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Fast synthesis of poly(ethylene glycol) diacrylate cryogels via UV irradiation

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ABSTRACT

Poly(ethylene glycol) diacrylate (PEGDA) cryogels, particularly useful for

biotechnological applications, are currently fabricated exploiting crosslinking systems

that require long freezing/crosslinking times (20 hours or longer). The aim of this work

was to assess whether fast UV irradiation (up to 60 seconds) of frozen PEGDA

solutions could be an advantageous alternative for cryogel production. By using

different polymer concentrations and UV times, cryogels with highly interconnected

macropores (about 50-90 μm) were produced. A gelation yield in the range 60-80% was

recorded, with higher values obtained for low PEGDA concentrations (5 and 10% w/v).

Interestingly, while decreasing the swelling and increasing the stiffness of the cryogels,

a higher polymer concentration was also found to reduce the pore size. Furthermore,

increasing the UV time resulted in significantly higher swelling and larger pores for

10% PEGDA samples, while having negligible effect on other cryogel types and/or

features. Although deserving further exploration, fast UV irradiation is an effective

method to produce PEGDA cryogels with tunable properties.

Keywords: biomaterials; porous materials; cryogel; stiffness

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