INTRACELLULAR OXYGEN MEASUREMENT WITH SUBCELLULAR RESOLUTION USING WIDEFIELD FREQUENCY DOMAIN FLUORESCENCE LIFETIME IMAGING MICROSCOPY (FD-FLIM)

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KEY WORDS: intracellular oxygen concentration, fluorescence lifetime imaging microscopy (FLIM), luminescent silica nanosensors

Oxygen affects cellular responses in different aspects such as metabolic pathways and plasma membrane integrity. Therefore, accurate measurement of intracellular oxygen concentration is an essential task in biomedical research. Tris(4,7-diphenyl-1,10-phenanthroline)ruthenium(II) perchlorate (Ru(dpp)) has been widely used as a probe for luminescent detection and quantification of oxygen. The fluorescence intensity and lifetime of the dye (λ_ex = 425-475 nm, λ_em = 575-625 nm) are strongly reduced and shorten by the presence of molecular oxygen due to dynamic quenching. Unlike the intensity values can be affected by the fluorophore concentration, photo-bleaching, autofluorescence, and excitation light intensity, the fluorescence lifetime only depends on the presence of quenchers. As a result, the lifetime measurement is more accurate and straightforward when considering quantitative interpretation of the results. In this research, intracellular oxygen concentration with subcellular resolution is measured by a widefield frequency domain fluorescence imaging microscopy (FD-FLIM) system [1]. Here, the ruthenium complex (Ru(dpp)) doped solid silica nanoparticles (RuNPSiNPs) with diameters around 70 nm are used as sensors for oxygen measurement in living human lung adenocarcinoma epithelial cells (A549) [2]. Due to the advantages provided by the widefield technique, the image acquisition speed of the system is faster and the exposure time can be reduced significantly resulting in less photo bleaching. Moreover, the measuring processes are less sensitive to surrounding environments. Therefore, it is suitable to be applied for time-lapsed observation to study transient phenomena. We believe the measurement technique developed in this research can be an efficient tool that greatly helps biomedical scientists to better understand intracellular oxygen distribution.

Figure 1: Contour plots (Top row) and histograms (Bottom row) of intracellular oxygen tensions in two different cells A (a) and B (b). Scale bar: 5 µm.