

TECHNICAL NOTE

Flow Imaging Microscopy Reveals Particles Missed by DLS and NTA

SUMMARY

The presence of protein aggregates and extrinsic particles is a significant problem in biotherapeutic formulations. With the improvement of particle analysis technologies, developers are discovering that drug impurities and protein aggregation occur at multiple phases of formulation development, production, and quality control. The goal is to ensure the production of pure and safe biologics that can be shipped and delivered to patients, ensuring their health and safety.

Many particle analysis instruments commonly used by biopharmaceutical developers have the ability to detect proteins and other particles at the submicron level, but do not necessarily detect particles larger than 1 μm that may be present in a sample: e.g. protein aggregates, fibers, glass or silicone particles. The FlowCam 8000 counts, images, and analyzes particles ranging from 2 μm to 1 mm. Using this instrument as an orthogonal detection method during multiple phases of drug development can assure that a much wider range of particles in a sample are detected, and that drug developers are able to see the full picture of what's in their product.

ABSTRACT

In a study performed by William Bernt of Particle Characterization Laboratories, Inc (Novato, CA), three instruments were used to count and analyze PSD standard samples at a variety of sizes. The following is taken from Bernt's 2017 poster entitled Screening Biopharmaceuticals with Flow Imaging; Finding the Missing Fraction.

"Sub-visible proteinaceous aggregates are often a degradation product that can be a major factor in limiting the shelf life and efficacy of biopharmaceuticals. These aggregates may affect product manufacturability, bioactivity and absorption rate. More importantly aggregates may bring about immunogenicity in the patient resulting in a loss of drug efficacy, patient discomfort or even death."



Fluid Imaging Technologies FlowCAM VS-1



Brookhaven Instruments Corporation 90Plus



Malvern Instruments, Ltd. NanoSight LM-10 HSB

Figure 1. Instruments used in Bernt study. Yokogawa Fluid Imaging Technologies replaced the FlowCAM VS-1 with newer model FlowCam 8100 in 2016.

Flow Imaging Microscopy Reveals Particles Missed by DLS and NTA

ABSTRACT, CONTINUED

“Establishing the presence of such particles is therefore of paramount importance when developing products for infusion or subcutaneous injection. We show how two commonly used particle sizing methods, dynamic light scattering (DLS) and nano-particle tracking (NTA), can easily fail to detect subvisible micron-sized aggregates even at concentrations ten times greater than those specified by USP <787/788>. Furthermore we demonstrate how Flow Imaging Microscopy (FIM) plays a critical role in detecting, characterizing and enumerating these sub-visible particles. Data is also presented on a commercially available 50nm liposomal product.”

METHOD

Bernt prepared samples using the following method:

- “Make up a 10 µm PSD standard (Thermo Scientific Corporation) suspension at 120,000 particles per ml (20X USP-788 limit).
- Make up a 25 µm PSD standard (Thermo Scientific Corporation) suspension at 12,000 particles per ml (20X USP-788 limit).
- Add 4.5 ml of each suspension to a fresh Falcon tube. This diluted the concentration of each standard by half (10X the USP-788 limit).
- Add 1ml of a 10wt% 186nm NIST traceable PSD standard (final concentration 1 wt% 186 nm PSD).
- Analyze the sample neat through the FlowCam VS-1 10X FC100.
- Dilute the sample 1:5,000 for the DLS analysis
- Dilute the sample 1:50,000 for the NanoSight analysis.”

RESULTS

Particle size distribution standards of three different sizes (186 nm, 10 µm, and 25 µm) were combined into a single sample and subsequently analyzed by each instrument.

The DLS instrument detected an average particle diameter of 186 nm, demonstrating that the instrument detected only the 186 nm NIST traceable PSD standard particles, and was not able to detect the 10 µm or 25 µm particles. (Figure 2)

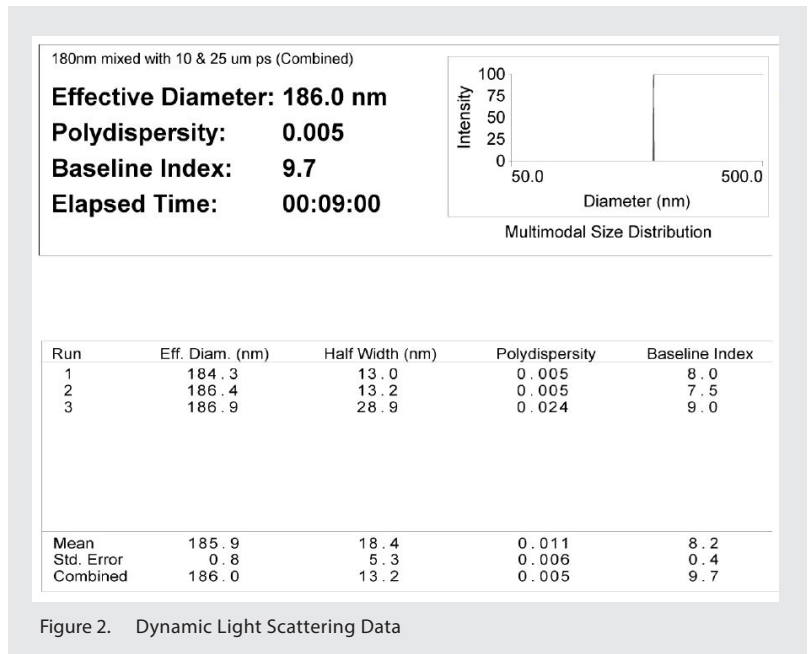


Figure 2. Dynamic Light Scattering Data

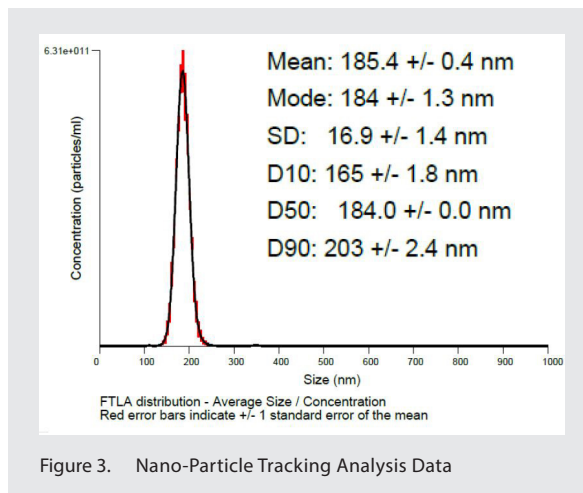


Figure 3. Nano-Particle Tracking Analysis Data

Flow Imaging Microscopy Reveals Particles Missed by DLS and NTA

RESULTS, CONTINUED

Particles detected by the NTA instrument had a similar average diameter of 185.4 nm showing that the NanoSight was also unable to detect the 10 μm and 25 μm PSD standard particles. (Figure 3)

FLOWCAM SEES LARGER PARTICLES

The data from the sample run on the FlowCam shows peaks at 10 μm and 25 μm (Figure 4), demonstrating that while this FlowCam model does not detect particles in the nanometer range, it works very well to detect, count, and image particles 2 μm and larger. This data also shows outliers that could represent extrinsic particles present in the sample, and the imaging capabilities of the Flow-Cam allow for identification of these individual particles.

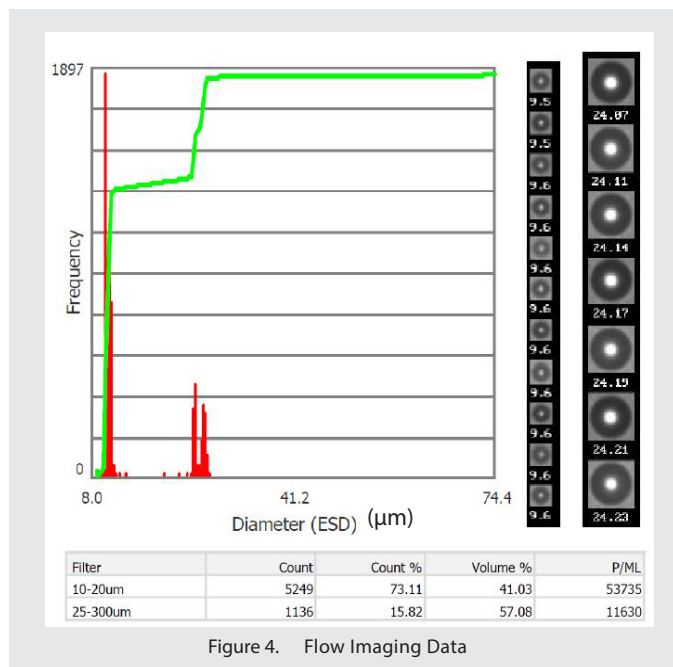


Figure 4. Flow Imaging Data

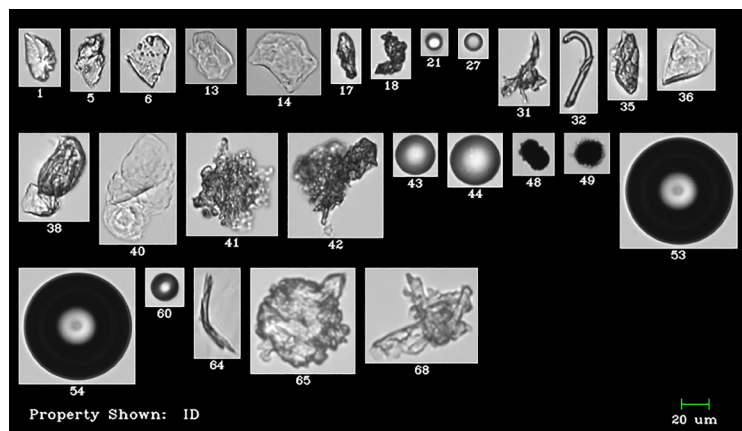
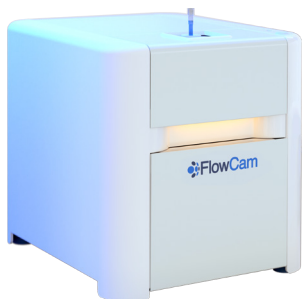


Figure 5. Intrinsic and extrinsic particles imaged by the FlowCam: protein aggregates, glass shards, silicone oil droplets, and other particulate.

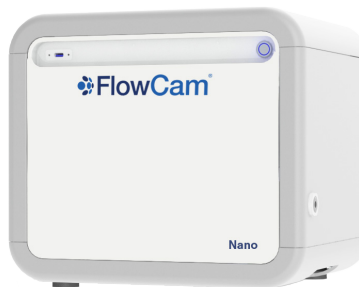
CONCLUSIONS

- “Flow Imaging Microscopy is a critical tool for assessing biopharmaceutical formulations.
- Flow Imaging Microscopy augments other instruments which are designed specifically to characterize the submicron size component.
- Just because DLS and NTA don't report micron sized particles does not mean that they are not there. Verify!”



FlowCam 8100

- 2 μm - 1 mm size range
- Advanced thresholding capabilities enable accurate analysis of translucent particles
- Compatible with Automated Liquid Handling system (ALH)



FlowCam Nano

- 300 nm - 2 μm size range
- Oil-immersion, flow-imaging technology
- Advanced thresholding capabilities enable accurate analysis of translucent particles