

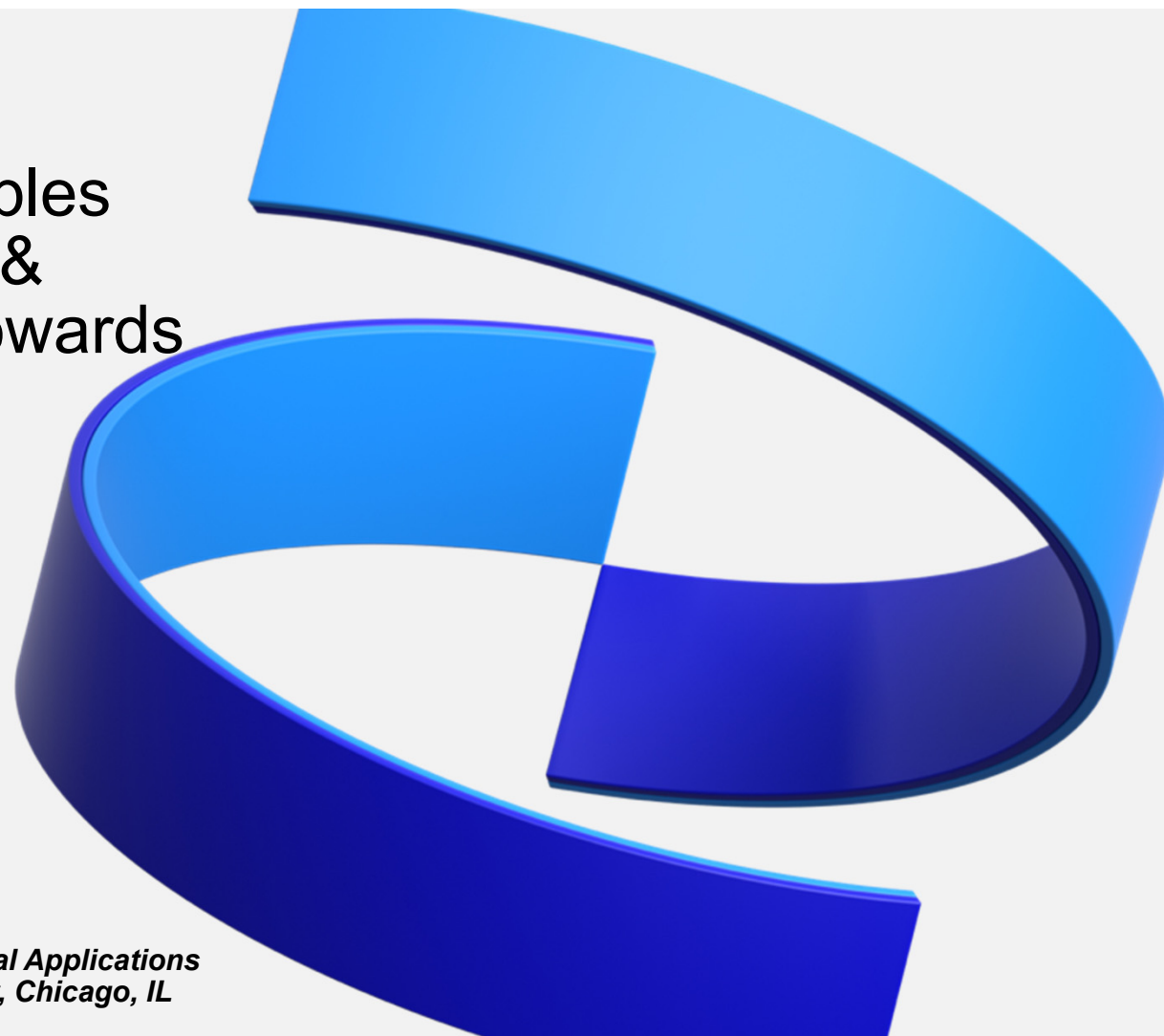
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# Mass Spectrometry Enables More Definitive Process & Product Development Towards Well-Characterized Biotherapeutics: *A Personal Account*

Jason C. Rouse  
Analytical Research & Development  
Biotherapeutics Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Pfizer, Inc., Andover, MA

September 7, 2023

**CASSS Mass Spec 2023: Symposium on the Practical Applications  
of Mass Spectrometry in the Biotechnology Industry, Chicago, IL**

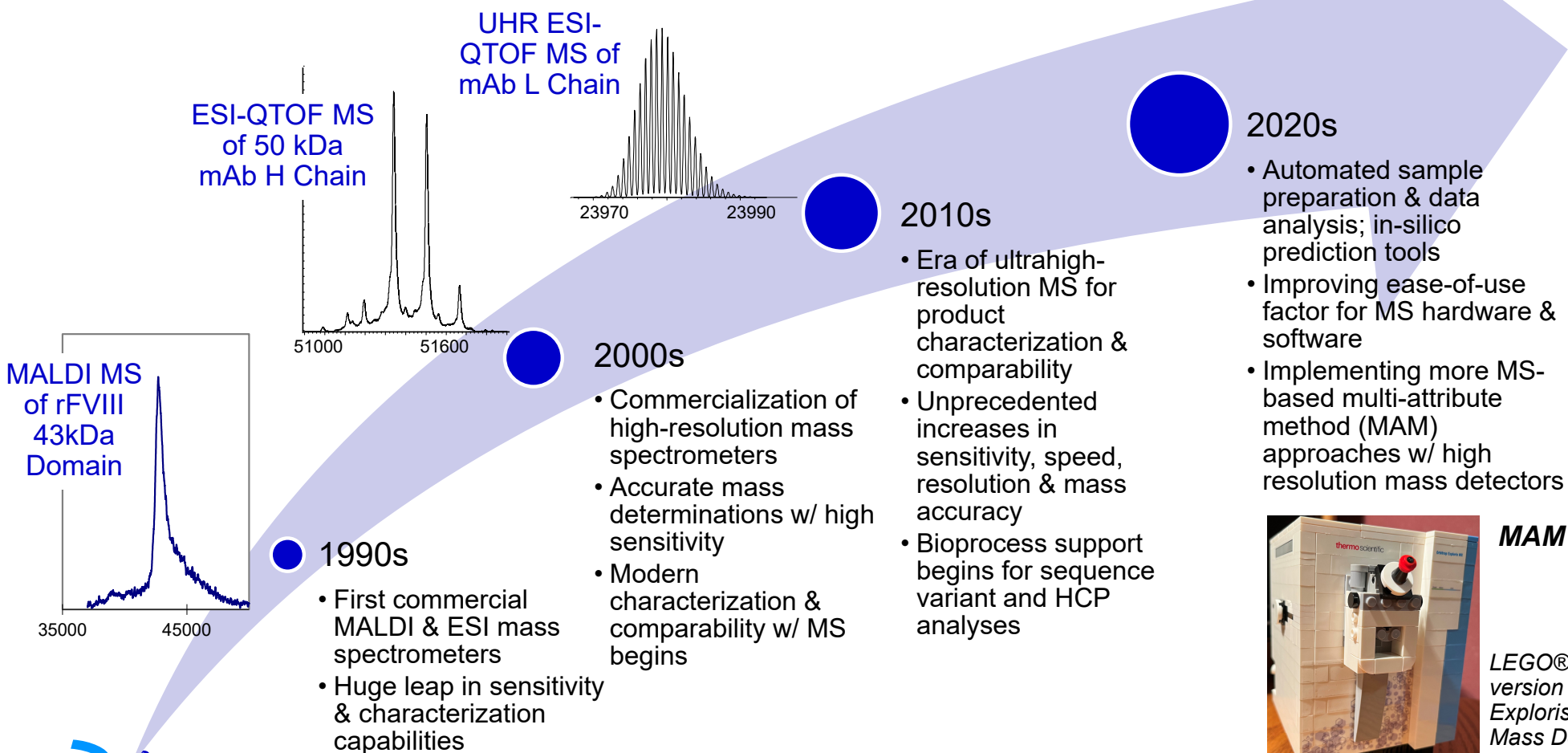


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## Modern Mass Spectrometry (MS) Performance *(with Research Grade Instruments)*

- At least 40000 FWHM resolution w/ fast acquisition rates
- <2-5 ppm mass accuracy: both MS and MS/MS modes
- Low attomole sensitivity (6 million 50-kDa protein molecules)
- Five orders of magnitude dynamic range
- 50-20,000 m/z mass range (and higher)
- Multiple modes of ion fragmentation (CID, HCD, ETD, EThcD)

# The Rise of Mass Spectrometry in Biotech



**MAM 2.0**

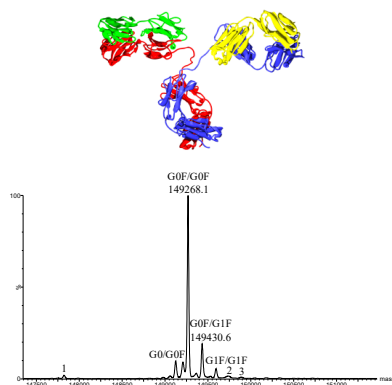
**LEGO®**  
version of  
Exploris MX  
Mass Detector



# Enduring MS-based Methods for Heightened Product Characterization

## Intact Protein Analysis

- **Molecular mass**
  - Product isoforms
  - Conjugate forms
- **Multi-chain architecture**

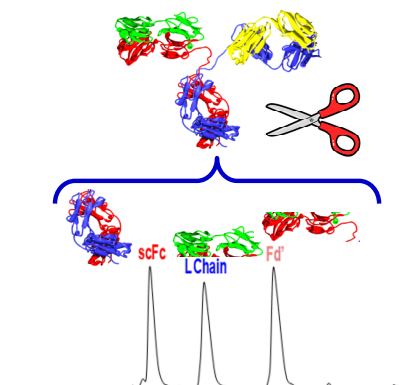


**SE- or RP-HPLC-UV/MS**  
(+/- PNGaseF)

**SDS-PAGE**

## Subunit Analysis

- **Confirm primary structure**
  - 100% sequence coverage
- **Chain-specific isoforms**
  - Conjugate forms

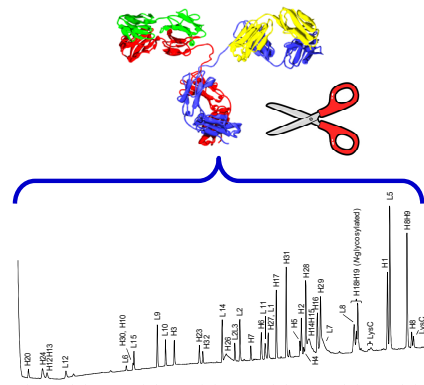


**C4 RP-HPLC-UV/MS**  
(IdeS digestion → reduction)

**SDS-PAGE**

## Peptide Mapping

- **Confirm primary structure**
  - ≤100% sequence coverage
  - Elucidate disulfide bonds
- **Sites of posttranslational & chemical modifications**

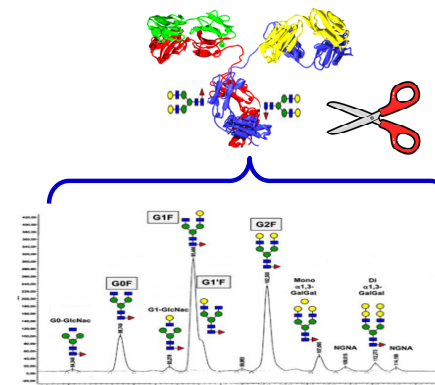


**C18 RP-HPLC-UV-MS/MS**  
(Denaturation/reduction/alkylation or alkylation/denaturation → proteolysis)

*Edman degradation*  
*Amino acid analysis*

## N-glycan Profiling

- **N-glycan structures (MS)**
- **N-glycan quantitation (FLR)**



**HILIC-FLR/MS**  
(PNGaseF digestion → 2-AB fluorescent labeling → cleanup)

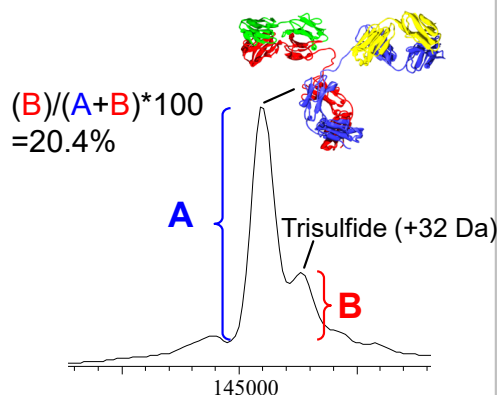
(Shang et al. *J. Pharm. Sci.* 2014, 103, 1967)  
*HPAEC-PED, AEX-HPLC, GC/MS & NMR*



# Contemporary MS-based Methods for Heightened Process Characterization

## Trisulfide Analysis

- Common mAb modification
- Root cause related to cell culture duration/feeding/pH
- Screen by intact mass & confirm by nr-peptide map

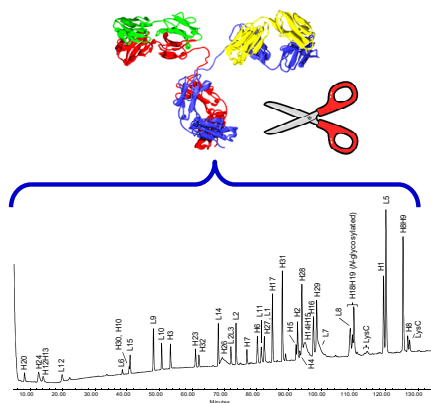


SE- or RP-HPLC-UV/MS  
(+/- PNGaseF)

(Gu et al. Anal. Biochem. 2010, 410, 89)

## Sequence Variant (SV) Analysis

- NGS is frontline SV method to identify genetic mutations
- Final PQ tested w/LC-MS/MS
- Confirm primary structure
  - 100% seq. integrity  $\geq 0.1-0.5\%$

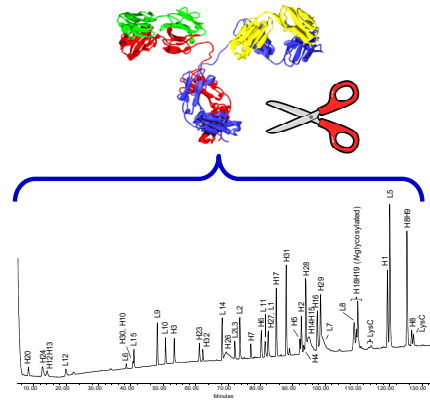


LC-MS/MS – peptide mapping  
(Denaturation/reduction/alkylation →  
desalt → proteolysis → bioinformatics)

(Lin et al. mAbs 2019, 11, 1; Wong et al. Biotechnol. Adv. 2018, 36, 168)

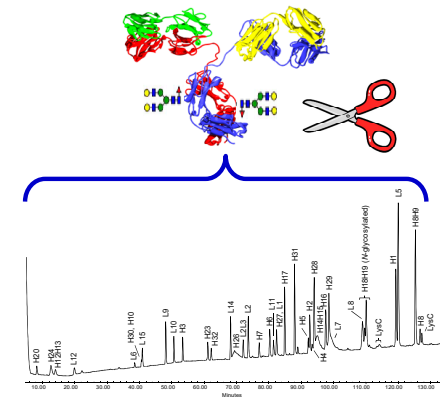
## Misincorporation Analysis

- AAA is frontline SV method to detect nutrient depletion
- Final PQ tested w/LC-MS/MS
- Confirm primary structure
  - 100% seq. integrity  $\geq 0.1-0.5\%$



## Host Cell Protein (HCP) Analysis

- Proteomic identification & relative quantitation of individual HCPs
- Augments routine HCP-ELISA
- Ensure no HCPs evade detection above a reportable limit (10 ppm)



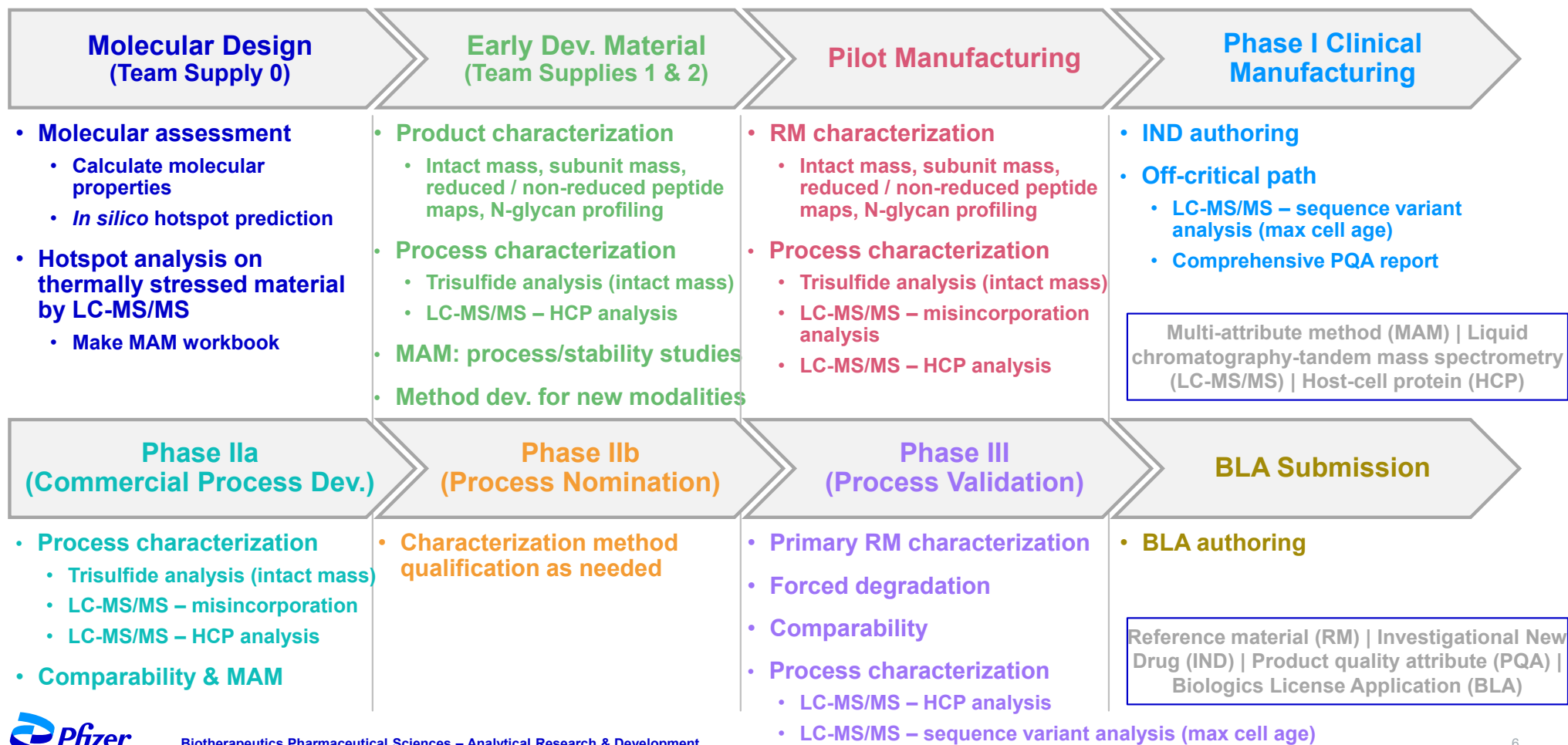
LC-MS/MS – peptide mapping  
(Denaturation/reduction/alkylation →  
desalt → proteolysis → database search)  
(Zhang et al. LC/GC Supp. 2021. 39. 25)



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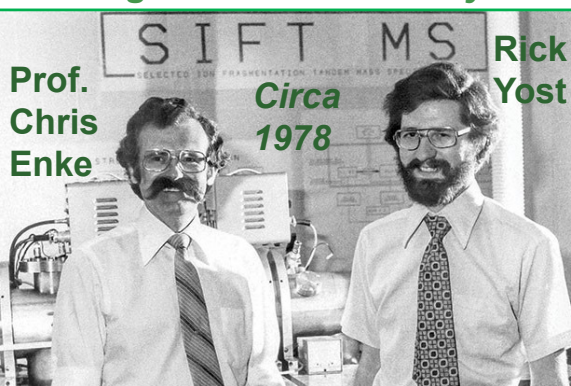
Liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) | Next-generation sequencing (NGS) | Amino acid analysis (AAA) | Product quality (PQ)

# MS Characterization Roadmap Supporting Product & Process Development



# Beginnings of Protein Mass Spectrometry

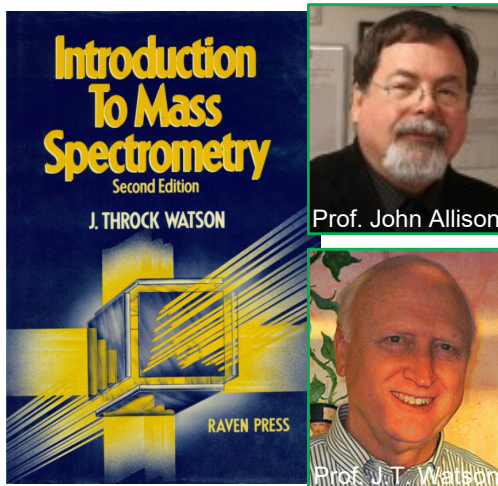
Michigan State University 1988-1993: *peptide sequencing*



Prof. Chris Enke

Circa 1978

Rick Yost



Prof. John Allison



Prof. J.T. Watson

**The triple quadrupole turns 40...**  
C&E News: Mar. 5, 2018, Vol 96:10 | 15-18

*Anal. Chem.* 1987, 59, 2621-2625

2621

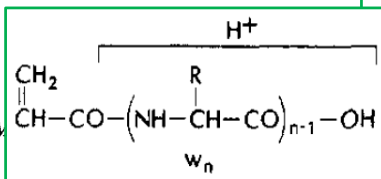
## Novel Fragmentation Process of Peptides by Collision-Induced Decomposition in a Tandem Mass Spectrometer: Differentiation of Leucine and Isoleucine

Richard S. Johnson, Stephen A. Martin,<sup>1</sup> and Klaus Biemann\*

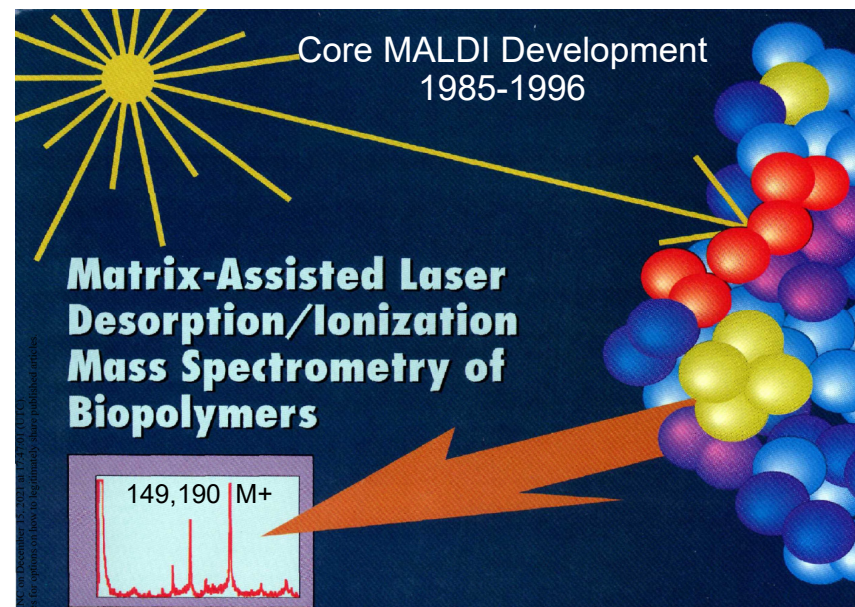
Department of Chemistry, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA

John T. Stults and J. Throck Watson

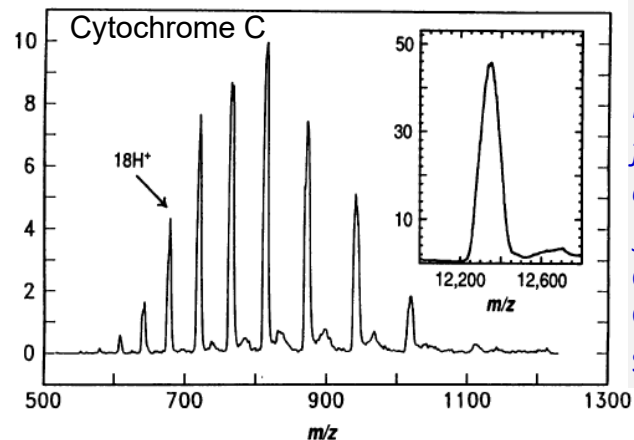
Department of Biochemistry, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824



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F. Hillenkamp, M. Karas, R.C. Beavis and B.T. Chait  
*ANAL. CHEM.*, VOL. 63, NO. 24, DEC. 15, 1991, 1193 A



Core ESI Development  
1984-1996

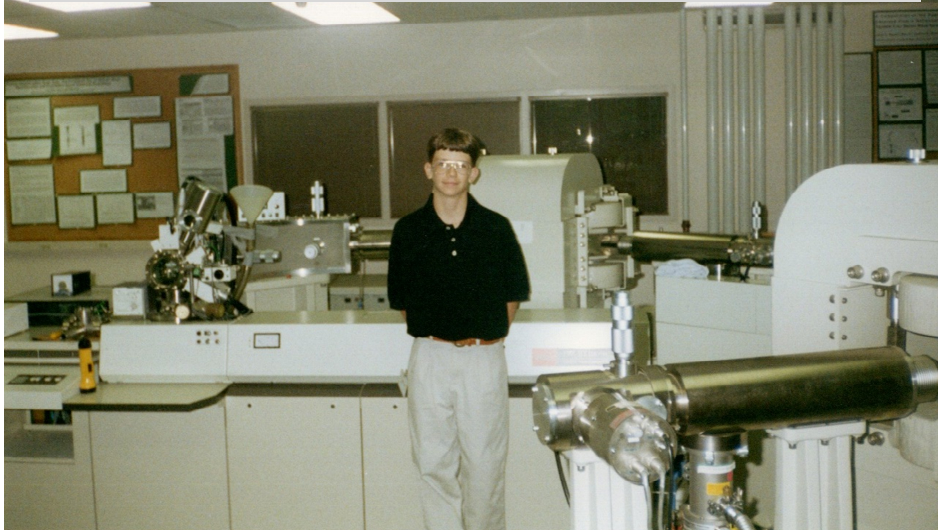
*Electrospray Ionization for Mass Spectrometry of Large Biomolecules*

J.B. FENN, M. MANN, C.K. MENG, S.F. WONG, C.M. WHITEHOUSE (1989)  
*SCIENCE*, VOL. 246, p. 64

## Genetics Institute circa 1993

- Structural Biochemistry - MS subgroup
  - Hubie Scoble, Director (Sanofi, consultant)
  - Steve Martin, Manager (Waters, retired)
  - James Vath (Cure Ventures)
  - Wen Yu (AstraZeneca)
  - Mike Huberty

**JEOL HX-110/ HX-110 4-sector mass spectrometer  
(equipped w/ fast-atom bombardment [FAB])**



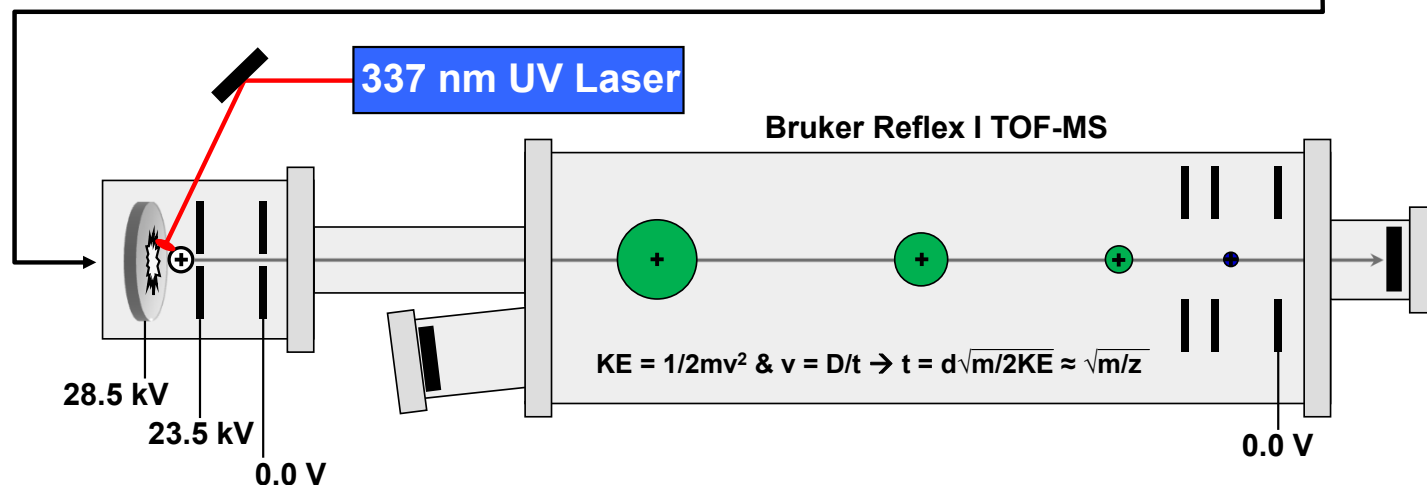
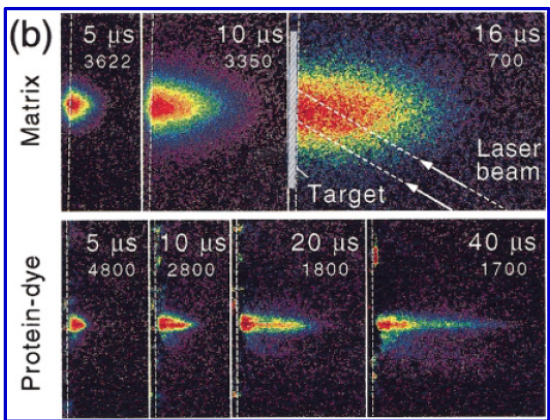
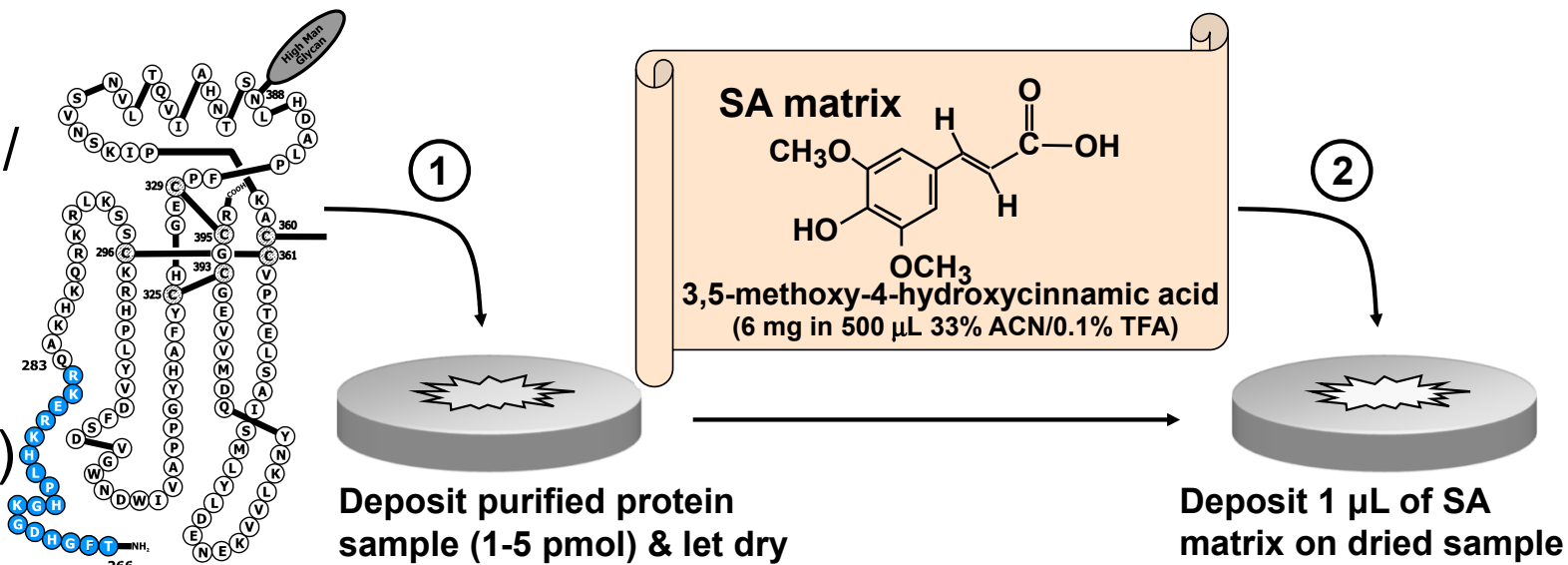
**Bruker Reflex I mass spectrometer  
(MALDI-TOF MS)**

### • My Postdoc Research Projects

- Optimized continuous-flow FAB on JEOL HX-110/ HX-110 4-sector mass spectrometer for peptides
- Benchmarked peptide ion fragmentation by MALDI-PSD to high and low energy CAD on JEOL HX-110/HX-110 4-sector mass spectrometer
- Developed MALDI cleanup methods for sensitive analysis of released N-linked glycans
- Elucidated N-linked glycan structures and isomers by MALDI, PSD and glycosidases



# Matrix-Assisted Laser Desorption/Ionization Time-of-Flight Mass Spectrometry (MALDI-TOF MS)

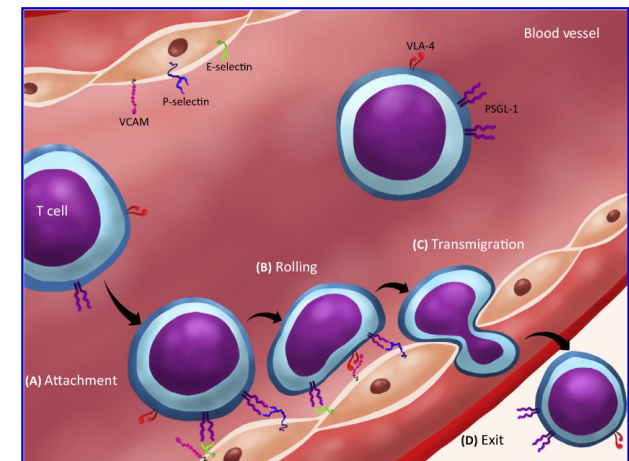
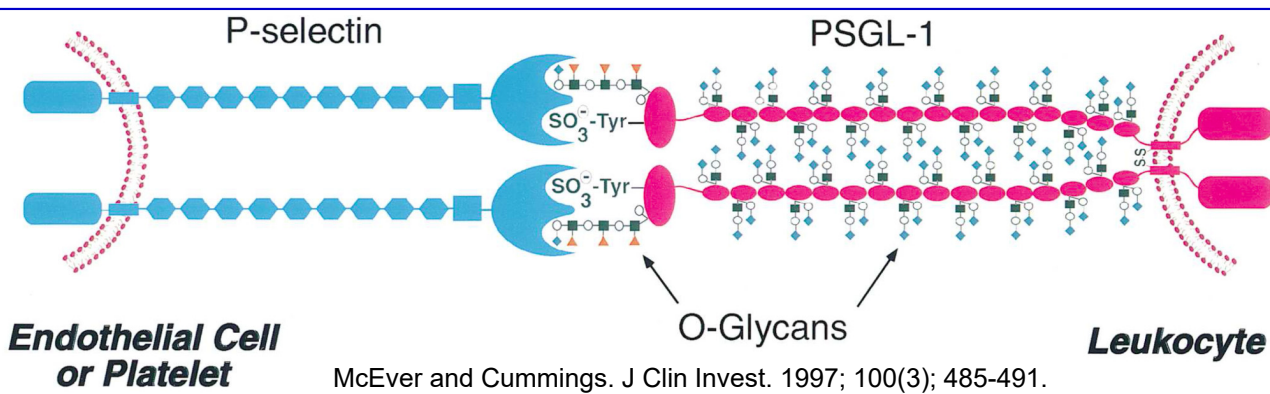


PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS 1999, VOL 83:2, p444

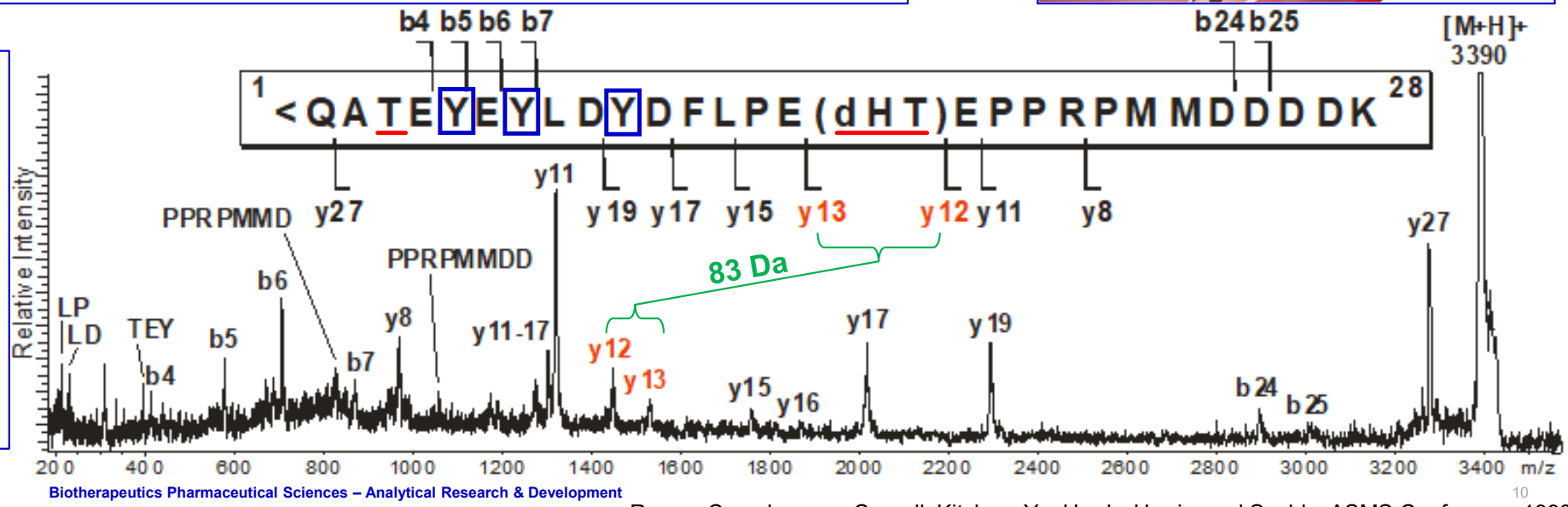


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# sPSGL-1 – P-selectin Glycoprotein Ligand-1 (1994)

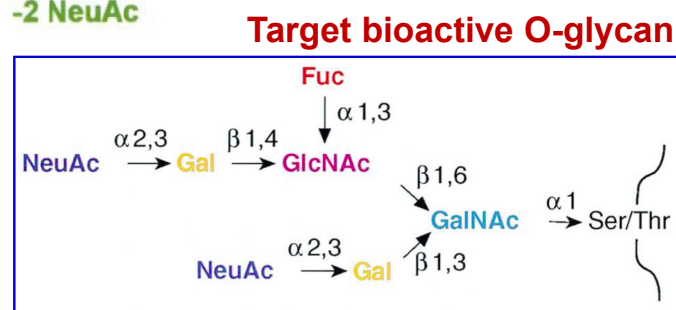
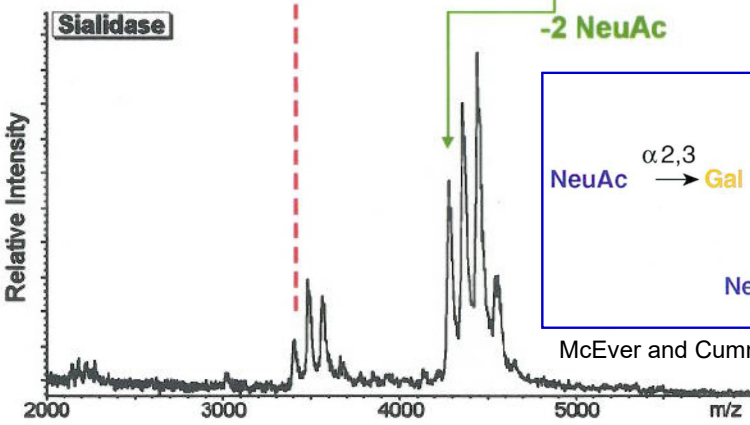
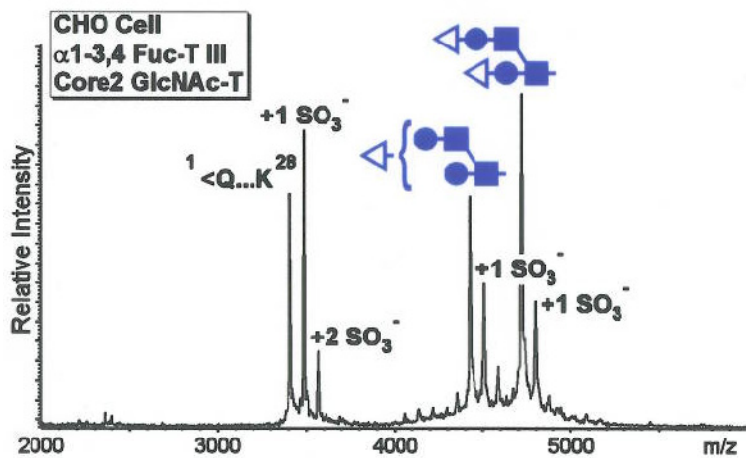
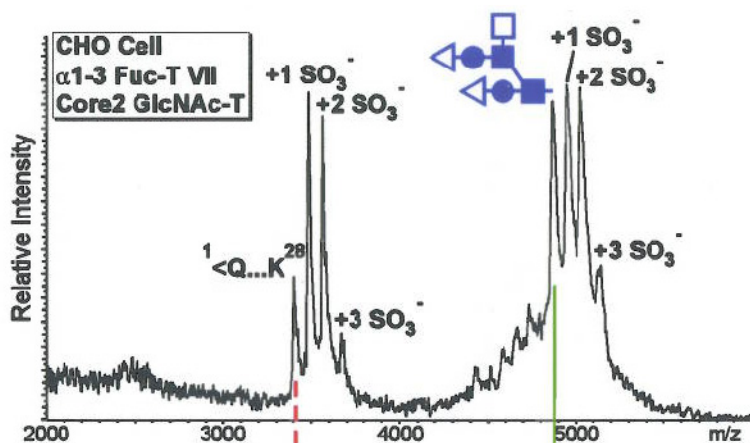
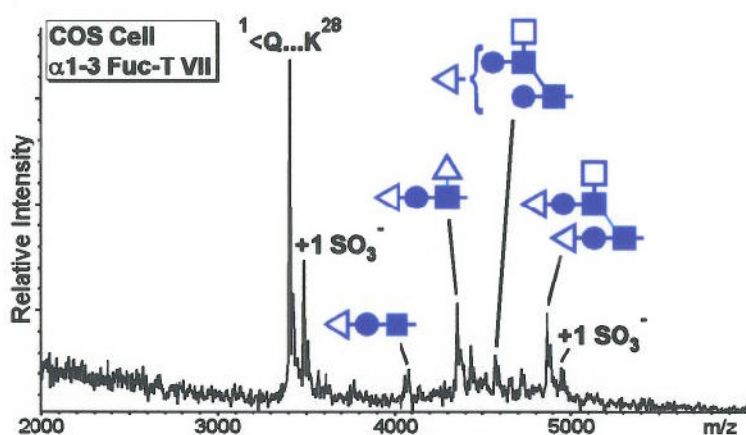


- ✓ Site-specific analysis of a bioactive O-glycan in sPSGL-1
- ✓ MALDI-PSD-TOF MS
- ✓ Small-scale beta-elimination with NaOH (i.e., de-O-glycosylation)



Rouse, Camphausen, Cornell, Kitchen, Yu, Hardy, Harris, and Scoble, ASMS Conference 1998.

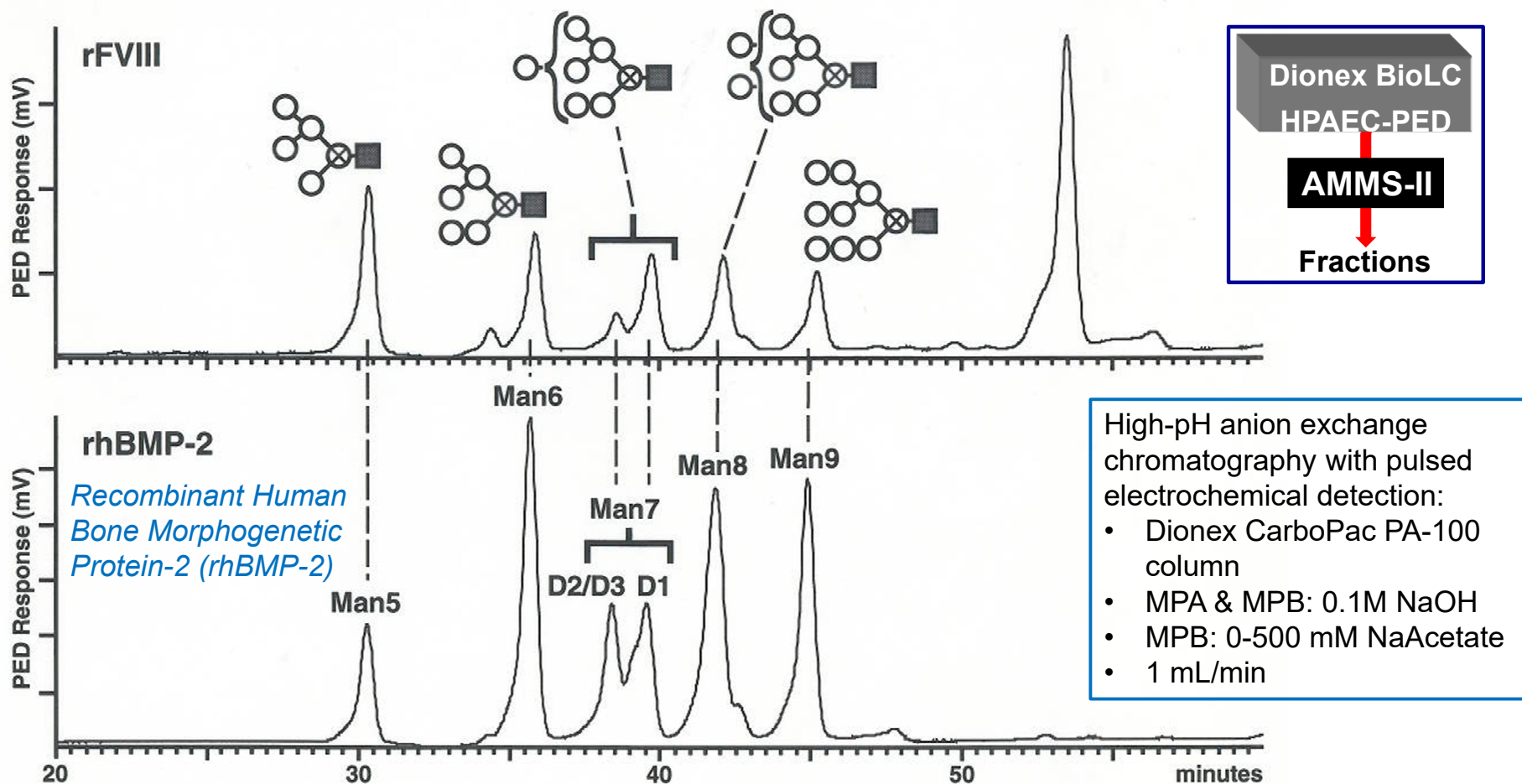
# Monitoring sPSGL-1 “Glyco-Engineering” by MALDI-TOF MS (1994)



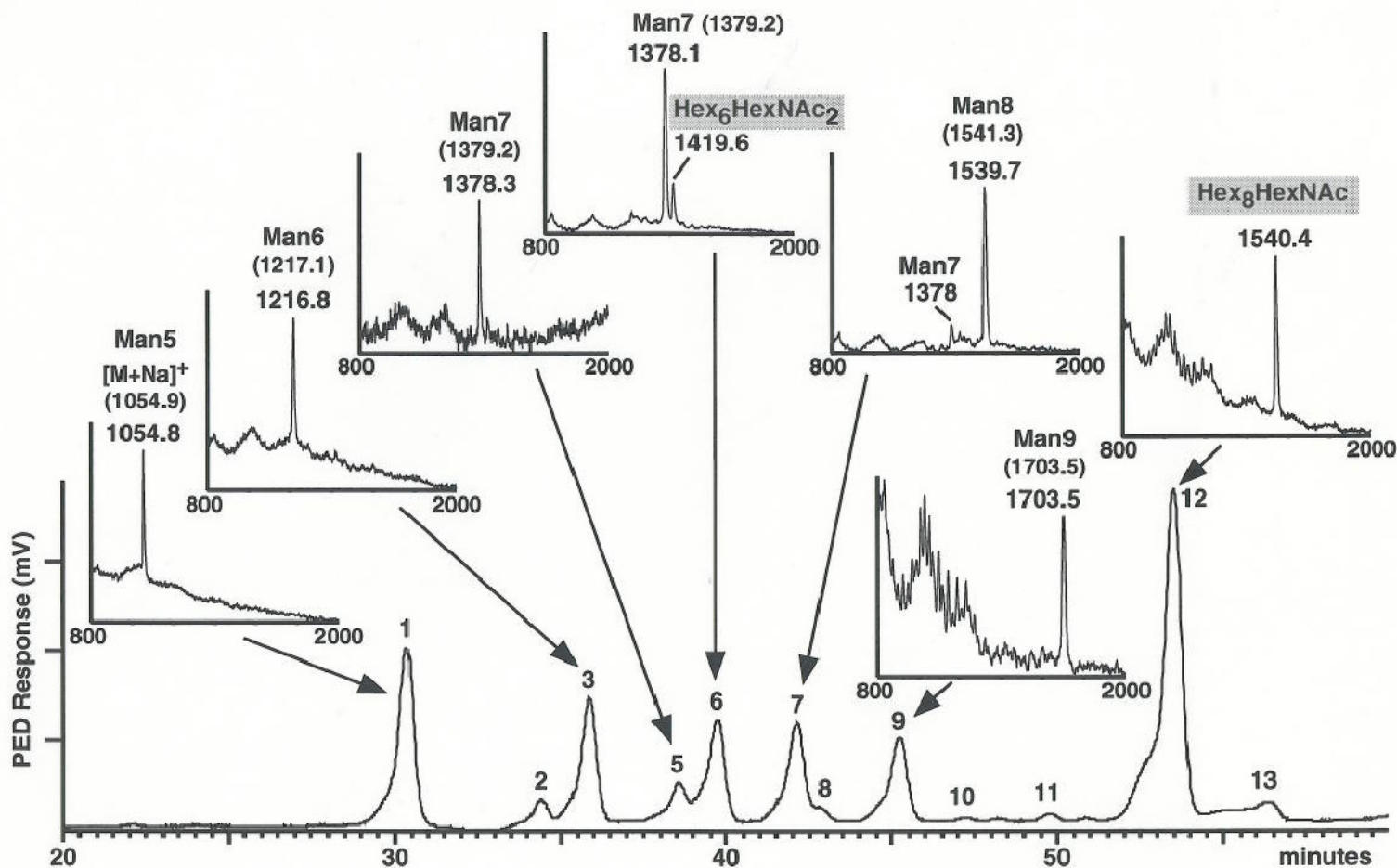
McEver and Cummings. J Clin Invest. 1997; 100(3); 485-491



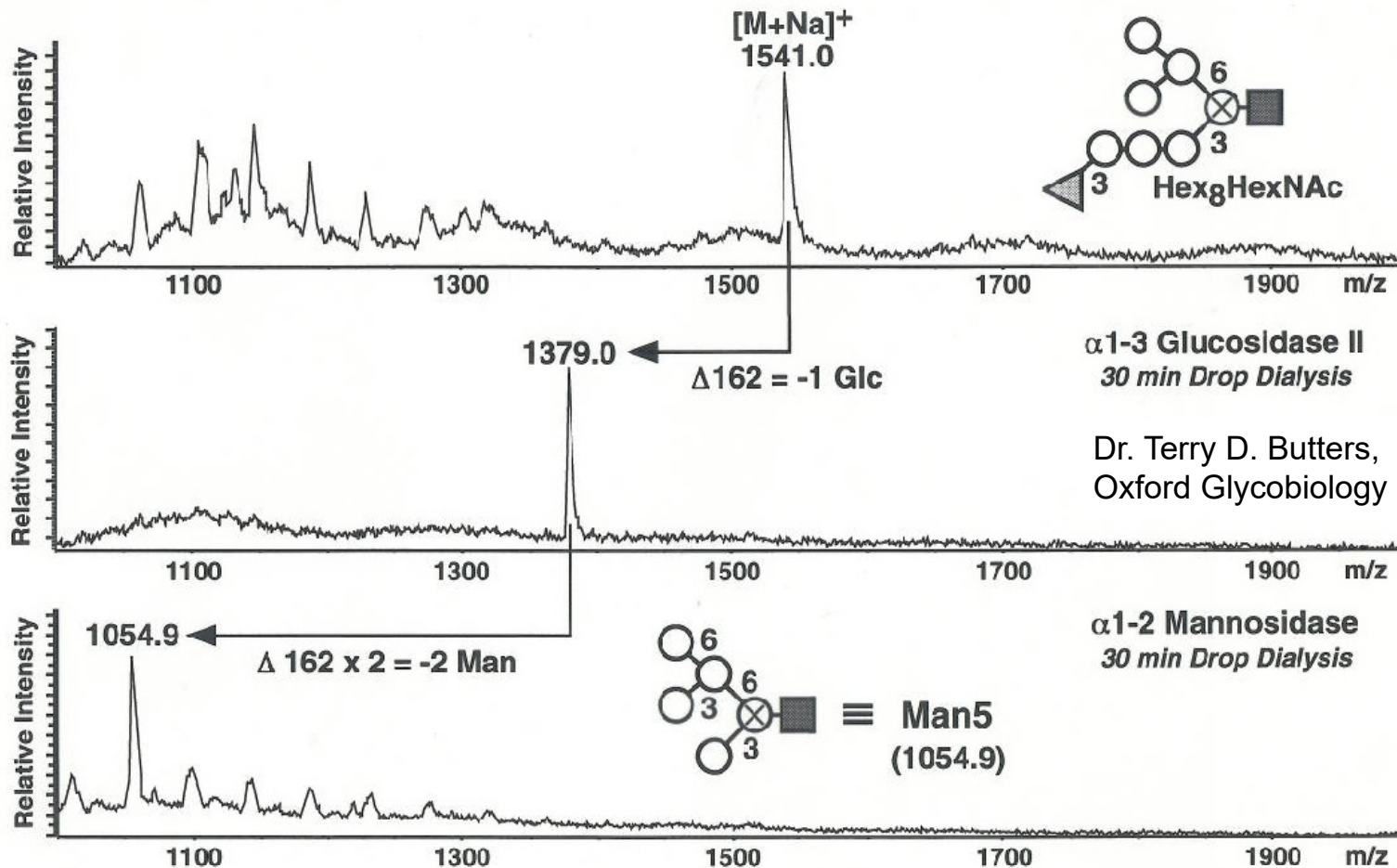
## Profiling EndoH-released N-glycans by HPAEC-PED (1995)



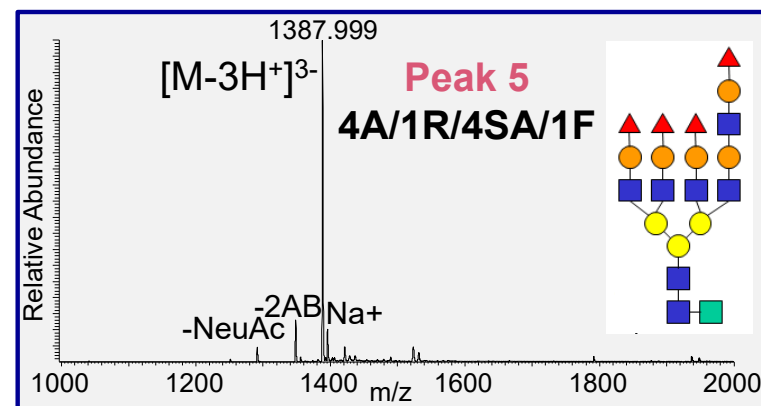
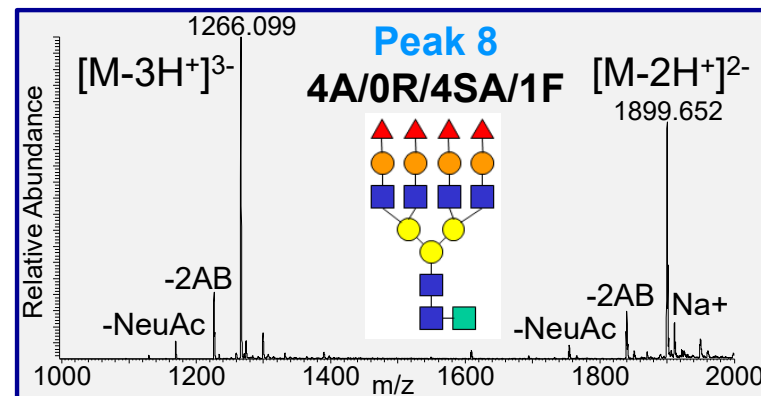
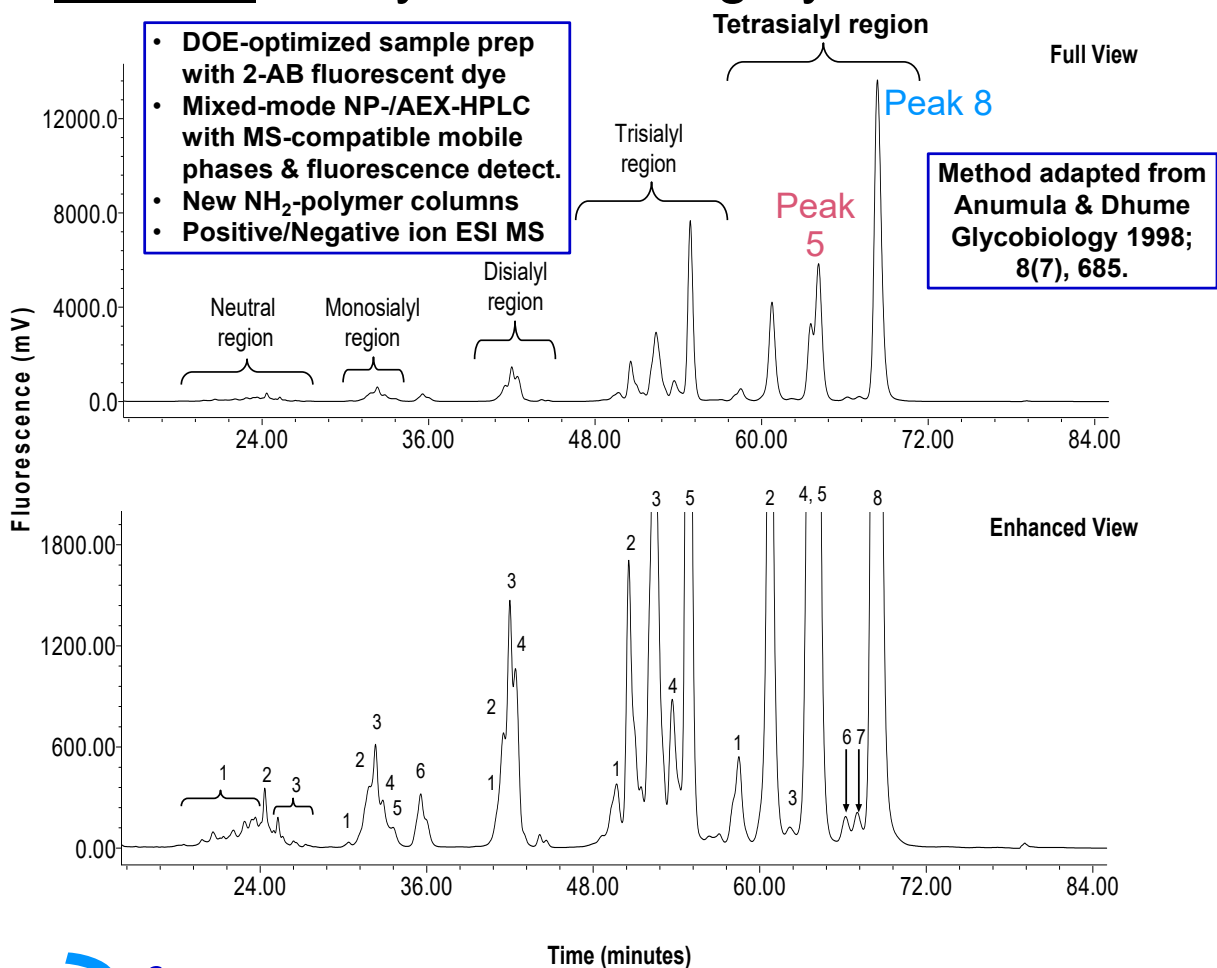
# MALDI-TOF MS Analysis of rFVIII HPAEC Fractions (released EndoH N-glycans)



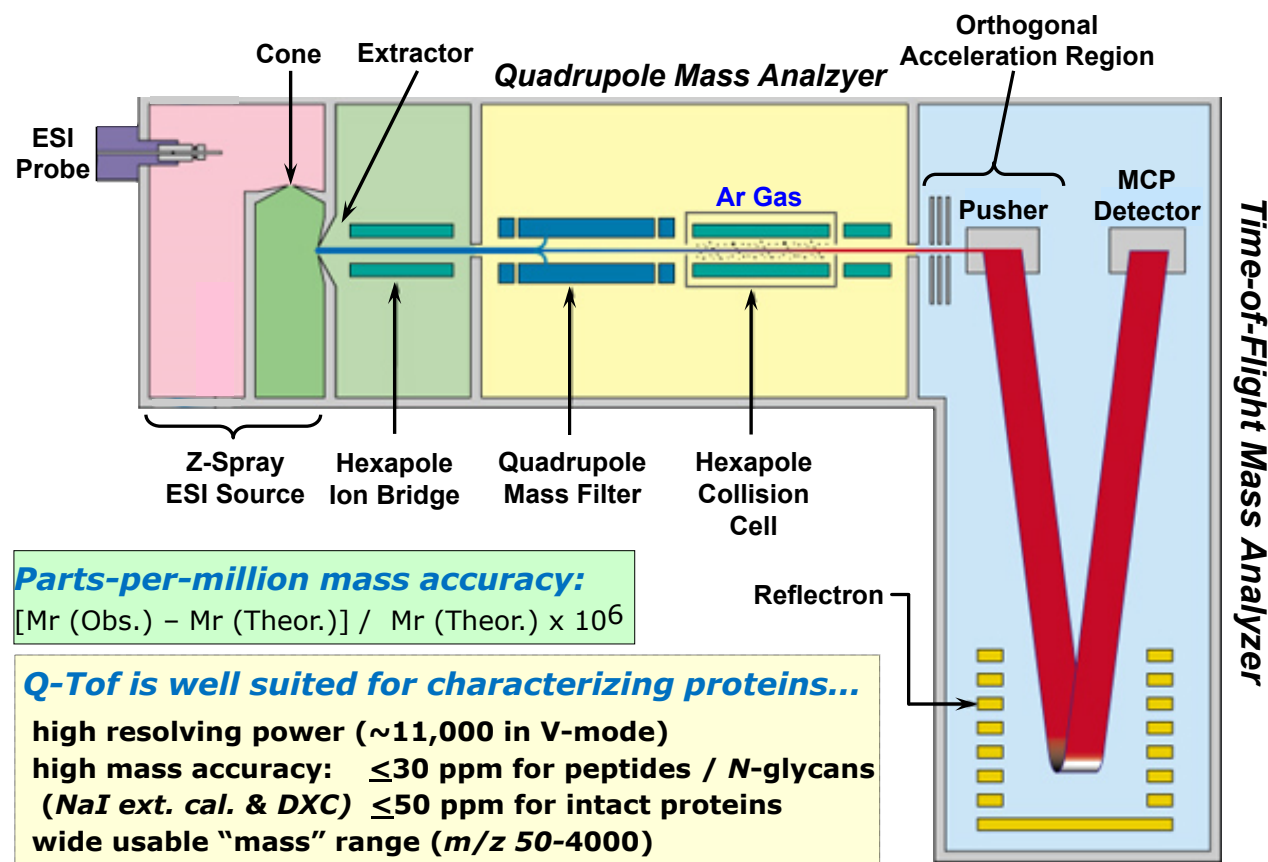
# Sequential Glycosidase Digestion of Unknown Fraction 12



# Modern N-Glycan Profiling by LC-FLR/MS: Recombinant Factor IX (rFIX)



# In 2000, the ESI-Quadrupole Time-of-Flight (Q-TOF) Mass Spectrometer Arrives

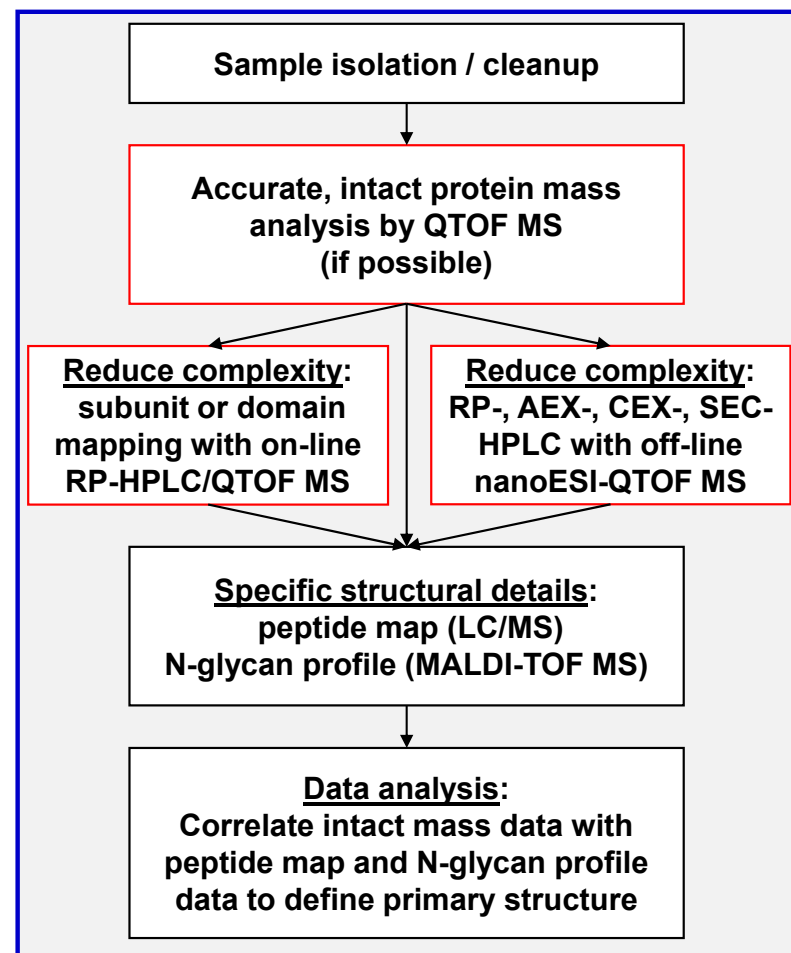


**Parts-per-million mass accuracy:**  

$$\frac{[Mr(\text{Obs.}) - Mr(\text{Theor.})]}{Mr(\text{Theor.})} \times 10^6$$

**Q-Tof is well suited for characterizing proteins...**

- high resolving power ( $\sim 11,000$  in V-mode)
- high mass accuracy:  $\leq 30$  ppm for peptides / N-glycans (NaI ext. cal. & DXC)  $\leq 50$  ppm for intact proteins
- wide usable "mass" range ( $m/z$  50-4000)
- efficient ion transmission
- powerful MaxEnt-1 & MaxEnt-3 deconvolution software



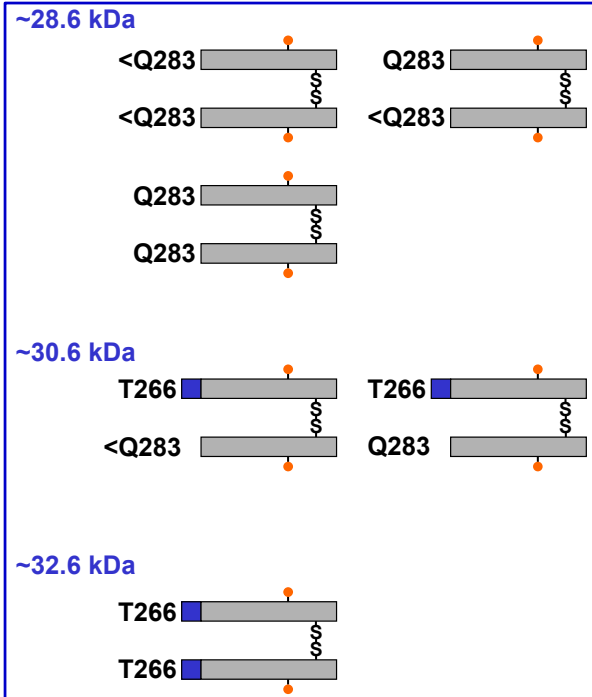
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Adapted from schematic of Q-Tof-2 (Micromass MS Technologies, Waters Corp.)

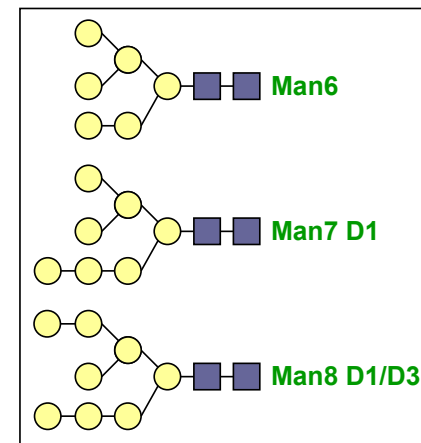
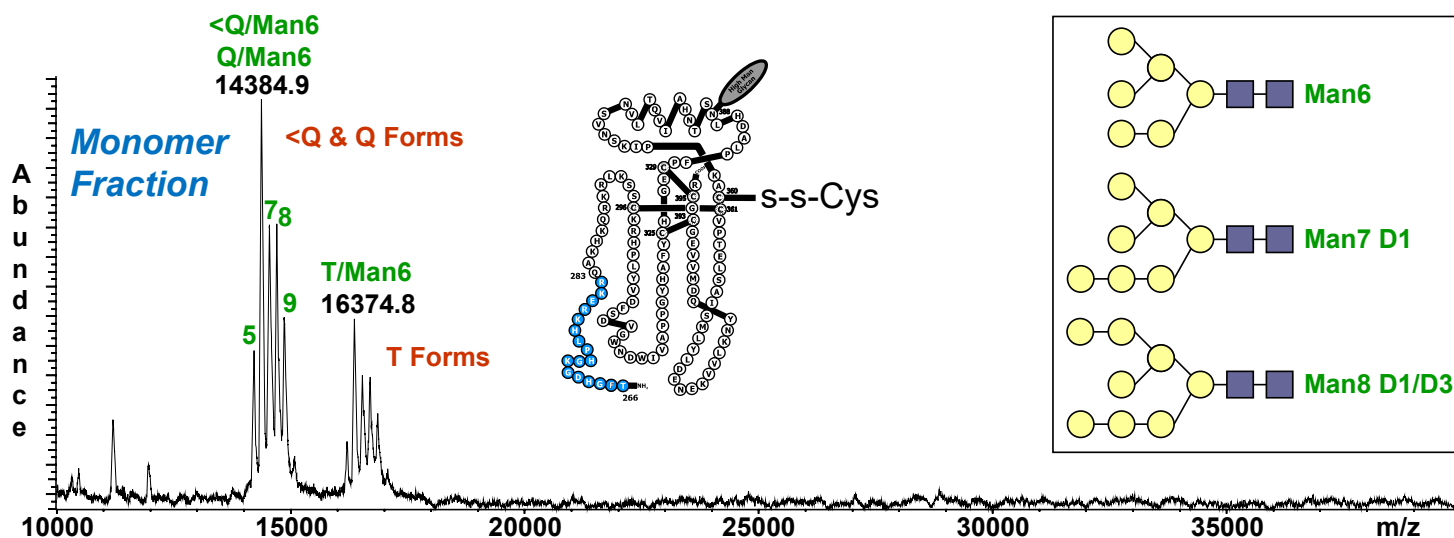
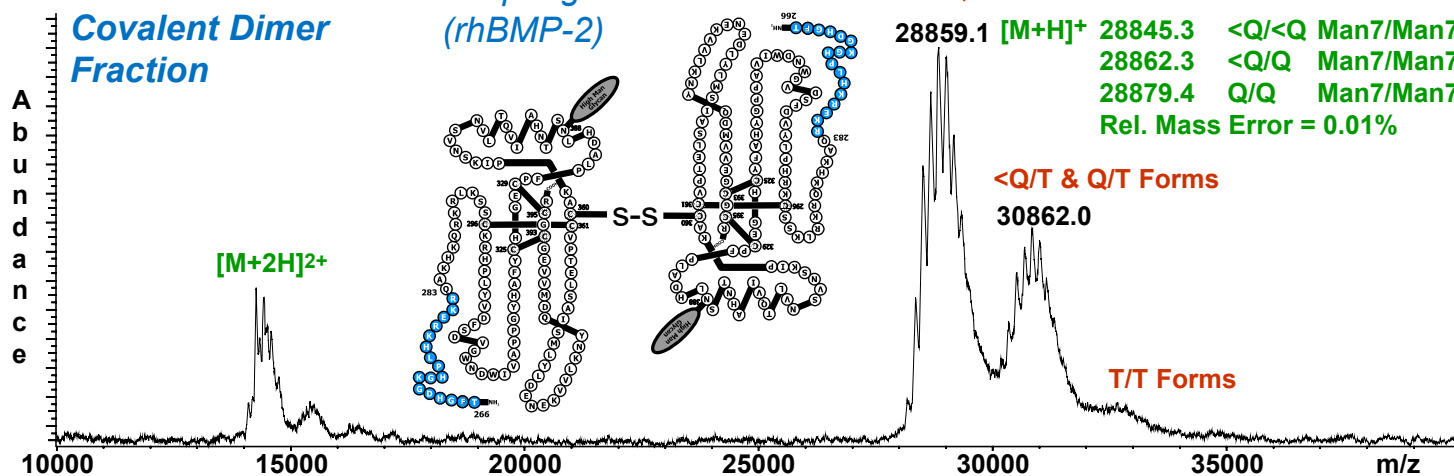


# MALDI-TOF MS of Intact rhBMP-2 (Isolated from Phenyl RP-HPLC-UV)

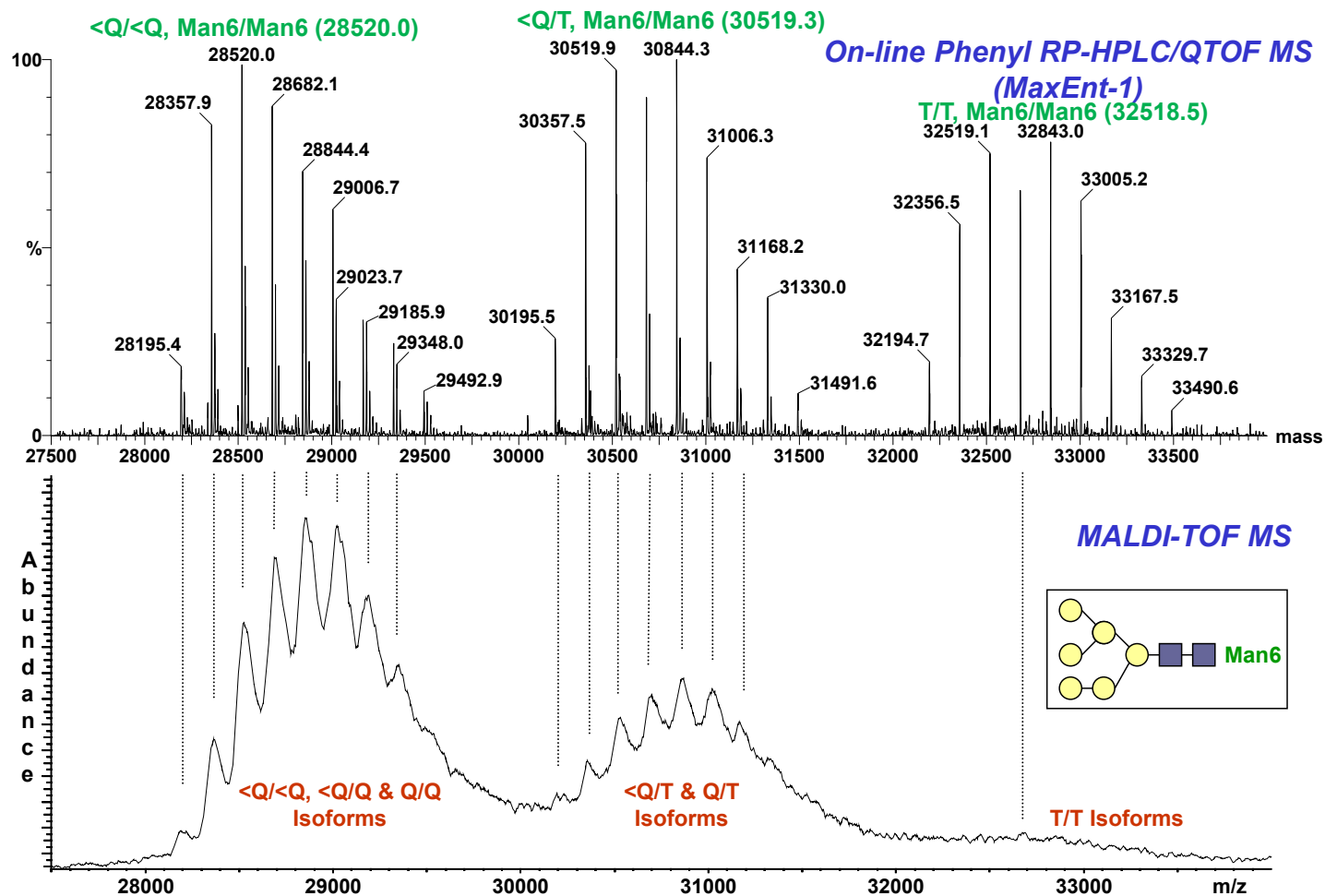
## rhBMP-2 N-terminal Heterogeneity



## Recombinant Human Bone Morphogenetic Protein-2 (rhBMP-2)



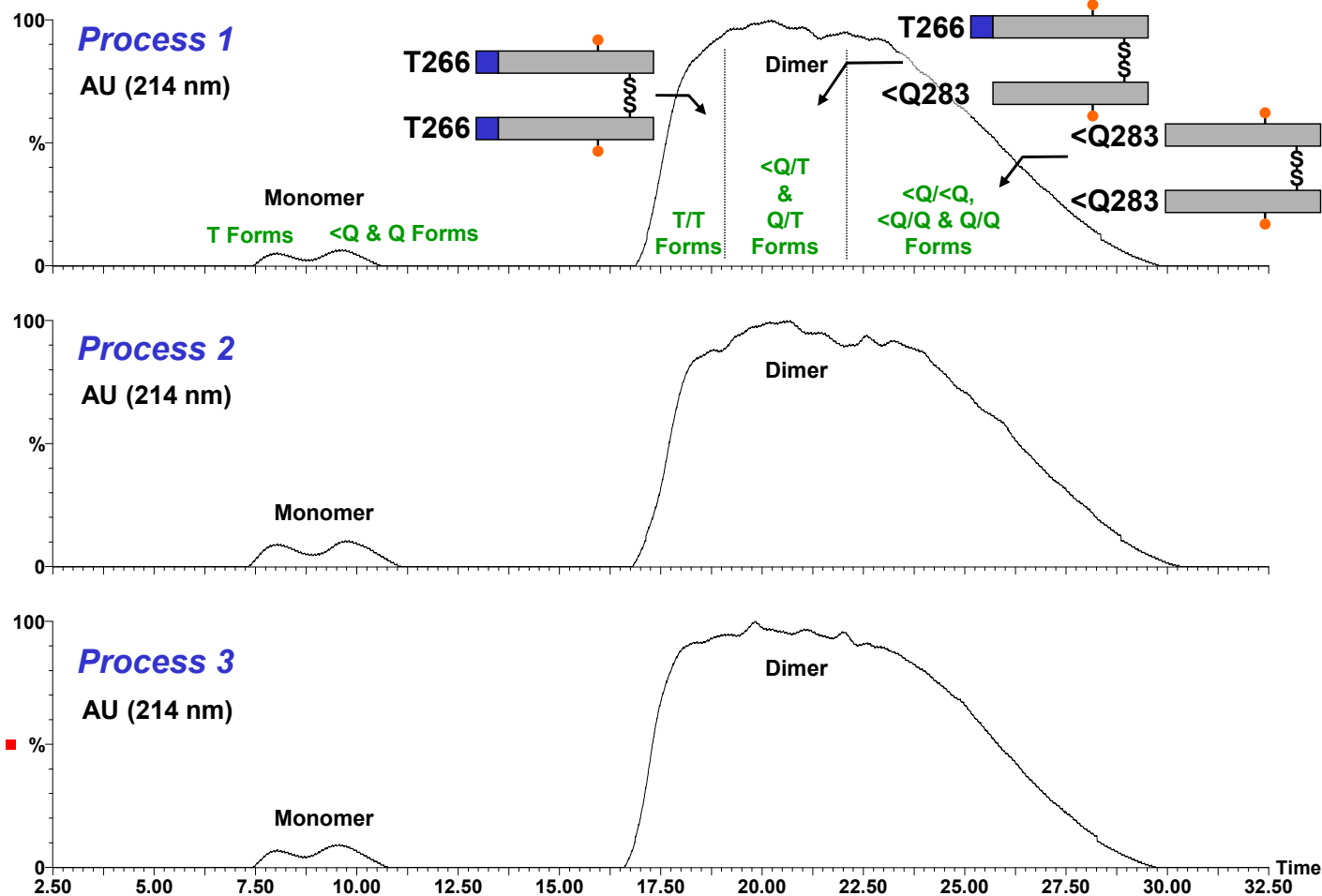
# Comparison of ESI-QTOF & MALDI-TOF MS for Covalent rhBMP-2 Dimer



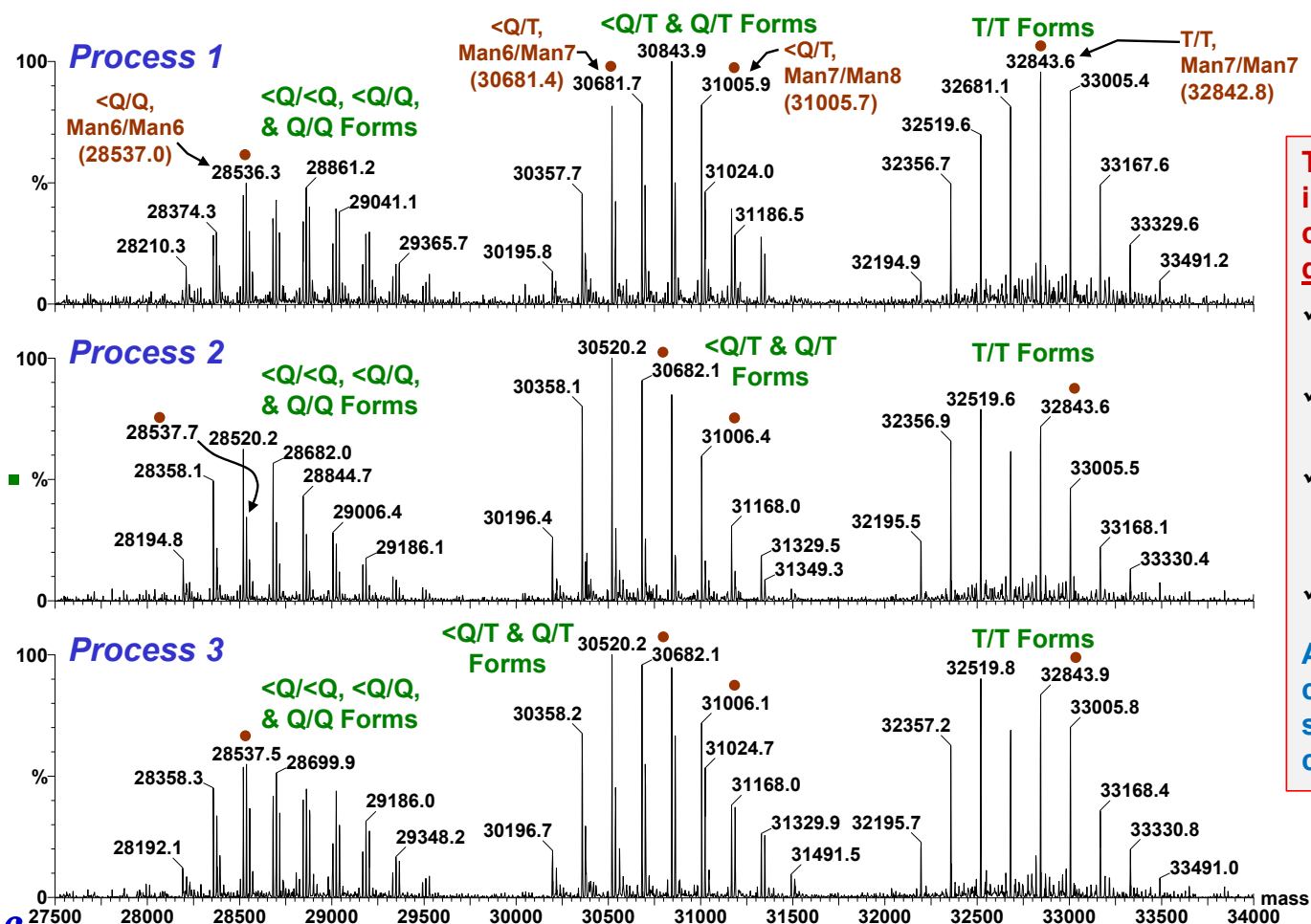
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Rouse, Abbatiello, Haq, Marzilli, Nemeth-Cawley, Patel, Rathore, Jankowski, Porter, & Scoble, ACS NERM 2001, University of NH

# rhBMP-2 Comparability Study: Phenyl RP-HPLC-UV / ESI QTOF MS



# rhBMP-2 Comparability Study: Zero-Charge Mass Spectra



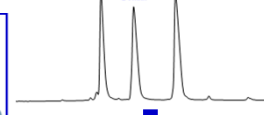
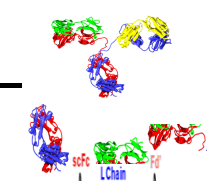
The mass spectra of intact rhBMP-2 indicated the 3 processes produced comparable DS (according to pre-determined acceptance criteria):

- ✓ Mass differences between the same isoforms were < 1.3 Da
- ✓ All isoform masses were < 1.6 Da (50 ppm) from theoretical values
- ✓ Similar isoform distributions were observed (slight redistribution in process 2)
- ✓ No new isoforms were detected

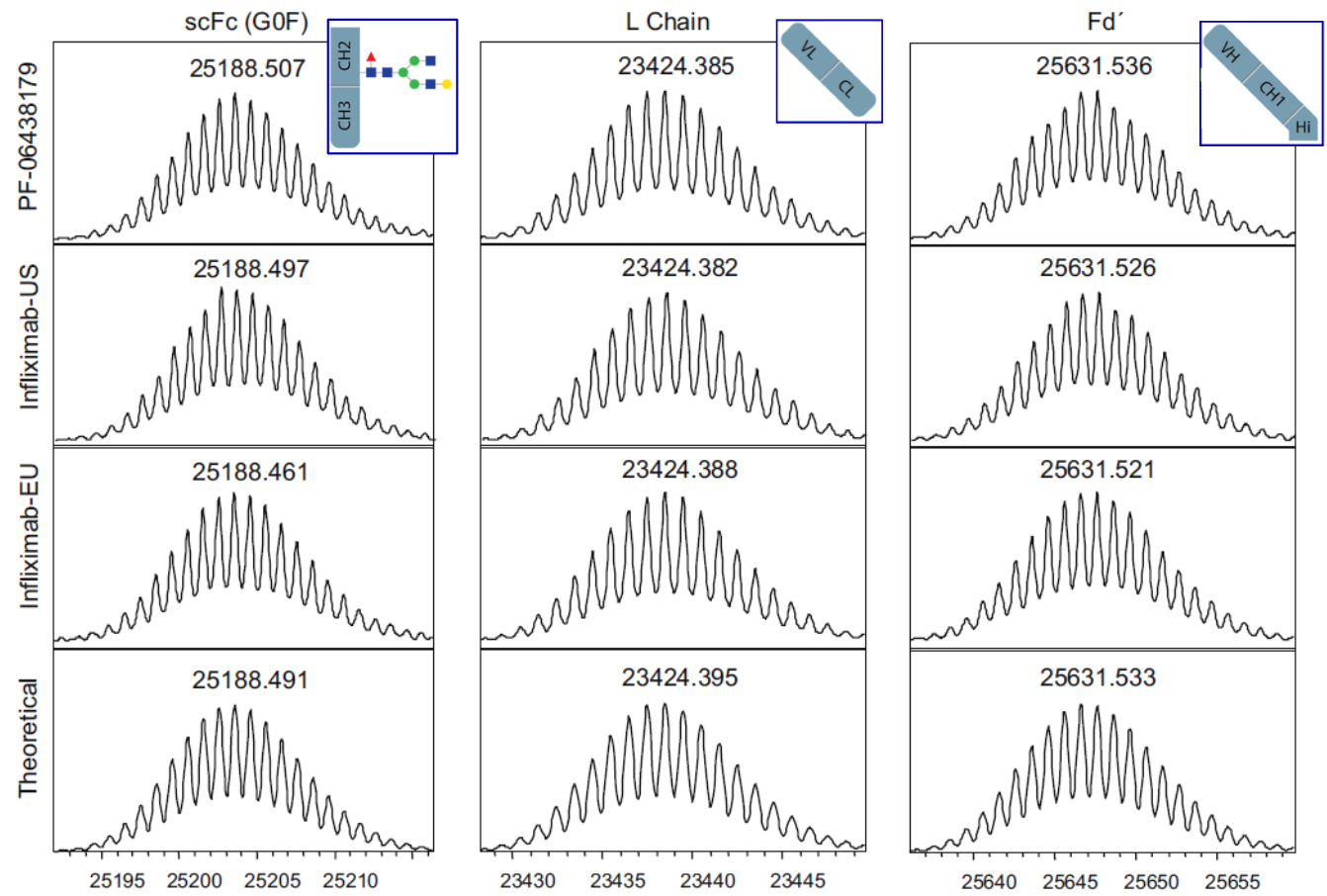
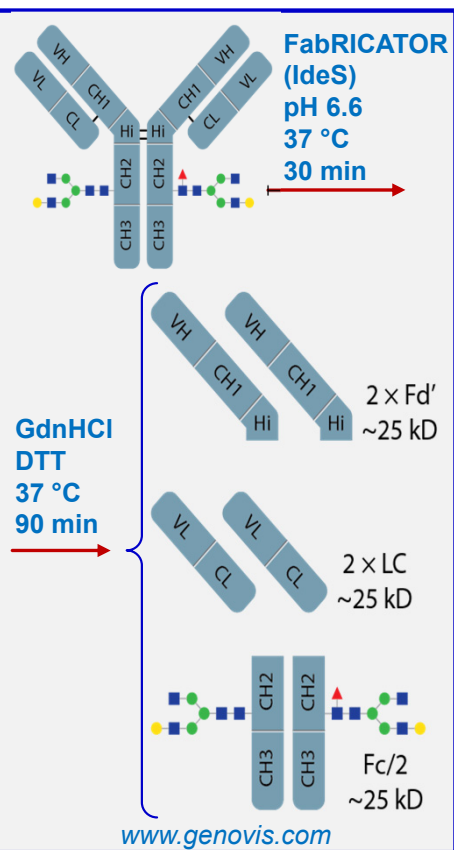
All routine testing and characterization studies together supported structural and functional comparability of rhBMP-2 DS



# Biosimilarity Assessments: Zero-charge Mass Spectra from LC/MS – Subunit Analysis of PF-06438179, Infliximab-US, and Infliximab-EU



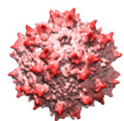
UHR QTOF MS  
 ✓ 40k FWHM resolution  
 ✓ <2 ppm mass accuracy



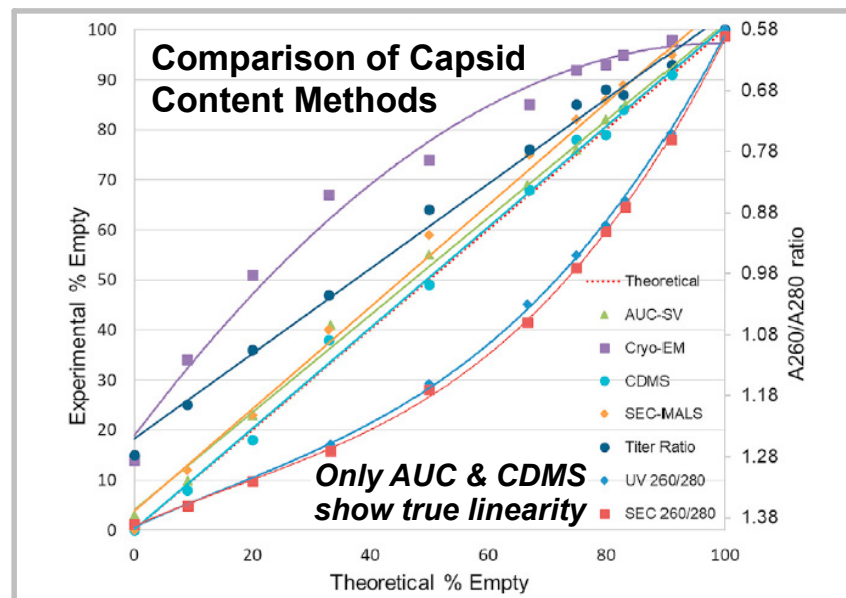
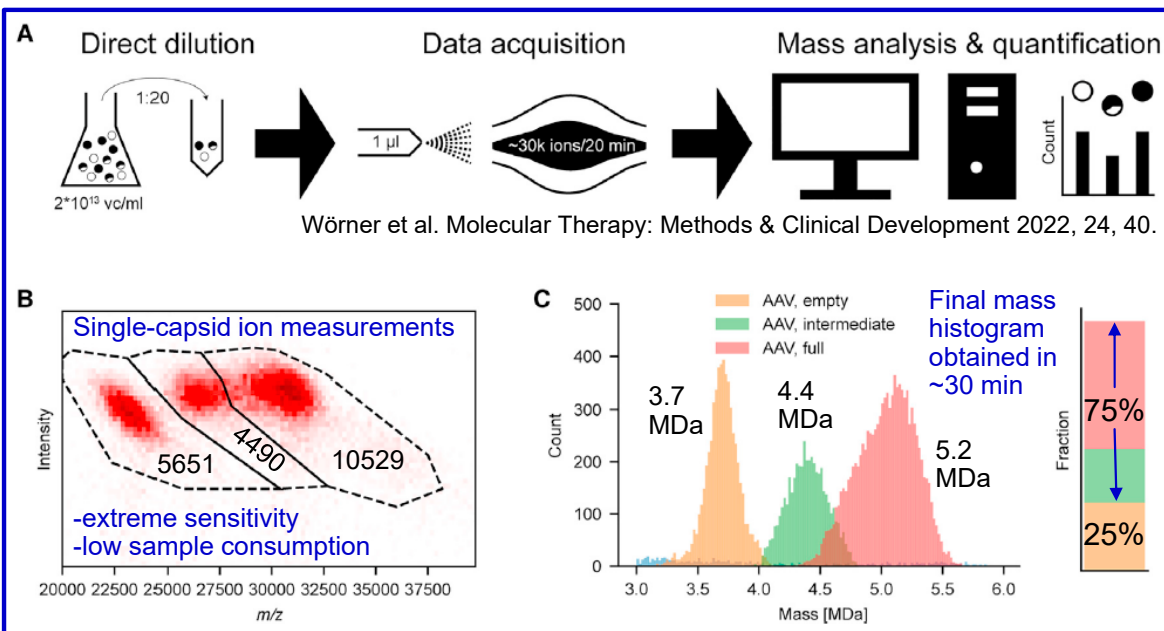
# Emerging Ultrahigh Mass Measurement Techniques (2022)

Werle et al. Molecular Therapy: Methods & Clin. Dev. 2021, 23, 254.

## Charge Detection MS (CDMS)



Adeno-associated Virus (AAV)

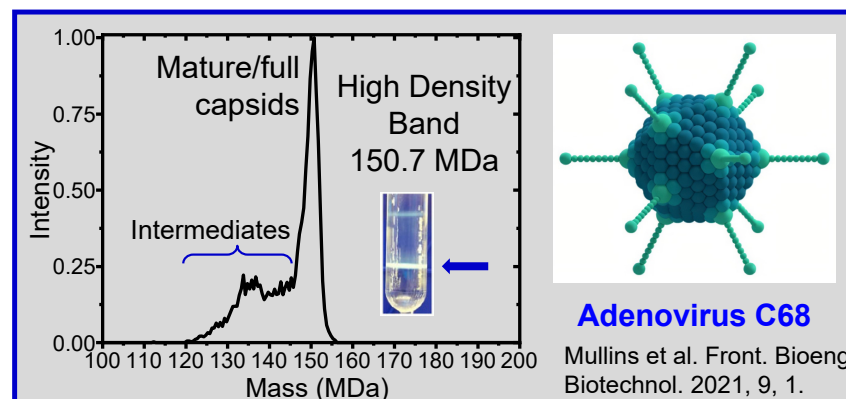


- ✓ CDMS is orthogonal to AUC for quantitation of empty / partial / full AAV capsids
  - Well-suited for analysis of low conc. samples; requires minimal volumes
  - Sufficient resolution of partially packaged AAV capsids (~2% rel. abundance)
- ✓ Viral capsids up to 150 MDa also were successfully analyzed by CDMS →

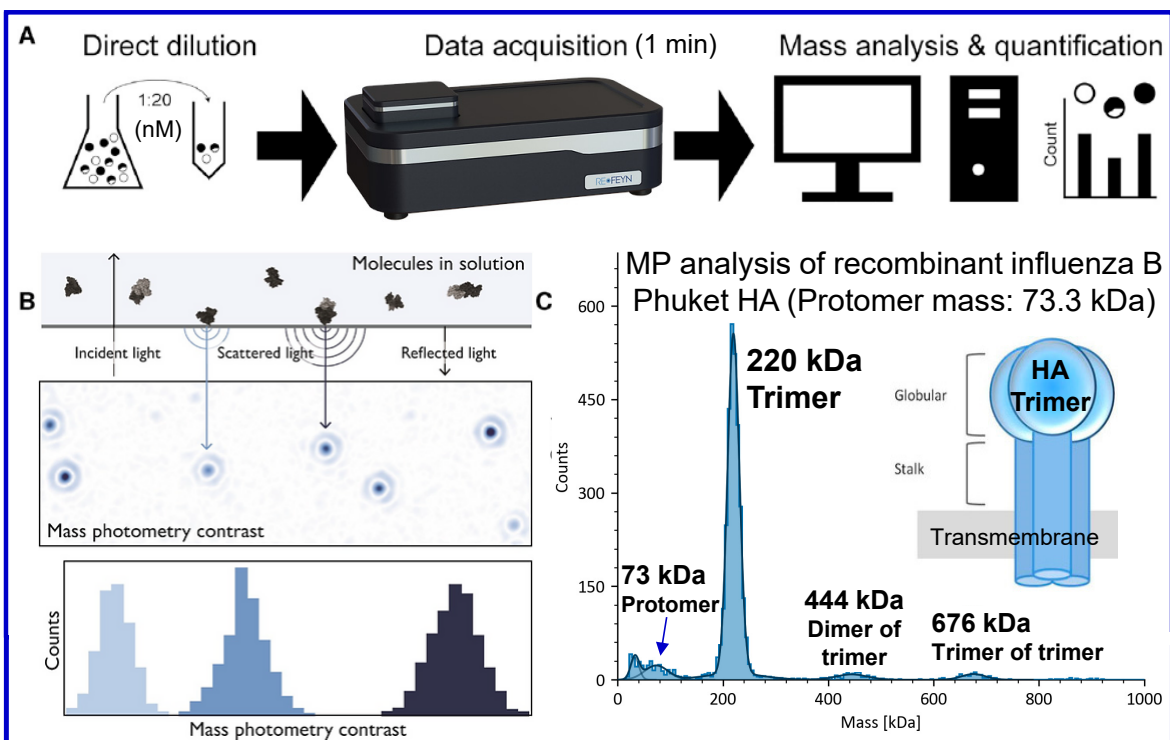


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Thomas Powers & Olga Friese, Pfizer

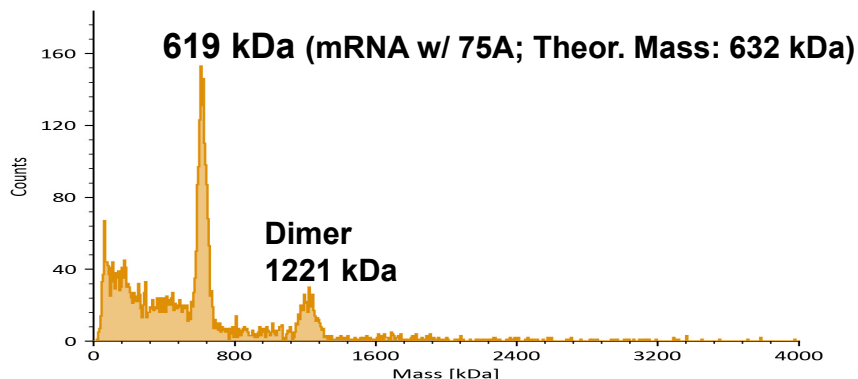
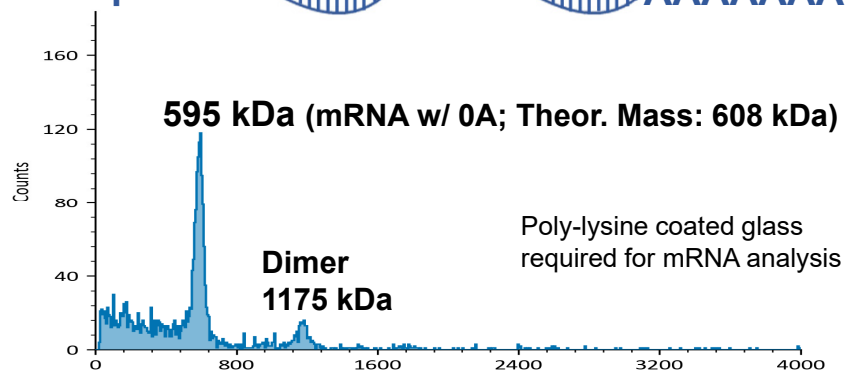


# Characterization of Biotherapeutics by Mass Photometry (MP) (2023)



## mRNA Case study:

Two mRNA samples with different poly(A)-tail lengths



- ✓ Sensitive mass measurement of single molecules in solution, in their native state
- ✓ Light scattered by a molecule that has landed on measurement surface interferes with light reflected by that surface. The interference signal scales linearly with mass.
- ✓ MP enables quick quality checks of glycoproteins & mRNA to support projects



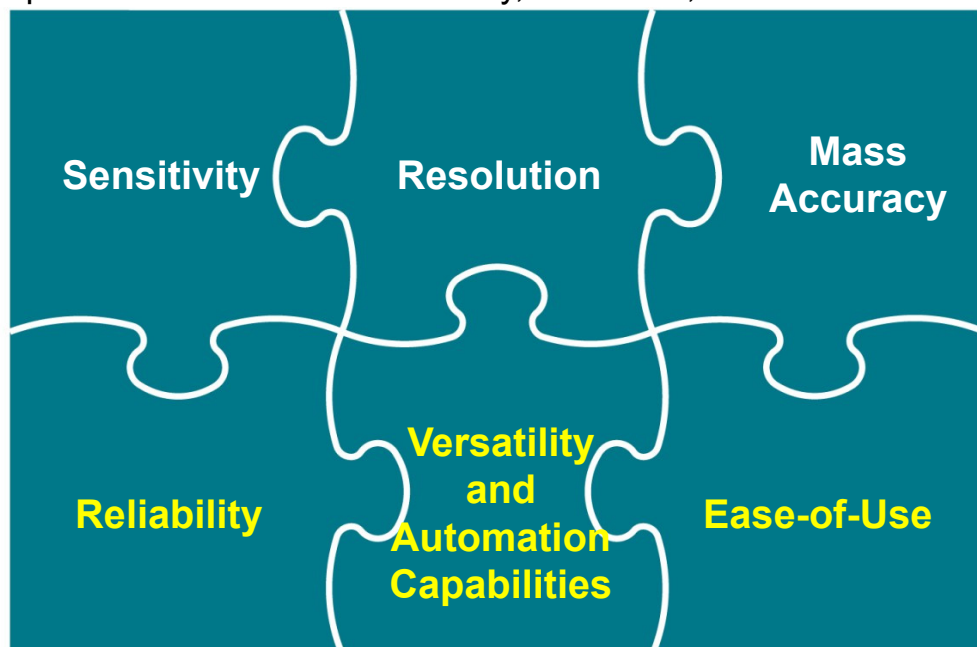
Biotherapeutics Pharmaceutical Sciences – Analytical Research & Development

Leah (Hanliu) Wang & Lauren Barnes, Pfizer

- ✓ Observed masses within 2% of theoretical masses
- ✓ Dimer under investigation; also present in CGE & CDMS

# Important Mass Spectrometer Characteristics & New Directions

- Research-grade mass spectrometers are defined by ultimate performance such as sensitivity, resolution, and mass accuracy



- New “Smart” UHPLC mass detectors are being developed with improved “ease-of-use” for hardware/software operation
  - ✓ Opens-up LC/MS access to more colleagues (w/ more manageable training) for supporting routine MS workflows!



Biotherapeutics Pharmaceutical Sciences – Analytical Research & Development

Orbitrap Fusion Lumos Tribrid



maxis



- Research Grade Mass Spectrometers
- Smart UHPLC Mass Detectors

BioAccord<sup>TM</sup> SYSTEM

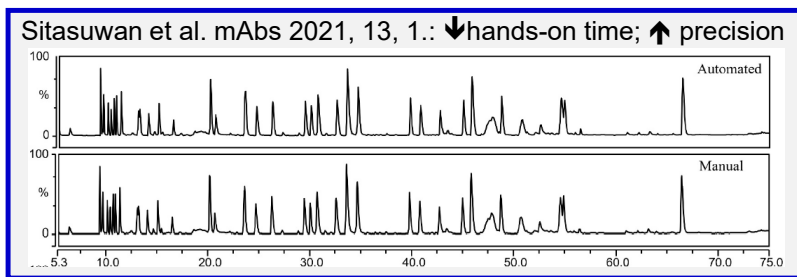


Orbitrap Exploris MX





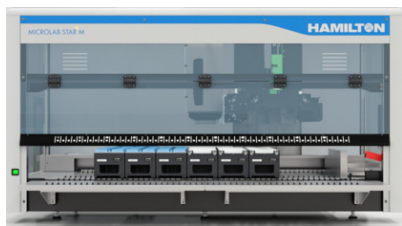
# Modern View of Mass Spectrometry in Process & Product Dev. Labs



- Reference material
- Drug substance
- Drug product
- In-process samples
- Stability samples

Direct analysis

Automated sample prep

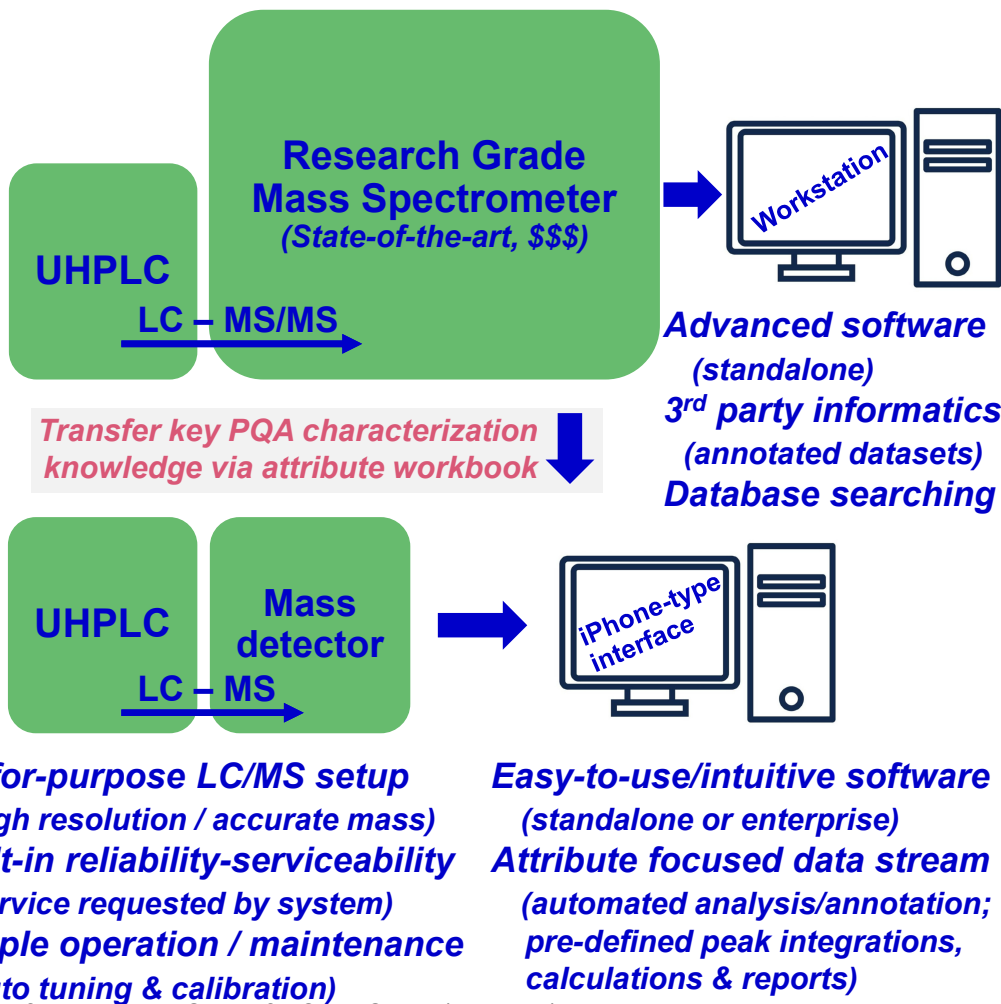


- LC/MS – intact protein analysis
  - Characterization
  - Trisulfide analysis

In-depth Characterization

Routine PQA monitoring (MAM)

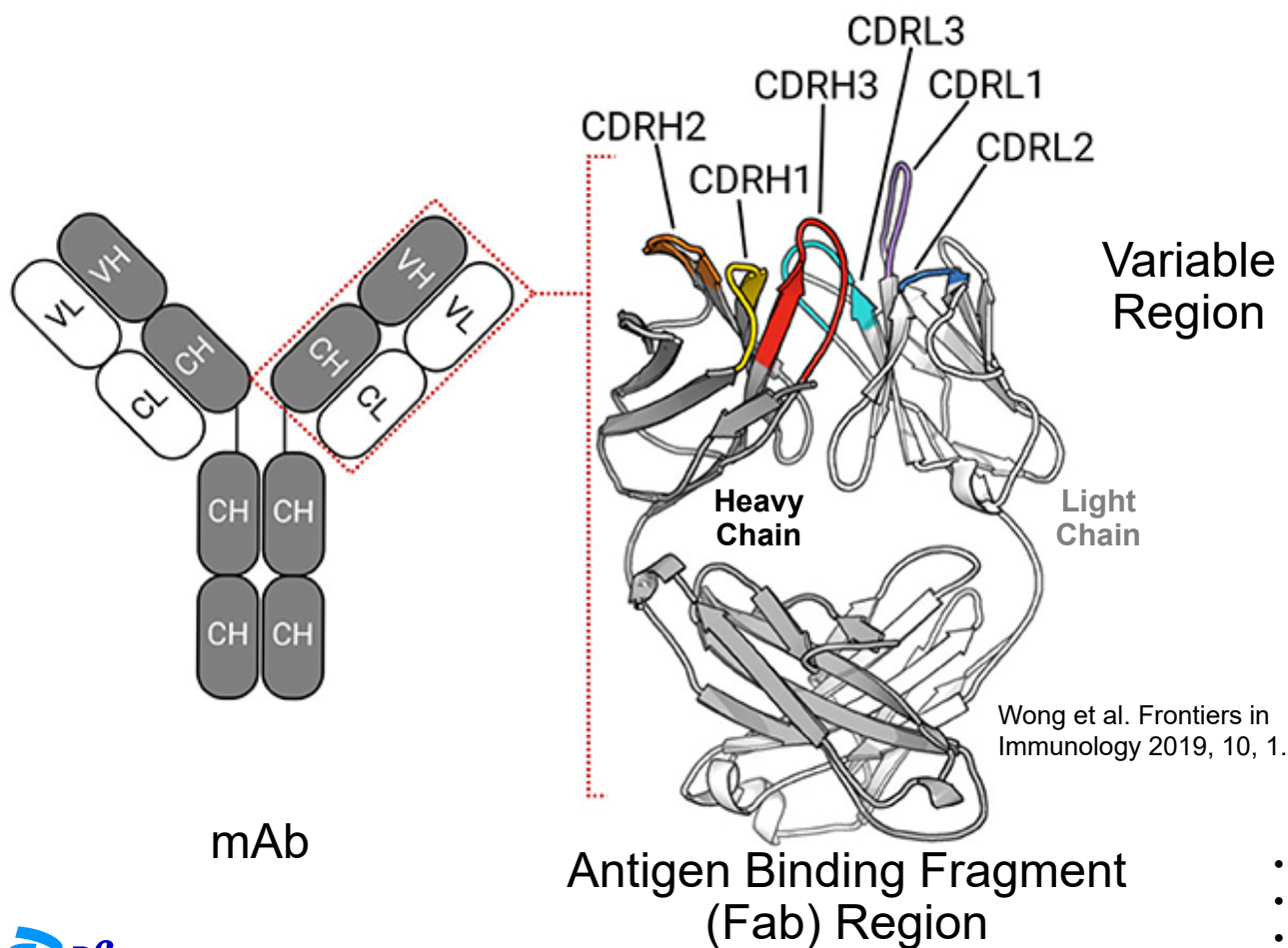
- LC-MS(/MS) – peptide mapping
  - Characterization
  - MAM
  - HCP analysis
  - Seq. variant analysis
  - Misincorporation analysis
- LC/MS – subunit analysis
- N-glycan profiling



Biotherapeutics Pharmaceutical Sciences – Analytical Research & Development

Deploying the multi-attribute method (MAM) across sites at Pfizer, Thermo Scientific Case Study (cs73683)

# Chemical Modifications in Complementarity-Determining Regions (CDRs)



## Potential CDR Modifications

- Asn deamidation
- Asp isomerization
- Met/Trp oxidation
- Asp-Pro cleavages

...which can occur during manufacturing, storage, administration, and *in vivo* circulation,

...and possibly affect mAb target binding

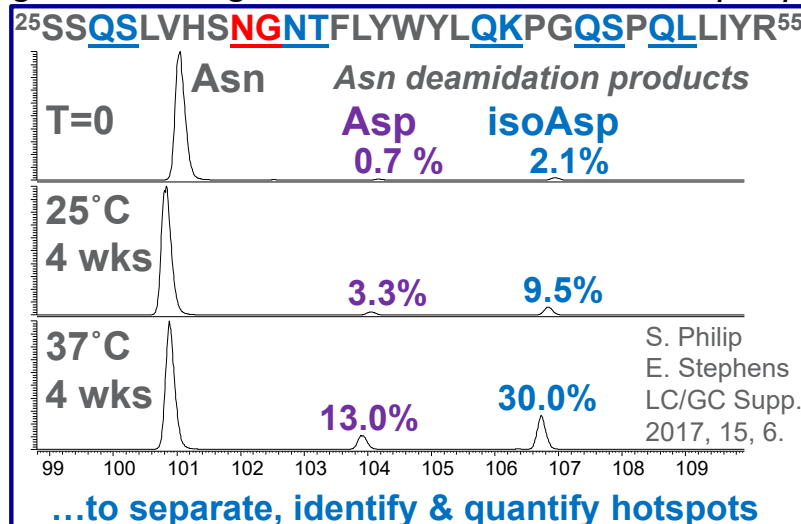
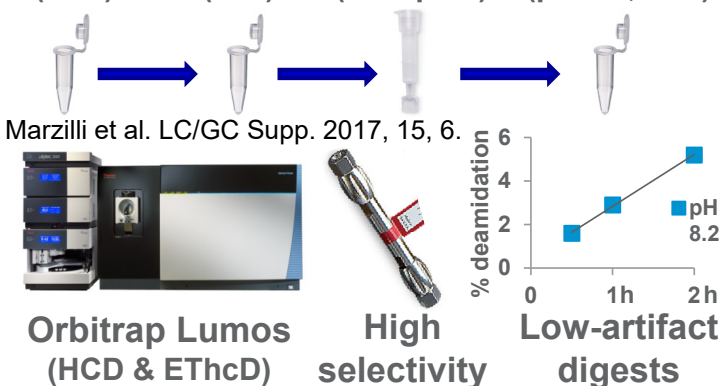
- Habegger et al. mAbs 2014, 6, 327.
- Sydow et al. PLoS ONE 2014, 9, e100736.
- Lu et al. mAbs 2019, 11, 45.

# Elucidated & Cataloged CDR Sequence Instabilities across 95 mAbs

...provided enhanced S-F & molecular design knowledge, and laid groundwork for *in silico* hotspot prediction

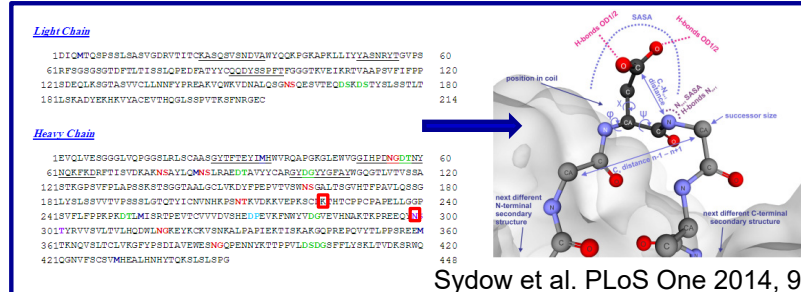
## Used the latest LC-MS/MS technologies...

Reduce (DTT)    Alkylate (IAA)    Desalt (BioSpin6)    Trypsin/Lys-C (pH 8.2, 37C)



## Compiled a hotspot database → shared across orgs

mAb1 L Chain CDR Hotspot Database		Rel. Abund.
1	DIVMTQTPLSLSVTPGQPASISCRSS <b>QSLV</b>	30 <b>High (&gt;5%)</b>
31	HS <b>NGNT</b> FLYWYLQKPGQSPQLLIYRVS <b>NRF</b>	60 <b>Low (1-5%)</b>
61	SGVPDRFSGSGSGTDFTLKI SRVEAEDVGV	90 <b>Potential</b>
91	YYCFQATHV <b>PT</b> FGGGTKVEIK	<b>Framework</b>

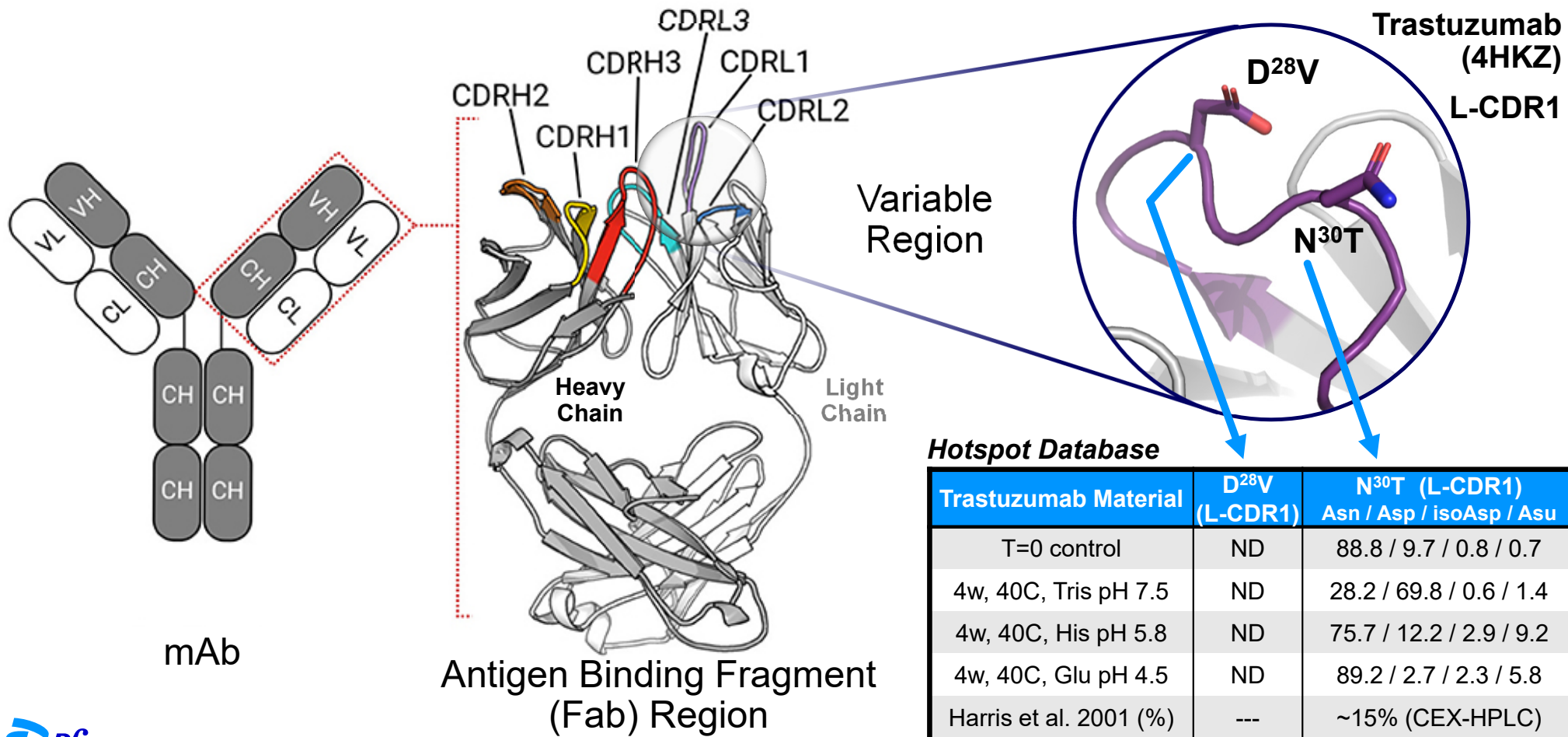


## ...and developed a structure-based hotspot prediction algorithm for deamidation, isomerization & oxidation



Pfizer Structural & Computational Biology Team  
 Biotherapeutics Pharmaceutical Sciences – Analytical Research & Development

# Trastuzumab Light Chain CDR-1



## Hotspot Database

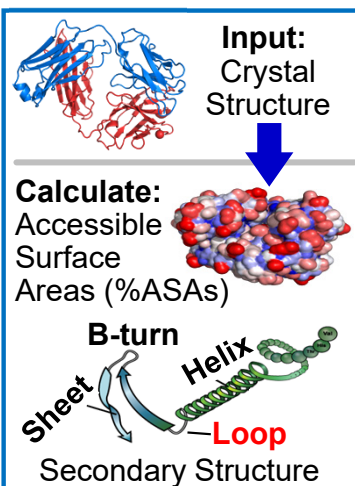
Trastuzumab Material	D <sup>28</sup> V (L-CDR1)	N <sup>30</sup> T (L-CDR1) Asn / Asp / isoAsp / Asu
T=0 control	ND	88.8 / 9.7 / 0.8 / 0.7
4w, 40C, Tris pH 7.5	ND	28.2 / 69.8 / 0.6 / 1.4
4w, 40C, His pH 5.8	ND	75.7 / 12.2 / 2.9 / 9.2
4w, 40C, Glu pH 4.5	ND	89.2 / 2.7 / 2.3 / 5.8
Harris et al. 2001 (%)	---	~15% (CEX-HPLC)
Sydow et al. 2014 (%)	---	11% → 24% (His, pH 6)

# New Structure-based mAb CDR "Hotspot Prediction" Algorithm

## mAb CDR Hotspot Database (95 mAbs)

- Unstressed material (T=0)
- Stressed material
  - ✓ Tris buffer† (pH 7.5, 40C, 4wks)
  - ✓ His buffer (pH 5.8, 40C, 4wks)
  - ✓ Glu buffer (pH 4.5, 40C, 4wks)
- LC-MS/MS – peptide maps
  - ✓ Trypsin digestion at pH 8.2, 30min
  - ✓ Trypsin digestion at pH 6.0, overnight

**Database Trends:**  
Prevalent Hotspot Motifs  
Hotspot positions in CDRs



## Motif-based prediction (91% false discovery rate)

### Trastuzumab Heavy Chain

1EVQLVESGGGLVQPGGSLRLSCAASGFNIKDTYIHWVRQAPGKGLEWVARIYPTNGYTRY 60  
61ADSVKGRFTISADTSKNTAYLQMNSLRAEDTAVYYCSRWGGDGFYAMDYWGQGLTVTVSS 120

### Trastuzumab Light Chain

1DIQMTQSPSSLSASVGRVTITCRASQDVNTAVAWYQQKPGKAPKLLIYSASFLYSGVPS 60  
61RFSGSRSGTDFTLTISSLQPEDFATYYCQOHYTPPTFGQGTKVEIKRTVAAPSVFIFPP 107

## Structure-based prediction (90% accuracy rate; 58% false discovery rate; MCC=56%)

mAb	CDR	Site	Motif	%ASA (x)	%ASA (x+1)	B-turn Type	B-turn Position	Sec. Structure	Predicted Hotspot >5%	Exp. Hotspot Level (%) †
Trastuzumab (4hkz)	L-CDR1	28	DV	66.8	0	--	--	Loop	No	ND
		30	NT	70.6	48.5	II'	2&3	Loop	Investigate	71.8
	H-CDR1	28	NI	84.1	1.0	I	1&2	Loop	No	0.2
		31	DT	78.7	3.5	I	3&4	Helix	No	ND
	H-CDR2	55	NG	54.8	68.6	I	4&--	Loop	Investigate	7.3
		62	DS	92.1	64.3	I	2&3	Loop	No	0.2
	H-CDR3	99	W	18.8	--	--	--	Sheet	No	0.6
		102	DG	83.0	84.0	I'	2&3	Loop	Investigate	43.3
		107	M	0.7	--	--	--	Loop	No	0.6
		108	DY	0.2	34.5	--	--	Loop	No	ND

Provides hotspot access to more colleagues • Speeds-up hotspot analysis • Create MAM workbooks at risk • Cross-check MS assignments



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## Summary

- MS has evolved significantly over 25+ years, providing more in-depth, high-quality information faster
  - MS is the analytical characterization workhorse for definitive elucidation of primary structure & modifications
- MS is a decisive characterization tool during molecular assessment and early process development
  - If needed, minor improvements to the platform process can occur in “real-time” without affecting timelines
- MS is an essential element of commercial process dev. and comparability (similarity) exercises
  - Rapidly assess effect of manufacturing improvements on product quality attributes & batch consistency
  - Directly visualize the intact protein isoforms that constitute pre-change & post-change comparability batches
- The pace and breadth of biotherapeutics process & product development are increasing every year!
  - Demand is shifting to smaller, more reliable, easier-to-use instruments with automatic calibration & tuning
    - Automated sample preparation/data analysis, and in silico prediction tools, will improve access & productivity
  - Continued quantum leaps in capability, performance & ease-of-use from our vendor partners are essential!

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Thank You

