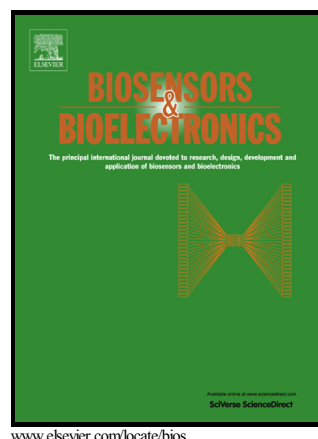


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**Chemical etching of bovine serum albumin-protected Au₂₅ nanoclusters for
label-free and separation-free detection of cysteamine**

Tong Shu,^a Lei Su,^{a,*} Jianxing Wang,^a Chenzhong Li,^b and Xueji Zhang^{a,*}

^a Research Center for Bioengineering and Sensing Technology, Beijing Key Laboratory for Bioengineering and Sensing Technology, University of Science and Technology Beijing, Beijing 100083, P. R. China

^b College of Engineering and Computing, Florida International University, 10555 West Flagler Street, Miami, FL 33174, USA

*Corresponding authors. E-mail addresses: sulei@ustb.edu.cn (L. Su); zhangxueji@ustb.edu.cn (X.J. Zhang). Tel./Fax: 86 10 8237 7347.

Abstract

This study describes a novel Au nanocluster-based fluorescent sensor for label-free, separation-free and selective detection of cysteamine (CSH). The sensing mechanism is based on CSH etching-induced fluorescence quenching of the bovine serum albumin-protected Au₂₅ nanoclusters (BSAGNCs). A series of characterizations is carried out towards a better understanding of the CSH-induced fluorescence quenching of the BSAGNCs. It is found that CSH can etch the Au₂₅ nanoclusters, exhibiting the potent etching activity. Other thiol-containing compounds such as glutathione and cysteine and other 19 natural amino acids do not interfere with such CSH-induced etching process. The decreases in fluorescence intensity of the

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