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Comparative Analysis of Methods for Isolating Exosomes from the Culture Medium

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Exosomes are extracellular membrane vesicles with a diameter of 40–100 nm. They are formed as invaginations of the membrane of the late endosome, with the release of the vesicles into the lumen of the multivesicular body. The fusion of the multivesicular body with the plasma membrane leads to the secretion of exosomes into the extracellular environment. Exosomes are a key vehicle for intercellular communication. They are used to transfer a wide range of biologically active molecules, including lipids, proteins, mRNA and microRNA. The transfer of these molecules to recipient cells regulates their functions normally and contributes to the pathogenesis of many diseases. The unique features of the molecular composition of exosomes make them a potentially important diagnostic and prognostic marker in medicine. The communicative function of exosomes allows them to be considered as a promising delivery system for therapeutic drugs, including the latest gene therapy tools. For the practical implementation of these pos-

sibilities, fully reproducible, standardized protocols for obtaining highly purified exosome preparations from various biological fluids and culture media, known for their complex heterogeneous composition, are required. To date, a number of methods have been proposed for the isolation and purification of exosomes. Nevertheless, there is currently no standard approach that allows one to obtain pure preparations fully suitable for the subsequent application of highly sensitive methods for the analysis of exosomal proteins and RNA. In this work, we compared the efficiency of exosome isolation from the cell culture medium by three methods: 1) ultracentrifugation, 2) concentration by tangential flow filtration followed by gel filtration, 3) precipitation using the commercial Total Exosome Isolation Reagent. Evaluation of the quality of exosome samples obtained by the above methods included transmission electron microscopy, dynamic light scattering and detection of the marker exosomal protein annexin A2 by Western blotting. According to our data, the highest purity of exosome preparations is achieved when they are concentrated by tangential flow filtration followed by gel filtration.

Keywords: exosomes, ultracentrifugation, gel filtration