Gels and Biomedical Materials

Symposium held November 28–December 2, 2011, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

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CONTENTS

Preface ................................................................ xi

Materials Research Society Symposium Proceedings .......... xiii

* Stretched Exponential Stress Relaxation in a Thermally
Reversible, Physically Associating Block Copolymer Solution .... 1
  Kendra A. Erk and Jack F. Douglas

Oxygen-generating Gel Systems Induced by Visible Light
and Application to Artificial Photosynthesis ....................... 9
  Kosuke Okeyoshi and Ryo Yoshida

* Gels for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage .......... 17
  Piero Baglioni, Debora Berti, Massimo Bonini,
  Emiliano Carretti, Maria Del Carmen Casas Perez,
  David Chelazzi, Luigi Dei, Emiliano Fratini,
  Rodorico Giorgi, Irene Natali,
  and Marcia Carolina Arroyo

Probing DNA Assembly into Nanoparticles with Short DNA ... 27
  Preethi L. Chandran, Emelios K. Dimitriadis,
  and Ferenc Horkay

Depth Dependent Osmotic and Swelling Properties
of Cartilage .............................................................. 33
  Candida Silva, Iren Horkayne-Szakaly,
  Preethi Chandran, Emelios K. Dimitriadis,
  David Lin, Christopher Papanicolas,
  Peter J. Basser, and Ferenc Horkay

Theory of Fluid Lubrication of Hydrogels and Articular
Cartilage During Compression Under an Applied Load ....... 39
  J.B. Sokoloff

Matrix Modulus Affects Invasion Rate of Tumor Cells
Through Synthetic Hydrogels ........................................ 45
  Esmaiel Jabbari

*Invited Paper
Self-Assembled Gels from Biological and Synthetic Polyelectrolytes ........................................ 51
    Paul Calvert, Skander Limem, Don McCallum, Gordon Wallace, and Marc in het Panhuis

Evaluation of the Effects of Phenylalanine and Carboxylate on the Rheological Behaviors of Small Molecule Hydrogels Containing Naphthalene ........................................ 57
    Junfeng Shi, Yue Pan, Yuan Gao, and Bing Xu

Culturing Cells on Flexible Substrates of High Refractive Indexes ........................................... 67
    You-Ren Liu and Po-Ling Kuo

* Theory of Volume Transitions in Polyelectrolyte Gels ....................................................... 75
    Mithun K. Mitra and M. Muthukumar

Agglomeration Dynamics in Thermo-sensitive Polymers Across the Lower Critical Solution Temperature:
A Molecular Dynamics Simulation Study ................................................................. 87
    Sanket A. Deshmukh,
    Subramanian K.R.S. Sankaranarayanan,
    and Derrick C. Mancini

Mesoscale Simulation of the Structure of Star Acrylated Poly(ethylene glycol-co-lactide) Hydrogels ........................................ 93
    Seyed Sina Moeinzadeh and Esmail Jabbari

* Structure and Properties of High Performance Gels Made by Module Assembling Method ................ 99
    Mitsuhiro Shibayama, Hanako Asai,
    Kenta Fujii, Yuki Akagi, and Takamasa Sakai

Thiol Coupling Based Synthesis of Temperature-sensitive Polymer–peptide Conjugates with Controlled Architecture .................................................. 105
    Jean-Baptiste Guibaud, Aline F. Miller,
    and Alberto Saiani

Design a Biologically Inspired Nanostructured Coating for Better Osseointegration ................ 111
    Mian Wang, Jian Li, Michael Keidar, and Lijie Grace Zhang

*Invited Paper
Engineered Nanostructured Coatings for Enhanced Protein Adsorption and Cell Growth ........................................ 119
Fereydoon Namavar, Alexander Rubinstein,
Renat F. Sabirianov, Geoffrey M. Thiele,
J. Graham Sharp, Utsav Pokharel,
Roxanna M. Namavar, and Kevin L. Garvin

Photoembossing for Surface Texturing of Films and Fibres for Biomedical Applications ........................................ 127
Nanayaa Freda Hughes-Brittain, Olivier T. Picot,
Lin Qiu, Carlos Sanchez, Ton Peijs,
and Kees Bastiaansen

Hydrothermal Synthesis of Bioinert Oxide Film on Pure Ti: In Vitro and In Vivo Studies ........................................ 133
Masato Ueda, Masahiko Ikeda, Richard Langford,
Jeremy Skepper, Ruth E. Cameron,
and Serena M. Best

Characterization of Silver Doped Hydroxyapatite Prepared by EDTA Chelate Decomposition Method ..................... 139
Kubra Celik, Celaletdin Ergun,
and Huseyin Kizil

Masanori Fujii, Naotoshi Nakashima,
and Yasuro Niidome

* Novel Electrospun Bicomponent Scaffolds for Bone Tissue Engineering: Fabrication, Characterization and Sustained Release of Growth Factor .............................................. 151
Chong Wang, Min Wang, and Xiao-Yan Yuan

* Conductive Electrospun and Micro-stereolithographically Produced Porous Scaffolds as Potential Neural Interface Materials .................................................... 163
Shawn M. Dirk, Kirsten N. Cicotte,
Elizabeth L. Hedberg-Dirk, Stephen Buerger,
Patrick P. Lin, and Gregory Reece

* 3D Printing Fumarate Based Polymers .............................................. 171
Kirsten N. Cicotte, Elizabeth L. Hedberg-Dirk,
and Shawn M. Dirk

*Invited Paper
* Potential Bone Replacement Materials Prepared by Two Methods . . . 177
  Steve Lee, Michael Porter, Scott Wasko, Grace Lau,
  Po-Yu Chen, Ekaterina E. Novitskaya,
  Antoni P. Tomsia, Adah Almutairi,
  Marc A. Meyers, and Joanna McKittrick

Effect of Glutaraldehyde on Properties of Membranes
Prepared from Fish Scale Collagen ........................................ 189
  Zhefeng Xu, Toshiyuki Ikoma, Tomohiko Yoshioka,
  Motohiro Tagaya, Satoshi Motozuka,
  Rena Matsumoto, Toshimasa Uemura,
  and Junzo Tanaka

* Laser Direct-write of Embryonic Stem Cells and Cells
  Encapsulated in Alginate Beads for Engineered Biological
  Constructs ................................................................. 195
  T.B. Phamduy, A.D. Dias, N. Abdul Raof,
  N.R. Schiele, D.T. Corr, Y. Xie, and D.B. Chrisey

Development of Bisphosphonate-calcium Phosphate Composites
and Drug Release Characteristic ........................................... 209
  Hidekuni Kameda, Tomohiko Yoshioka,
  Toshiyuki Ikoma, and Junzo Tanaka

Practical Considerations for Medical Applications Using
Biological Grafts and Their Derivatives ................................ 215
  Shayanti Mukherjee, Venugopal Jayarama Reddy,
  Rajeswari Ravichandran, Santosh Mathapati,
  Soma Guhathakurta, Michael Raghunath,
  and Seeram Ramakrishna

Synthesis of Core-shell Biopolymer Particles Using
Coaxial Electrospray ........................................................ 241
  Cho Hui Lim and Michael E. Mullins

Fibrinogen Adsorption on Hydroxyapatite, Carbonate Apatite
and Gold Surfaces In Situ Detected by Quartz Crystal
Microbalance with Resistance Technique ................................ 247
  Hiroshi Yonekura, Motohiro Tagaya, Tomohiko Yoshioka,
  Toshiyuki Ikoma, and Junzo Tanaka
* Potential Bone Replacement Materials Prepared by Two Methods . . . .177
  Steve Lee, Michael Porter, Scott Wasko, Grace Lau,
  Po-Yu Chen, Ekaterina E. Novitskaya,
  Antoni P. Tomsia, Adah Almutairi,
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Prepared from Fish Scale Collagen ....................... 189
  Zhefeng Xu, Toshiyuki Ikoma, Tomohiko Yoshioka,
  Motohiro Tagaya, Satoshi Motozuka,
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  Encapsulated in Alginate Beads for Engineered Biological
  Constructs ............................................. 195
  T.B. Phanmduy, A.D. Dias, N. Abdul Raof,
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  Rajeswari Ravichandran, Santosh Mathapati,
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Micobalance with Resistance Technique .................. 247
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PREFACE

This issue contains the proceedings of Symposia LL and MM of the 2011 MRS Fall Meeting, which was held November 28 – December 2 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston, Massachusetts.

“Synthetic and Biological Gels” (Symposium LL) focused on advances made in the field and demonstrated the growing importance of these materials in a wide variety of applications. Insights were reported concerning the structural and dynamic properties of molecular and polymeric gels as well as dispersions in which the liquid component was aqueous or organic. Many of the presentations focused on potential or realized applications of gels for tissue engineering or medical interventions at the cellular or subcellular levels. Gels and cells linked together a wide range of subject matter ranging from the biomechanical properties of cartilage to fundamental studies of how cells interact with the polymeric scaffold upon which they are cultured. A number of papers dealt with the design, synthesis, and characterization of the structure and physical properties of protein-based hydrogels. The understanding of these complex systems benefited from the combination of thermodynamic considerations and molecular simulation.

“Micro- and Nanoscale Processing of Biomedical Materials” (Symposium MM) highlighted several recent advances in the processing of microstructured and nanostructured materials for use in medical diagnosis and treatment. For example, building blocks for bottom-up assembly of biomaterials are being developed, which will simplify the development of nanostructured materials. In addition, functional nanobiomaterials are being developed that exhibit unique interactions with proteins, DNA, and other components of biological systems. The symposium covered novel techniques for processing metals, ceramics, polymers, natural materials, and composite materials that enable enhanced diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. In addition, the symposium allowed for discussion among the many groups involved in the development and use of biomaterials, including materials researchers and medical device manufacturers.

We would like to thank the staff at the Materials Research Society for making this proceedings volume possible. We hope that this volume becomes a valuable resource on microstructured and nanostructured biomaterials, which not only contributes to advances
in biomaterials research but also signifies the growing role of the Materials Research Society in this rapidly growing area.

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