

Transforming Nanoparticle Analysis: What Light Scattering Techniques Reveals About LNPs & Liposomes

Will Penny

*Sr. Sales Manager, Bio
Waters | Wyatt Technology*

LNP-mediated therapies

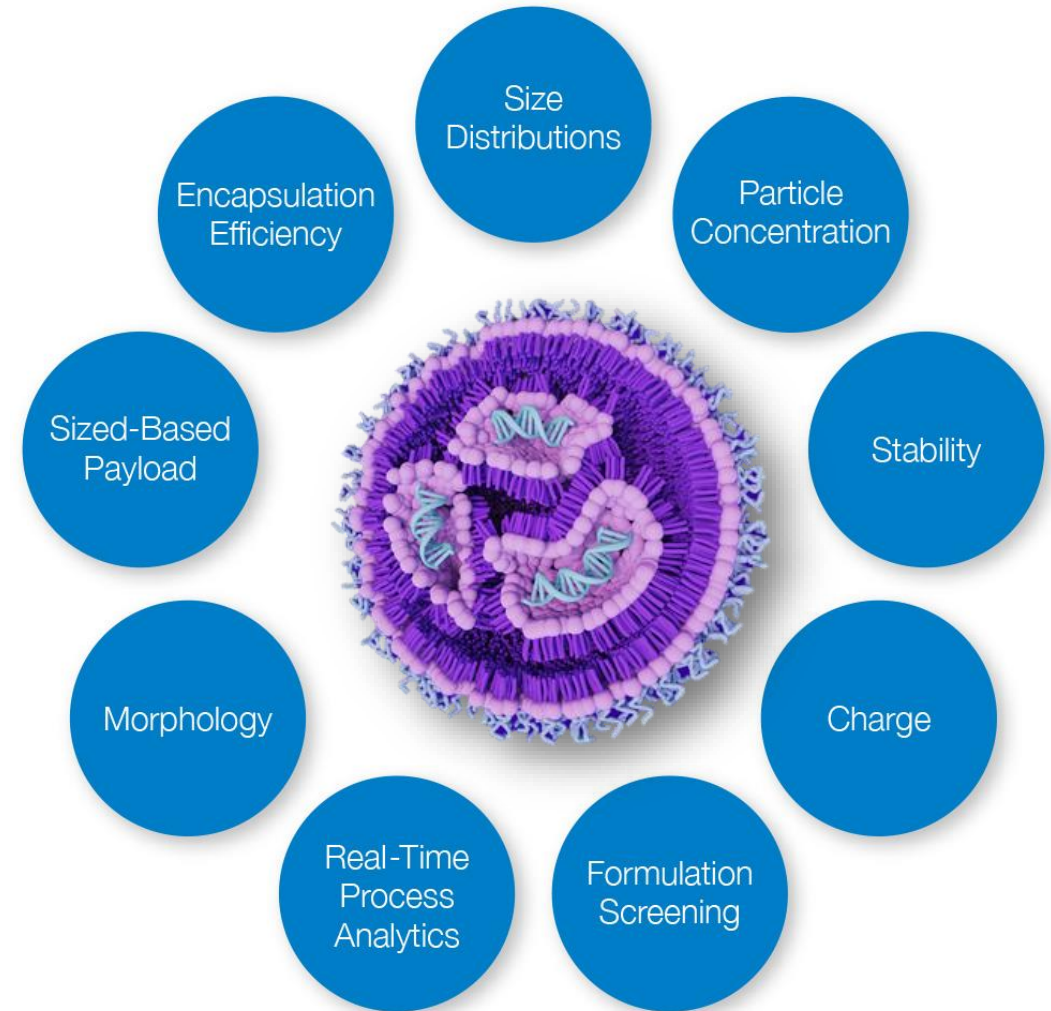
- LNPs are a new class of delivery vehicles.
- First US and EU approvals in 2018.



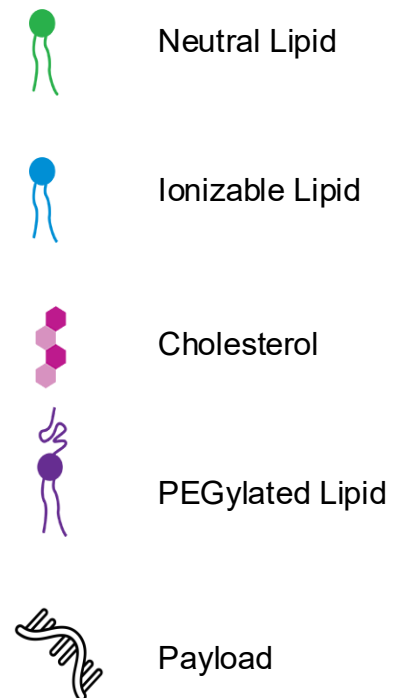
- Multiple drug products in development:

- siRNA
- mRNA
- Cas mRNA + sgRNA
- DNA
- protein
- small molecules

- Quality attributes are evolving.
- Second-generation targets are more challenging. Many outstanding questions.



Optimizing LNP formulation is a challenge



Permutations:

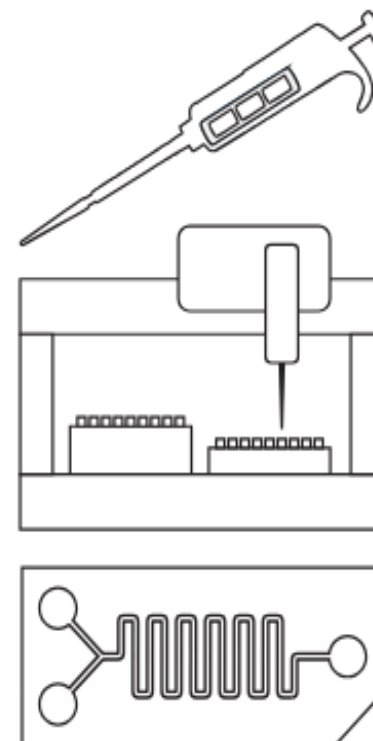
Choice of payload

Choice of lipids

- Neutral
- Ionizable
- Cholesterol
- PEGylated

Relative concentration

Total concentration



Permutations:

Mixing Methods

Speed

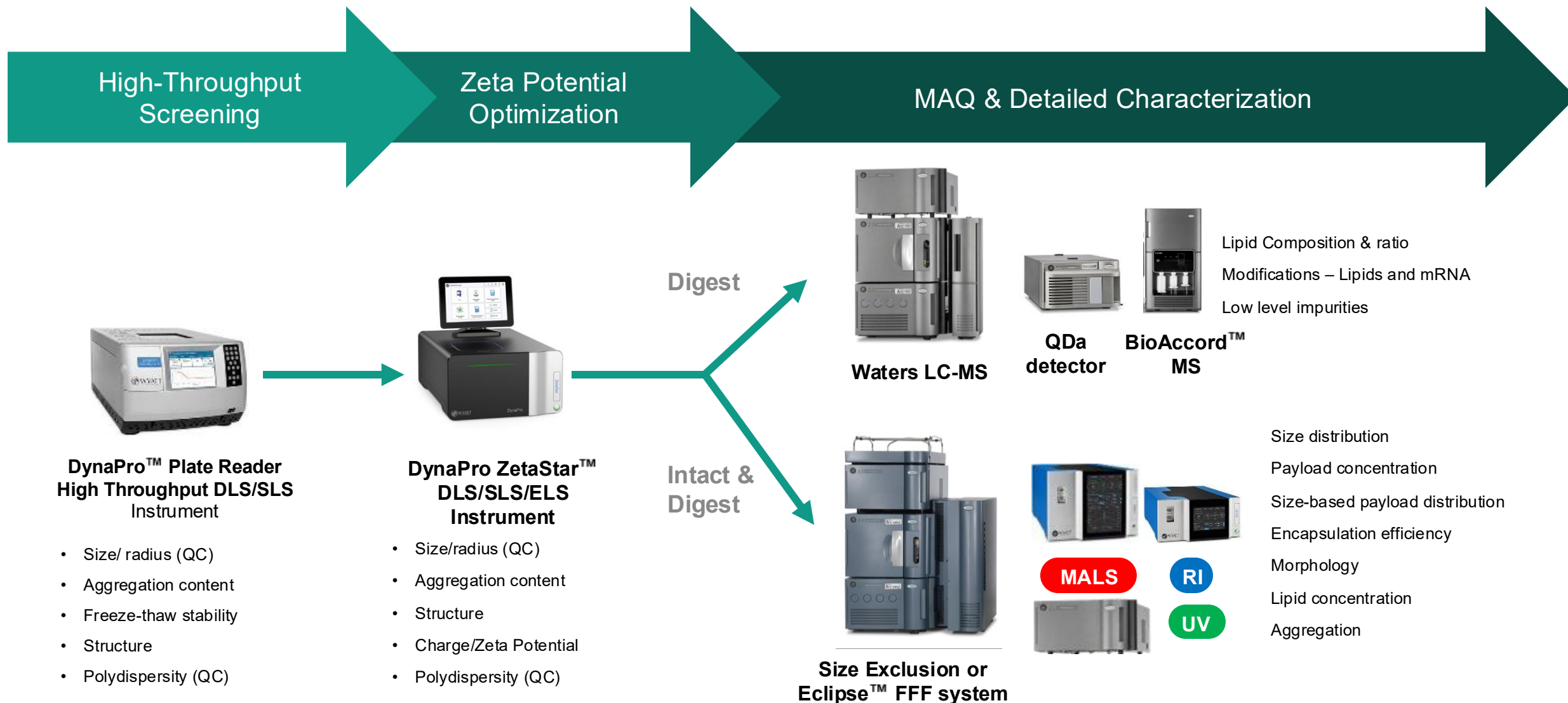
TFR

Scale-up

Hundreds of samples may be generated in early stages.
High-throughput solutions are critical for efficient sample analysis.

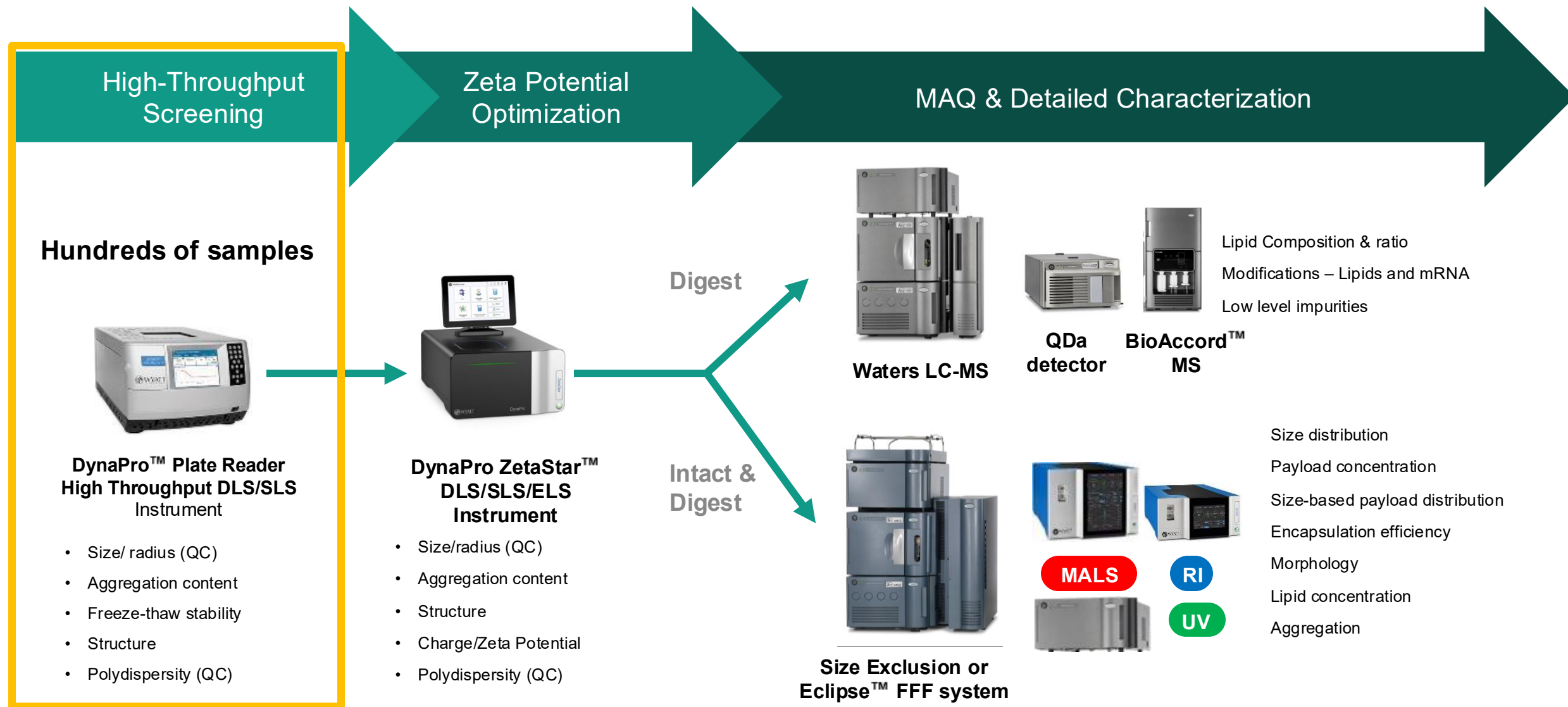
Waters | Wyatt LNP Characterization Solutions

Non-exhaustive

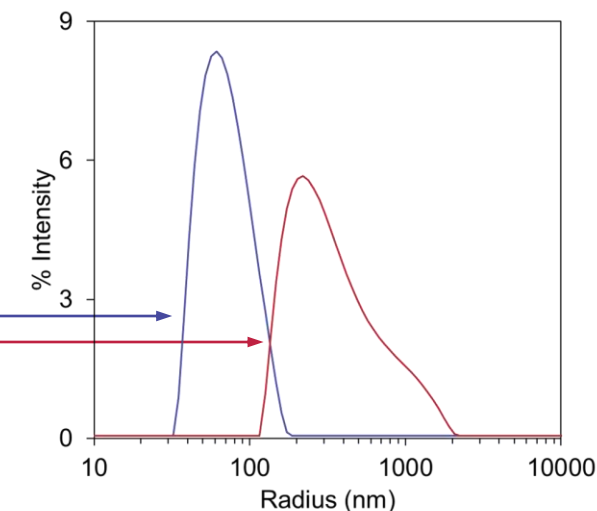
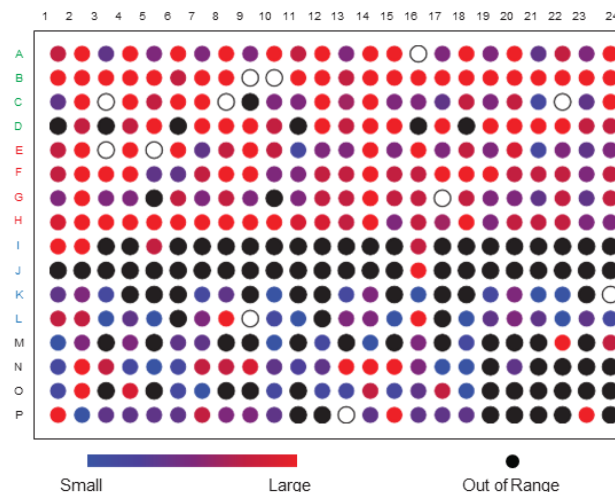
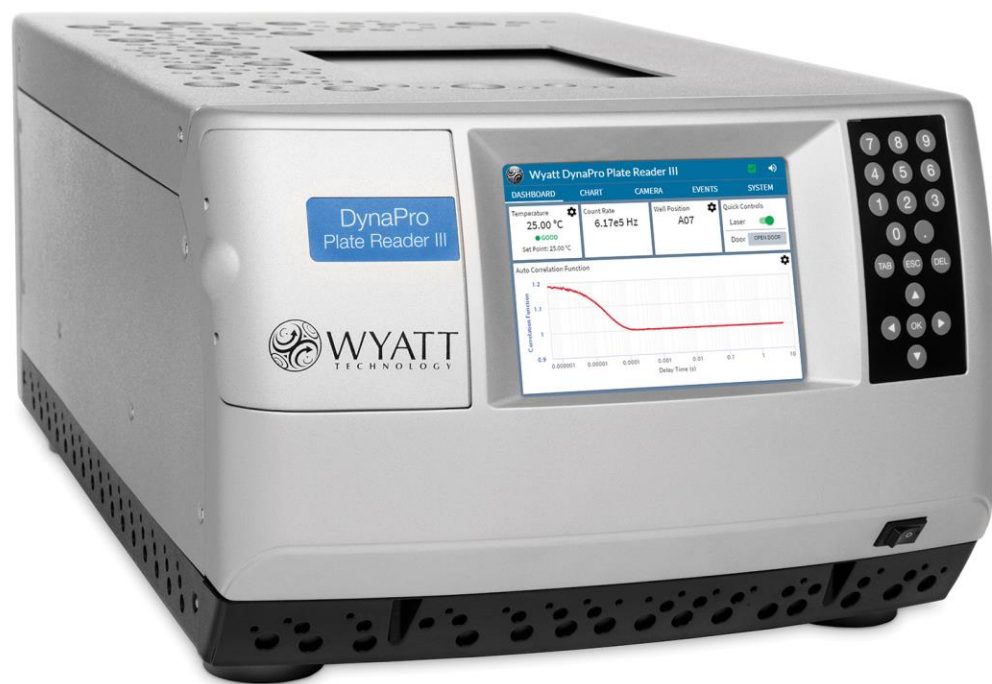


Waters |Wyatt LNP Characterization Solutions

Non-exhaustive



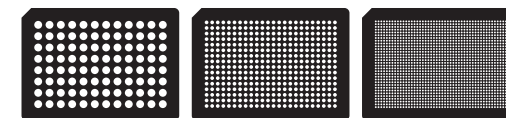
High-throughput LNP formulation screening



DynaPro Plate Reader

High-throughput DLS/SLS instrument

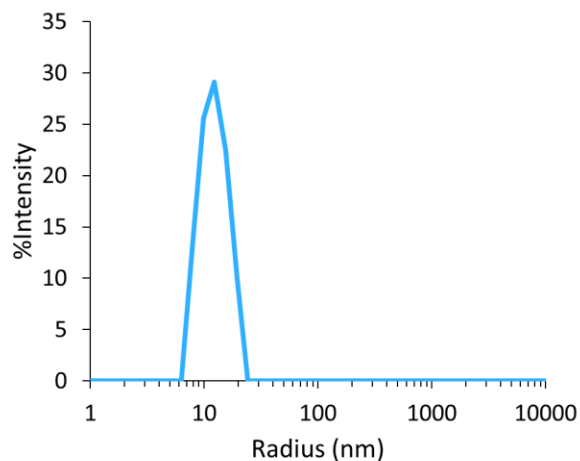
- Automation friendly
- Size and Polydispersity
- Particle concentration
- Degradation



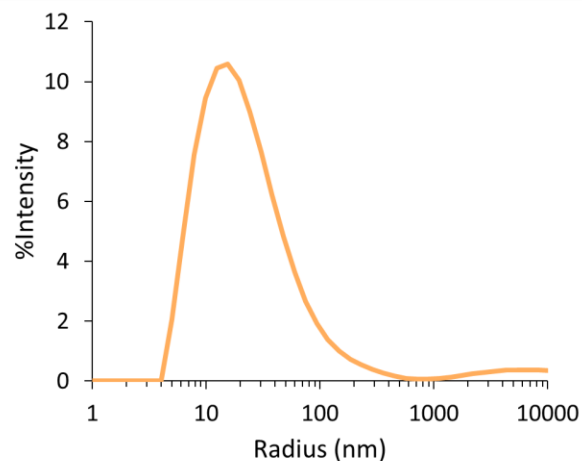
Compatible with industry-standard
96, 384, 1536 well plates

Strength of DLS measurement

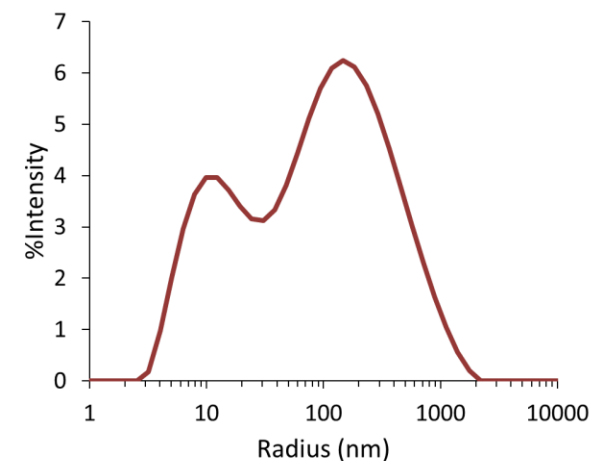
- **Fast and sensitive assessment of aggregation**



Sample appears to be in good shape



Some self association happened



Sample contains larger aggregates.

Rapid check on sample quality

Get result in <1min and minimal volume use

Case Study: Industry-standard plates for HT LNP screening

“Development of a high-throughput platform for screening lipid nanoparticles for mRNA delivery”
Collaboration: AstraZeneca & U.Michigan

Nanoscale

PAPER

Check for updates

Cite this: *Nanoscale*, 2022, 14, 1480



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Development of a high-throughput platform for screening lipid nanoparticles for mRNA delivery†

Lili Cui,^{a,*} Sara Pereira,^a Silvia Sonzini,^a Sally van Pelt,^a Steven M. Romanelli,^b Lihuan Liang,^c David Ulkoski,^d Venkata R. Krishnamurthy,^d Emily Brannigan,^e Christopher Brankin^a and Arpan S. Desai^a

mRNA lipid nanoparticles (LNPs) are at the forefront of nucleic acid intracellular delivery, as exemplified by the recent emergency approval of two mRNA LNP-based COVID-19 vaccines. The success of an LNP product largely depends on the systematic optimisation of the four lipidic components, namely the ionisable lipid, PEG lipid, structural and helper lipids. However, the *in vitro* screening of novel lipidic components and LNP compositions is limited by the low-throughput of LNP preparation. To address these issues, we herein present an automated high-throughput screening platform to select novel ionisable lipids and corresponding LNPs encapsulating mRNA *in vitro*. This high-throughput platform employs a lab-based automated liquid handling system, amenable to high-throughput up to 384 formulations per plate and several plates per run and allows precise mixing and reproducible mRNA LNP preparation which ensures a direct head-to-head comparison of hundreds and even thousands of novel LNPs. Most importantly, the robotic process has been successfully applied to the screening of novel LNPs encapsulating mRNA and has identified the same novel mRNA LNP leads as those from microfluidics-mixing technology, with a correlation coefficient of 0.875. This high-throughput platform can facilitate to narrow down the number of novel ionisable lipids to be evaluated *in vivo*. Moreover, this platform has been integrated into a fully-automated workflow for LNP property control, physicochemical characterisation and biological evaluation. The high-throughput platform may accelerate proprietary lipid development, mRNA LNP lead optimisation and candidate selection to advance preclinical mRNA LNP development to meet urgent global needs.

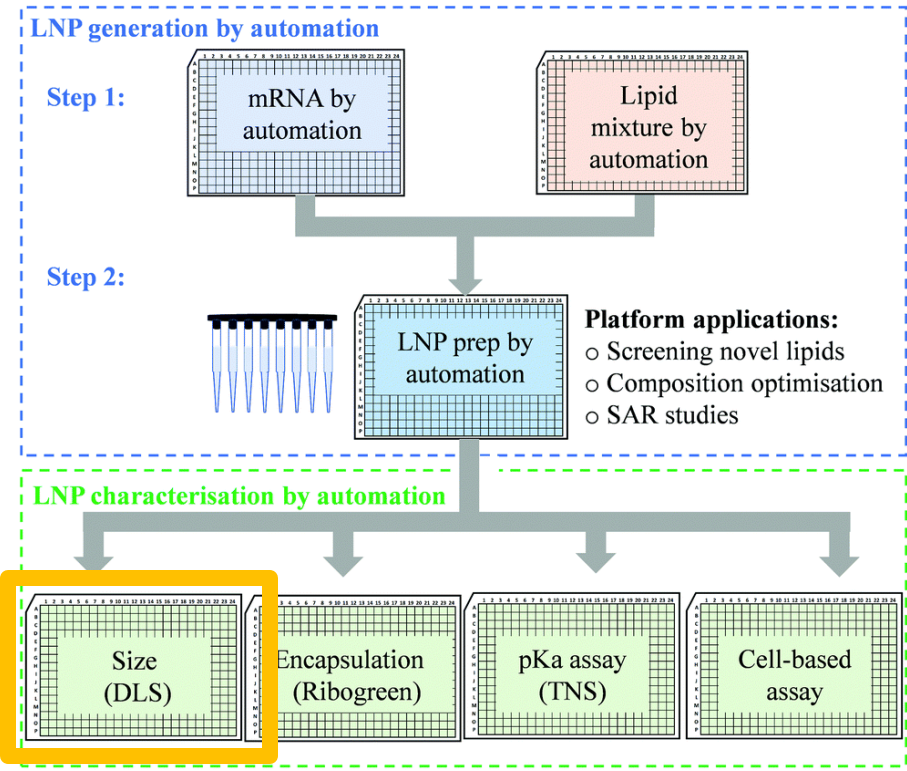
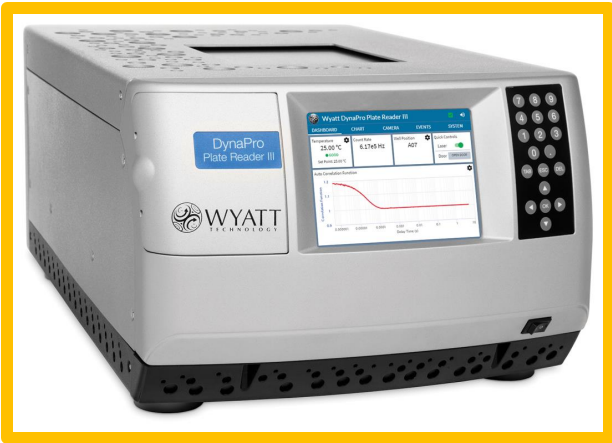
Received 17th October 2021
Accepted 4th January 2022
DOI: 10.1039/d1nr06858j
rsc/nanoscale

† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Supplementary figures of stability of the mRNA LNPs generated from the high-throughput platform, high-throughput characterisation of mRNA LNPs including DLS for particle size distribution, Ribogreen assay for mRNA encapsulation, TNS assay for pKa determination and cell assay for LNP-mediated mRNA transfection, and *in vivo* proof-of-concept of the mRNA LNPs generated from the high-throughput platform by whole body and *in situ* tissue imaging. See ESI† for full text.

Introduction

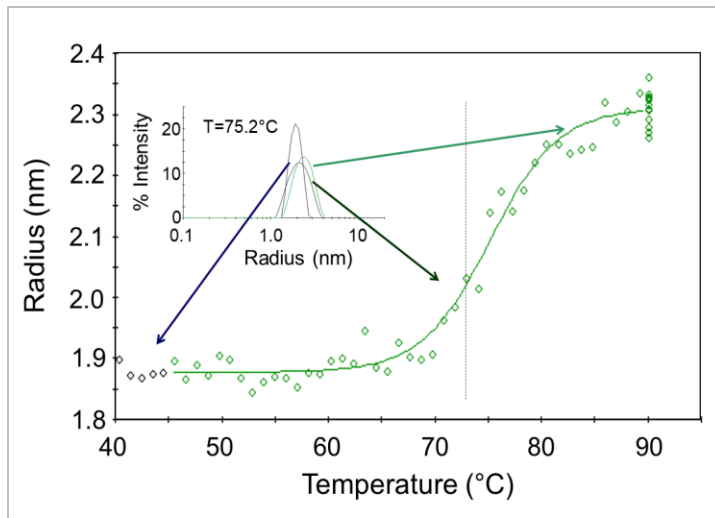
Nucleic acid-based medicines including antisense oligonucleotide (ASO), small interfering RNA (siRNA), microRNA (miRNA), messenger RNA (mRNA), self-amplifying RNA (saRNA) and DNA have emerged as game changer therapies with the potential to address previously undruggable targets and cure diseases. The first ASO drug, Fostemsavir, was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1998.¹ Fourteen years later, the first DNA-based medicine (Glybera) was approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).² In 2018, the first siRNA drug (Onpattro) delivered by a non-viral vector (lipid nanoparticles, LNPs) was approved by the FDA³ followed by the approval of another siRNA drug (Givlarzi) in 2019.⁴ These series of successes have evoked fierce competition for biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies to develop nucleic acid drugs.

Among a large panel of nucleic acids, mRNA is in the spotlight of recent technological innovation due to its great potential in preventing and treating disease. A key advantage of mRNA is its ability to use our own body to transiently make

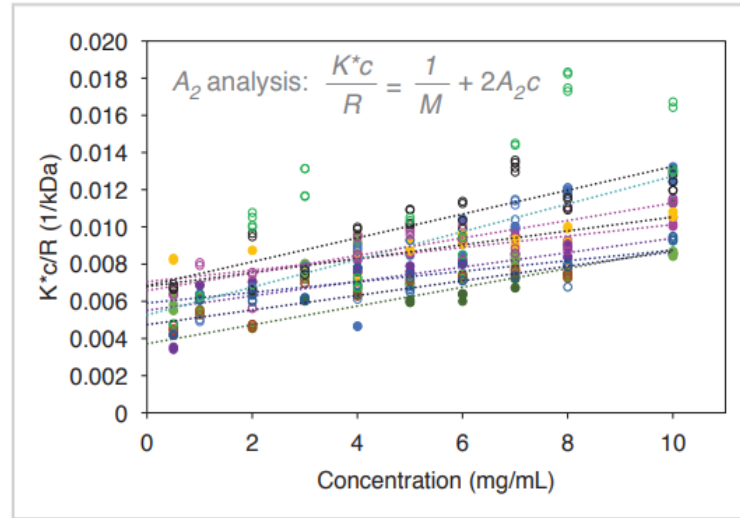


Development of a high-throughput platform for screening lipid nanoparticles for mRNA delivery
Collaboration: AstraZeneca & U.Michigan
<https://doi.org/10.1039/D1NR06858J>

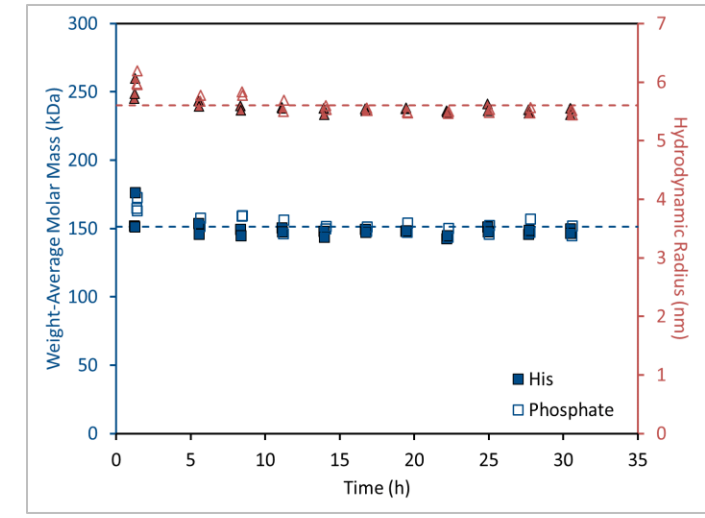
Biophysical characterization with DLS and SLS



Onset of Aggregation
with Thermal ramp



Colloidal stability metrics with
 A_2 (SLS) and k_D (DLS)

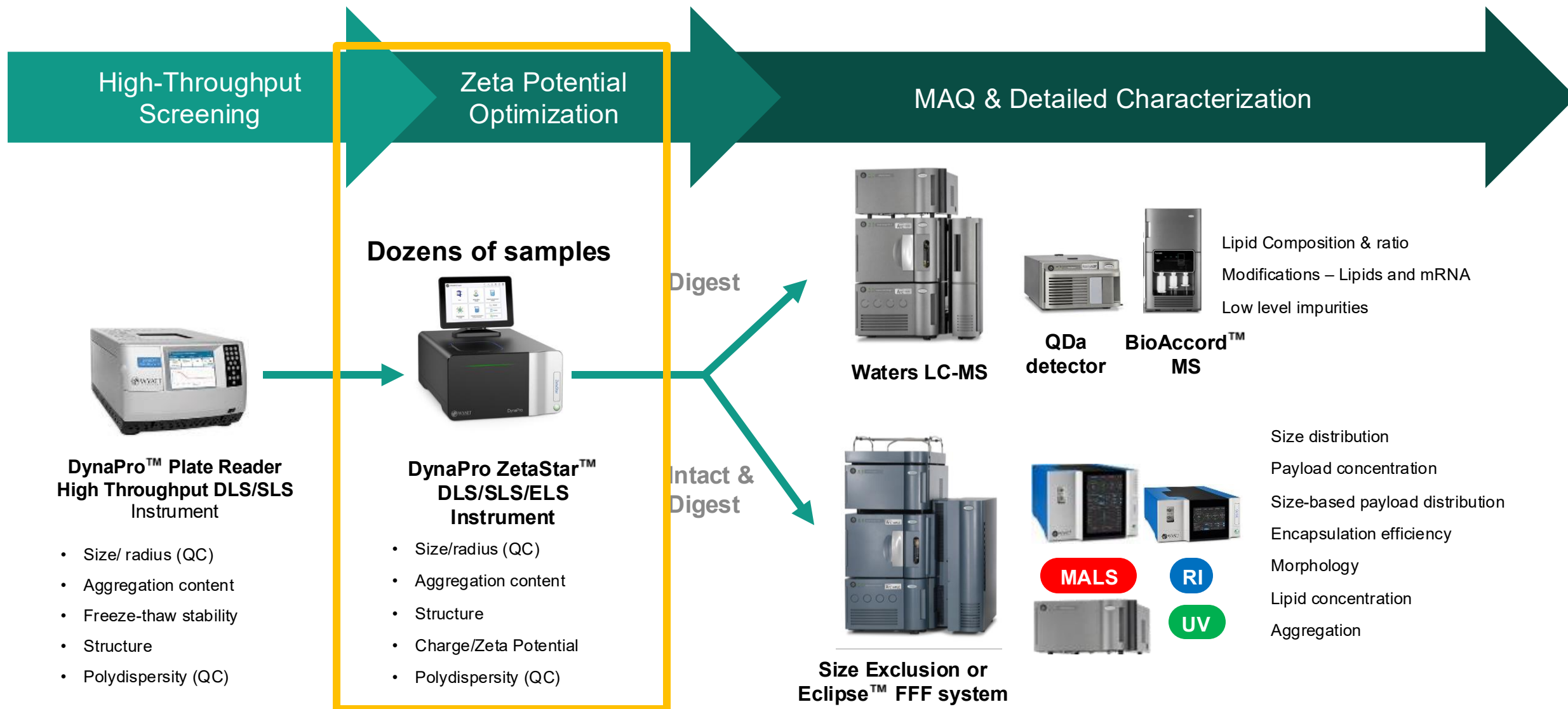


Accelerated storage
stability assessment

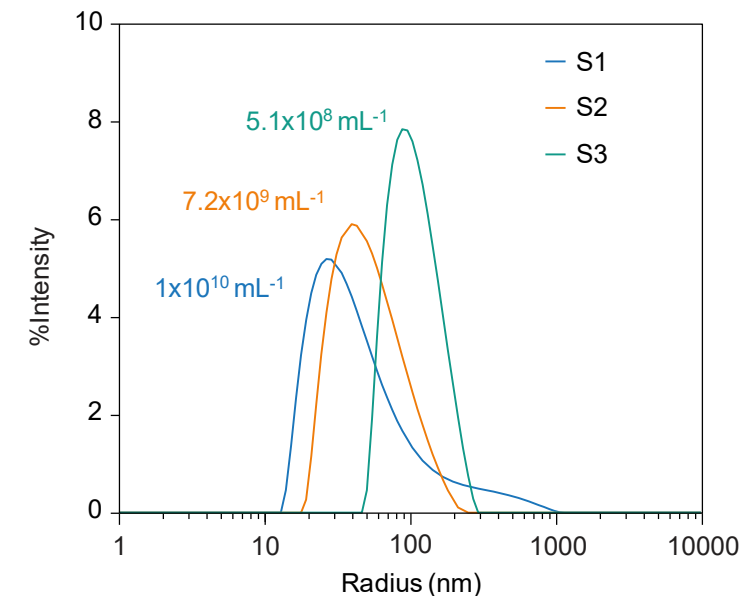
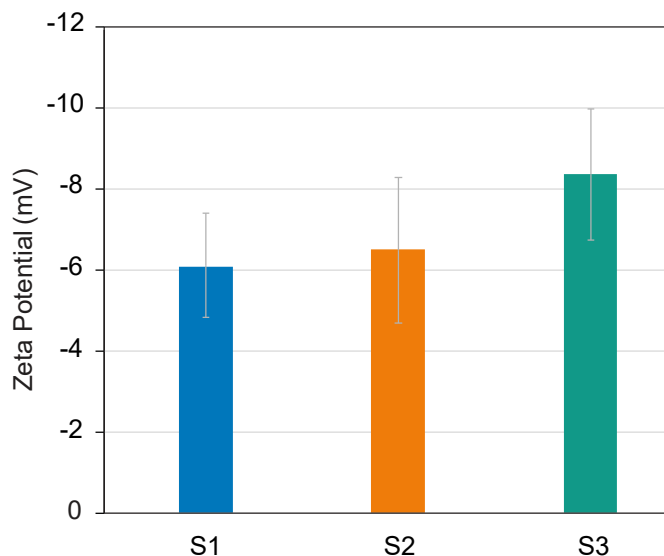
Applicable in candidate screening and formulation development

Waters | Wyatt LNP Characterization Solutions

Non-exhaustive



Walk-up or Automated Zeta Potential LNP screening



- Zeta Potential
- Size
- Polydispersity
- Particle concentration
- Colloidal stability

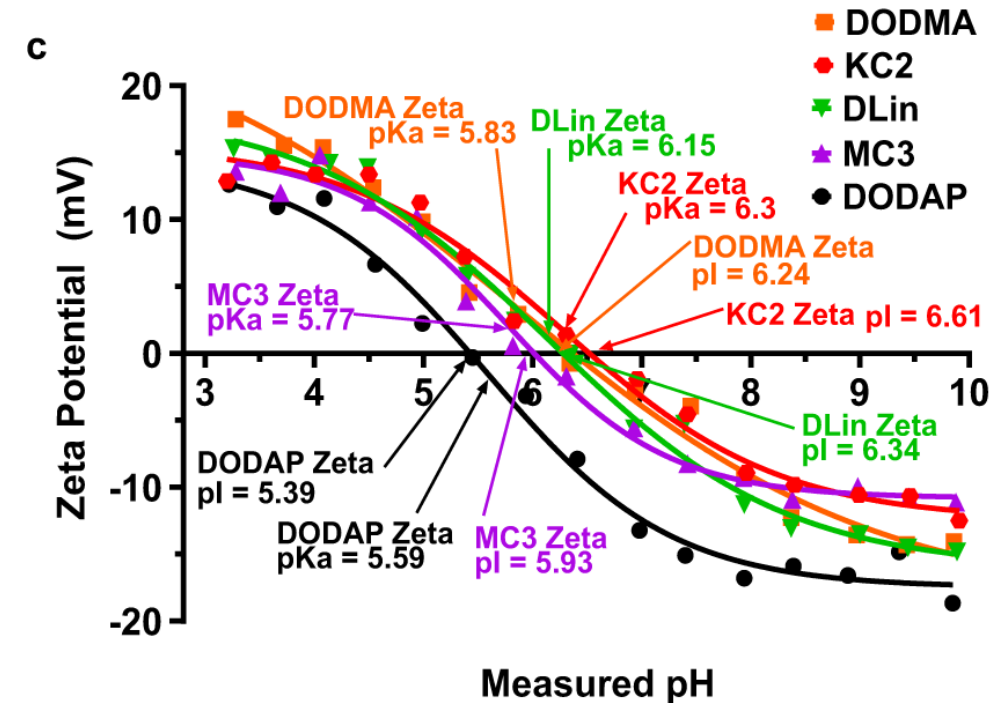
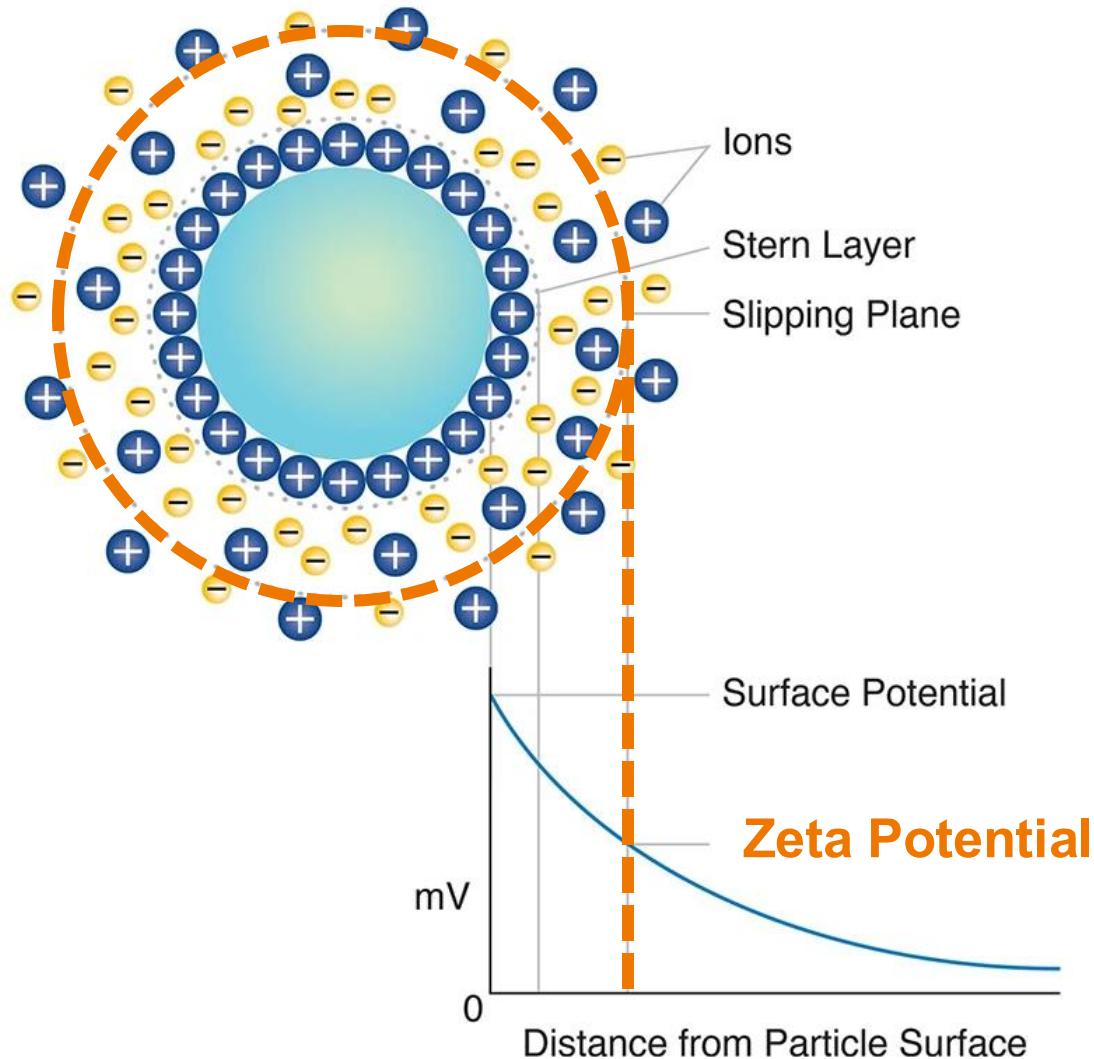
Fast and Simple workflow

ELS in native buffer.

Hands-free automation

DynaPro ZetaStar
walk-up or automated
DLS/SLS/ELS instrument

LNP electric charge is known to control in vivo distribution and expression of mRNA-LNPs



- Charge and Zeta-Potential depends on ionizable lipid choices and pH
- LNP charge may change between formulation and in vivo

Challenges with traditional ELS technology



Staffing challenge

Training new staff following expansion & turnover



Productivity bottlenecks

Not enough staff, access to instruments / instrument downtime, workflow inefficiencies



Boost lab efficiency

Outdated technology, multiple platforms required for obtaining information

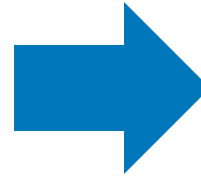


Sample challenges

Volume limitations, interest in measuring samples in physiological conditions

**Traditional ELS &
needed improvements:**

Better Measurement
Faster Measurement
Less Sample
Less Hands-on-time



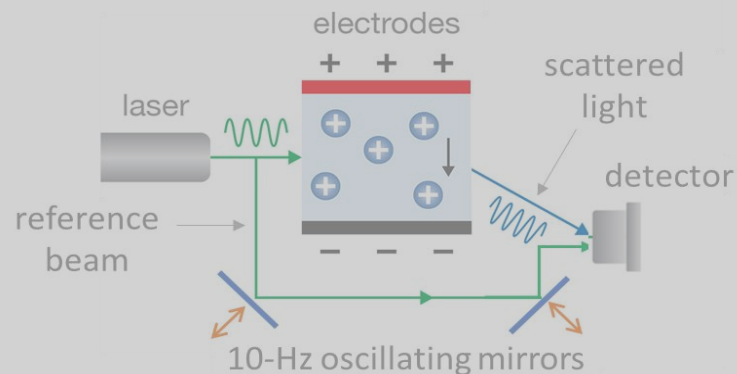
Completely redesigned

Hardware
User Interface
Workflow

Some changes under the hood: FIDELIS

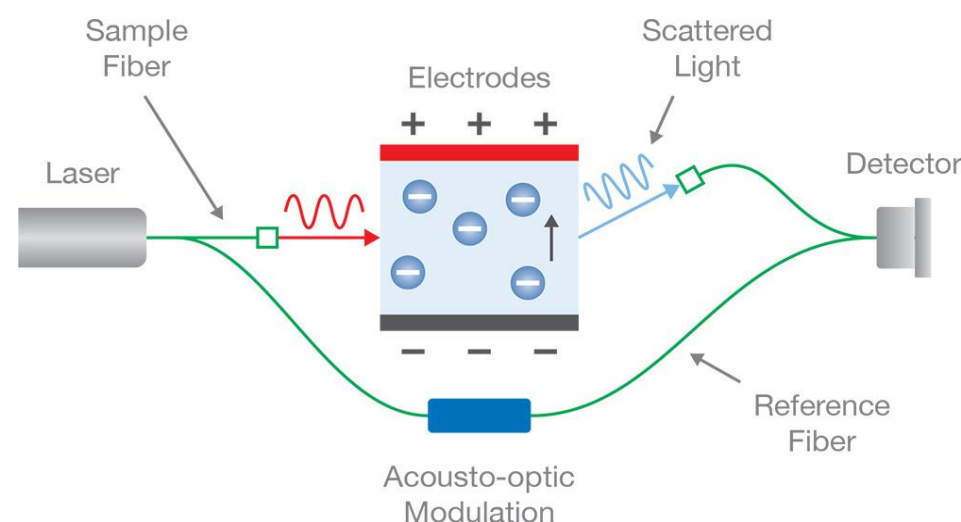
Robust and more sensitive instrument

Conventional PALS



- Mechanical motion, low frequency → low SNR, slow measurements, fragile samples degrade
- Free space optics: difficult maintenance, factory repair

FIDELIS



Fiber
Interferometric
Doppler
Electrophoretic
Light
Scattering

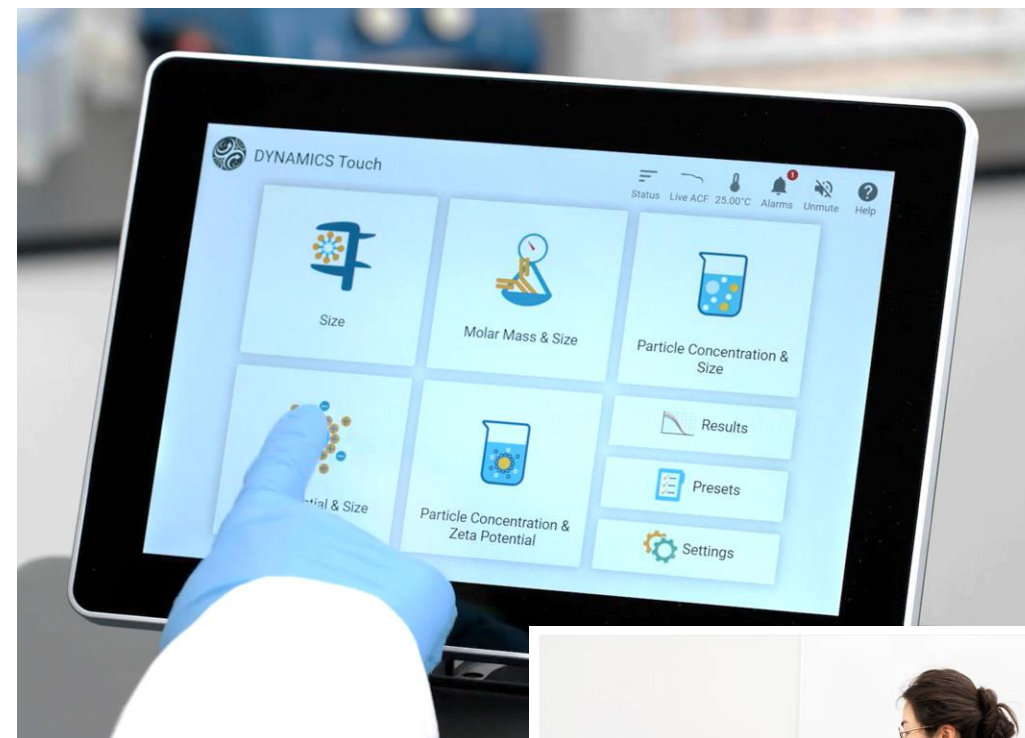
- Solid-state modulator, high frequency → high SNR, fast measurements, no degradation
- Fiber-coupled optics → simple maintenance, field-replaceable modules

Result: Simpler and Faster data collection

As little as:
~30 sec
and 65µL /
sample

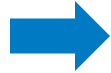
Size
Zeta Potential
Polydispersity
Particle Concentration

- Flexible walk-up measurements with stand-alone touch interface
- **Simultaneous size and zeta potential**
- **Adaptive ELS** collection mode
 - Less user input and knowledge required
 - No need to change measurement parameters for various sample types
 - Mitigates the chance of sample degradation



Automated Measurements to minimize Hands-on time

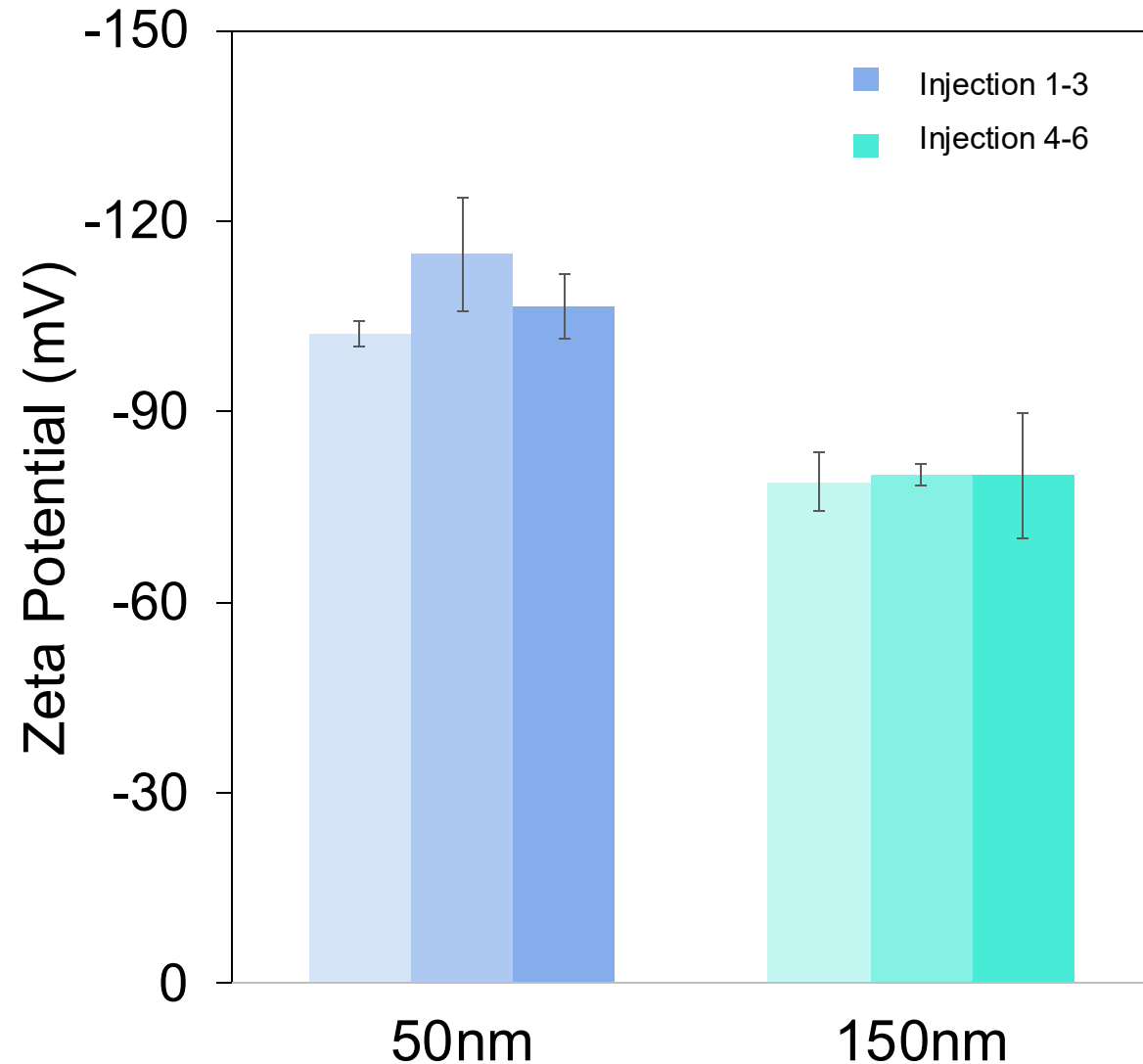
Run dozens to
hundreds of samples,
effortlessly



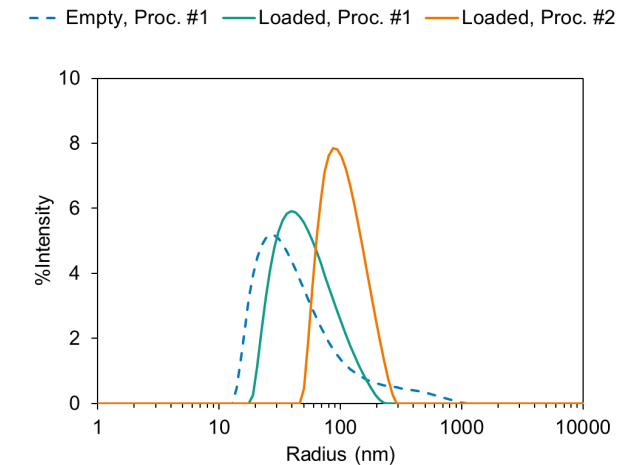
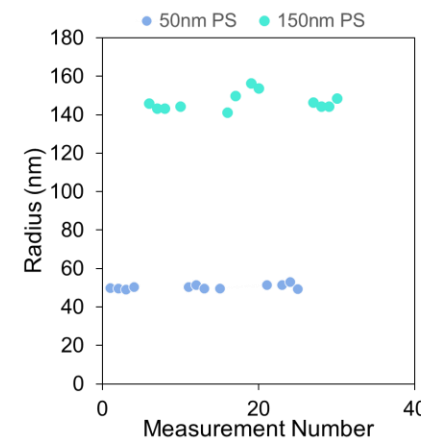
Load autosampler vials or
plates, execute method
and generate reports



Automate and measure simultaneous size and zeta potential

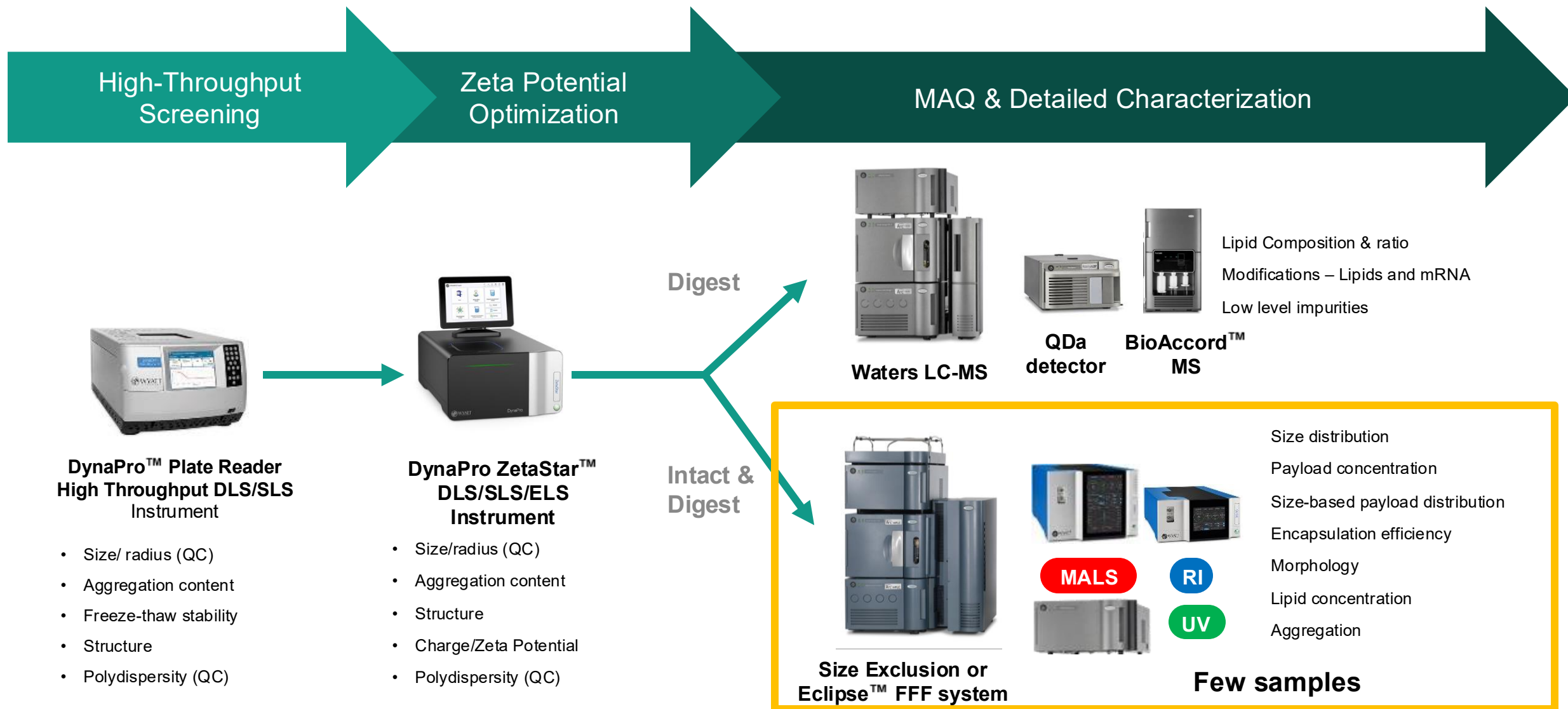


- The unique combination of the ZetaStar with an autosampler and pump automates sample delivery, creating a powerful, reproducible characterization system
- Adaptive mode utilized for easy method set-up and optimization



Waters | Wyatt LNP Characterization Solutions

Non-exhaustive



Unprecedented detailed LNP characterization

- RNA integrity
- LNP size
- LNP distribution
- LNP number
- Physical stability
- LNP morphology
- Encapsulation efficiency
- mRNA concentration
- Lipid concentration

Obtain high-resolution LNP size, payload, and how these payloads are distributed across the particles within the sample, all in a single experiment.



Optilab™

differential refractive index (dRI) detector

DAWN™

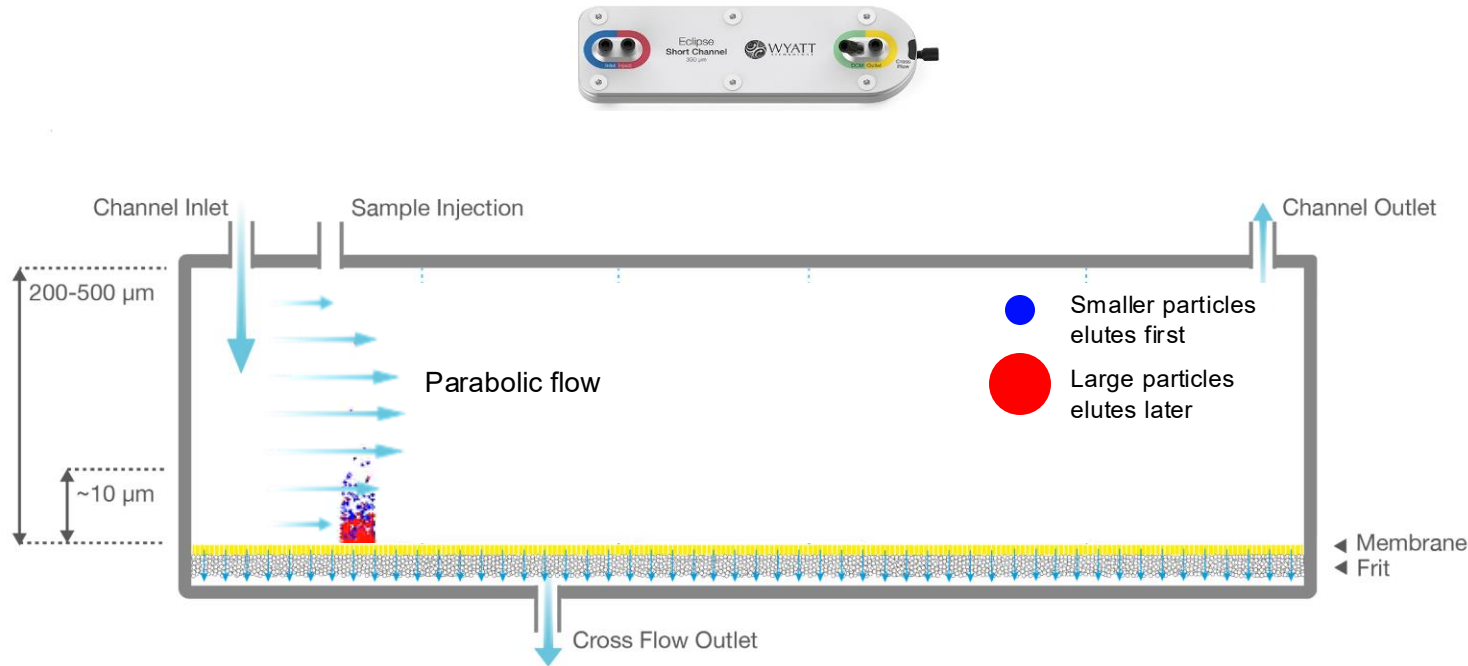
multi-angle light scattering (MALS) photometer

Eclipse

Field Flow Fractionation (FFF) system

FFF separation, alternative to SEC

Eclipse™ FFF system



- FFF **separates based on size**: small particles elutes first.
- **Gentle separation** with **tunable resolution**.
- Multidetector MALS provide **in-depth characterization and quantification**.
- **FDA recognizes FFF** as an orthogonal technique to SEC and AUC.
- LNPs
- Viral Vectors
- Exosomes
- Polymers
- Proteins & Peptides



Fixed Height Channel

- Robust channel for faster assembly
- Ideal for routine and QC applications
- Temperature regulation module from ambient up to 50°C (all eclipse channel)

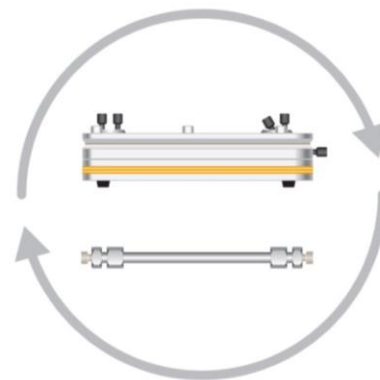


Channel	Benefits
Analytical Short	Rapid nano/microgram separations
Analytical Long	Nano/microgram separations
Dispersion Inlet	For aggregation-prone samples
Semi-Prep	Milligram separations coupled to a fraction collector
Mobility EAF4	Separation by size and charge

Benefits of Eclipse FFF-System



FFF Mode



SEC Mode

- Industry-leading Waters Arc HPLC front-end for maximum accuracy and reliability
- Flexible and convenient channel selection
- SEC switching option enables automated switching between FFF-MALS and SEC-MALS
- Intelligent solvent management system with configurable recycling minimizes solvent consumption

FFF = High Resolution Size Distribution of LNPs

DLS Fast Screening

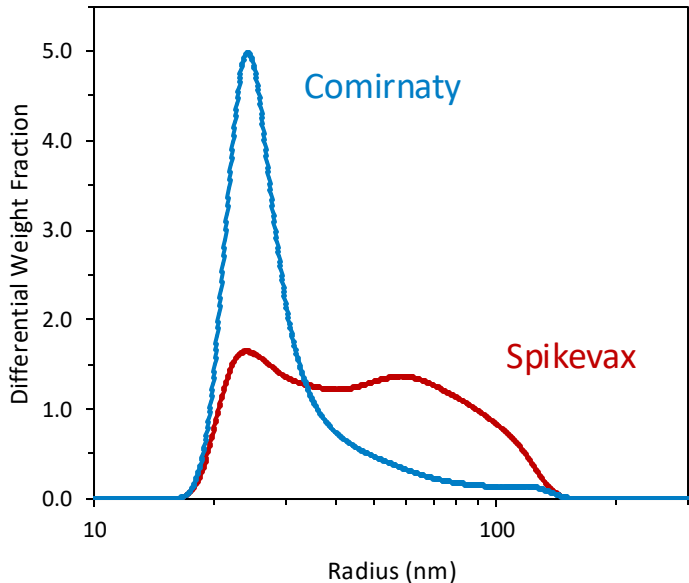
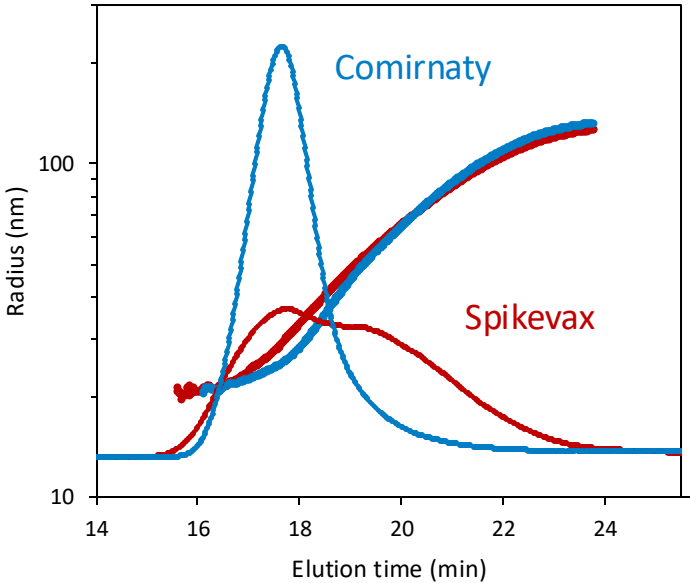
Cumulant	R_h [nm]	%PD
Comirnaty™	38 ±1	26 ± 2
Spikevax™	75 ± 1	24 ± 2



DLS Fast Screening

Cumulant	R_h [nm]	%PD
Comirnaty™	38 ± 1	26 ± 2
Spikevax™	75 ± 1	24 ± 2

FFF-MALS High-resolution size distribution



	R_z [nm]	$\bar{D} = M_w/M_n$	c_{RNA} [mg/mL]
Comirnaty	69.6 ± 0.3	2.6 ± 0.1	0.106
Spikevax	85.8 ± 0.5	5.0 ± 0.1	0.086

Unprecedented detailed LNP characterization

- RNA integrity
- LNP size
- LNP distribution
- LNP number
- Physical stability
- LNP morphology
- Encapsulation efficiency
- mRNA concentration
- Lipid concentration

Obtain high-resolution LNP size, payload, and how these payloads are distributed across the particles within the sample, all in a single experiment.



Optilab™

differential refractive index (dRI) detector

DAWN™

multi-angle light scattering (MALS) photometer

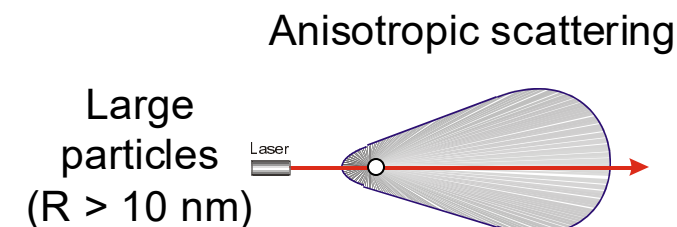
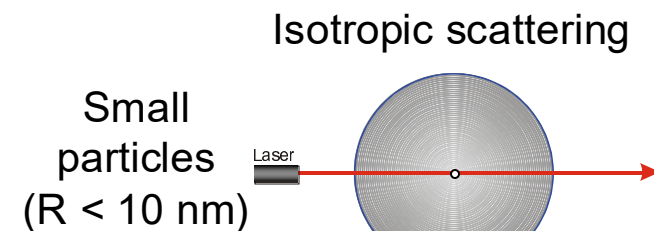
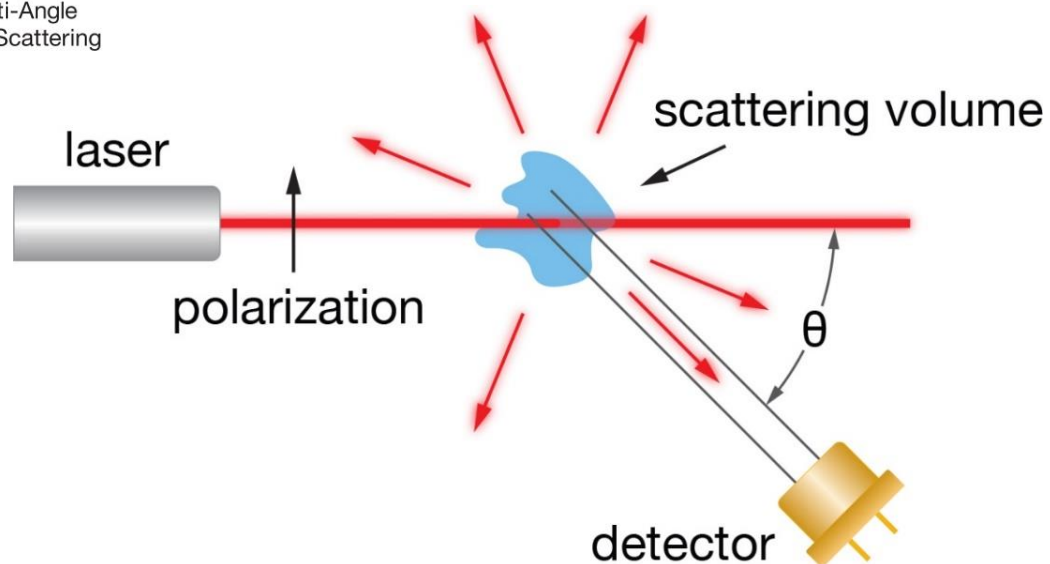
Eclipse

Field Flow Fractionation (FFF) system

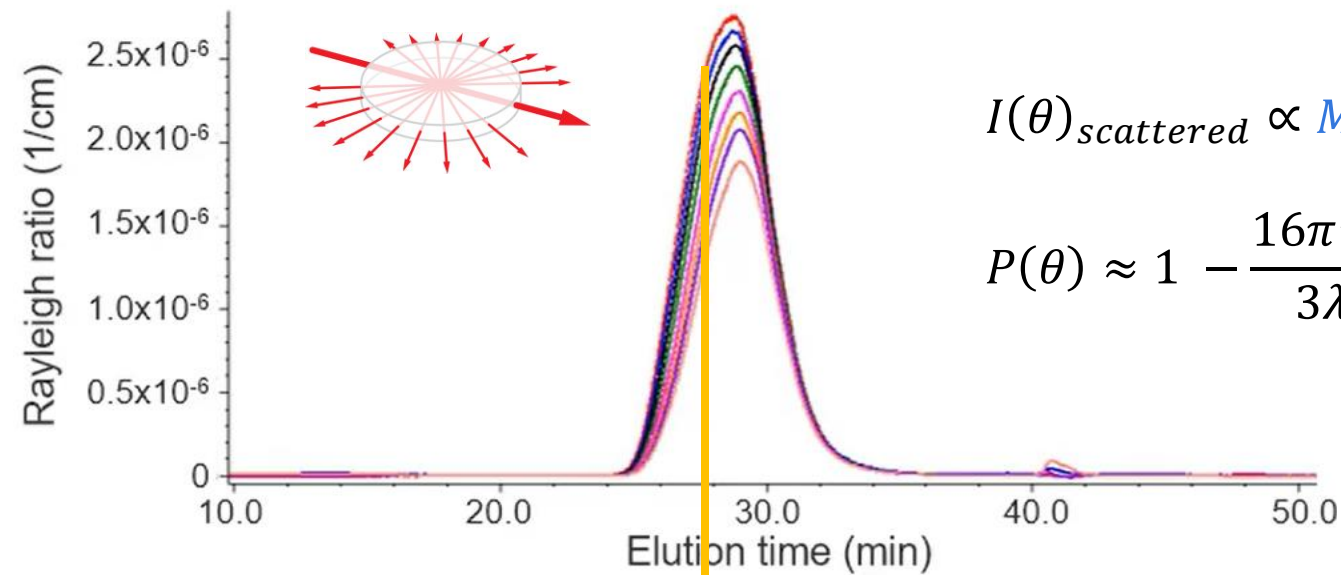
Multi-angle static light scattering (MALS)



Multi-Angle
Light Scattering



Intensity of scattered light provide information on both size and molecular weight

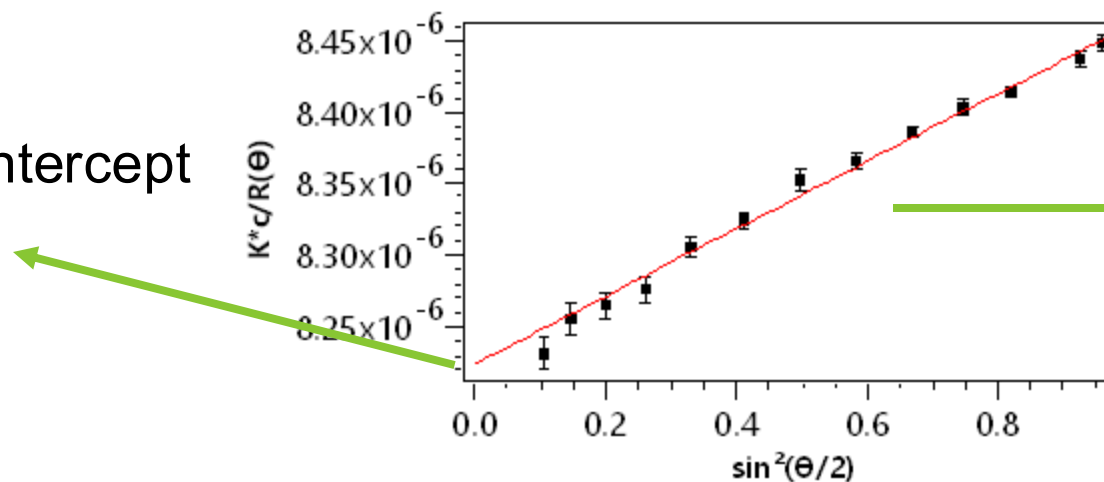


$$I(\theta)_{\text{scattered}} \propto M \cdot c \cdot \left(\frac{dn}{dc} \right)^2 P(\theta)$$

$$P(\theta) \approx 1 - \frac{16\pi^2 n_0^2}{3\lambda_0^2} \sin^2\left(\frac{\theta}{2}\right) \langle r_g^2 \rangle + \dots$$

Zeroth-angle intercept

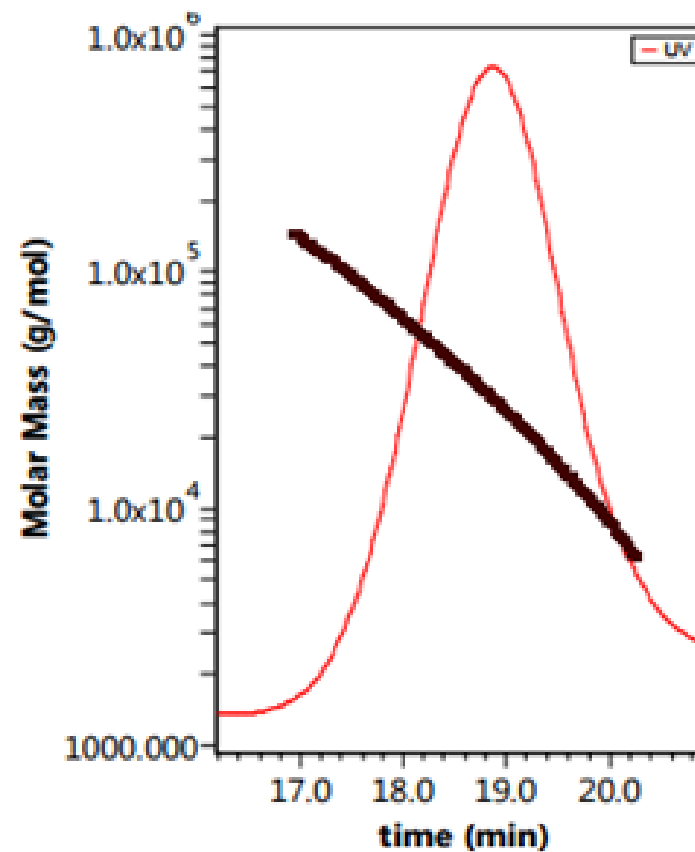
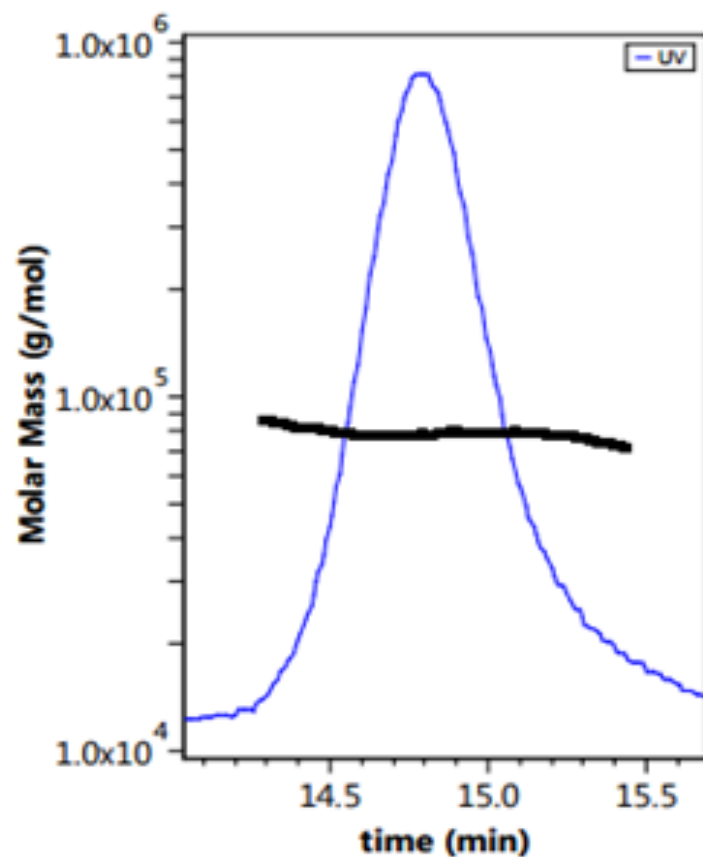
Mw



Slope

r_g

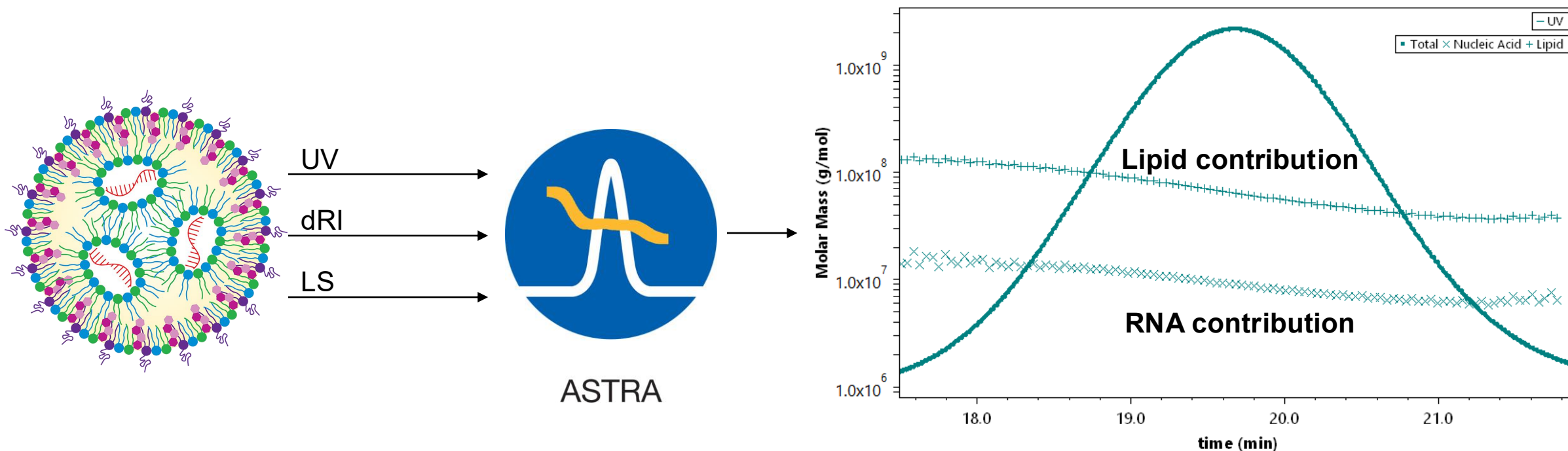
SEC-MALS: Provide Mw Details



Concentration signal is ambiguous:
is the peak homogeneous or polydisperse?

MALS gives the answer

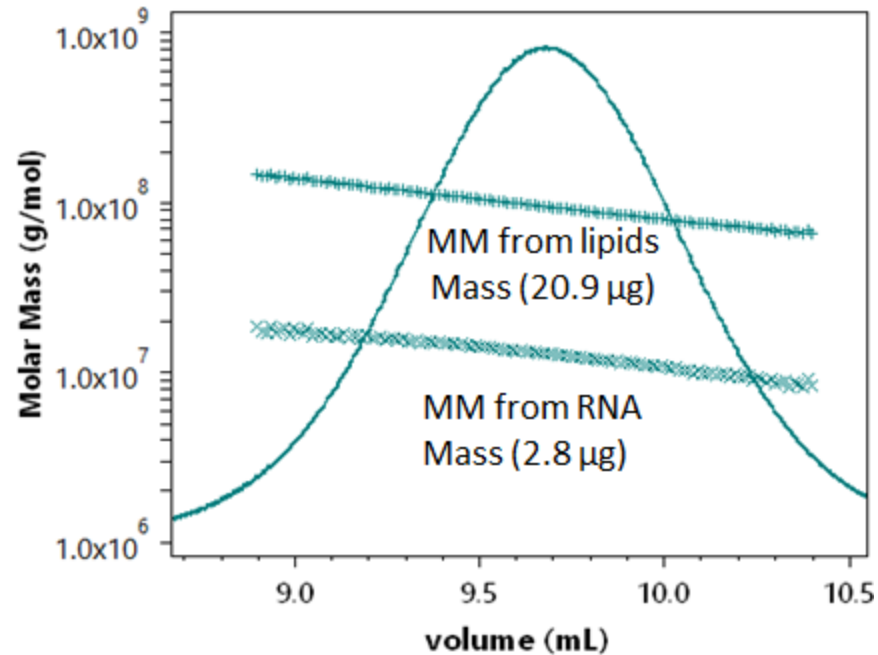
ASTRA™ software LNP Analysis tease out Lipid vs RNA contribution



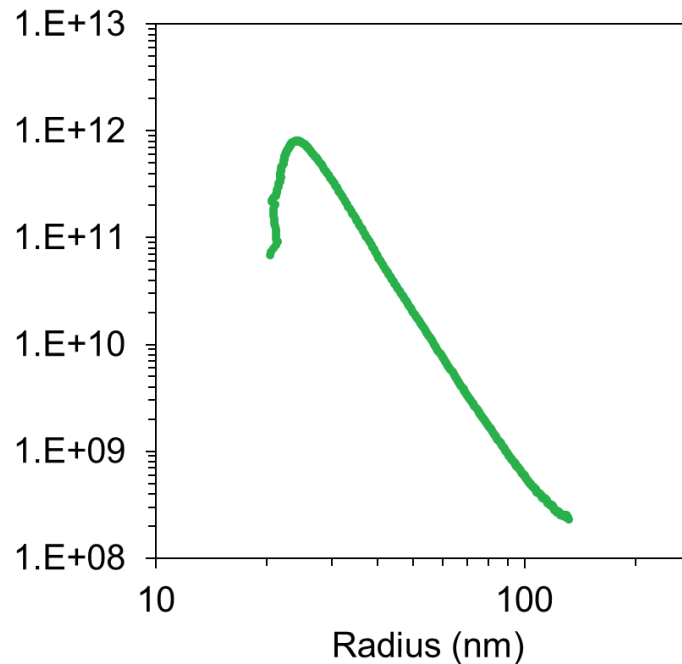
ASTRA software combines signals from multiple detectors to *tease out* the signal contributions from lipid and payload to determine size dependent encapsulation efficiency

Get all the details in a single experiment

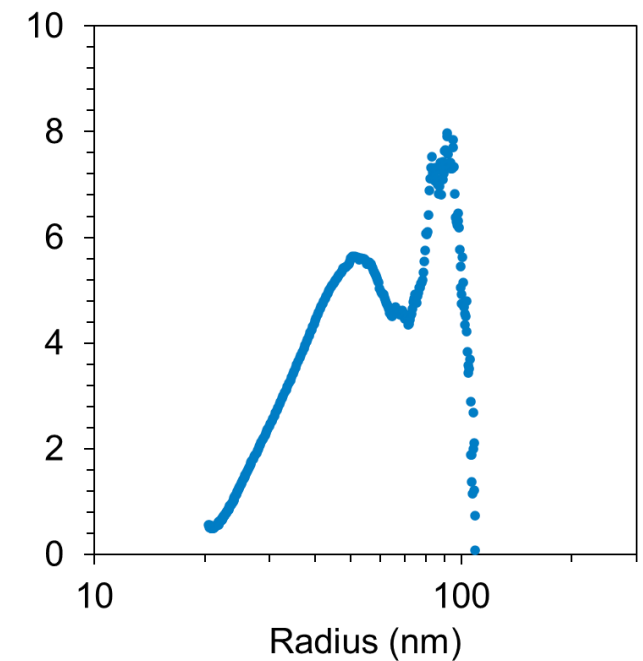
Molar Mass of Lipids and Payload



Particle Concentration



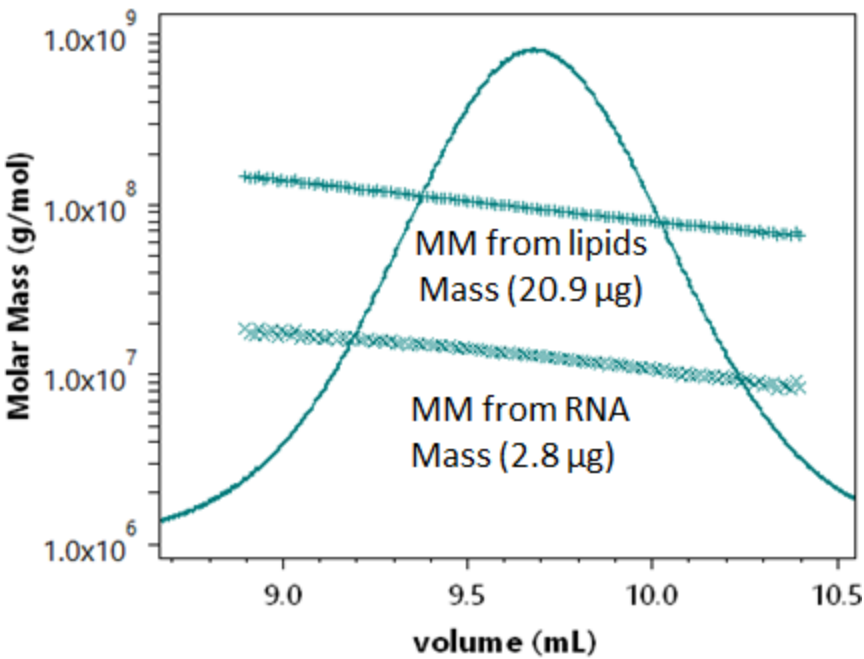
mRNA number



ASTRA software deconstruct the data to provide, in a single physiologically relevant experiment:
Particle Concentration, Size-based Payload distribution, Aggregation, mRNA number, and more

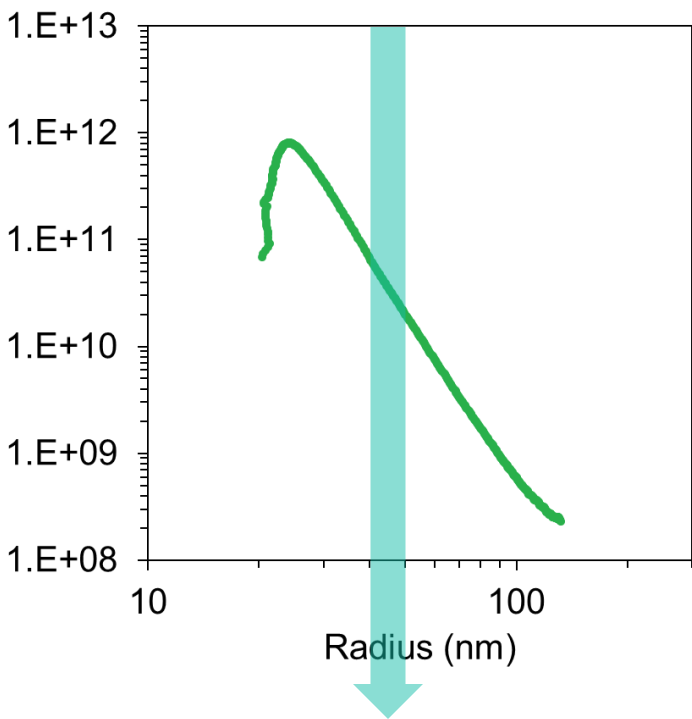
Example:

Molar Mass of Lipids and Payload



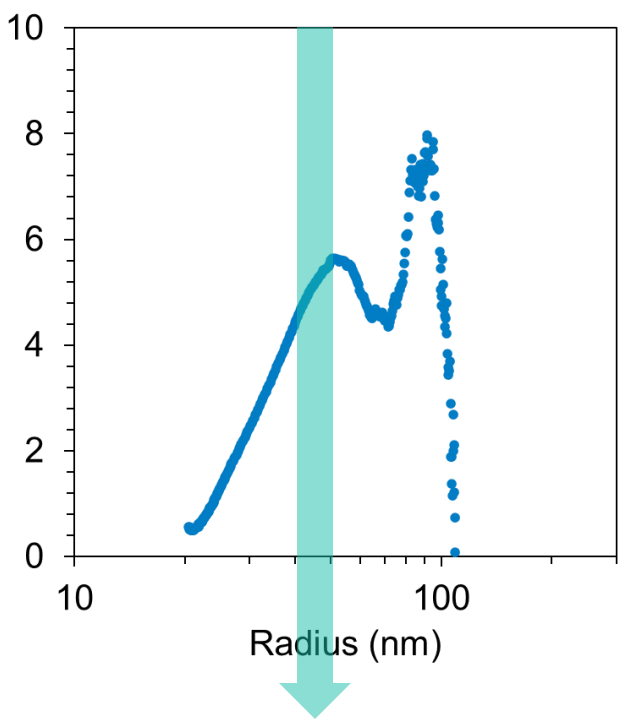
Size range
40-50nm

Particle Concentration



$\sim 5 \times 10^{10}$
particles/mL

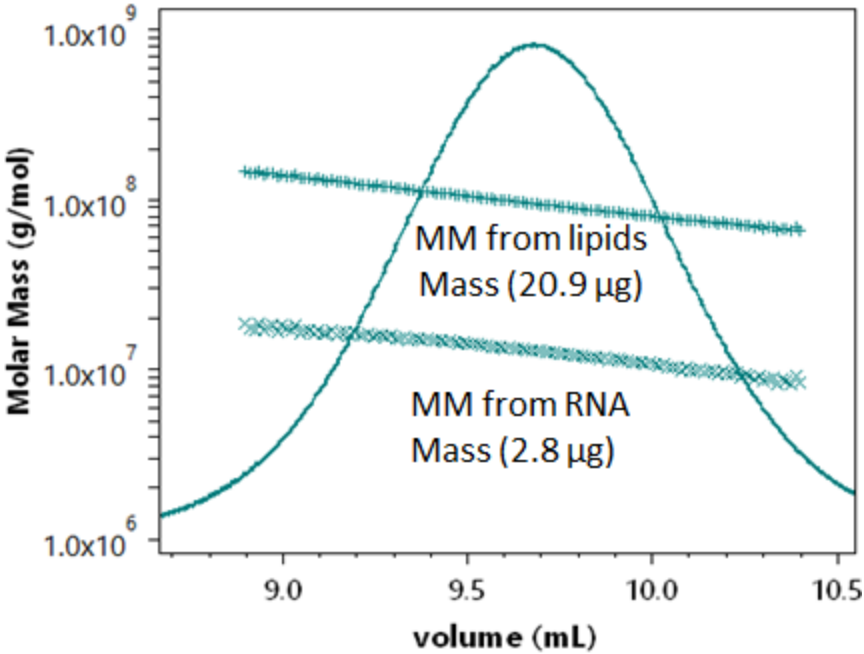
mRNA number



On average,
 ~ 5 mRNA / particle

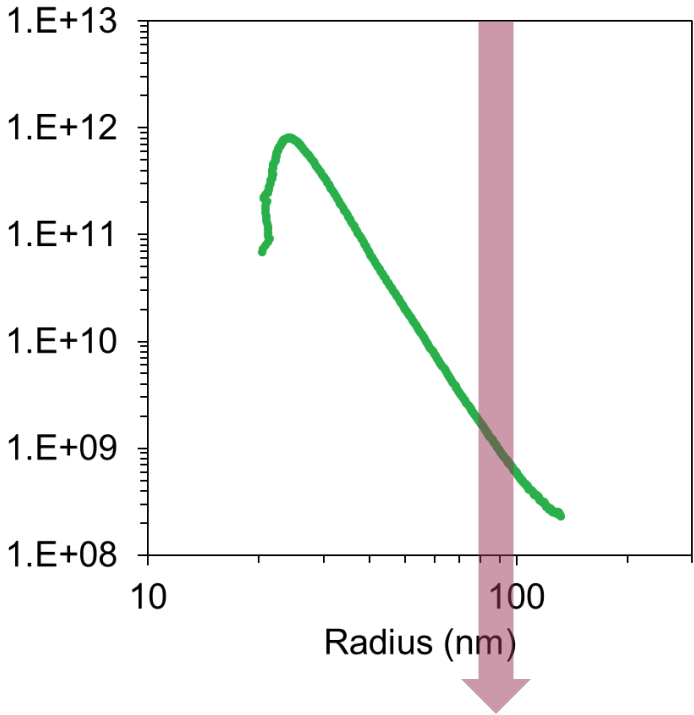
Example:

Molar Mass of Lipids and Payload



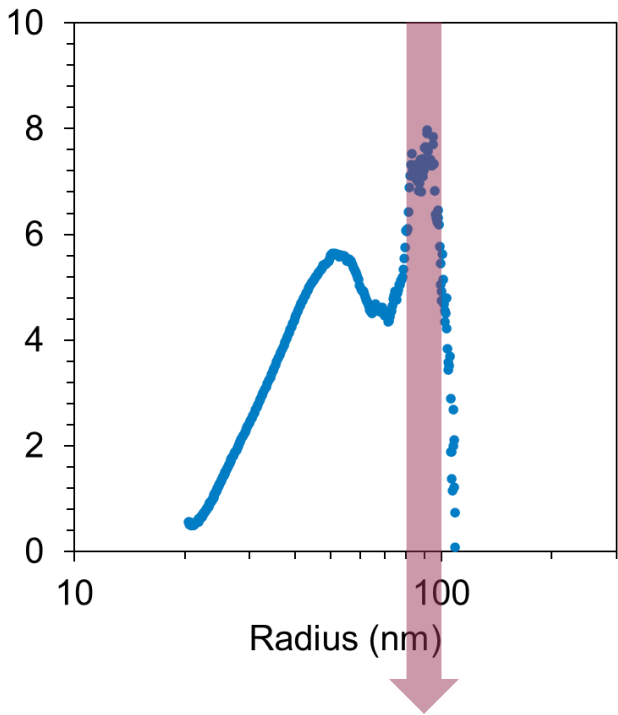
Size range
80-100nm

Particle Concentration



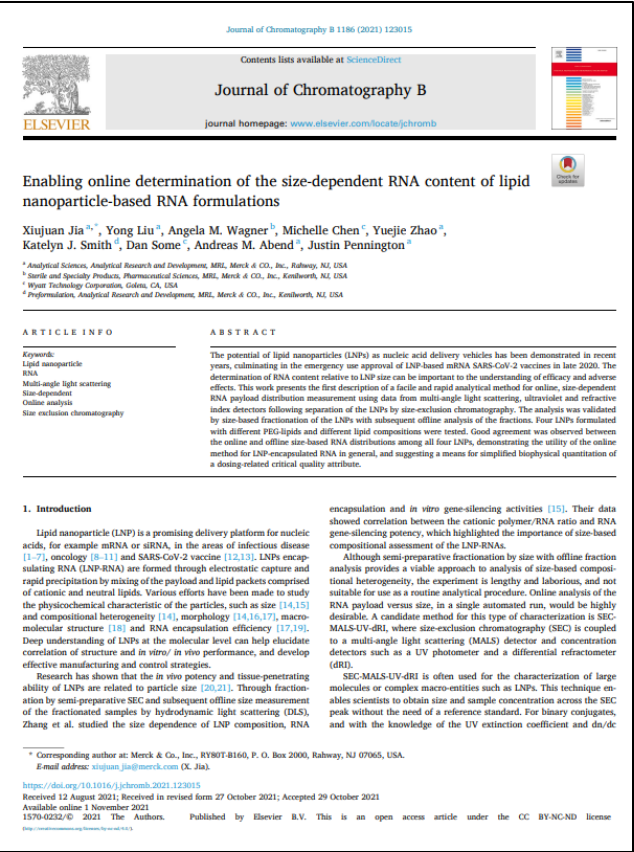
~1x10⁹
particles/mL

mRNA number

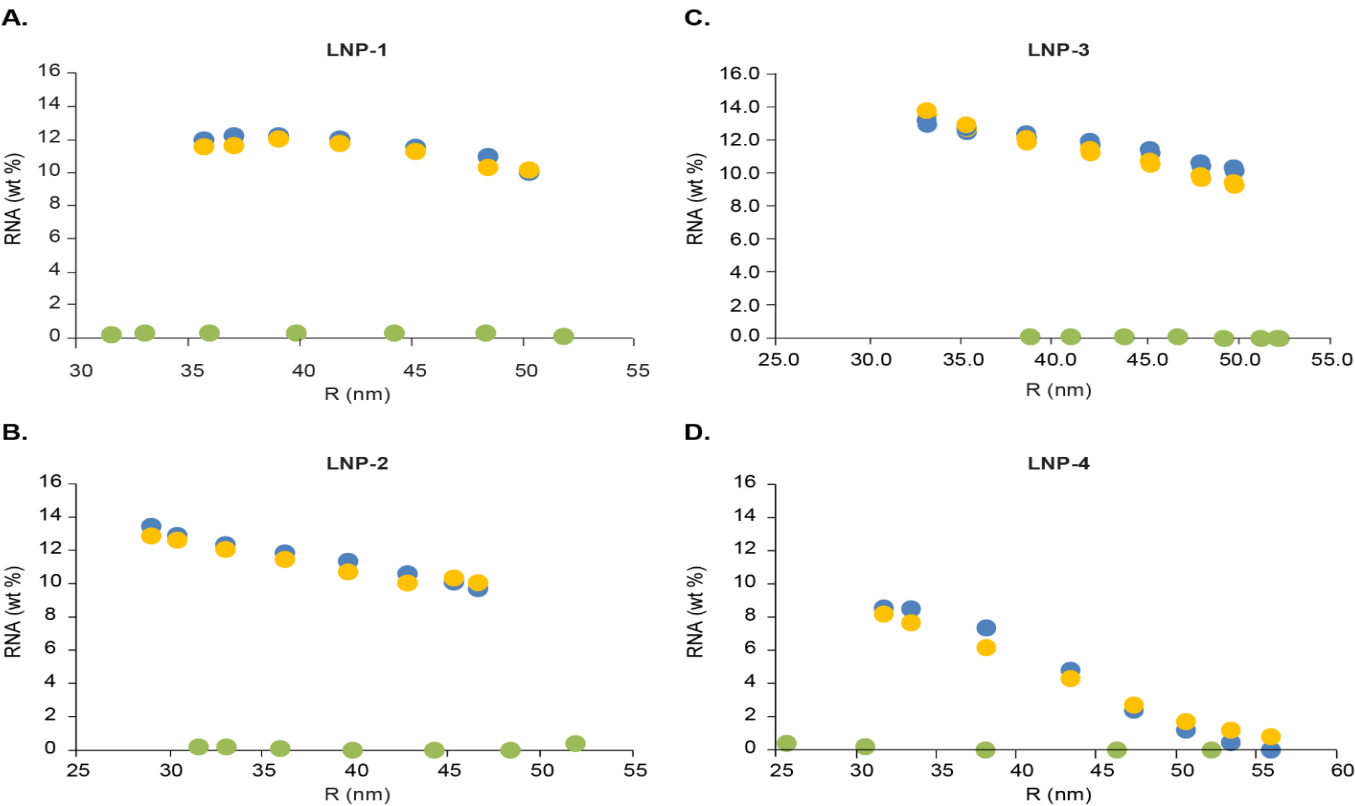


On average,
~8 mRNA / particle

Cross-verification - Size-based payload



Aliquots collected with fraction collector match!



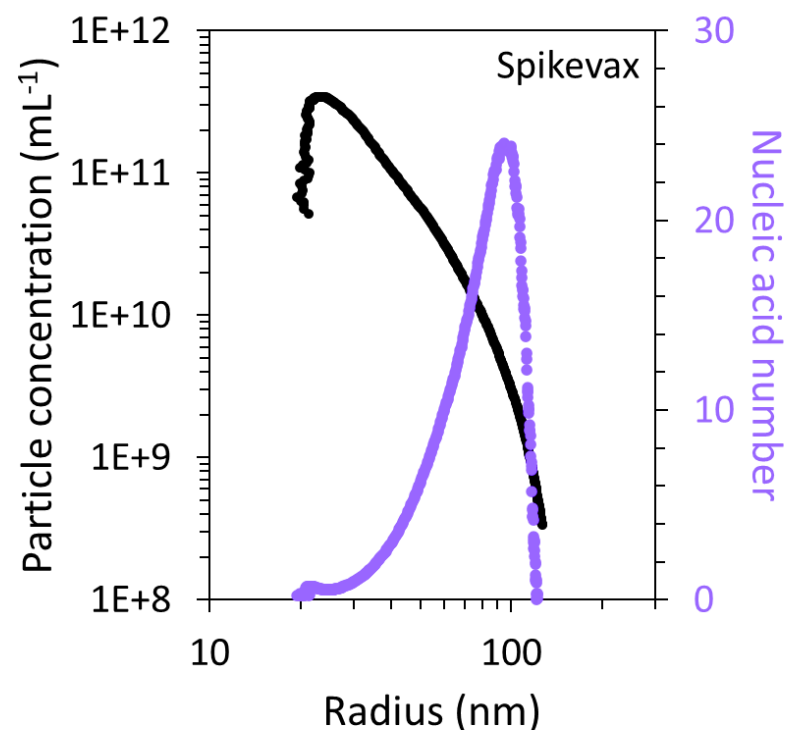
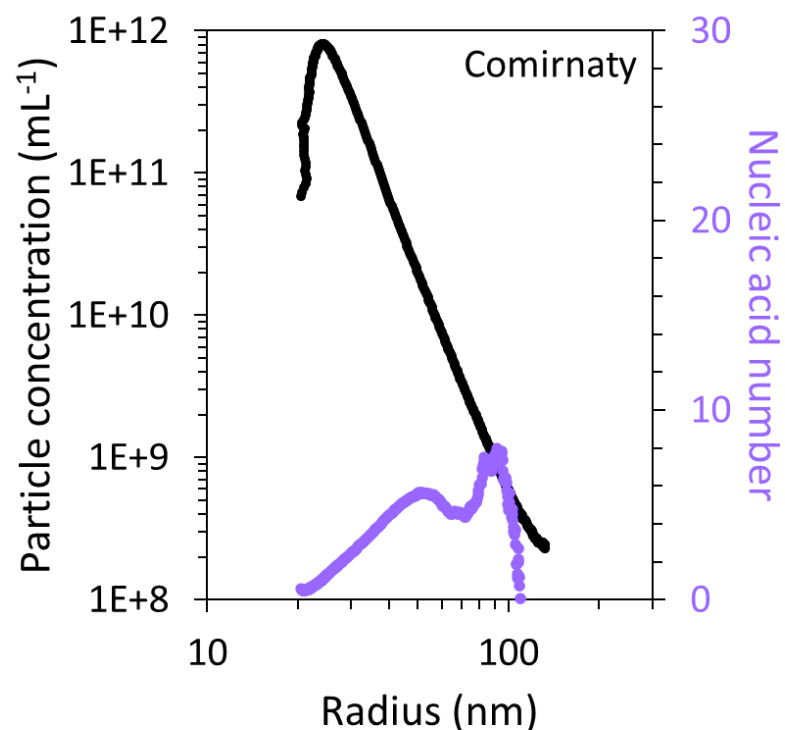
"Enabling online determination of the size-dependent RNA content of lipid nanoparticle-based RNA formulations"
Merck & Co. 2021
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jchromb.2021.123015>

LNP-RNA, RNA wt% (online)
LNP-RNA, RNA wt% (offline)
Empty LNP, RNA wt% (online)

More details in app note:



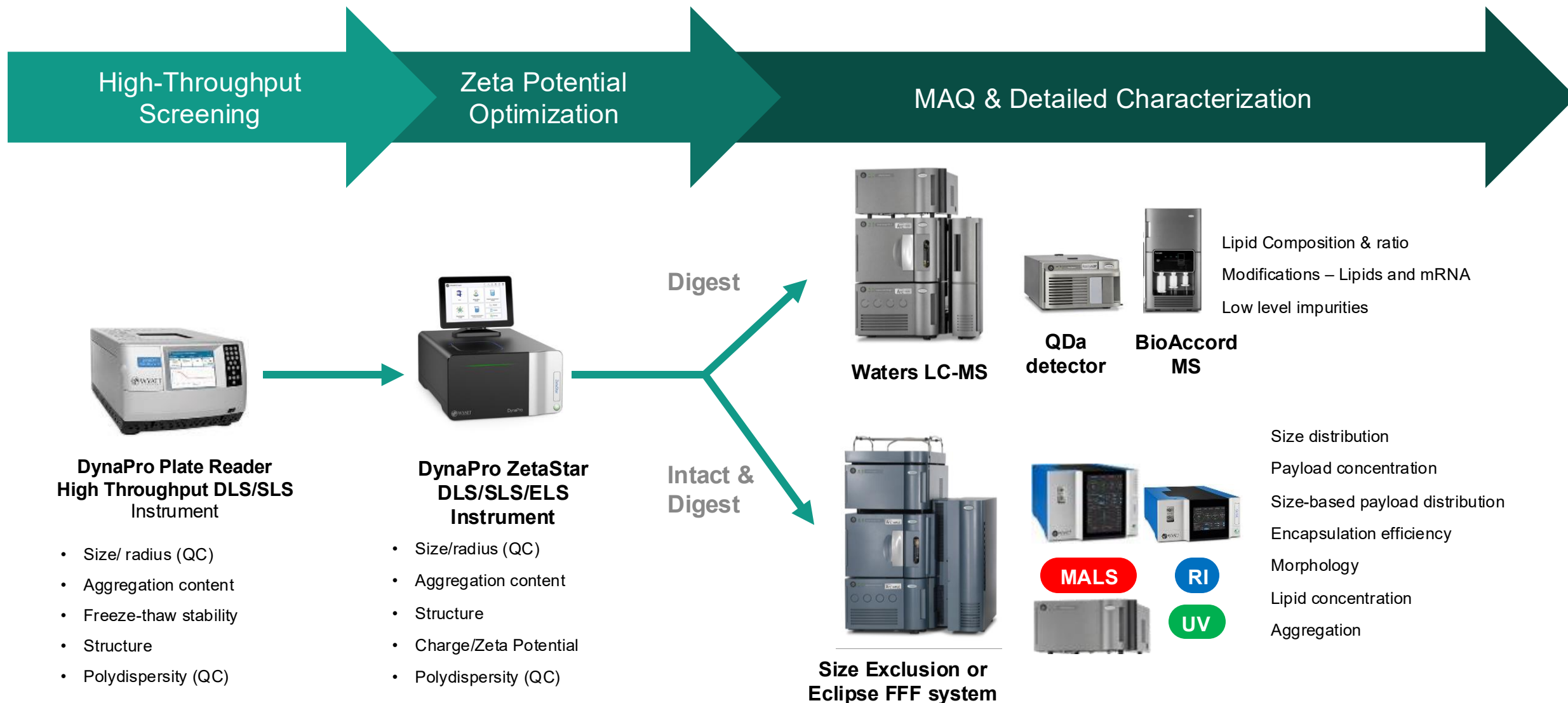
- Quantify the amounts of LNPs with a specific size and drug substance content.



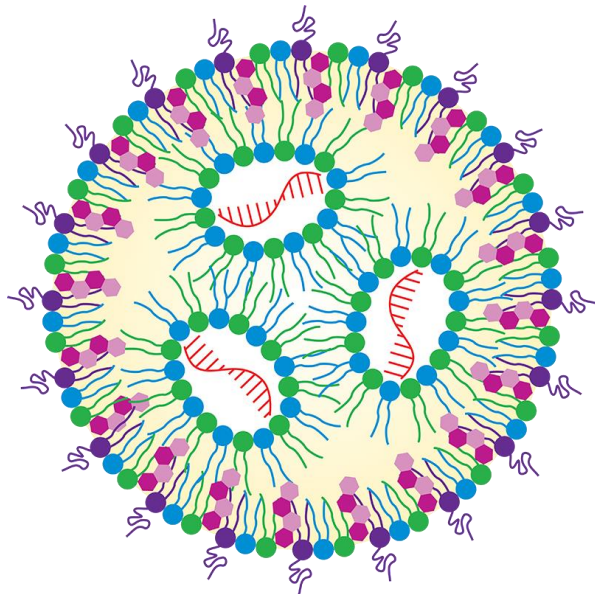
- The mRNA payload is *not* distributed equally across the different-sized LNPs.

Waters | Wyatt LNP Characterization Solutions

Non-exhaustive

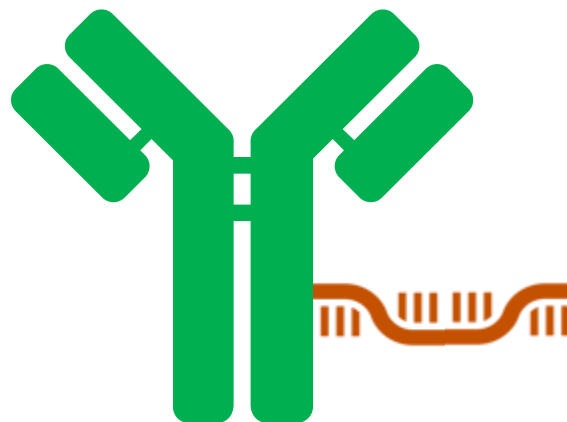


Multi-detector MALS can provide:



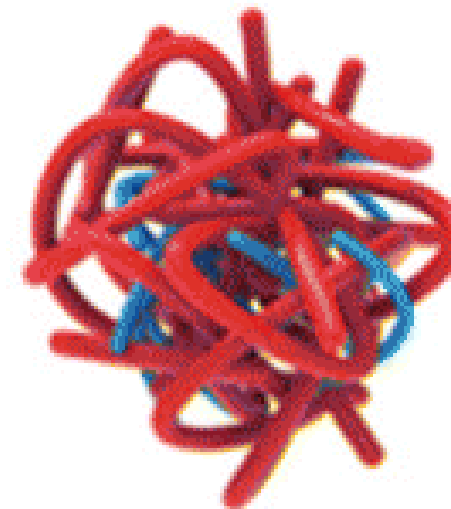
LNPs

High-Res Size
Polydispersity
Encapsulation
Size-based payload
distribution
Stability



ADCs

Aggregation
Molar mass
Antibody concentration
Payload concentration
Drug-Antibody Ratio
Stability
Variant analysis



Polymeric

High-Res Size
Polymer concentration
Payload concentration
Conformation
Molecular weight

Questions

