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微流控液滴生成新器件新方法及其在单分子扩增分析与单细胞捕获研究中的应用

New Devices for Droplet Generation and Their Application in Single-Molecule Amplification and Single Cell Manipulation.

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Manipulation.**

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摘要

单分子、单细胞是生物体系的最基本单位。分子之间的不同决定了其引发反应的不同，细胞之间的不同决定了生命活动的不同。因此，深入研究单分子和单细胞对人们探索生命活动本质是十分必要的。与传统研究对象不同，单个分子、单个细胞的研究需要更加精准的研究平台，从而避免大背景的干扰，提高信噪比。微流控芯片，是一种将常规反应小型化、集成化新型的技术。其具有反应迅速、反应体积小、信噪比高、通量高、结果精准、试剂节约等特点，这些优点十分符合目前对单分子、单细胞研究的要求。因此在近些年来，微流控芯片技术在单分子、单细胞分析领域得到广泛的发展。

虽然微流控平台在单分子、单细胞的研究领域内，已经展现了良好的应用价值和实用性，但是随着对单分子、单细胞研究的深入，传统微流控平台的一些缺点逐渐显现：昂贵的进样系统、复杂的液滴生成操作、芯片内产物难以回收、死体积大、单细胞捕获效率低等。这些问题一直限制着微流控芯片在单分子、单细胞的研究上得到更大的发展。针对上述问题，本论文尝试解决困扰微流控平台的一些问题，论文内容主要分为以下三部分：

(1) 单分子核酸扩增及其在数字化检测和功能化产物分析中的应用

液滴微流控技术已经在单分子核酸扩增中显示出强大的应用前景。液滴微流控芯片降低了单分子核酸扩增时的腔体体积、提高了反应腔体的通量，并且将数字化检测成为可能。为了克服微流控技术一直存在的耗时长、兼容性差、易融合、产物回收难等问题，我们发展了一种高通量液滴生成微阵列芯片，用于实现芯片内的单分子核酸扩增，数字化检测超低浓度核酸等目的。利用该芯片，我们实现了对单分子克隆产物进行有效的回收、贮存和后续分析。我们使用单核酸扩增的方式，将单克隆产物直接与靶标结合，考察结合强度，从而直接得到结合力强的单克隆产物，大大简化了传统核酸适体筛选需要对分子库测序及大量合成的不足。该单分子核酸扩增方法对功能化单克隆的产物分析、核酸测序和后续分析仪器兼容性方面也具有极大的应用价值。

(2) 非泵型高通量液滴生成微流控芯片

传统微流控液滴生成方式已经成功在单分子、单细胞研究上取得一定的成果,然而传统的液滴生成方式,往往依赖于进样泵对芯片内流体进行精密地控制。这增加了液滴的生成成本和复杂程度,限制了液滴在多种生物分析领域的应用。如何克服液滴生成过程中对仪器的依赖,简化液滴生成操作,成为扩大其应用范围的关键。为此,我们开发两种非泵型微流控芯片,只需简单操作即可形成高通量的液滴的芯片,其分别采用离心式和按压式进行液滴生成。离心式液滴生成芯片,使用离心力控制流体间压力,通过油水界面处的特殊结构,利用表面张力生成液滴。该方法生成简便,液滴直径均一可控,液相无死体积残留。这些优点克服了传统液滴生成方式的一些弊端,为后续将该方法应用在单细胞测序等领域提供了一定基础。按压式琼脂糖液滴生成方式,通过将液态琼脂糖按压入预制的 PDMS 阵列芯片内,我们可以高通量地生成直径均一可控的液滴。而且液滴固定在 PDMS 阵列中,解决了传统液滴随油相飘动难以长期对特定液滴观察的缺点。此外,利用琼脂糖固-液转换的特点,琼脂糖液滴可转化为琼脂糖微球,从而实现单一微球的回收与样品的进一步分析的目的。

(3) 基于流体力学设计的单细胞高效捕获微流控芯片

单细胞做为人们研究的热点,其分离与捕获一直是人们所急需解决的问题。由于单细胞体积小,形状不规则性,如何高效地分离并捕获单细胞成为一项艰巨的任务。针对这一问题,作者设计一款用于高效单细胞捕获的芯片。该芯片使用简便,单细胞捕获效率高、捕获速度快。基于流体力学计算优化的芯片结构,细胞捕获效率可以高达 91%,单细胞捕获效率高于 70%,该方法克服了传统泊松分布对单细胞捕获效率的限制,实现了高效的单细胞捕获。该方法在单细胞异质性、单细胞培养等领域有着极大的应用前景。

关键词: 微流控芯片高通量液滴生成琼脂糖液滴单分子核酸扩增单克隆产物分析单细胞捕获

Abstract

Single molecule and single cell are the basic units in the process of biological systems. Molecular and cellular difference are important factors determining the response and activity of life. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the nature of life activity at the single molecule and single-cell level. Distinguished from the traditional research objects, single molecule and single cell research need more accurate platform to avoid the interference of the background, improve the signal to noise ratio. Microfluidic chip also known as the lab-on-a-chip, is a novel technology that can miniaturize and integrate the experiment process. The innate characteristics of rapid response, minute size, excellent signal-to-noise ratio, high throughput and low reagent consumption are consistent with the requirement of single-molecule and single-cell analysis. As a result, microfluidic chip has been widely developed in single-molecule and single-cell study.

Although microfluidic platform has shown a great application value and practicability in single molecule and single-cell analysis, disadvantages of traditional microfluidic platform including expensive sampling system, complex droplet generation operation, troublesome product recovery, high dead-volume, and low capture efficiency of single cell remain to overcome. These problems have limited the development of single-molecule and single-cell analysis. These thesis attempt to address these problems by working on the following three projects.

(1) Single-molecule amplification and its application in digital detection and functional product analysis

Droplet Microfluidic technology has been shown a powerful application in single-molecule amplification. Microfluidic chip reduces the cavity volume of nucleotide amplification and improves the throughput of reaction cavity that make the digital detection of nucleotide possible. To overcome the limitation of existing microfluidic technology such as high time-consumption for large amount of droplet

accumulation, low compatibility of other detection device and difficulty in droplet recovery due to solvent floatation and droplet fusion. We developed a high-throughput droplet generation microarray chip, in order to achieve single-molecule amplification and digital detection of ultra low concentrations of nucleic acids. Using this chip, the monoclonal amplified products have been recovered, stored and recovered for subsequent analysis. The feasibility for functional analysis of monoclonal products were further demonstrated.

(2) Pump-free microfluidic chip for high throughput droplet generation

Microfluidic droplets proved to have a great potential in single-molecule and single-cell analysis. Current droplet microfluidics techniques, which based on water as the reaction carrier are facing some limitations, such as the requirement for highly precise syringe pump for droplet generation, that greatly increases the cost and complexity of droplet generation system, and limited the application of droplets in biological analysis. To address these challenges, we developed two novel methods to droplet generation by means of centrifugal control of the liquid and by pressing the liquid into PDMS array. The centrifugal method, through the structure of oil-water contact point, the surface tension of liquid in oil promotes droplet generation. The advantages of this method, such as simple to operate, uniform and controllable droplet generation, low dead volume, overcome drawbacks of the traditional method. By utilizing agarose sol-gel transition on a prefabricated PDMS microwells array, a press-type agarose droplet generation method was developed to synthesize size-tunable uniform droplets with high throughput. More importantly, PDMS array fixed droplet to solve the traditional shortcoming as difficult in long-term observation of specific droplets when droplet in oil was floating. In addition, using agarose sol-gel transition, we achieve the purpose of further analysis of the droplet and recovery of samples.

(3) High efficiency single cell capture microfluidic chip based on hydrodynamics

High throughput separation and capture of single cell is a challenging task, single cell has the feature of small size, irregular shape, which make it difficult to be

efficiently separated and captured. To solve these problems, we designed a single-cell capture chip with the advantages of simple operation, high capture efficiency, and high speed. Through the calculation of hydrodynamicsto optimize structure of the chip, cell capture efficiency up to 91%, single cell capture efficiency up to 70% were achieved. This capture method is potentially useful for sinlge-cell analysis.

Keywords: Microfluidic chip; High throughput droplet generation; single-molecule nucleotide amplification; single-cell capture

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第一章绪论

1.1 单分子/单细胞研究

随着生物领域的发展,人们逐渐对生物领域中的基本个体,即单分子、单细胞产生了极大的研究兴趣。人们希望通过对这些参与生物体内反应的基本单元的深入地研究,从而更好地理解生物的本质¹⁻³。生物单分子水平的研究一般是指对体内的一些参与反应的功能性分子的研究,如核酸、蛋白质、多糖等。这些研究涵盖了分子的状态、特性、功能化、动力学以及与其他分子之间的相互作用⁴⁻⁶。生物单细胞水平研究是指对单一细胞进行研究,如分裂能力、功能化程度、蛋白表达多少等⁷⁻⁹。随着人们对单分子、单细胞的不断深入研究,人们发现单分子、单细胞之间存在巨大异质性^{6,10,11},而这也很好的阐明了许多生物学的问题。

传统生化分析中,人们往往将研究目光集中在集群化的分子、细胞。对集群化目标的研究虽然也可以为我们提供被研究对象的单细胞数据,但是由于分析对象数目众多,使得我们得到的结果是许多分子、细胞共同作用下的平均化结果,是群体状态的一个平均值^{12,13}。这种平均值是建立在默认所有分子、细胞完全一致的情况下得出的结论,虽然这种研究方法在研究初期可以有效地降低研究难度,简化研究手段,直接得到整体相关的结果,但是随着人们对生物研究的深入,人们需要更加深入地探索生命本质,因此,简单的平均值无法为人们提供所需的单分子、单细胞的研究,人们需要真正的对单一分子、细胞进行考察。单分子、细胞的研究不仅是对一个分子、一个细胞的研究,更是需要对多个单分子、单细胞进行研究,对每一个分子、细胞的研究结果进行汇总,并进行统计学层面考察^{14,15}。如此,不仅得到了每个分子、细胞的信息,更是可以得到与原来平均值结果不完全相同的累加结果¹⁶。传统对大量分子、细胞的研究方法,难以对分子、细胞之间的差异性进行精准的研究。这种差异性,恰恰是单分子、单细胞研究中十分重要的研究信息。因此,为了摆脱当前单分子、单细胞研究瓶颈,人们迫切需要一种新型的分析检测方式,用以实现对单分子、细胞的个体化研究,从而准确分析在单个水平的分子和细胞的各项指标。

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