filtrate (permeate). When screen channel membranes are used with 300kDa MWCO membrane instead of the open channel membranes as in WO98/05673, a large big plasmid DNA loss is observed in the permeate, due to the minimized formation of the gel layer on the membrane surface. Anion exchange chromatography step 9 constitutes the final step of plasmid DNA purification process after which obtained plasmid DNA conforms in its characteristics to the requirements for therapeutic grade DNA (endotoxin concentration is already lower than 0,10EU/μg DNA, tables 1 and 2). The diafiltration step used afterwards allows one to obtain the final preparation of purified plasmid DNA dissolved in the solution having the desired composition.

Table 1. Results of plasmid DNA purification using high temperature ultrafiltration method

Purification Stage	volume, ml	Endotoxin content, EU/ml	Total amount of nucleic acid, mg	RNA/DNA content		DNA yield, %
				RNA amount, mg	DNA amount, mg	
Cell debris removal, supernatant	4000	<1000000		-	-	
Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration, concentrate of NA	600	>100000		-	-	
Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl ₂ supernatant	725	<1250	592	214	378	100
Fine RNA removal	Concentrate	550	>800	377	6	371
	Diafiltrate	7200	<1250	208	208	-
Anion exchange chromatography, pool of appropriate fractions	495	<50	317	0	317	84

Table 2. Results of plasmid DNA purification using room temperature ultrafiltration method

Purification Stage	Volume, ml	Endotoxin content, EU/ml	Total amount of nucleic acid, mg	RNA/DNA content		DNA yield, %
				RNA amount, mg	DNA amount, mg	
Cell debris removal, supernatant	3170	<1000000		-	-	
Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration, concentrate of NA	520	>100000		-	-	
Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl ₂ supernatant	618	<1250	449	151	298	100,0
Fine RNA removal	Concentrate	410	<2500	287	7	280
	Diafiltrate	6040	<1250	105	144	-
Anion exchange chromatography, pool of appropriate fractions	450	<50	252	0	252	84

Example 2**1. Fermentation**

[0068] Fermentation was performed as described in Example 1.

2. Plasmid DNA Purification

[0069] A step-by-step flowchart and a detailed protocol for purification of control plasmid of *E.coli* cells are presented in Fig. 13. This example of process of plasmid DNA purification is elaborated below.

Step 1. Biomass suspension preparation:

[0070] 200g of *E.coli* cell paste was resuspended in suspending buffer (25 mM Tris-HCl, pH8.0, 10 mM EDTA, 50 mM glucose) at a ratio 1 gram of wet cell biomass/5ml buffer and mixed to receive homogeneous suspension of cells.

Step 2. Alkaline lysis of E.coli cell:

[0071] 1200 ml of resulting suspension from step 1 was added to 2500 ml of lysis buffer (0.2 M NaOH, 1% SDS, 0.1 M glucose) in a glass vessel and gently stirred with mixer for 5 minutes at room temperature.

Step 3. Precipitation by neutralization with sodium acetate:

[0072] To the 3700 ml of lysed cell suspension, 1900 ml of 3M CH₃COONa, pH 4.8 solution was added and mixed for 10 minutes to form a uniform suspension with precipitated cellular debris.

Step 4. Cell debris removal:

[0073] The cellular cell debris was submitted to centrifugation at 8000 rpm for 20 minutes at 18° temperature and 4880 ml of supernatant were collected into appropriate volume plastic bottle. Obtained nucleic acids solution was neutralised to pH 7.5+/-0.5 by adding 488 ml of 2.5 M Tris base solution and 240ml of 5M NaOH. The final solution volume was 5608 ml. The NA solution was split into two equal portions and taken into ultrafiltration processes with 0.1% SDS and without 0.1%SDS in parallel.

Step 5. Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration (with 0.1% SDS):

[0074] 2804ml of neutralized nucleic acid (NA) containing solution pH 7,5+/-0,5 were concentrated using two 100 kDa NMWL screen channel ultrafiltration Minisette Systems Cassettes with Omega Membrane (PALL FILTRON, USA) installed in Minisette Lab Tangential Flow System (PALL FILTRON, USA) ultrafiltration device. Total area of filtration was 0.14 sq. m. For NA concentration 30kDa or 50kDa, or 70 kDa, or 100kDa NMWL screen channel cassettes with ultrafiltration membranes may be used. For plasmids less than 4000 bp in size the use of membranes up to 70kDa NMWL is preferred in order to avoid the plasmid loss in the filtrate. The NA solution neutralization prior to concentration with Tris base and NaOH solutions up to pH 8.0 +/-0.5 is preferable. The temperature of filtrated NA solution in the experiment was +40+/-2°C, pressure in the ultrafiltration unit was 20+/-2psi. Average filtrate flow speed was 100+/-5 ml/min.

[0075] The initial volume of neutralized NA solution was more than tenfold reduced by ultrafiltration up to 280ml and 560ml of 10mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.1%SDS were subsequently added to dilute the concentrated NA solution threefold. The NA diafiltration/concentration cycles were repeated five times, than the NA diafiltration/concentration cycles were repeated three times, using 10mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA solution without 0.1%SDS (TE buffer). The final diafiltrate was decanted, the system was flushed with TE buffer to collect a residual NA and flush solution was pooled with decanted diafiltrate. Resulting 360 ml of pool volume were taken into initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl₂.

Step 5. Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration (without 0.1%SDS):

[0076] 2804ml of neutralized nucleic acid (NA) containing solution pH 7,5+/-0,5 were concentrated using the same technology as in Step 5 (with 0.1%SDS), except that ultrafiltration was performed without 0.1%SDS. The NA solution neutralization prior to concentration with Tris base and NaOH solutions up to pH 8.0 is preferable. Ultrafiltration of NA solution was performed in 40+/-2 °C temperature. Like in the previous example (with 0.1%SDS) pressure in the ultrafiltration unit was 20+/-2psi. Average filtrate flow speed was 80ml/min. The initial volume of neutralized NA solution was more than tenfold reduced by ultrafiltration up to 280 ml and 560 ml of TE (10mM Tris-HCl, 1mM EDTA, pH8.0) buffer were added to dilute concentrated NA solution volume up to threefold. The volume of NA solution was fourfold reduced by the next step of diafiltration. The diafiltration/concentration cycles were repeated 6 times. The final diafiltrate was decanted and the system was flushed with TE buffer to collect a residual NA that was pooled with decanted diafiltrate. 360 ml of pool volume was taken into initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl₂.

Step 6. Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl₂:

[0077] 360 ml of the NA solution resulting from the ultrafiltration procedure with 0.1%SDS and 360 ml obtained in the ultrafiltration procedure without 0.1%SDS were adjusted to 0.2M CaCl₂ concentration by adding 90 ml of 1M CaCl₂ solution. Obtained suspension was maintained without stirring for approx. 30 minutes prior to subsequent centrifugation.

Step 7. Crude plasmid DNA solution recovery:

[0078] The plasmid DNA containing supernatant after centrifugation at 8000 rpm for 20 minutes at room temperature was collected into the measuring cylinders. Both plasmid DNA samples were analysed in parallel by ion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP. Chromatographic profiles and analysis results are presented in figures 14 and 15.

[0079] Fig. 14 shows chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA containing supernatant after Step 7 using high temperature ultrafiltration with 0.1% SDS: "mini-prep" of anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP HiTrap Q HP column; column volume - 5 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, λ=64mS/cm, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.95 M NaCl, λ=84mS/cm, flow rate - 60cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
1	RNA/ Polysaccharides	7.34	1305.3977	52.74	446.670
2	Genomic DNA	56.10	6.7491	0.27	2.300
3	Relaxed form of plasmid DNA	60.83	35.8755	1.45	21.310
4	Supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	65.88	1127.0944	45.54	263.830
Total area (mAU*ml)			2488.4278		
Area in evaluated peaks (mAU*ml)			2475.1166		
Ratio peak area / total area			0.994651		
Total peak width (ml)			40.44		
Calculated from			rpomc po cac12 su sds01:1_UV2_260nm		
Baseline			rpomc po cac12 su sds01:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASEC		
Peak rejection on					
Maximum number of peaks ()			20		
Current peak filter settings					

[0080] Fig. 15 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA containing supernatant after Step 7 using high temperature ultrafiltration without: 0.1% SDS : "mini-prep" of anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP , HiTrap Q HPcolumn; column volume - 5 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, λ=64mS/cm, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.95 M NaCl, λ=84mS/cm, flow rate - 60cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
1	RNA/ Polysaccharides	7.39	1547.9908	55.41	551.230
2	Genomic DNA	56.54	17.5617	0.63	4.440
3	Relaxed form of plasmid DNA	61.20	44.1249	1.58	24.450
4	Supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	66.32	1184.1590	42.38	250.810
Total area (mAU*ml)			2825.9080		

EP 1 245 674 B9

(continued)

No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
5	Area in evaluated peaks (mAU*ml)		2793.8365		
	Ratio peak area / total area		0.988651		
	Total peak width (ml)		55.99		
	Calculated from		rpomc po Cacl2 be sds0 1:1_UV2_260nm		
10	Baseline		rpomc po Cacl2 be sds0 1:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASBCI		
	Peak rejection on				
	Maximum number of peaks ()		20		
	Current peak filter settings				

Step 8. Fine RNA removal (from sample following treatment in step 5 with 0.1%SDS):

[0081] Before RNA removal, 435 ml of the plasmid DNA solution was twofold diluted up to 870 ml with 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=65\text{mS/cm}$ (loading buffer solution for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP) and heated up to $50\pm 2^\circ\text{C}$. Plasmid DNA containing solution was diafiltered by using two 100kDa NMWL screen channel ultrafiltration Minisette Systems Cassettes with Omega Membrane (PALL FILTRON, USA), installed in Minisette Lab Tangential Flow System (PALL FILTRON, USA) ultrafiltration device. Total filtration area was 0.14 sq. m. Loading buffer for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP containing high NaCl concentration and high temperature were used for additional RNA removal by diafiltration of plasmid DNA solution. Diafiltration in the loading buffer solution for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP facilitates the process transition to the following anion exchange chromatography step, since the composition of plasmid DNA buffer solution after diafiltration coincides with that used for equilibration of sorbent, this way any undesirable ion concentration effects in the sorbent may be avoided during the chromatography.

[0082] The initial volume of DNA solution was five times reduced up to 85ml by ultrafiltration and loading buffer was added to restore the 500 ml volume. Five cycles of diafiltration at $+50\pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ were performed. The diafiltrate was decanted and the system was flushed with buffer to collect a residual plasmid DNA that was pooled with decanted diafiltrate. 205 ml of pooled volume was taken into hydrophobic chromatography on Phenyl Sepharose6FF. Plasmid DNA obtained in the diafiltration process with 0.1%SDS was analysed by anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP. Chromatography profile and analysis results are presented in the Figure 16.

[0083] Fig. 16 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at $+50^\circ\text{C}$ temperature after concentration/diafiltration step with 0.1% SDS: "mini-prep" of anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP, HiTrap Q HP column; column volume - 5 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=66\text{mS/cm}$, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.9 M NaCl, $\lambda=84\text{mS/cm}$, flow rate - 60cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
1	Polysacharides	4.01	1.0646	0.04	1.460
2	RNA	6.63	19.0362	0.79	8.510
45	3 Relaxed form of plaamid DNA	39.66	86.3014	3.59	31.060
	4 Supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	46.96	2300.2018	95.58	356.620
50	Total area (mAU*ml)		2413.7948		
	Area in evaluated peaks (mAU*ml)		2406.6040		
	Ratio peak area / total area		0.997021		
	Total peak width (ml)		56.85		
55	Calculated from		mini prepas su sds 02:1_UV2_260nm		
	Baseline		mini prepas su sds 02:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASEC1		
	Peak rejection on				

(continued)

No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
5	Maximum number of peaks () Current peak filter settings		20		

Step 8. Fine RNA removal (from sample following treatment in step 5 without 0.1%SDS):

10 **[0084]** Before RNA removal, 425 ml of the plasmid DNA solution was twofold diluted up to 850 ml with 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=65\text{mS/cm}$ (loading buffer solution for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP) and heated up to $50\pm 2^\circ\text{C}$. Plasmid DNA containing solution was diafiltered using 100kDa NMWL screen channel ultrafiltration Minisette Systems Cassettes with Omega Membrane (PALL FILTRON, USA), installed in Minisette Lab Tangential Flow System (PALL FILTRON, USA) ultrafiltration device. Total filtration area was 0.14 sq. m. Loading buffer

15 for anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP containing high NaCl concentration and high temperature were used for additional RNA removal and diafiltration of plasmid DNA solution. The initial volume of DNA solution was five times reduced up to 85 ml by ultrafiltration and loading buffer was added up to 500 ml volume. Five cycles of diafiltration at high temperature were performed. The diafiltrate was decanted and the system was flushed with buffer to collect a residual plasmid DNA that was pooled with decanted diafiltrate. 205 ml of pooled volume was taken into hydrophobic chromatography on Phenyl Sepharose 6FF. Plasmid DNA obtained in the diafiltration process was analysed by anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP. Chromatography profile and analysis results are presented in the figure 17.

20 **[0085]** Fig. 16 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at $+50^\circ\text{C}$ temperature after concentration/diafiltration step with 0.1% SDS: "mini-prep" of anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP, HiTrap Q HP column; column volume - 5 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=66\text{mS/cm}$, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.9 M NaCl, $\lambda=84\text{mS/cm}$, flow rate - 60cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

	No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
30						
	1	Polysacharides	4.14	1.9249	0.08	1.840
	2	RNA	6.77	53.6578	2.16	25.220
	3	Relaxed form of plasmid DNA	40.02	75.9882	3.06	29.190
35	4	Supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	47.16	2353.6699	94.71	358.600
	Total area (mAU*ml)			2503.5982		
40	Area in evaluated peaks (mAU*ml)			2485.2408		
	Ratio peak area / total area			0.992668		
	Total peak width (ml)			50.93		
	Calculated from			mini prepas be sds02:1_UV2_260nm		
	Baseline			mini prepas be sds02:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASEC2		
45	Peak rejection on					
	Maximum number of peaks ()			20		
	Current peak filter settings					

Step 9. Hydrophobic chromatography

50 **[0086]** 85 cm³ of Phenyl Sepharose 6FF (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Sweden) in chromatographic column XK-26 (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Sweden) connected to AktaExplorer 100Air chromatographic system (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Sweden) were equilibrated with 10mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=66\text{ mS/cm}$ at a flow rate 56cm/h until stable electric conductivity curve appeared in a monitor or recorder. Chromatographic process was controlled by Unicorn 3.00 software for Windows NT. Chromatographic purification of both plasmid sample preparations was performed using the same column at the same process parameters, by regenerating the sorbent before each chromatography. Both plasmid DNA solutions obtained in either ultrafiltration with 0.1%SDS or ultrafiltration without

EP 1 245 674 B9

0.1% SDS were applied on Phenyl Sepharose 6FF at a flow rate 56 cm/h. Plasmid DNA was flowed through and collected. Final volumes plasmid DNA were obtained: 203 ml of plasmid DNA from ultrafiltration process with 0.1% SDS and 203 ml of plasmid DNA from ultrafiltration process without 0.1% SDS. Chromatographic profiles of both plasmid DNA solutions are presented in figures 18 and 19.

[0087] Fig. 18 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at +50°C temperature, NA concentration/diafiltration (Step6) with 0.1% SDS. Hydrophobic chromatography on Phenyl Sepharose 6FF, XK-26 column; column volume - 85 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=66\text{mS/cm}$, flow rate 56 cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
1	RNA and plasmid DNA	164.88	467276.1527	100.00	2550.710
Total area (mAU*ml)			471872.4674		
Area in evaluated (mAU*ml) peaks			467276.1527		
Ratio peak area / total area			0.990259		
Total peak width (ml)			202.79		
Calculated from			Phenyl Sepharose 0101:1_UV2_260nm		
Baseline			Phenyl Sepharose 0101:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASEC1		
Current peak filter settings					
Maximum number of peaks ()			20		

[0088] Fig. 19 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at +50°C temperature, NA concentration/diafiltration (Step6) without 0.1% SDS. Hydrophobic chromatography on Phenyl Sepharose 6FF, XK-26 column; column volume - 85 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=66\text{mS/cm}$, flow rate 56 cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
1	RNA and plasmid DNA	163.49	503668.7017	100.00	2788.110
Total area (mAU*ml)			511791.8029		
Area in evaluated peaks (mAU*ml)			503668.7017		
Ratio peak area/total area			0.984128		
Total peak width (ml)			203.57		
Calculated from			Phenyl Sepharose 0201:1_UV2_260nm		
Baseline			Phenyl Sepharose 0201:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASEC		
Current peak filter settings					
Maximum number of peaks ()			20		

Step 10. Anion exchange chromatography:

[0089] 125 cm³ of Q Sepharose HP (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Sweden) in chromatographic column XK-26 (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Sweden) connected to AktaExplorer 100Air chromatographic system (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Sweden) were equilibrated with 10mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, $\lambda=66\text{ mS/cm}$ at a flow rate 45cm/h until stable electric conductivity curve appeared in a monitor or recorder. Chromatographic process was controlled by Unicorn 3.00 software for Windows NT. Chromatographic purification of both plasmid sample preparations was performed using the same column at the same process parameters, by regenerating the sorbent before each chromatography. Both plasmid DNA solutions obtained in either ultrafiltration with 0.1% SDS or ultrafiltration without 0.1% SDS were applied on an anion exchanger at a flow rate 45 cm/h. Elution of the adsorbed plasmid DNA with 10columns volume length of a linear increasing gradient from 0.70M to 0.95M of NaCl in TE buffer, pH 8.0 at a flow rate

45 cm/h was carried out. Electric conductivity of a buffer solution was increased from 66 mS/cm to 84 mS/cm. Fractions of 20 ml were collected. Chromatographic fractions were analysed by 1% agarose gel electrophoresis. Fractions containing supercoiled plasmid DNA were pooled and the following final volumes plasmid DNA were obtained: 120 ml of plasmid DNA from ultrafiltration process with 0.1%SDS and 120 ml of plasmid DNA from ultrafiltration process without 0.1% SDS. Chromatographic profiles of both plasmid DNA solutions are presented in figures 20 and 21.

[0090] Fig.20 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at +50°C temperature. NA concentration/diafiltration (Step 6) with 0.1%SDS . Semi preparative anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP XK-26 column; column volume - 125 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, λ =66mS/cm, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.90 M NaCl, λ =84mS/cm, gradient flow rate - 45 cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
1	Relaxed form if plasmid DNA	616.03	13638.3239	3.15	246.610
3	Supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	741.64	416982.8787	96.20	4861.060
Total area (mAU*ml)			43394.2683		
Area in evaluated peaks (mAU*ml)			433471.1200		
Ratio peak area / total area			0.998900		
Total peak width (ml)			615.68		
Calculated from			Q Sepharose HP 0102:1_UV2_260nm		
Baseline			Q Sepharose HP 0102:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASEC		
Current peak filter settings					
Maximum number of peaks ()			20		

[0091] Fig.21 shows the chromatographic profile and analysis data of plasmid DNA after Fine RNA removal (Step 8) using diafiltration at +50°C temperature. NA concentration/diafiltration (Step 6) without 0.1%. Semi preparative anion exchange chromatography on Q Sepharose HP XK-26 column; column volume - 125 cm³, Buffer A - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.70M NaCl, λ =66mS/cm, Buffer B - 10mM Tris, pH 8.0, 1mM EDTA, 0.90 M NaCl, λ =84mS/cm, gradient flow rate - 45 cm/h. Analysis of the chromatogram is as follows:

No	Peak name	Retention (ml)	Area (mAU*ml)	Area/Peak area ((volume) %)	Height (mAU)
1	RNA	217.29	10709.5104	2.29	58.920
2	Relaxed form of plasmid DNA	667.67	15872.7195	3.39	297.470
3	Supercoiled form of plasmid DNA	795.17	441913.3352	94.33	4953.590
Total area (mAU*ml)			468832.3410		
Area in evaluated peaks (mAU*ml)			468495.5651		
Ratio peak area / total area			0.999282		
Total peak width (ml)			679.16		
Calculated from			Q Sepharose HP 0202:1_UV2_260nm		
Baseline			Q Sepharose HP 0202:1_UV2_260nm@02,BASEC		
Current peak filter settings					
Maximum number of peaks ()			20		

Step 11. Pooled plasmid DNA diafiltration and DNA concentration:

[0092] The pooled plasmid DNA solutions from both plasmid preparations were diafiltered in parallel using one 100kDa NMWL screen channel ultrafiltration Minisette Systems Cassettes with Omega Membrane (PALL FILTRON, USA), installed in Minisette Lab Tangential Flow System (PALL FILTRON, USA) ultrafiltration device. 0.22 μ m filtrated TE

buffer was used for diafiltration of the plasmid DNA solutions. The initial volume of DNA solutions was six times reduced by ultrafiltration and loading buffer was added to restore the initial volume. Three cycles of diafiltration were performed. Plasmid DNA diafiltrate volume in the last diafiltration cycle was reduced to obtain DNA concentration in the range of 4-5mg/ml. Diafiltrate was decanted and the ultrafiltration system was flushed with TE buffer volume to collect the residual plasmid DNA and dilute DNA up to 1.8-2.2 mg/ml concentration.

Step 12. Bulk plasmid DNA preparation:

[0093] The plasmid DNA solution at a final concentration was prepared and submitted to the sterile filtration into apyrogenic containers. Samples for quality control were taken. Containers were labelled with a description of the product lot #, volume, concentration, date of production and were stored frozen.

[0094] Yields of test plasmid DNA after purification processes described above are presented in Table 1 for ultrafiltration with 0.1% SDS and in Table 2 for ultrafiltration without 0.1% SDS,

[0095] Amount of polysaccharides, including lipopolysaccharides, synthesized in *E.coli* cells depends greatly from the cultivation conditions, such as carbon/nitrogen ratio in the cultural medium, inoculate life, etc. Amount of synthesized polysaccharides is also greatly dependent on particular *E.coli* strain that is chosen as plasmid DNA producent. As a rule, if in the beginning of *E.coli* fermentation 2-3 hours lag phase is observed, biomass obtained in such fermentation is characterised by increased amounts of polysaccharides that significantly complicate further plasmid DNA purification and decrease qualitative parameters of the final product. To minimise negative polysaccharide influence on the plasmid purification process and quality, we have modified composition of TE buffer used in Step 5: Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration and have introduced additional hydrophobic chromatography step into purification scheme. Maintenance of 0.1% SDS concentration during diafiltration allowed for more efficient elimination of cellular polysaccharides and other contaminants of product origin compared to the standard TE buffer (10mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 1 mM EDTA) used in the previous experiment. Hydrophobic chromatography is used as an additional step that ensures that endotoxin and cellular protein contamination level in the final plasmid DNA preparation conforms to the requirements set for pharmaceutical compounds.

[0096] Example No 2 illustrates purification process of pUC type plasmid DNA from *E.coli* JM109 strain product biomass. During the fermentation of this biomass almost 3 hours lag phase was registered, that resulted in the increased amount of polysaccharides and endotoxins. Summarised results of the purification process performed in Example No 2 are presented in Table 3 and Table 4. Diafiltration in Step 5 against TE buffer supplemented with 0.1% SDS allowed the preparation of plasmid DNA solution (concentrate after Step 8. Fine RNA removing), that was characterised by thousand times lower lipopolysaccharides content compared to that obtainable when using standard TE buffer: 6800 EU/ml instead of 7000000 EU/ml respectively. Use of 0.1% SDS also improved the elimination of remaining low molecular mass RNA in Step 8: Fine RNA Removing: 0.8% RNA, when using TE buffer with 0,1% SDS instead of 2,3%, when standard TE buffer was used. Removal of *E.coli* cell proteins was much more efficient when using 0.1% SDS: 45 ng/ml instead of 126 ng/ml. Hydrophobic chromatography was more efficient when used in combination with ultrafiltration in the presence of 0.1% SDS and enabled a further reduction of cellular contaminants level of at least ten times, that after anion exchange chromatography step, in turn, resulted in plasmid DNA with highest quality parameters set at present for therapeutic plasmid DNA.

[0097] It is evident from presented data that temperature elevation from room temperature (20°C) to 40°C during the concentration of NA solution (Step 5) allowed to increase the ultrafiltration speed (average filtrate flow speed) about two times, i.e. from 58 to 120 ml/min in described experiment, while maintaining the same parameters of ultrafiltration process, namely, the NA solution supply speed (1100ml/min) and the pressure in the ultrafiltration unit (20 psi), and subsequently reduced the duration of concentration step at least twice.

[0098] Diafiltration and concentration of NA solution in TE buffer in step 5 when followed by subsequent CaCl_2 treatment in step allows the elimination of the majority of *E.coli* RNA, genomic DNA, cell proteins and large amounts lipopolysaccharides. DNA electrophoretic analysis (lanes 3 and 5 in Fig. 20) and SDS PAGE analysis (lanes 2 and 4 in Fig. 21) as well as plasmid DNA chromatographic analysis (Fig. 14 and 15) indicate that concentration and diafiltration of NA solution increased the efficiency of the subsequent CaCl_2 treatment and effectively reduced the amount of contaminants. According to our data CaCl_2 treatment performed immediately after the acetate neutralisation step (Step 3, 4) is not that efficient and significantly higher amounts of contaminants of *E.coli* origin, such as different RNAs and their degradation products, are retained in the solution.

[0099] RNA diafiltration at 50°C temperature and high (0,70 M) NaCl concentration in step 8 allowed to reduce the amount of RNR/polysaccharide/protein contaminants to 1,51% according to absorption at 260 nm, while the same step performed at the room temperature reduced the total amount of contaminating substances to 3,01% according to semi preparative anion exchange chromatography data (Fig. 18, 19). Having in mind that usually polysaccharides constitute about 30% of RNA/polysaccharides peak (data from Fig. 16, 17) the final RNA amount in the plasmid DNA solution after Fine RNA removal step at 50°C temperature constituted only about 1% from the total absorption at 260nm. Fine RNA

removal step carried out at room temperature was quite efficient as well, however, the final RNA amount constituted 2%. According to SDS-PAGE (Fig. 21) analysis results, the cell proteins remaining after the Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl_2 step are effectively eliminated during diafiltration at step 8 (lanes 4 and 10). Moreover, experimental data indicate that diafiltration at 50°C results in the lower amount of contaminating proteins than the same procedure performed at the room temperature (Fig. 21, lane 10). Anion exchange chromatography step 9 constitutes the final step of plasmid DNA purification process after which obtained plasmid DNA conforms in its characteristics to the requirements for therapeutic grade DNA (endotoxin concentration is already lower than 0,10EU/ μg DNA, Tables 3 and 4). Diafiltration step used afterwards allows to obtain the final preparation of purified plasmid DNA dissolved in the solution having desired composition.

Table 3. Results of plasmid DNA purification using nucleic acid concentration and diafiltration method with 0.1% SDS

Purification Stage	Volume, ml	Endotoxin content, EU/ml	Amount of host cell protein, ng/ml	Total amount of nucleic acid, mg	RNA/DNA content		DNA yield, %
					RNA amount, mg	DNA amount, mg	
Cell debris removal, supernatant	2440				-	-	
Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration, concentrate of NA	360				-	-	
Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl_2 supernatant	435			268	142	126	100
Fine RNA removal	Concentrate	205	6800	45	123	1	97
	Diafiltrate	4000		132	132		
Hydrophobic chromatography	203	400	3	117	1	116	92
Anion exchange chromatography, pool of appropriate fractions	120	3	0.3	104		104	83

Table 4. Results of plasmid DNA purification using nucleic acid concentration and diafiltration method without 0,1% SDS

Purification Stage	Volume, ml	Endotoxin content, EU/ml	Amount of E.coli host protein, ng/ml	Total amount of nucleic acid, mg	RNA/DNA content		DNA yield, %
					RNA amount, mg	DNA amount, mg	
Cell debris removal, supernatant	2440				-	-	
Nucleic acid (NA) concentration and diafiltration, concentrate of NA	360				-	-	
Initial precipitation of RNA with CaCl_2 supernatant	425			295	164	131	100

(continued)

Purification Stage		Volume, ml	Endotoxin content, EU/ml	Amount of E.coli host protein, ng/ml	Total amount of nucleic acid, mg	RNA/DNA content		DNA yield, %
						RNA amount, mg	DNA amount, mg	
Fine RNA removal	Concentrate	205	7.0x10 ⁶	126	128	3	125	95
	Diafiltrate	4000			142	142		
Hydrophobic chromatography		203	>360000	112	125	2	123	94
Anion exchange chromatography, pool of appropriate fractions		120	2200	28	110		110	84

Claims

1. A process for purifying plasmid DNA from a nucleic acid containing sample comprising plasmid DNA, and contaminants including RNA, which process comprises a step of contaminant removal, comprising:
 - (a) treating the sample to form a nucleic acid solution having a concentration of monovalent cations;
 - (b) contacting the nucleic acid solution with an ultrafiltration membrane having a molecular weight exclusion limit of at least 30kDa under conditions in which the formation of a gel-layer is prevented and in which the concentration of monovalent cations is at least about 0.35M for a time sufficient to remove substantially all RNA and form a retentate containing plasmid DNA; and
 - (c) collecting the retentate.
2. A process according to claim 1, wherein at least step (b) comprises a step of diafiltration.
3. A process according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the monovalent cation concentration does not exceed about 2M.
4. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the monovalent cation comprises sodium or potassium.
5. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the molecular weight exclusion limit of the ultrafiltration membrane does not exceed 100kDa.
6. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the molecular weight exclusion limit of the ultrafiltration membrane is at least 50kDa.
7. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the ultrafiltration membrane is provided in a unit which generates turbulent sample flow.
8. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the ultrafiltration membrane is provided in a screen-channel ultrafiltration unit.
9. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the step of contaminant removal comprises fine RNA removal.
10. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein at least step (b) is performed at a temperature in the range 30°C to 60°C.
11. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, which further comprises a step (d) of subjecting the retentate to further purification.

12. A process according to claim 11, wherein step (d) comprises:

- (i) contacting the retentate with an anion exchange resin under conditions to bind plasmid DNA;
- (ii) optionally washing the resin to remove impurities from the plasmid DNA; and
- (iii) eluting the plasmid DNA.

13. A process according to claim 11 or claim 12, wherein the retentate is contacted with a hydrophobic solid phase under conditions to separate contaminants from plasmid DNA.

14. A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the nucleic acid containing sample is prepared from a crude nucleic acid solution containing plasmid DNA and RNA by

- (i) treating the solution to provide a calcium ion concentration sufficient to precipitate a majority of the RNA; and
- (ii) separating therefrom a solution phase which comprises the nucleic acid containing sample.

15. A process according to claim 14, wherein the calcium ion concentration is in the range 0.1 to 0.3M.

16. A process according to claim 14 or claim 15, wherein the crude nucleic acid solution is prepared by

- (i) providing a cell free extract comprising plasmid DNA and RNA; and
- (ii) concentrating the extract by ultrafiltration.

17. A process according to claim 16, wherein step (ii) comprises passing the extract through an ultrafiltration membrane having a molecular weight exclusion limit of at least 30kDa to form the crude nucleic acid solution as a retentate.

18. A process according to claim 16 or claim 17, wherein at least step (ii) is performed at a temperature in the range 30°C to 60°C.

19. A process according to any one of claims 16 to 18, which further comprises a step of diafiltration against a solution suitable for treatment to precipitate RNA.

20. A process according to any one of claims 16 to 19, wherein the ultrafiltration is carried out in the presence of a detergent.

21. A process according to claim 20, wherein the detergent comprises sodium dodecylsulphate.

22. A process for pharmaceutical grade plasmid DNA preparation, comprising a process according to any one of the preceding claims.

Patentansprüche

1. Verfahren zum Reinigen von Plasmid-DNA aus einer nucleinsäurehaltigen Probe, die Plasmid-DNA und Kontaminanten, einschließlich RNA, enthält, welches Verfahren einen Schritt der Kontaminantenentfernung umfasst, wobei dies Folgendes umfasst:

- (a) das Behandeln der Probe, um eine Nucleinsäurelösung zu bilden, die eine Konzentration an einwertigen Kationen aufweist;
- (b) das Kontaktieren der Nucleinsäurelösung mit einer Ultrafiltrationsmembran, die eine Molekulargewichtsausschlussgrenze von mindestens 30 kDa aufweist, unter Bedingungen, bei denen die Bildung einer Gelschicht verhindert wird und die Konzentration der einwertigen Kationen zumindest etwa 0,35 M beträgt, für einen Zeitraum, der ausreicht, um im Wesentlichen die gesamte RNA zu entfernen und ein Plasmid-DNA enthaltendes Retentat zu bilden; und
- (c) das Sammeln des Retentats.

2. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 1, wobei zumindest Schritt (b) einen Diafiltrationsschritt umfasst.

3. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 1 oder Anspruch 2, wobei die Konzentration der einwertigen Kationen ca. 2M nicht

überschreitet.

4. Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei das einwertige Kation Natrium oder Kalium umfasst.
- 5 5. Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Molekulargewichtsausschlussgrenze der Ultrafiltrationsmembran 100 kDa nicht überschreitet.
6. Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Molekulargewichtsausschlussgrenze der Ultrafiltrationsmembran mindestens 50 kDa beträgt.
- 10 7. Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Ultrafiltrationsmembran in einer Einheit vorliegt, die eine turbulente Probenströmung erzeugt.
8. Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Ultrafiltrationsmembran in einer Siebkanal-Ultrafiltrationseinheit vorliegt.
- 15 9. Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei der Schritt der Kontaminantenentfernung eine präzise RNA-Entfernung umfasst.
- 20 10. Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei zumindest Schritt (b) bei einer Temperatur im Bereich von 30°C bis 60°C durchgeführt wird.
11. Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, welches weiters einen Schritt (d) umfasst, bei dem das Retentat einer weiteren Reinigung unterzogen wird.
- 25 12. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 11, wobei Schritt (d) Folgendes umfasst:
 - (i) das Kontaktieren des Retentats mit einem Anionenaustauscherharz unter Bedingungen zum Binden von Plasmid-DNA;
 - 30 (ii) gegebenenfalls das Waschen des Harzes, um Verunreinigungen aus der Plasmid-DNA zu entfernen; und
 - (iii) das Eluieren der Plasmid-DNA.
13. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 11 oder Anspruch 12, wobei das Retentat unter Bedingungen zum Abtrennen von Kontaminanten von der Plasmid-DNA mit einer hydrophoben festen Phase in Kontakt gebracht wird.
- 35 14. Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, wobei die nucleinsäurehaltige Probe aus einer Plasmid-DNA und RNA enthaltenden rohen Nucleinsäurelösung hergestellt wird, indem
 - (i) die Lösung behandelt wird, um eine Kalziumionenkonzentration bereitzustellen, die ausreicht, um einen Großteil der RNA auszufällen; und
 - 40 (ii) eine Lösungsphase, welche die nucleinsäurehaltige Probe umfasst, davon abgetrennt wird.
15. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 14, wobei die Kalziumionenkonzentration im Bereich von 0,1 bis 0,3 M liegt.
- 45 16. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 14 oder Anspruch 15, wobei die rohe Nucleinsäurelösung hergestellt wird, indem
 - (i) ein Plasmid-DNA und RNA enthaltender zellfreier Extrakt bereitgestellt wird; und
 - (ii) der Extrakt durch Ultrafiltration konzentriert wird.
- 50 17. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 16, wobei Schritt (ii) das Hindurchleiten des Extrakts durch eine Ultrafiltrationsmembran mit einer Molekulargewichtsausschlussgrenze von mindestens 30 kDa umfasst, um die rohe Nucleinsäurelösung als Retentat zu bilden.
18. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 16 oder Anspruch 17, wobei zumindest Schritt (ii) bei einer Temperatur im Bereich von 30°C bis 60°C durchgeführt wird.
- 55 19. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 16 bis 18, welches weiters einen Schritt der Diafiltration gegen eine für die Behandlung geeignete Lösung umfasst, um RNA auszufällen.

20. Verfahren gemäß einem der Ansprüche 16 bis 19, wobei die Ultrafiltration in Gegenwart eines Detergens durchgeführt wird.
21. Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 20, wobei das Detergens Natriumdodecylsulfat umfasst.
22. Verfahren zur Herstellung von Plasmid-DNA von pharmazeutischer Qualität, umfassend ein Verfahren gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche.

Revendications

1. Procédé de purification d'un ADN plasmidique à partir d'un échantillon contenant des acides nucléiques comprenant un ADN plasmidique et des contaminants, comme des ARN, ledit procédé comprenant une étape d'élimination des contaminants, comprenant :
 - (a) le traitement de l'échantillon pour former une solution d'acide nucléique ayant une concentration de cations monovalents ;
 - (b) le contact de la solution d'acide nucléique avec une membrane d'ultrafiltration possédant une limite d'exclusion de poids moléculaire d'au moins 30 kDa dans des conditions dans lesquelles la formation d'une couche de gel est empêchée et où la concentration des cations monovalents est d'au moins environ 0,35 M pendant une durée suffisante pour éliminer essentiellement la totalité des ARN et former un rétentat contenant un ADN plasmidique ; et
 - (c) la collecte du rétentat.
2. Procédé selon la revendication 1, dans lequel au moins l'étape (b) comprend une étape de diafiltration.
3. Procédé selon la revendication 1 ou la revendication 2, dans lequel la concentration en cation monovalent ne dépasse pas environ 2 M.
4. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel le cation monovalent comprend du sodium ou du potassium.
5. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la limite d'exclusion de poids moléculaire de la membrane d'ultrafiltration ne dépasse pas 100 kDa.
6. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la limite d'exclusion de poids moléculaire de la membrane d'ultrafiltration est d'au moins 50 kDa.
7. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la membrane d'ultrafiltration est fournie dans une unité qui génère un écoulement turbulent d'échantillon.
8. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel la membrane d'ultrafiltration est fournie dans une unité d'ultrafiltration à canal perforé.
9. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel l'étape d'élimination des contaminants comprend l'élimination fine des ARN.
10. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel au moins l'étape (b) est mise en oeuvre à une température dans la plage de 30 °C à 60 °C.
11. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, comprenant en outre une étape (d) consistant à soumettre le rétentat à une purification supplémentaire.
12. Procédé selon la revendication 11, dans lequel l'étape (d) comprend :
 - (i) le contact du rétentat avec une résine échangeuse d'anions dans des conditions permettant la liaison d'un ADN plasmidique ;
 - (ii) le lavage facultatif de la résine pour éliminer les impuretés de l'ADN plasmidique ; et

(iii) l'élution de l'ADN plasmidique.

13. Procédé selon la revendication 11 ou la revendication 12, dans lequel le rétentat est mis en contact avec une phase solide hydrophobe dans des conditions permettant de séparer des contaminants de l'ADN plasmidique.

14. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel l'échantillon contenant des acides nucléiques est préparé à partir d'une solution brute d'acide nucléique contenant un ADN plasmidique et des ARN

(i) en traitant la solution pour fournir une concentration en ion calcium suffisante pour précipiter la majeure partie de l'ARN ; et

(ii) en séparant de celle-ci une phase de solution comprenant l'échantillon contenant des acides nucléiques.

15. Procédé selon la revendication 14, dans lequel la concentration en ion calcium est dans la plage de 0,1 à 0,3 M.

16. Procédé selon la revendication 14 ou la revendication 15, dans lequel la solution brute d'acide nucléique est préparée

(i) en fournissant un extrait exempt de cellules comprenant un ADN plasmidique et des ARN ; et

(ii) en concentrant l'extrait par ultrafiltration.

17. Procédé selon la revendication 16, dans lequel l'étape (ii) comprend le passage de l'extrait à travers une membrane d'ultrafiltration possédant une limite d'exclusion de poids moléculaire d'au moins 30 kDa pour former la solution brute d'acide nucléique sous la forme d'un rétentat.

18. Procédé selon la revendication 16 ou la revendication 17, dans lequel au moins l'étape (ii) est mise en oeuvre à une température dans la plage de 30 °C à 60 °C.

19. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 16 à 18, comprenant en outre une étape de diafiltration contre une solution appropriée pour réaliser un traitement permettant la précipitation des ARN.

20. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 16 à 19, dans lequel l'ultrafiltration est réalisée en présence d'un détergent.

21. Procédé selon la revendication 20, dans lequel le détergent comprend du dodécylsulfate de sodium.

22. Procédé de préparation d'un ADN plasmidique de qualité pharmaceutique, comprenant un procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes.

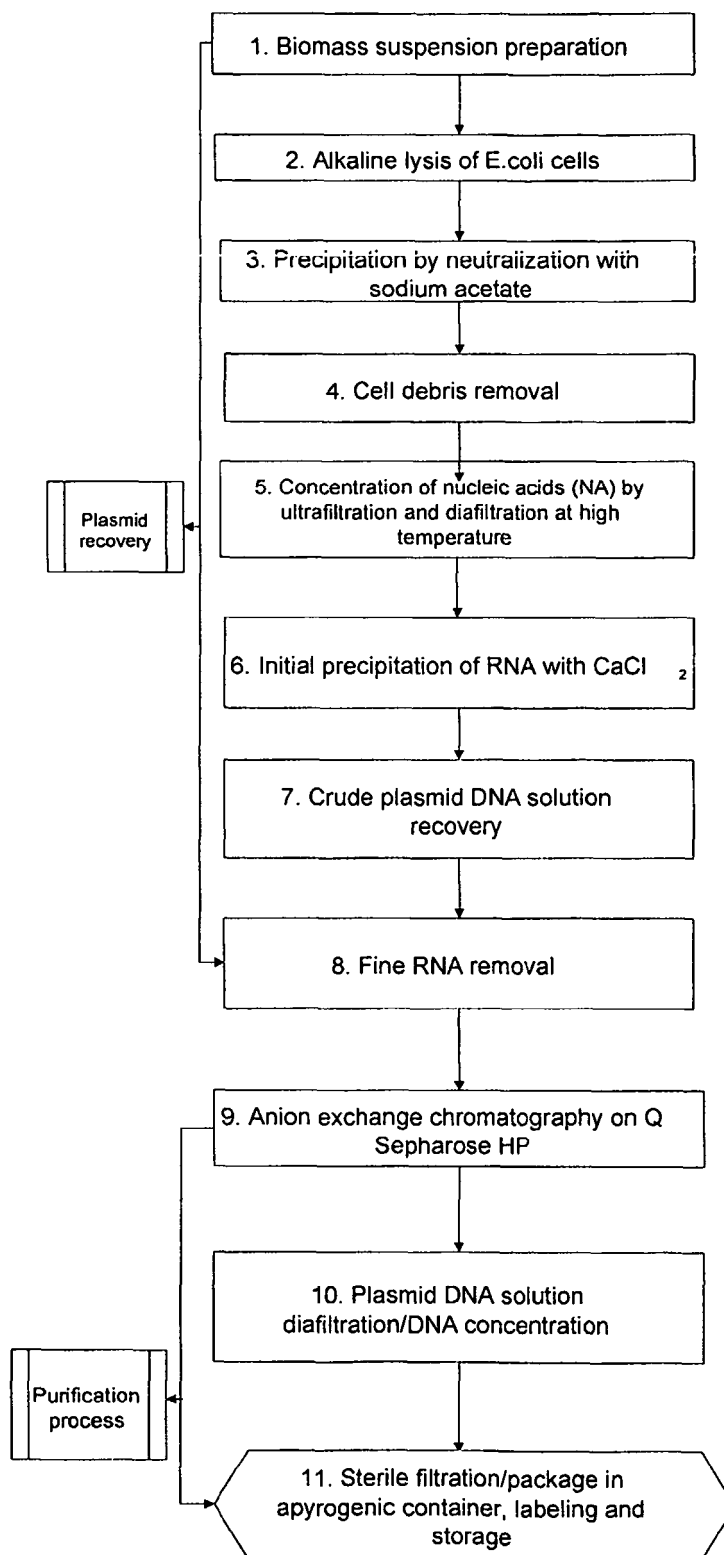


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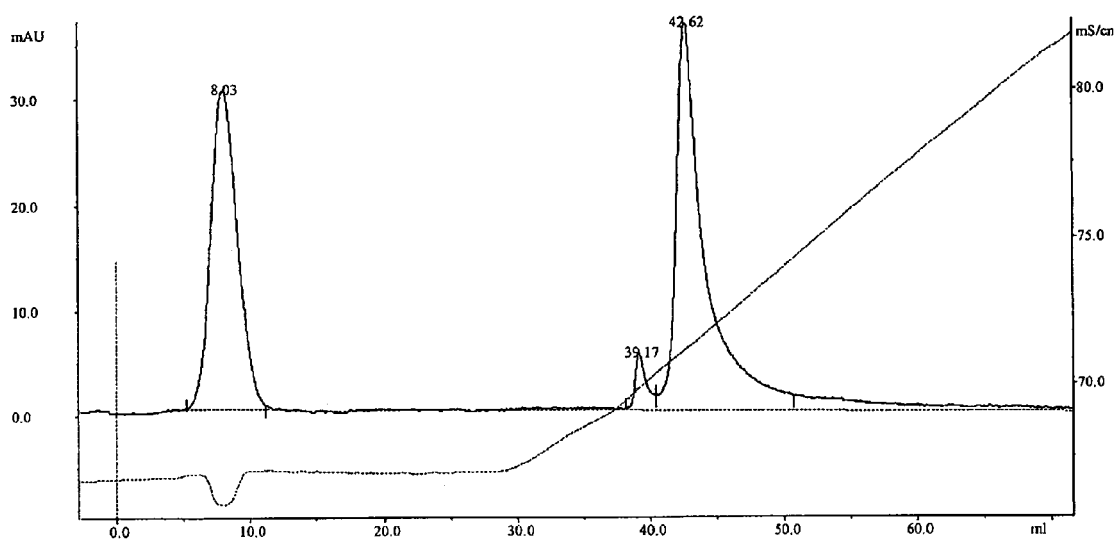


Figure 2

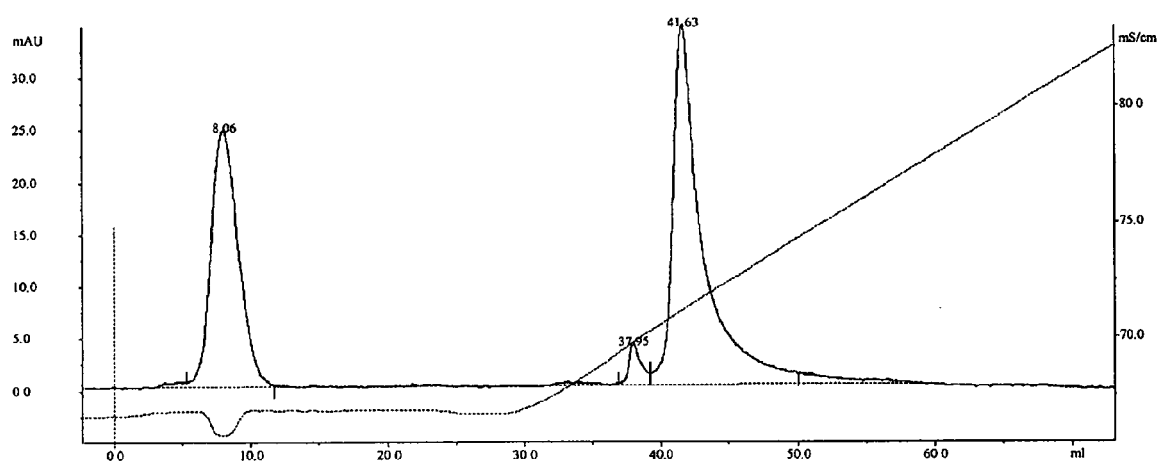


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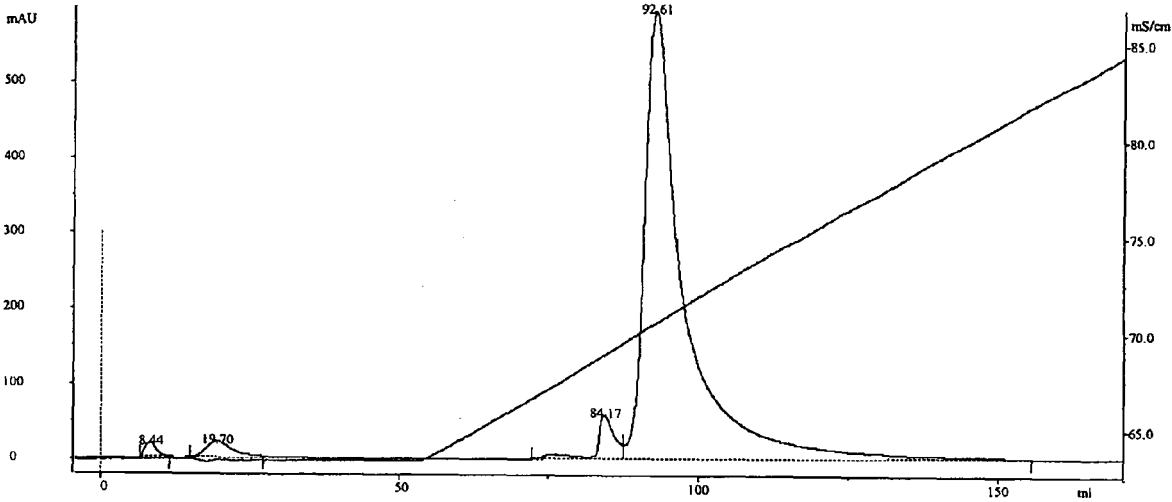


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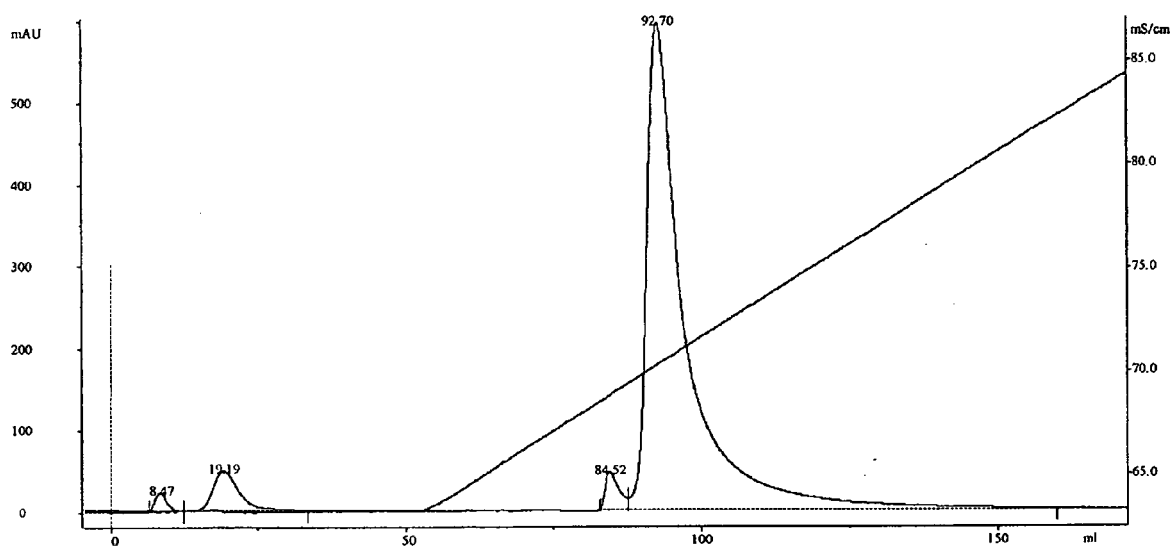


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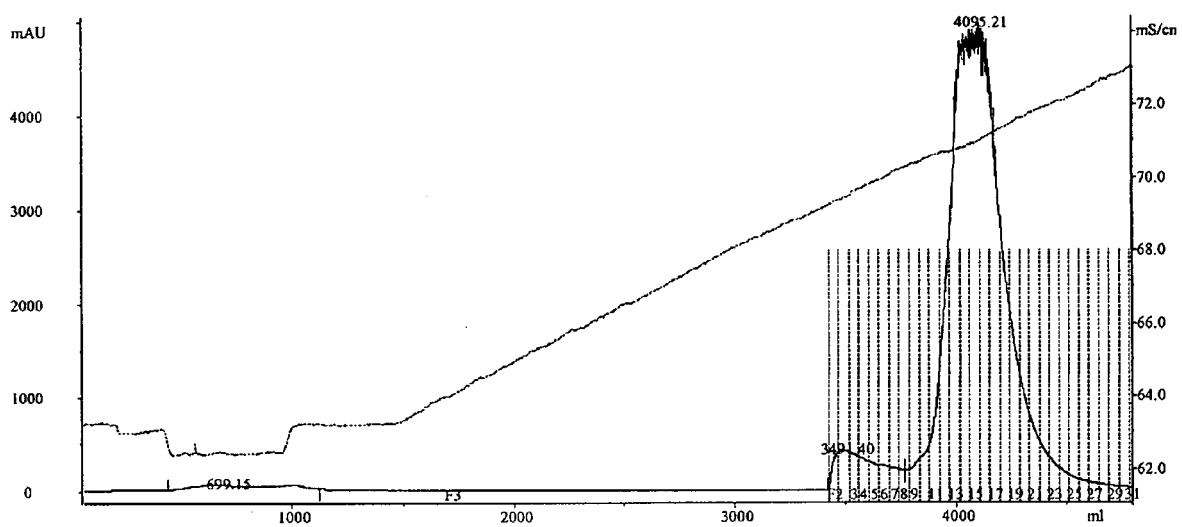


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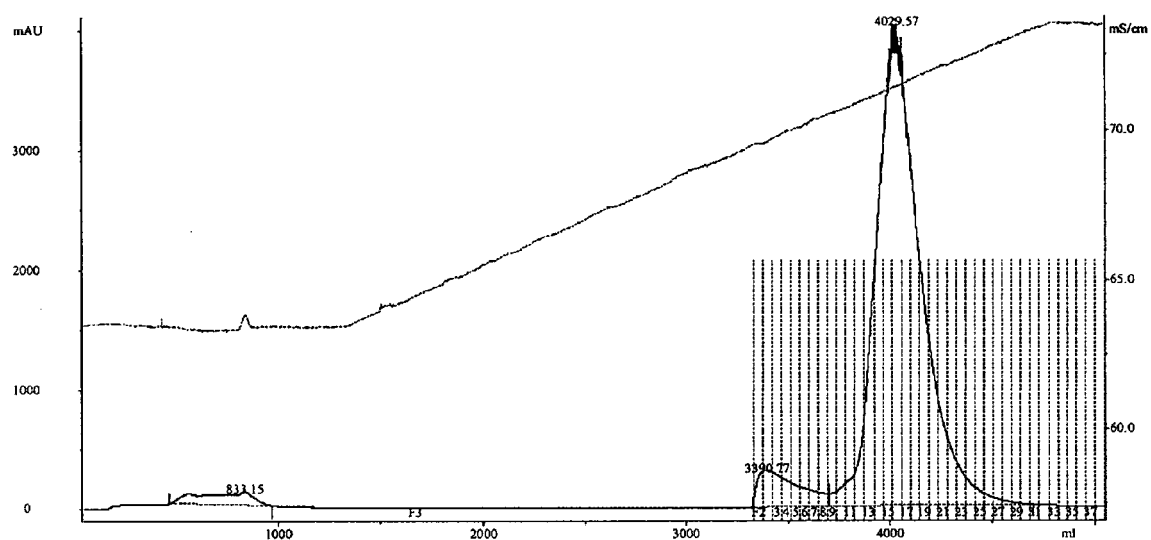
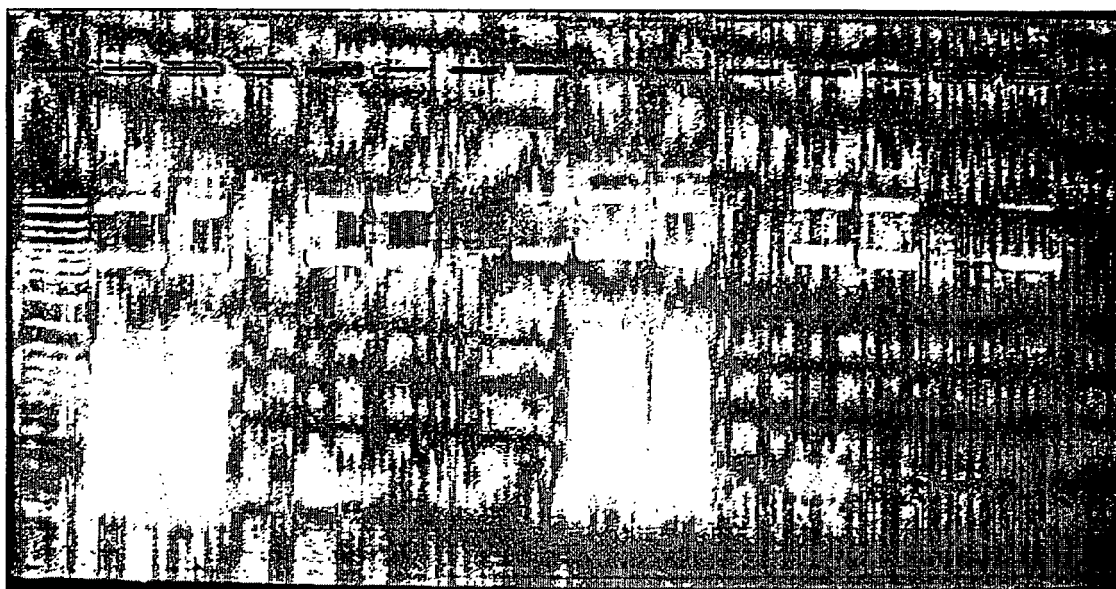


Figure 7



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Figure 8

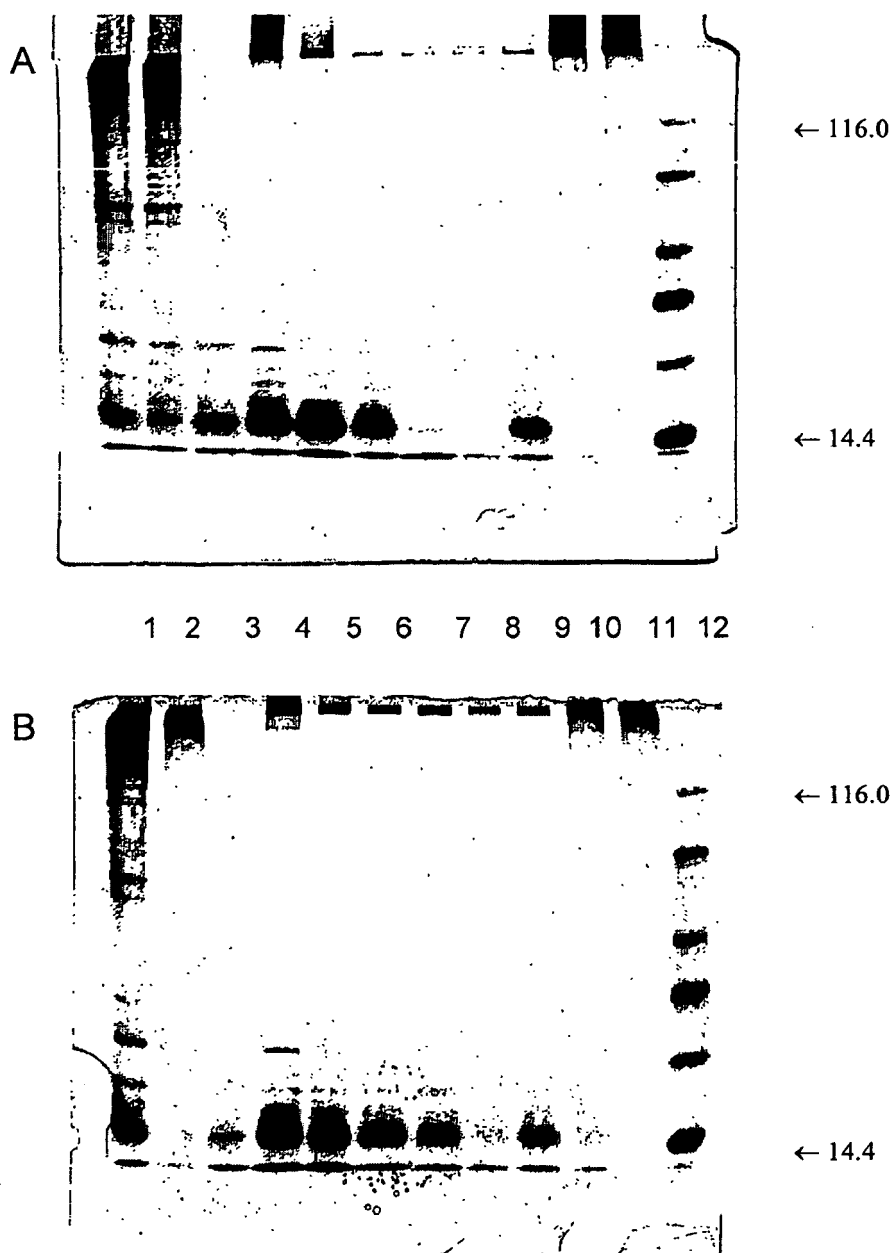
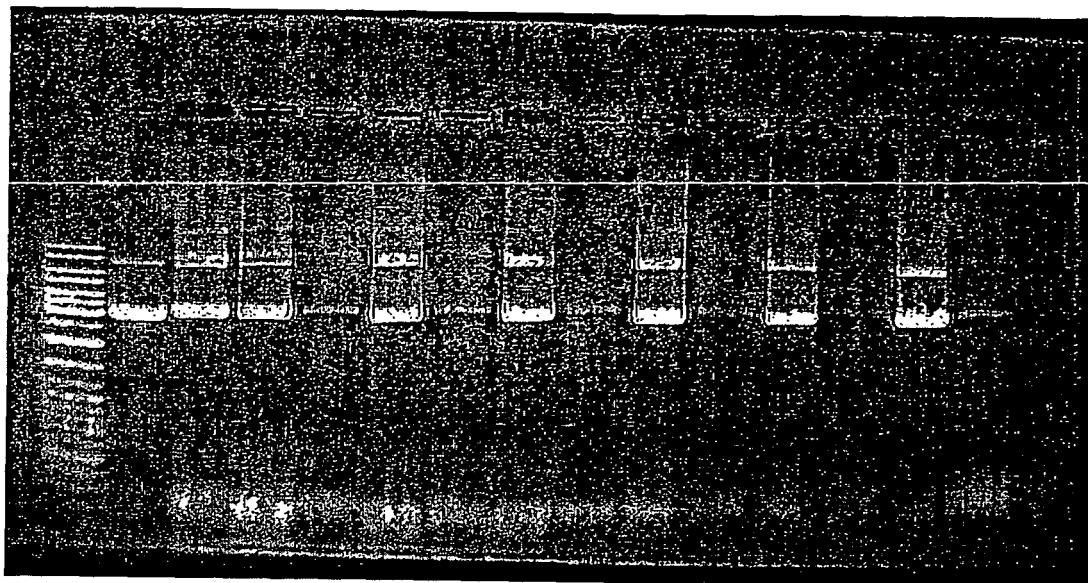
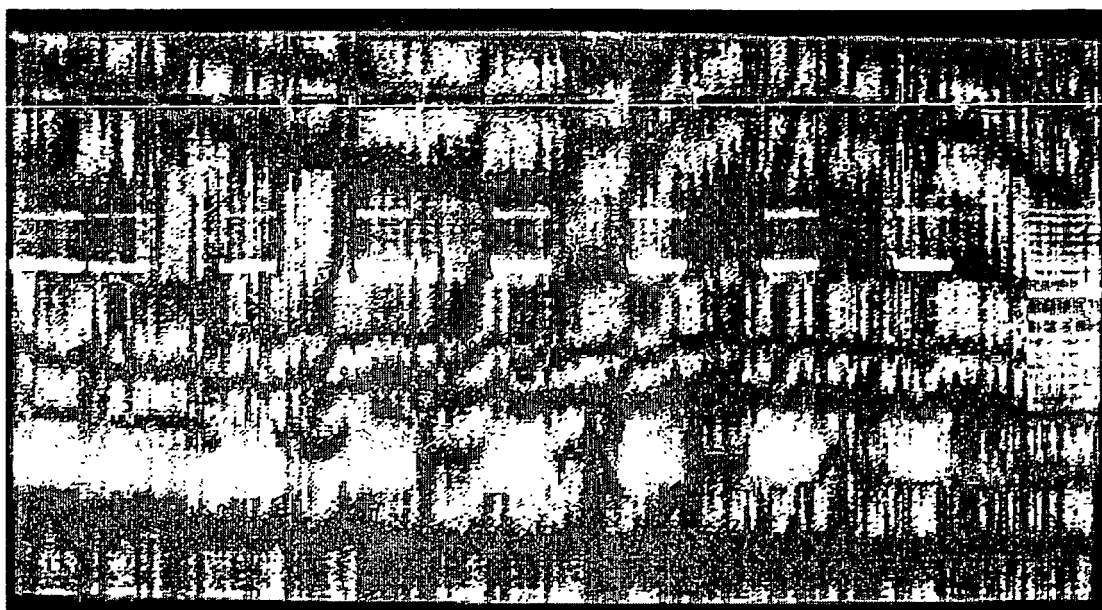


Figure 9



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Figure 10



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

Figure 11



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

Figure 12

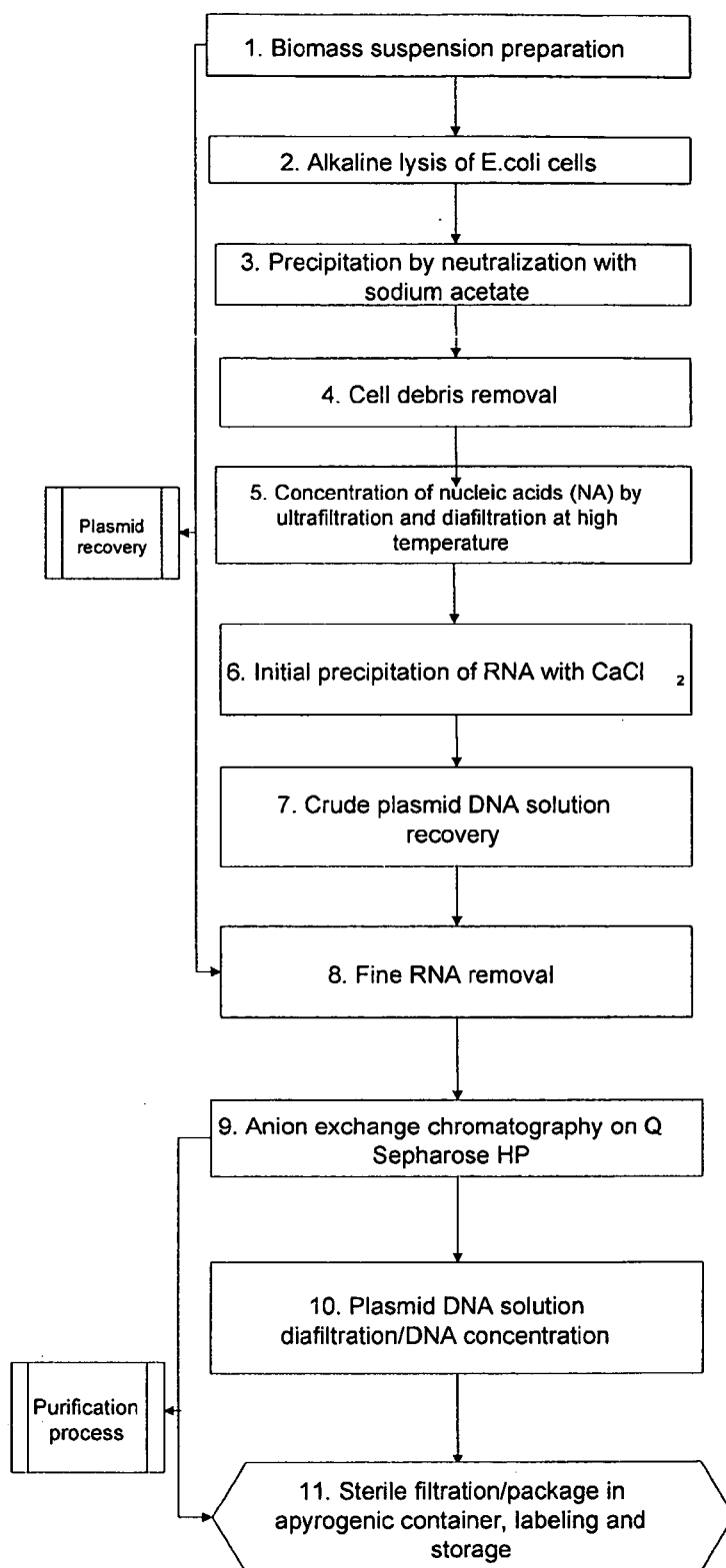


Figure 13

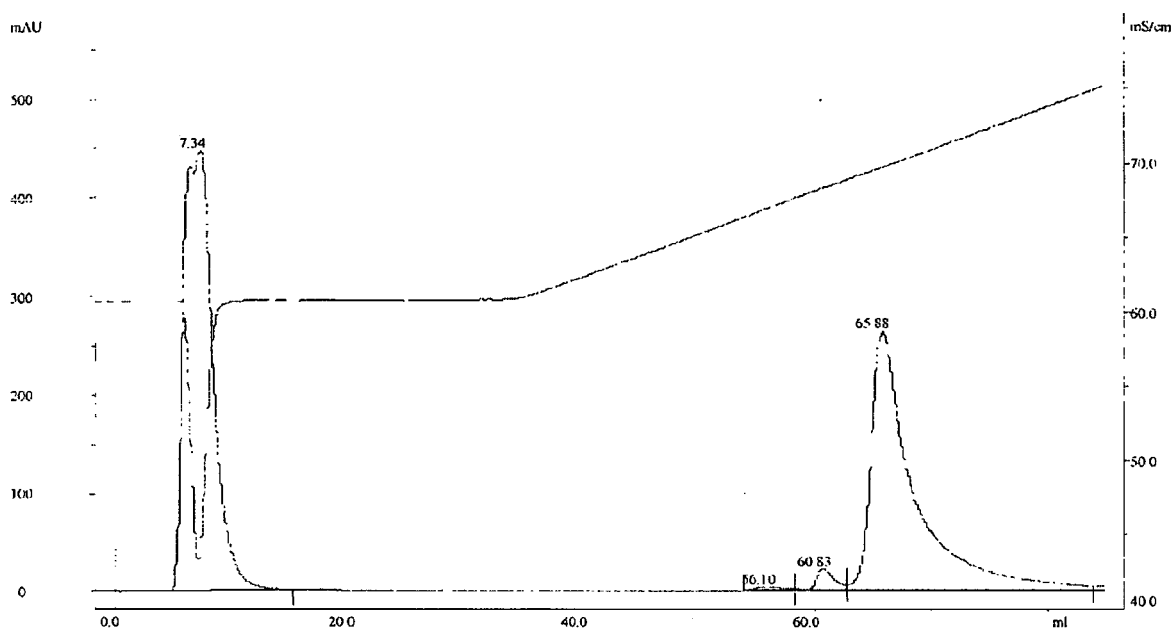


Figure 14

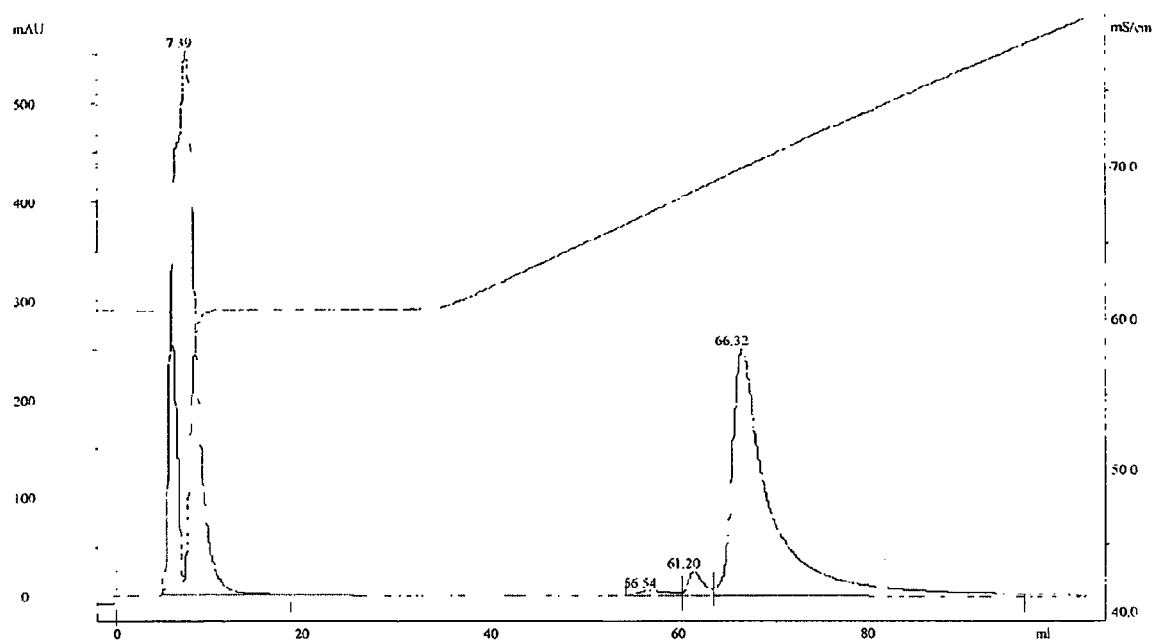


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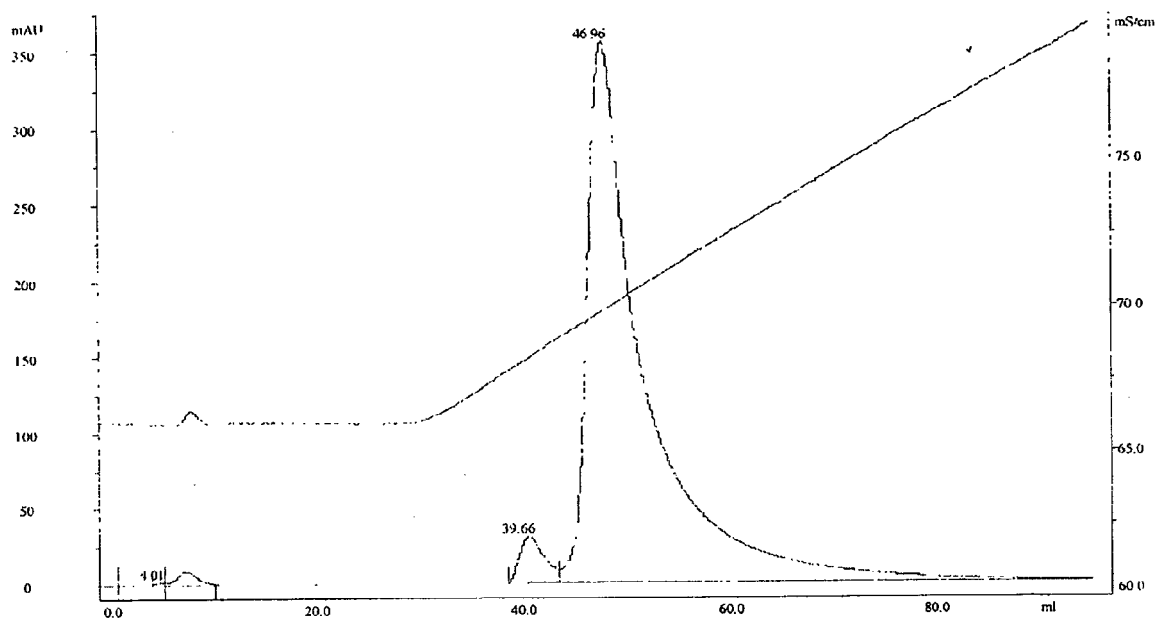


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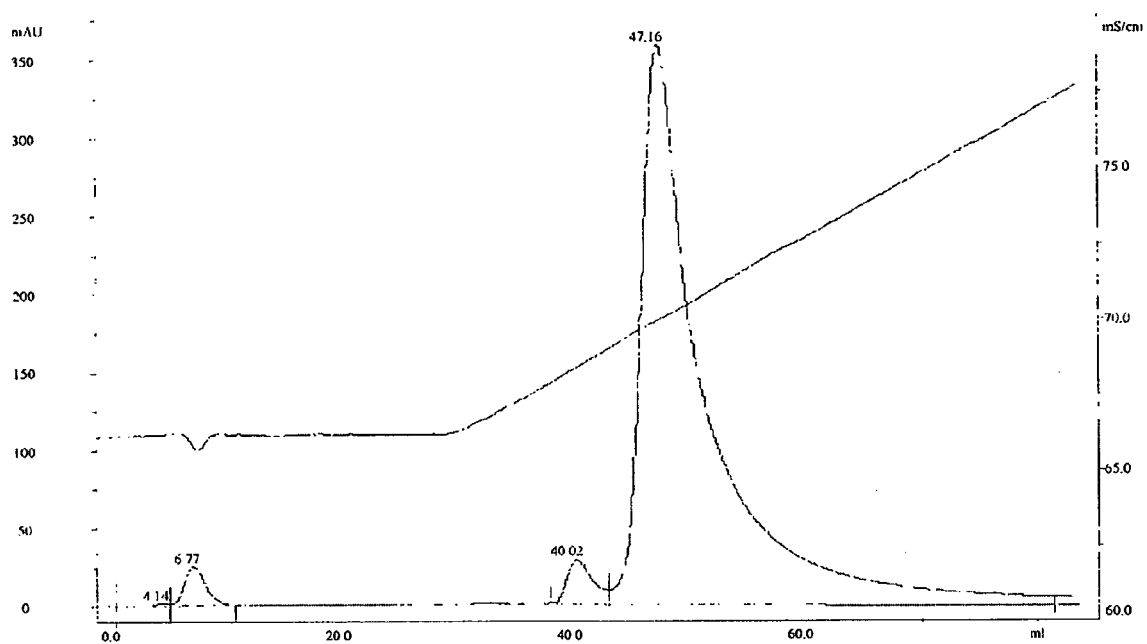


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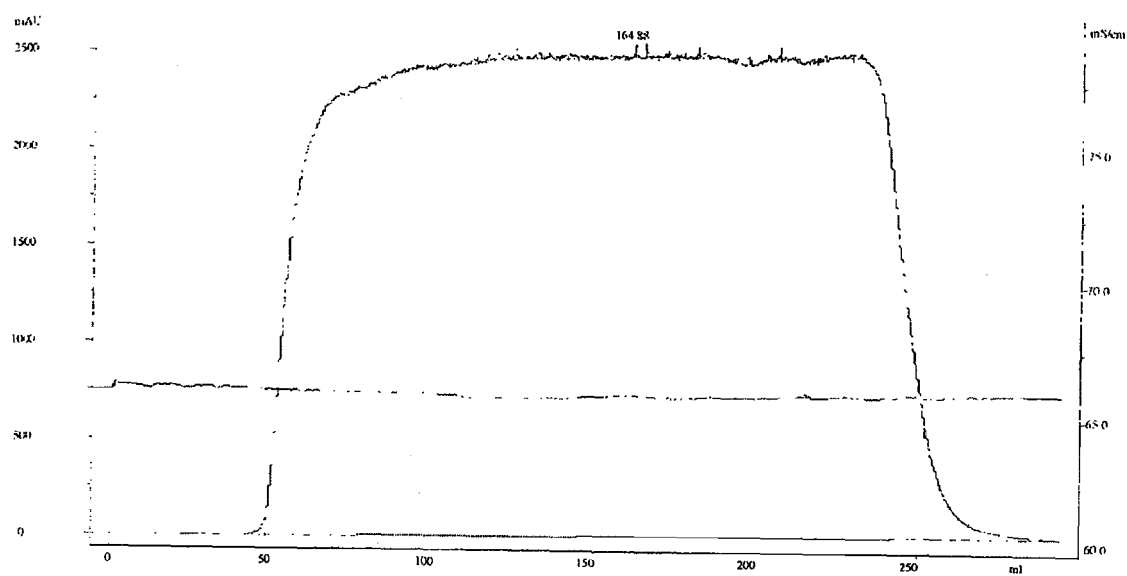


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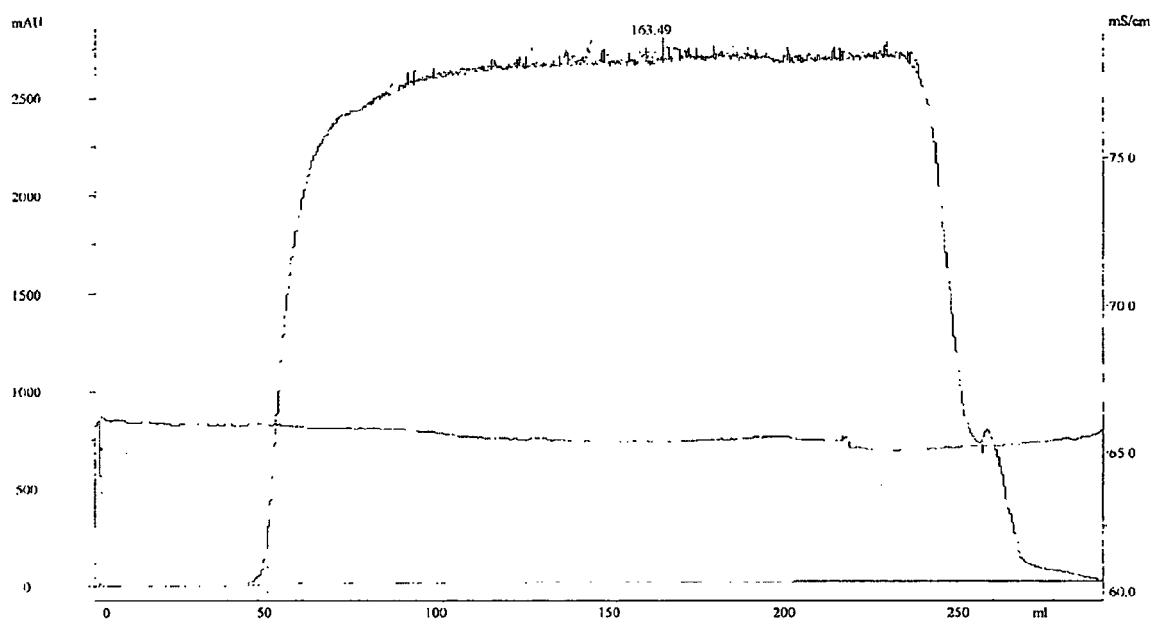


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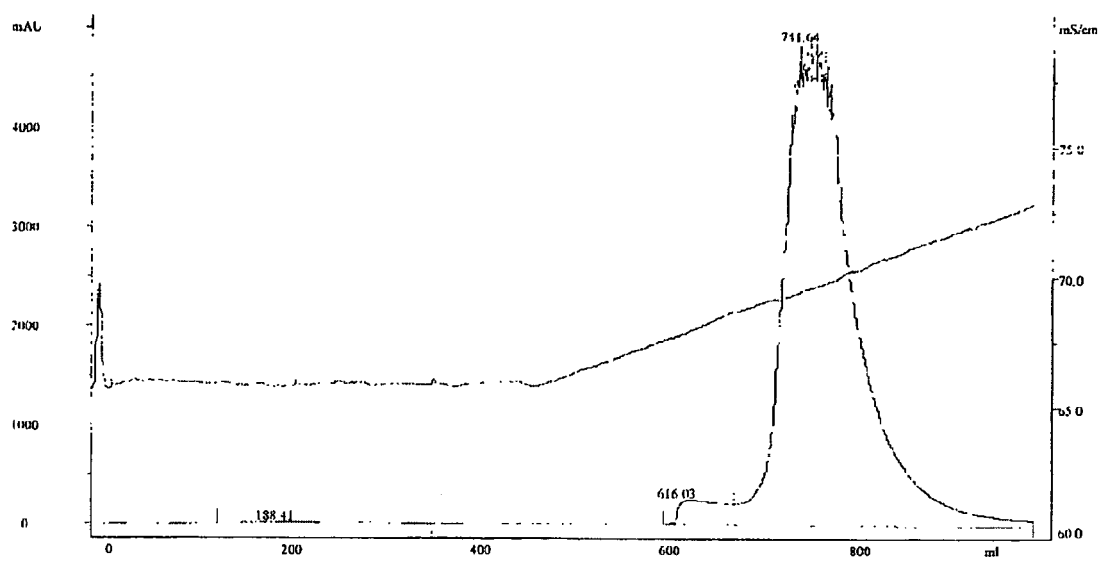


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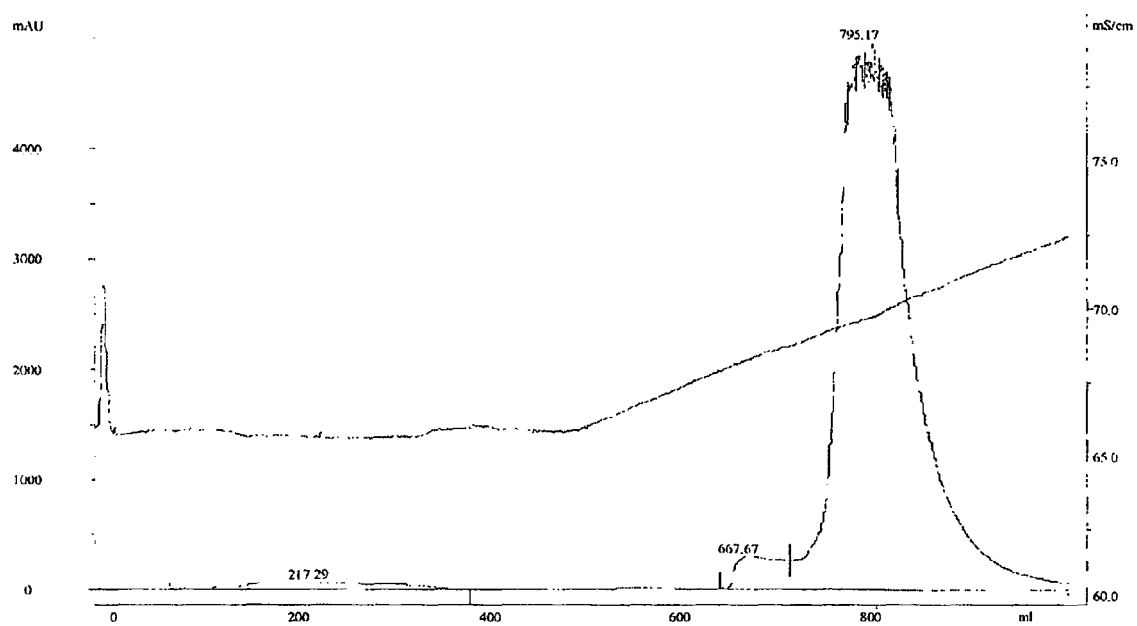


Figure 21

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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