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### ► To cite this version:

Carine Arnaudguilhem, Marion Larroque, Olivia Sgarbura, Dominique Michau, Fran ois Quenet, et al.. Toward a comprehensive study for multielemental quantitative LA-ICP MS bioimaging in soft tissues. *Talanta*, 2020, 222, 121537 (11 p.). 10.1016/j.talanta.2020.121537 . hal-03019255

**HAL Id: hal-03019255**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03019255>**

Submitted on 24 Nov 2021

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1 **Toward a comprehensive study for multielemental quantitative LA-ICP MS**  
2 **bioimaging in soft tissues**

3 **Carine Arnaudguilhem<sup>1</sup>, Marion Larroque<sup>1,2</sup>, Olivia Sgarbura<sup>3</sup>, Dominique Michau<sup>4</sup>, François**  
4 **Quenet<sup>3</sup>, Sébastien Carrère<sup>3</sup>, Brice Bouyssiére<sup>1</sup>, Sandra Mounicou<sup>1\*</sup>**

5 <sup>1</sup>Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, E2S UPPA, CNRS, Institut des Sciences Analytiques  
6 et de Physico-Chimie Pour l'Environnement et les Matériaux (IPREM), UMR5254, Hélioparc,  
7 64053 Pau, France

8 <sup>2</sup>Institut du Cancer de Montpellier, Unité de Recherche Translationnelle, Montpellier, France

9 <sup>3</sup>Institut du Cancer de Montpellier, Département Chirurgie, Montpellier, France

10 <sup>4</sup>CNRS, Université Bordeaux, ICMCB, UMR 5026, 87 avenue du Dr A. Schweitzer, 33608, Pessac,  
11 France

12

13 \*Authors to whom correspondence should be addressed: [sandra.mounicou@univ-pau.fr](mailto:sandra.mounicou@univ-pau.fr),  
14 IPREM UMR 5254, Technopôle Hélioparc, 2 avenue du Président Angot, 64053 Pau cedex 09,  
15 phone: ++33 5 59 40 77 64

16

17 **Abstract**

18 Quantitative localization of metals in biological tissue sections is critical to obtain insight into  
19 metal toxicity mechanisms or their beneficial characteristics. This study presents the  
20 development of a quantitative LA-ICP MS bioimaging methodology based on the polymer film  
21 strategy and internal standardization. To maximize the number of elements mapped, an  
22 aqueous soluble polymer (dextran) was selected. Among the elements studied, the great  
23 majority (eight out eleven), i.e., Co, Ni, Cu, Zn, Se, Mo, Cd and Pt, exhibited linear regression  
24 after LA-ICP MS analysis of metal-spiked polymer standards. Methodology performances were  
25 carefully assessed as a function of the three internal standards (In, Rh and Ir) considered, the  
26 analytical operational conditions (ICP power, addition of O<sub>2</sub> to ICP, and laser fluency) and the  
27 thickness of the biological tissue section. The results indicated that three groups (Co, Mo; Ni,  
28 Cu, Pt; and Zn, Se, Cd) of elements could be distinguished from their analytical response as a  
29 function of analytical conditions and the internal standard. These different element behaviors

30 appeared to be mainly First Ionization Potential dependent (FIP). For elements with lower FIP  
31 (Co, Ni, Cu, Mo and Pt), differential responses due to carbon load in the ICP MS plasma could  
32 be efficiently corrected as a function of analytical conditions. Matrix effects were more  
33 pronounced for higher FIP elements (i.e., Zn, Cd and Se), and analysis of <10- $\mu$ m thin sections  
34 without the addition of O<sub>2</sub> to ICP MS plasma is recommended. LODs are in the range of 0.1-  
35 0.5  $\mu$ g g<sup>-1</sup> for Co, Mo, Cu, Ni, Pt and Cd as well as 0.9 and 1  $\mu$ g g<sup>-1</sup> for Zn and Se, respectively.  
36 The methodology was validated by means of a homemade metal-spiked kidney homogenate  
37 analyzed by LA-ICP MS imaging, and Co, Ni, Cu, Mo, and Pt provided the closest concentrations  
38 (5-29% bias) to the target values determined by ICP MS after mineralization. The methodology  
39 was applied to two types of clinical human samples undergoing different sample preparation  
40 protocols that did not affect internal standard homogeneity in the polymer film. This  
41 methodology is the first reported for the quantitative bioimaging of eight elements  
42 simultaneously.

43

44 **Keywords:** LA-ICP MS, bioimaging, quantification, multielemental, polymer films

45

## 46 **Introduction**

47 Metals affect many aspects of life. Some metals are essential or beneficial, whereas others  
48 are deleterious or even toxic (i.e., iron is the most widely distributed metal and is essential to  
49 oxygen transport; mercury is neurotoxic, but its presence with selenium inhibits its toxicity)  
50 [1-2]. The bioinorganic chemistry of the organism/cell governs the role of each metal, stressing  
51 the requirement for a fine description of metal localization. Thus, visualizing metals  
52 distribution at the organism and cellular level is critical for understanding how metals function  
53 and how their functions might be altered [3]. Moreover, the measurement of the  
54 concentration of metal in a specific area of a biological tissue is of paramount importance.  
55 Indeed, metal deficiency or overload can be a proof of disease (i.e., iron misbalance in  
56 neurological diseases [4-5], high copper levels in sera of patients with breast cancer [6]), and  
57 studies of metal-based drug penetration into tumor facilitates treatment protocol  
58 development [7-9].

59 LA-ICP MS is the most advanced technique for metal species quantification given its  
60 sensitivity (low  $\mu$ g g<sup>-1</sup> level) [10-13] and sufficient spatial resolution ( $\mu$ m and sub- $\mu$ m).

61 Nevertheless, quantification of metals in tissue thin sections using LA-ICP MS is problematic.  
62 Indeed, the heterogeneity of biological samples and the lack of suitable standard material give  
63 rise to difficulties (ablation, transport, ionization into ICP source, signal drift over analysis time  
64 and matrix effects) that are well documented [14]. Various approaches have been proposed  
65 to improve metal quantification by LA-ICP MS in biological tissues; however, there are still  
66 discrepancies regarding a truly universal calibration and quantification protocol [14-15].

67 The quantification methodologies by LA-ICP MS can be classified into three strategies. One  
68 of the pioneer works corrected instrumental or elemental sensitivity through the addition of  
69 an internal standard into either the ablation cell or the ICP source [16]. However, correction  
70 strategies for ablated material variation and transport are lacking. External calibration  
71 strategies have emerged using matrix matched standards, i.e., gelatin-dried droplets [13] and  
72 standards [17], embedding resins [18], or a piece of the sample itself [19-20] spiked with  
73 different amounts of metal. These strategies that lack internal standard require the complete  
74 ablation of the standard as well as the sample itself, and the lack of a blank may cause issues  
75 with the measurement of endogenous elements, such as Cu, Zn, and Fe, among others.  
76 Internal standardization strategies consist using either a native element homogeneously  
77 distributed in the sample [16], but this is often difficult to find, or by introducing an internal  
78 standard by full immersion [21] of the slice sample into the metallic solution, but this method  
79 potentially bears the risk of metal redistribution. Other internal standardization strategies rely  
80 upon adding an internal standard spiked layer either at the top or below the sample. Among  
81 these strategies, printed metal spike ink [22] onto the sample surface, spraying an internal  
82 standard coating on top of the sample [23] and depositing the internal standard between the  
83 sample and the substrate [24] represent the main strategies being developed. Here, the  
84 complete ablation of the sample and internal standard ensures their simultaneous transport.  
85 Internal standard-spiked ink methods may be limited when endogenous elements, such as  
86 copper, are under study given their natural presence in ink. Coating the sample with an  
87 internal standard spray is typically performed by sputter using Au, Cr, Mo, Ni, Ti, W, Ag, Pt, Cu,  
88 Pd, Co, or Fe as commercially available metal targets. Therefore, given that most of these  
89 metals may be encountered in biological samples, applications are often limited to the use of  
90 Au as internal standard, which is only appropriate for a set of elements. Interfacing a metal  
91 spiked polymer film between the support (glass slide) and the sample requires some sample  
92 preparation similar to that noted with others methodologies and the use of a spin-coater, but

93 leaves free ourselves of the choice of the polymer and the internal standard according to the  
94 bioimaging application. Autin et al [24] has proposed an organic soluble (xylene and  
95 chlorobenzene) polymer (polymethylmethacrylate) requiring organometallic standards (Cu  
96 and Zn for calibration and Y and Ru as internal standards) for spiking experiments.  
97 Normalization with Y and Ru improved the accuracy of Cu and Zn quantification on a 20- $\mu$ m  
98 tissue slice despite increased standard deviation compared to  $^{13}\text{C}$  normalization. This  
99 methodology is very promising given that it can be potentially used in a wide panel of various  
100 applications (different elements to map). Nevertheless, the use of such a type of polymer is a  
101 limiting parameter in the choice of internal standards and the handling of organometallic  
102 standards (non-aqueous soluble); thus, further developments should be considered.

103 The choice of the internal standard for an effective normalization of the analyte is of  
104 course of paramount importance. The use of carbon ( $^{13}\text{C}$ ) has been long time discussed to  
105 correct for variation in ablated mass, but its low sensitivity (11.6 eV first ionization potential  
106 (FIP)) and its heterogeneous distribution in biological samples prevent its use for quantitative  
107 bioimaging by LA-ICPMS. The choice of an isotopic variant of the analyte itself would be ideal  
108 to correct for instrumental signal drift, matrix effects or analyte losses [25-26]. However, this  
109 is not always possible (case of monoisotopic element) and given that this method would  
110 ideally imply the mixing of the enriched isotope with the sample at the earliest point in the  
111 preparation procedure, this would limit the field of applications (impossible in case of clinical  
112 samples for example). The selection of the analyte/internal standard pair is typically made  
113 based on the criteria of a close mass and first ionization potential between the two elements.  
114 Autin et al [27] recommended the incorporation of an internal standard with an atomic mass  
115 close to the analyte for imaging experiments to correct for variation in ablated mass and  
116 sampling cell position. In addition,  $^{197}\text{Au}$ , which has a high mass and mid-range ionization  
117 potential (9.22 eV), compensates for instrumental drifts, matrix-related ablation differences  
118 and day-to-day signal changes for  $^{63}\text{Cu}$  (FIP 7.73 eV) and  $^{64}\text{Zn}$  (9.39 eV) analysis despite the  
119 high mass difference [23]. Therefore, the choice of an internal standard relies on the  
120 application.

121 The aim of our study was to develop an internal calibration methodology based on polymer  
122 film standards to extend this methodology to the quantitative bioimaging of a wider range of  
123 elements by LA-ICP MS. Thus, the nature of the polymer was first considered by targeting  
124 aqueous soluble polymers for easier spiking with metals. The methodology aimed at the

125 application to a set of elements encountered in biological samples given their natural  
126 occurrence, their therapeutic use or their presence as pollutants. Several internal standards  
127 were investigated for normalization of the various elements for increased stability and  
128 sensitivity. The accuracy of our methodology was assessed by means of a homemade matrix-  
129 matched standard at three concentrations levels and different thin-section thicknesses. The  
130 influence of experimental conditions of LA-ICP MS analysis, such as ICP power and  
131 composition of ICP plasma (O<sub>2</sub> addition), were also evaluated to minimize differential analyte  
132 responses over the imaging run time.

133

## 134 **Materials and methods**

### 135 ***Reagents and samples***

136 Elemental solutions at 50 000 mg L<sup>-1</sup> Fe, Cu and Zn and 10 000 mg L<sup>-1</sup> of Pt, P, Co, Ni, Se, Mo,  
137 Hg, and Cd were purchased from SCP Science (PlasmaCAL, Courtaboeuf, France). Briefly, 1 000  
138 mg L<sup>-1</sup> solutions of In, Ir and Rh used as internal standards were purchased from SCP Science.  
139 Intermediate elemental solutions at 100 and 2500 mg L<sup>-1</sup> were prepared in 2% ultrapure HNO<sub>3</sub>  
140 (70% INSTRA-ANALYZED, Baker, Illkirch-Graffenstaden, France). Dextran polymer (Mw of ca.  
141 500 000 g mol<sup>-1</sup>) was purchased from VWR (Fontenay-sous-Bois, France). All solutions were  
142 prepared with milliQ water (resistivity ≥ 18.2 Ω cm) obtained from a Milli-Q Elix water  
143 purification system (Millipore, Molsheim, France).

144

### 145 ***Polymeric film preparation and thickness characterization***

146 Here, 60 mg mL<sup>-1</sup> dextran solution was prepared in water by simple vortexing. A portion of  
147 this solution was spiked with the internal standards solution (In, Rh, Ir) to obtain a theoretical  
148 concentration of 10 µg g<sup>-1</sup> before preconcentration by spin-coating and dedicated as sample  
149 deposit substrates after spin-coating. The other portion of the solution was spiked with  
150 internal standard solution and different amounts of metal solutions (Fe, Cu, Zn, Pt, P, Co, Ni,  
151 Se, Mo, Hg, Cd) to produce calibrants for quantification by LA-ICP MS after spin-coating. In  
152 each standard, two ranges of theoretical elemental concentrations were aimed in polymeric  
153 film, i.e., from 0 to 80 µg g<sup>-1</sup> for minor elements (Co, Ni, Se, Mo, Cd and Hg) and from 0 to 400  
154 µg g<sup>-1</sup> for major elements (P, Fe, Cu, Zn and Pt) while maintaining the same internal standard  
155 concentration (i.e., 10 µg g<sup>-1</sup>) as for samples deposit substrates. For sample deposit substrates

156 and each calibration solution, the proportion of polymer remained constant, whereas final  
157 volume was adjusted with milli-Q water. Each solution was individually spin-coated as follows.  
158 Approximately 600  $\mu\text{L}$  of each 45- $\mu\text{m}$  filtrated (45  $\mu\text{m}$  cellulose filter, VWR, France) solution  
159 was loaded onto the surface of a cleaned 2.6 x 2.6 cm glass slide (VWR international, Fontenay-  
160 sous-bois, France) and spin-coated (Polos SPIN150i spin-coater model, SPS, Vourles, France)  
161 following optimized conditions at 4500 rpm for 60 s under a light  $\text{N}_2$  gas stream. After spin-  
162 coating, film substrates were ready for analysis or sample deposit. The average mass ( $n=5$ ) of  
163 polymeric film was determined for each calibration point using an ultrahigh precision balance  
164 (Automated-S microbalance XP6, Mettler Toledo, Viroflay, France) by weighting glass slide  
165 before and after film deposition (providing a clean glass slide surface). Film thickness was  
166 determined by optical profilometry using a WYKO NT1100 Optical profiling System (Veeco,  
167 Dourdan, France) in Vertical Shift Interference (VSI) mode after using a scalpel to scratch the  
168 polymeric film on the glass substrate and coating with a thin Au layer (1-5 nm) for 30 s to make  
169 the surface reflective to light.

#### 170 ***Preparation of matrix-matched tissue standards***

171 A piece of pig kidney was purchased at a local supermarket and was homogenized using an  
172 Ultraturax (IKA T10 basic, Imlab, Lille, France). Aliquots of homogenized kidney were used as  
173 control standard, 2.5  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  spiked standard, 50  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  spiked standard and 250  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  spiked  
174 standard (concentrations expressed as major elements). To prepare these standards,  
175 approximately 5 g of homogenized kidney tissue was placed into a 10-mL tube, nonspiked (for  
176 control standard), or spiked with an appropriate volume of 100  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  (for 2.5  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  standard)  
177 and 2500  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  (for 50 and 250  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  standard) of intermediate elemental solutions before  
178 homogenization with Ultraturax. For each condition, 2 aliquots were transferred (as compact  
179 as possible to form a cylinder) into 2-mL Eppendorf tubes, frozen under liquid  $\text{N}_2$  and stored  
180 at  $-18^\circ\text{C}$  until cryomicrotomy.

#### 181 ***Cryomicrotomy***

182 ***Matrix-matched tissue standard-*** Homogenate kidney standards were removed from  
183 Eppendorf tube and embedded with OCT (Q Path<sup>®</sup> VWR). Thin sections of 8, 10, 14, 30  $\mu\text{m}$   
184 thickness were produced from the kidney standards using a cryomicrotome (CM 1950 model,  
185 Leica, France) where  $-18^\circ\text{C}$  and  $-15^\circ\text{C}$  temperatures were set for the specimen and the  
186 chamber, respectively, and deposited on the polymeric substrate.

187 **Patient tissues-** For sanitary, safety and regulatory issues, human tissue samples (ovary and  
188 tumoral nodules) were collected, frozen at -80°C and processed at the Institut du Cancer de  
189 Montpellier in accordance with standard practices. Here, 8-µm thin sections of ovary were  
190 obtained from frozen tissues using a Microm HM 550 (Thermo Scientific) cryotome set at -  
191 18°C and -20°C for specimen and chamber, respectively. Thin frozen sections were deposited  
192 on top of the polymeric film substrate and allowed to dry under vacuum. Tumor tissues were  
193 fixed with formaldehyde and paraffin-embedded prior to microtomy (MICROM HM 340 E,  
194 Thermo Scientific) sectioning at 8 µm. Paraffin-embedded sections were transferred into a  
195 heated (40°C) water bath to avoid shrinkage, and the polymeric film substrate was immersed  
196 (5 s) in the bath to recover the slice. Samples were then analyzed by LA-ICP MS without any  
197 further processing. The storage in a box of such a sample did not exceed 10 days. All patients  
198 provided written informed consent before the procedure, and the study was approved in the  
199 institutional review board in accordance with the ethical standards of the Helsinki Declaration  
200 of 1975.

201

#### 202 **Determination of elemental content by ICP MS**

203 **Kidney standards** - The frozen kidney standard in Eppendorf tube was cut in six 2-3 mm  
204 sections (approximately 150 mg each) to determine elemental concentrations in fresh and  
205 dried kidney. Half of the sections were quickly frozen under liquid N<sub>2</sub> and placed into a freeze-  
206 drying system until complete dryness (water content of ca. 75%). Then, the dried half and the  
207 other half of the fresh kidney section were mineralized using 400 µl 69% HNO<sub>3</sub> and heated at  
208 80°C in the oven for 265 min. Then, digests were accordingly diluted with milli-Q water to  
209 reduce the HNO<sub>3</sub> content to 2% before analysis by ICP MS.

210 **Polymeric films** – For each concentration of metal-spiked polymeric films (calibrants for LA-  
211 ICP MS), over 10 substrates, 5 substrates (glass slide + polymer film) (n=4/condition and 5  
212 additional blanks (glass slides)) were individually placed into a plastic flask containing 5 mL of  
213 2% HNO<sub>3</sub> solution overnight to allow for quantitative polymer film solubilization and metals  
214 released into the acid solution before ICP MS analysis. Each left substrate per condition was  
215 used as a control for LA-ICP MS analysis. Glass slides were washed into two successive 2%  
216 HNO<sub>3</sub> baths to ensure complete metals release into solution. Consecutively, glass slides were  
217 dried under a laminar hood, and the absence of metal spiked at the glass slide surface was  
218 verified by running several transects (n= 3) by LA-ICP MS analysis over the glass slide surface.



219 The polymeric films of the 10 substrates were previously weighted using the high-precision  
220 balance as described above.

221 **ICP MS analysis** was performed with an Agilent 7700x model (Agilent Technologies, Tokyo,  
222 Japan). The instrument was tuned daily using a 1  $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$  solution containing Y, Li, Tl, Ce, and Ba  
223 in 2%  $\text{HNO}_3$ . ICP MS was operated using a micromist nebulizer, Ni cones and under octopole  
224 reaction cell with He gas to lower interferences on  $^{31}\text{P}$ ,  $^{63}\text{Cu}$ ,  $^{65}\text{Cu}$ ,  $^{64}\text{Zn}$ ,  $^{57}\text{Fe}$ ,  $^{78}\text{Se}$  and  
225  $^{80}\text{Se}$ . Element quantification in solution was performed with internal calibration in the range  
226 0 to 50  $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$  for major elements (0-10  $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$  for minor), and standard addition was performed  
227 for element quantification in kidney samples and polymeric films.

### 228 **LA-ICP MS imaging experiment**

229 A 7700s ICP MS detector (Agilent Technologies, Tokyo, Japan) mounted with platinum cones  
230 and S-lenses was used. Preliminary optimization of detection parameters was conducted  
231 under the liquid sample introduction mode by means of the 1  $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$  Y, Li, Tl, Ce, 2%  $\text{HNO}_3$   
232 tuning solution to ensure maximum sensitivity and optimal mass calibration. A laser ablation  
233 system (NWR213, ESI, Fremont, CA, USA) was then coupled to the ICP MS. The ablated  
234 particles of sample were transported from the TV2 ablation cell with 800  $\text{mL min}^{-1}$  of He mixed  
235 by means of a T-piece with Ar gas (ca 1.1  $\text{mL min}^{-1}$ ) prior to introduction to the dry ICP source.  
236 Under coupling mode, carrier gas and ionic lenses voltages were finely tuned using a NIST 612  
237 glass standard (NIST, Washington, USA) for a U/Th moving closer to the unit and to maximize  
238 sensitivity. ICP MS was used in collision cell mode with He (11  $\text{mL min}^{-1}$ ) as the  
239 collision/reaction gas to allow for monitoring of  $^{13}\text{C}$ ,  $^{31}\text{P}$ ,  $^{57}\text{Fe}$ ,  $^{59}\text{Co}$ ,  $^{60}\text{Ni}$ ,  $^{63}\text{Cu}$ ,  $^{64}\text{Zn}$ ,  $^{65}\text{Cu}$ ,  $^{66}\text{Zn}$ ,  
240  $^{78}\text{Se}$ ,  $^{80}\text{Se}$ ,  $^{98}\text{Mo}$ ,  $^{103}\text{Rh}$ ,  $^{111}\text{Cd}$ ,  $^{115}\text{In}$ ,  $^{193}\text{Ir}$ ,  $^{194}\text{Pt}$ ,  $^{195}\text{Pt}$ ,  $^{200}\text{Hg}$  and  $^{202}\text{Hg}$  with 0.08 s integration  
241 time except for  $^{13}\text{C}$  (0.01 s), yielding a sampling time of 1.567 s.

242 Imaging experiments were performed by sampling of subsequent line scans defined over the  
243 sample surface (metal-spiked film standards and biological tissues (kidney, ovary and tumoral  
244 tissue) and operating at 20 Hz laser shot repetition rate. For kidney standards and ovary  
245 samples, a laser beam size of 75 x 75  $\mu\text{m}$ , a fluency of 3.5  $\text{J cm}^{-2}$ , a scan speed of 45  $\mu\text{m s}^{-1}$  per  
246 duty cycle of ICP MS acquisition and a 125  $\mu\text{m}$  distance between each consecutive line were  
247 used to obtain the desired spatial resolution and signal intensity. For smaller sized samples,  
248 such as tumoral tissue (ca 0.5-0.7  $\text{cm}^2$ ), these parameters were 50 x 50  $\mu\text{m}$ , 4.2  $\text{J cm}^{-2}$ , 35  $\mu\text{m}$   
249  $\text{s}^{-1}$  and 100  $\mu\text{m}$ , respectively. For each sample line scanned, an ICP MS acquisition file was  
250 generated under a csv format.

251

## 252 **LA-ICP MS calibration and quantitative element imaging**

253 Metal-spiked polymeric standards with theoretical concentrations of 0, 2.5, 10, 100 and 400  
254  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  (as major element) were scanned according to the conditions used for sample imaging.  
255 For each standard, a set of 3 consecutive lines (ca 1.5-2 cm long) were scanned. Each ion  
256 intensity was normalized by the respective internal standard intensity, and an average value  
257 was calculated from the 3 scans for each standard. For each element, a linear regression was  
258 obtained from these average values as a function of the respective standard concentrations.  
259 These linear regressions were used to convert raw data (element intensity to internal standard  
260 intensity ratio) from sample analysis to elemental concentrations ( $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ) by taking into  
261 account the difference in ablated volume (thickness of polymeric film and tissue thin-section)  
262 as well as the densities of the polymeric film and tissue.

263

## 264 **Data processing**

265 An imaging experiment for a single sample consisted of n csv files, which were then  
266 concatenated. Then, a homemade program under Python was used to generate an elemental  
267 spectrum and images of element concentrations per pixel using a color code (png image  
268 format).

269

## 270 **Results and discussion**

271 The method relies on the use of polymeric films doped with metallic (including internal  
272 standards) solutions for calibrants or internal standards for samples. Therefore, elements  
273 present in biological tissues deposited on top of the polymeric film are quantified by internal  
274 calibration after complete ablation. For reliable quantification, calibrants must be physically  
275 and chemically characterized.

## 276 **Film characterization**

277 The main idea was to develop a method using a hydrosoluble polymer to extend the  
278 methodology to a larger panel of metals likely to be encountered in living organisms but also  
279 to avoid the use of organic solvents and thus reduce chemical waste treatment for a more  
280 environmentally friendly and durable methodology. Furthermore, successful quantification  
281 using polymer film calibrant strictly relies on two keys parameters: the chemical purity in  
282 terms of metals of the polymer molecule and the homogeneity of the film produced.

283 Chitosan is a natural polysaccharide produced from chitin of skeletons of crustaceans and  
284 cephalopods and the cell wall of mushrooms. It is soluble in slightly acidified water and  
285 therefore was considered as a potential candidate in a first attempt to produce the polymeric  
286 film. However, chemical analysis of a homemade chitosan compound ( $M_w$  20 000  $g\ mol^{-1}$ )  
287 using ICP MS revealed high concentrations of Fe (ca 300 000  $\mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ), Ni (ca 3 000  $\mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ), Zn  
288 ( $750\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ), Cu ( $400\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ), Mo ( $100\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ) and Pt ( $1\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ), preventing its use for the  
289 purpose of this study as it would increase the chemical background during analysis. A set of 6  
290 commercially available dextran polysaccharides that were 100% water soluble and with  $M_w$   
291 ranging from 50 000 to 500 000  $g\ mol^{-1}$  were then investigated. The determination of their  
292 chemical composition by ICP MS allowed the selection of one dextran molecule ( $M_w$  500 000  
293  $g\ mol^{-1}$ ) with the lowest concentrations of elements of interest (P  $\sim 73\ 000\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ , Fe  $\sim 2800$   
294  $\mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ; Cu  $\sim 180\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ; Ni  $\sim 148\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ; Zn  $\sim 77\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ; Mo  $\sim 51\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ; Se  $\sim 21\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ; Co  
295  $\sim 8\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ; Cd  $\sim 0.2\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ; Hg  $\sim 0.2\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$  and Pt < LOD of ca.  $0.02\ \mu g\ kg^{-1}$ ).

296 Polymer concentration and spin-coating parameters (speed and acceleration speed, rpm;  
297 duration, s;  $N_2$  gas stream), which impact film thickness and roughness, were optimized to first  
298 obtain a visible homogenized film. Although these dextran films are transparent, defaults were  
299 apparent when the wrong spin-coating conditions were used. Of note is the importance of the  
300 cleanness and purity of the glass slide (dust deposits must be meticulously removed, and  
301 chemical content must be assessed). Once default-free polymer films were obtained (i.e., at  
302  $60\ mg\ mL^{-1}$ ; 4000 or 4500 rpm for 1 s), the homogeneity of the polymer film was assessed  
303 using LA-ICP MS by scanning in imaging mode a large surface of several polymer substrates  
304 ( $n=2$  @ 4000 rpm and  $n=2$  @ 4500 rpm) used for sample deposits and monitoring internal  
305 standard (In, Rh, and Ir) signals. Over the 4 film substrates analyzed, internal standards signal  
306 stability was in the range of 8 to 16% and was slightly lower for film substrates produced at  
307 4000 rpm (RSD  $\sim 12\%$ ) compared with film obtained at 4500 rpm (RSD  $\sim 9\%$ ). For the latter  
308 condition, RSD between the 2 film substrates was better for In (10%) compared with Ir (12%)  
309 and Rh (14%). Therefore, spin-coating at 4500 rpm provided homogenized film substrates.

310 Elemental concentrations in film substrate were determined after the spin-coating step, which  
311 involves evaporation of the solution, leading to a metal preconcentration. For film calibrants  
312 at 0, 2.5, 10, 50, 200 and  $400\ \mu g\ g^{-1}$  (expressed for major elements), concentrations  
313 determined by total analysis of the solubilized film are presented in **Table 1** for all elements  
314 present in polymer films taking into account the measured mass of each film. Compared to

315 the theoretical concentration expected in the film, preconcentration factors (PF) for each  
316 element were determined and varied between 1 and 53 (average value by element)  
317 depending on the element. The low Hg concentration suggested a loss of Hg during the  
318 evaporation process such that no loss during filtration was observed. In addition to Hg, P and  
319 Fe exhibited the highest variabilities (respectively 74 and 112% RSD) in terms of  
320 preconcentration factors most likely due to measurement bias in the blank and at low  
321 concentrations, reflecting contamination issues (i.e., PF= 63 and 158 for P and Fe, respectively,  
322 at  $2.5 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ). For the others elements, i.e., Ni, Co, Cu, Zn, Se, Mo, Cd, Pt and the three internal  
323 standards (In, Rh, and Ir), preconcentration factors were in the range of 12 to 22 with RSD  
324 between 4% (Pt) and 34% (Ni). These preconcentration factors are in the same order of  
325 magnitude as that reported by Austin et al [25], who determined a 10-fold increase for Cu and  
326 Zn. The mass of the film varied between 99 and 126  $\mu\text{g}$  from the blank to the  $400\text{-}\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$   
327 standard. This finding was consistent with the thickness of 40 nm (variance 1%) and 80 nm  
328 measured for the blank and highest concentrated calibrant, respectively. This thickness  
329 difference is potentially due to a slight acid content difference (from the solution of elemental  
330 standards) between the blank and  $400 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  standard. This thickness determined approaches  
331 values ( $9 \pm 1$  nm) obtained by means of the sputtering method [23, 29]. Thinner film is more  
332 preferable compared with that previously reported [24] as surface variation would be  
333 insignificant given the complete ablation of the film and  $\mu\text{m}$  spatial resolution of the laser.  
334 Thinner films would also minimize the contribution of the chemical composition of the  
335 polymer to the blank background. Therefore, quantification was performed based on  
336 preconcentration factors determined for each element and the 40-nm thickness (density was  
337 therefore determined to 3.6982) of the film, which is the substrate used for sample  
338 deposition.

339

#### 340 **Calibration and normalization**

341 The purpose of this study was to identify the most appropriate internal standard (supposedly  
342 absent from biological samples) for each element taking into account its mass and FIP (eV).  
343 Considering these two latter parameters,  $^{115}\text{In}$  (5.79 eV),  $^{103}\text{Rh}$  (7.46 eV), and  $^{192}\text{Ir}$  (8.97 eV)  
344 were investigated as internal standards as they cover the large range of mass and FIP of the  
345 elements of interest. The responses of all elements under study were plotted as a function of  
346 their concentration and the internal standard considered (**Figure 1**). Good correlation

347 coefficients (0.995 - 1) were obtained except for P (<0.5), Fe (<0.2) and Hg (<0.09). For Hg, as  
348 expected from preconcentration factor determination, this lack of linearity originates from Hg  
349 loss during spin-coating. Several attempts to stabilize Hg in solution using an excess of chloride  
350 ions or cysteine ligand have been made but were not successful and require further research.  
351 The poor correlation coefficients of P and Fe calibration result from the presence of these  
352 elements in the polymer as it is observed in the blank and the lowest concentrations (2.5 and  
353 10  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ). Furthermore, the presence of P and Fe in the glass slide (which is also ablated at  
354 the surface (<10  $\mu\text{m}$  depth)) might also contribute to increase the background, thereby  
355 degrading the linear correlation at low concentrations. For these reasons, these three  
356 elements have been excluded from the following discussion.

357 Regardless of the element, calibration curves show that In is the internal standard with the  
358 highest sensitivity when normalization was applied. Compared to In calibration, reductions of  
359 approximately 1.5 and 3.4 were observed when element responses were normalized with Rh  
360 and Ir, respectively, and regardless of the element. This finding prompted us to first conclude  
361 that In is the best internal standard for highest sensitivity, for all elements and independently  
362 of the mass and FIP of the elements to be quantified. This feature is most likely due to its lower  
363 FIP leading to a better response than Rh and Ir in ICP MS. At constant sensitivity parameters  
364 (mainly ICP MS cones status), the graphs revealed good repeatability ( $\text{SD} < 1.1$ ) for all element  
365 concentrations and regardless of the internal standard for the same calibration analyzed thrice  
366 weekly. Our data also demonstrated the stability and linearity of a calibration over one year,  
367 ensuring the integrity of the polymeric film.

368

### 369 **Influence of ICP conditions**

370 ICP conditions were optimized for robust plasma and in an attempt to reduce potential  
371 differential elemental responses due to ablation of different materials (film, tissue  
372 (heterogeneous itself)), which might lead to incorrect quantification due to the introduction  
373 of organic material into the plasma (carbon effect). First, adjustment of ICP power revealed  
374 that the analysis could be run at 1400 until 1500 W, which favor sensitivity and signal stability  
375 (supporting text, Figures 2-SI and 3-SI).

376 The addition of  $\text{O}_2$  into the ICP was investigated to reduce carbon deposits and possible matrix  
377 effects. First, the impact of  $\text{O}_2$  addition was measured on calibration standards for all elements  
378 (**Figure 2a and Figure 4-SI**). When  $\text{O}_2$  is added, three groups of elements could be

379 differentiated according to their responses and the internal standard used for normalization,  
380 i.e., (1) a group of elements benefiting from sensitivity improvement regardless of the internal  
381 standard used; (2) a group of mixed elements with increased/stable or stable/decreased  
382 sensitivity as a function of the internal standard used; and (3) a group of elements suffering  
383 from decreased sensitivity with all internal standards. In the first group, O<sub>2</sub> addition enhanced  
384 the sensitivity of Co and Mo normalized with In, Rh or Ir. From the second group, the sensitivity  
385 of Ni and Cu increased when normalized with In and Ir, whereas sensitivity tends to decrease  
386 with Rh normalization. From the same group, the sensitivity of Pt is maintained with Ir as  
387 internal standard but tends to decrease when Pt is normalized with In and Rh. In the last group,  
388 the sensitivities of Zn, Se and Cd decrease systematically with all internal standards. The  
389 tendency of these 3 groups is likely to follow the FIP of these elements with the lowest FIP for  
390 Co (7.88 eV) and Mo (7.09 eV) followed by Ni (7.64 eV)-Cu (7.73 eV) and Pt (8.96 eV) at the  
391 limit of the 3<sup>rd</sup> group and finally the triplet of Zn (9.39 eV)-Se (9.75 eV)-Cd (8.99 eV). Therefore,  
392 if O<sub>2</sub> is added, Ir offering close mass and FIP similar to those of Pt and should be considered as  
393 the most appropriate to maintain analytical performances and reduce possible matrix effect.  
394 Definitely, the use of O<sub>2</sub> in the ICP source must be avoided for the LA-ICP MS analysis of Zn,  
395 Se and Cd unless more convenient internal standards (with closer mass and FIP) can be  
396 identified that are not naturally occurring in biological samples.

397 The effect of O<sub>2</sub> addition for potential matrix effect reduction was studied during ablation of  
398 biological tissue (homogenized metal-spiked kidney), which is a source of carbon introduced  
399 in the ICP. **Figure 2b and 2c** shows elemental images of kidney thin-sections without the  
400 addition of O<sub>2</sub> into the plasma (upper half part of the image) and with the addition of O<sub>2</sub> (lower  
401 half part). A representative image illustrates the tendency for each group of elements as  
402 defined above without internal standard normalization (2b) and with normalization (2c). For  
403 the first group of elements, O<sub>2</sub> addition enhanced Co signal intensity even in the presence of  
404 organic material. However, when Rh normalization was applied, no difference in relative  
405 responses were observed between the two conditions of plasma, indicating that these  
406 conditions were free of matrix effects. From the second group of elements, Pt exhibited  
407 increased signal intensity with O<sub>2</sub> addition. In contrast, In normalization tended to decrease  
408 the discrepancy of the Pt relative response over the thin-section regardless of plasma  
409 conditions, although Pt/In responses were still slightly more pronounced at the upper part of  
410 the section. With Ir normalization of Pt signal, no differential response could be observed

411 between the two statuses of O<sub>2</sub> plasma. Zn images that represent the thin section of the last  
412 group demonstrated strong loss of sensitivity under O<sub>2</sub> plasma that internal standard  
413 normalization did not recover, but Ir reduced the most, the differential response between the  
414 two plasma conditions.  
415 Together with results of the O<sub>2</sub> effects on calibration curves, these data demonstrate that the  
416 response of low FIP elements can be more easily corrected even in the presence of organic  
417 material and O<sub>2</sub> in the plasma, whereas high FIP elements are dramatically affected by the  
418 presence of O<sub>2</sub> and carbon load in the plasma that cannot be compensated for by  
419 normalization with any internal standard considered in this study. The intermediate group of  
420 elements (Cu, Ni and Pt) requires careful attention in the selection of the most suitable  
421 internal standard based on the plasma condition.

422

### 423 **Influence of laser energy and tissue thickness**

424 Thin sections of homogenized metal-spiked kidney (the matrix matched standard) were used  
425 to assess the effect of laser energy delivered and tissue thickness (10 and 30 μm) on elements  
426 response with and without O<sub>2</sub> in the ICP plasma. In most bioimaging studies, laser energy  
427 ranges in the low J cm<sup>-2</sup>. The two levels of energy (3.3 and 5.5 J cm<sup>-2</sup>) used in this study were  
428 chosen to enable complete ablation of the tissue and limit glass slide surface ablation as much  
429 as possible (**Figure 3**). On a 10-μm section analysis, these two levels of energy did not reveal  
430 notable differences for Co, Pt and Zn relative responses, which are representative elements  
431 of the three previously defined groups. On the other hand, when O<sub>2</sub> was added to the plasma,  
432 all relative responses of Pt and Zn were decreased by at least 2-fold with a 1.6-fold energy  
433 increase, whereas relative responses of Co were much less affected by O<sub>2</sub> while increasing  
434 energy level. Therefore, given that increasing the laser energy did not favor sensitivity  
435 enhancement and that a white deposit appeared on the skimmer cone after several days of  
436 imaging runs, the lowest laser energy was chosen to reduce (in depth) glass ablation and thus  
437 minimize white deposits originating from glass silicon oxide.

438 The relative response of the elements was compared for the two thicknesses of the matrix-  
439 matched standard using 3.3 J cm<sup>-2</sup> fluency. In the first group, Co relative responses increased  
440 proportionally (2.6 to 3-fold) with increases in section thickness for the majority of conditions  
441 (In, Rh, Ir, +/- O<sub>2</sub>). Mo behaved similarly to Co with or without addition O<sub>2</sub> to plasma.  
442 Considering Pt from the 2<sup>nd</sup> group, the lowest correlation (3.7-fold proportionality) was

443 obtained when the Pt signal was normalized by Rh in the absence of the addition of O<sub>2</sub> to  
444 plasma (2.9-fold for In and Ir normalizations). Under O<sub>2</sub>, the proportionality between tissue  
445 thickness increases and Pt normalized responses was slightly greater than with 3.6- to 4-fold  
446 relative response increases (as noted for Cu and Ni). Concerning the 3<sup>rd</sup> group, the normalized  
447 responses of Zn were on average poorly proportional (min-max: 1.7- to 2.9-fold) to the  
448 increase in tissue thickness. The closest values (2.87 and 2.95-fold) were obtained under Rh  
449 normalization without and with O<sub>2</sub> as observed for Se and Cd. Therefore, for this group of  
450 elements, thinner sections (i.e., 10 μm) are preferred for LA-ICP MS analysis without the  
451 addition of O<sub>2</sub> to plasma.

452 In summary, for the majority of these elements, with the exception of those in the third group  
453 (Zn, Se, and Cd), the carbon load from biological tissue does not hamper LA-ICP MS analysis  
454 on 30-μm sections given correct selection of internal standard for signal normalization.  
455 Overall, this finding underlines the consistent behavior of elements within each defined group,  
456 revealing once more that FIP is a key parameter to cope with the differences in carbon load in  
457 the plasma and regardless of its composition (-/+ O<sub>2</sub>).

458

#### 459 **LA-ICP MS methodology validation**

460 The reliability of the developed methodology was assessed using the matrix-matched  
461 standard, and homogenized kidney spiked with different amounts of metals (i.e., 2.5 μg g<sup>-1</sup>,  
462 50 μg g<sup>-1</sup> and 250 μg g<sup>-1</sup>) was cryosectioned at 8, 10, 14 and 30 μm (n=3/thickness conditions  
463 deposited in 3 different films). For each condition, 5 scans were acquired per kidney thin  
464 sections. In parallel, metal concentrations in each kidney standard (n= 3/conditions) were  
465 determined by conventional ICP MS analysis both in fresh and dried standards. Limits of  
466 detection of the LA-ICP MS methodology (under laser sampling conditions used) were  
467 determined according to the linear regression obtained by means of the polymer film  
468 standards (i.e., LODs = 3SD of the blanks/slope) and by taking into account the densities of the  
469 polymer film (d film = 3.6982 and d tissues=1), the thickness of the film (40 nm) and tissue  
470 section (8-30 μm). Using In as an internal standard for an 8-μm thin section samples (the  
471 thinnest section experimented), the limits of detections were in the μg g<sup>-1</sup> range and lower  
472 with Co (0.1 μg g<sup>-1</sup>), Mo (0.1 μg g<sup>-1</sup>), Pt (0.1 μg g<sup>-1</sup>), Cu (0.2 μg g<sup>-1</sup>), Cd (0.3 μg g<sup>-1</sup>), Ni (0.5 μg g<sup>-1</sup>),  
473 Zn (0.9 μg g<sup>-1</sup>), and Se (1 μg g<sup>-1</sup>). Accordingly, LOQs were approximately 3.3-fold increased.  
474 These values are in the expected range as LODs are usually reported at the 10<sup>-4</sup> to 10<sup>-1</sup> μg g<sup>-1</sup>



475 level [16]. LODs of some hundreds of  $\text{ng g}^{-1}$  and  $0.08 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  were reported for Cu [23] and Pt  
476 [19], respectively, and are close to our values. However, LODs are not reported for Co, Mo,  
477 Cd, Ni, Zn and Se for LA-ICP MS bioimaging analysis.

478 **Figure 4** presents LA-ICP MS quantification data obtained by means of metallic film calibration  
479 using In as internal standard,  $3.3 \text{ J cm}^{-2}$  fluency and no  $\text{O}_2$  in the ICP plasma. The LA-ICP MS  
480 data are bracketed by concentration values in fresh and dry weight samples for each  
481 condition. First, for all elements and thickness sections, concentrations determined by LA-ICP  
482 MS are located between the values expressed as fresh weight (FW) and as dry weight (DW).  
483 Of note, higher concentrations were obtained for 8- $\mu\text{m}$  sections compared with 10- $\mu\text{m}$  and  
484 30- $\mu\text{m}$  sections. This general trend is observed for all elements and is particularly pronounced  
485 for the highest concentration of kidney standard where an average 2.8-fold decrease in  
486 concentration is observed between the 8- and 30- $\mu\text{m}$  sections. For the two other kidney  
487 standards, this effect is reduced for all elements with an average 1.7- and 1.2-fold decrease at  
488 2.5 and  $50 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ , respectively. For all kidney standard concentrations, Pt is the element least  
489 affected by this decrease with 22% RSD (as Cd), 2% RSD (as Mo), and 64% RSD (as Cd, Mo and  
490 Se) at  $2.5 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ,  $50 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  and  $250 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ , respectively. In contrast, Ni is the most affected with  
491 the highest concentration discrepancies between the 8- $\mu\text{m}$  and 30- $\mu\text{m}$  sections (69% RSD at  
492  $2.5 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ; 71% RSD at  $250 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ). However, these decreases does not seem to be mass  
493 element dependent.

494 Additionally, at  $250 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ , quantification values obtained for an 8- $\mu\text{m}$  sections are closer to  
495 the DW concentration values than the FW values, especially for Co, Ni, Se and Mo with an  
496 approximately 37% bias. While Cu and Zn concentrations are approximately one-half of the  
497 value of DW, Zn and Cd values are one-half of an order of magnitude below the DW values.  
498 Consequently, for this concentration standard, the bias of 30- $\mu\text{m}$  section values with the FW  
499 values are in the range of 5% (Pt) to 29% (Co) for most elements with an average bias of 11%  
500 without taking into account Se (31%), Cd (49%) and Zn (56%). For the  $50 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  kidney standard,  
501 the average bias for the Co, Ni, Cu, Mo and Pt concentration values determined is 7%, and bias  
502 for Zn, Se and Cd is increased (42-92%). At  $2.5 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ , the bias of the 30- $\mu\text{m}$  section  
503 concentrations to the FW concentration values increases (>30%), which could be explained by  
504 the fact that the concentrations determined are moving closer to the LOQs. Nevertheless, the  
505 Pt concentration is still the closest to the FW value (29% bias). Using Ru and Y as internal  
506 standards for normalization in 20- $\mu\text{m}$  sections and comparing concentrations determined by

507 LA-ICP MS and ICP MS, a slightly higher bias (35%) was obtained for Cu (approximately the  
508 same level as  $2.5 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ), but the bias tended to be much lower for Zn (11% RSD at a  
509 concentration of  $8 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ) [24], in contrast to our study.

510 To summarize, Pt is the least problematic element in contrast to Zn (followed by Cd), which  
511 exhibits completely different behavior and appears to be difficult to properly quantify.  
512 Given that the kidney sample is directly analyzed without a drying step, one could expect a  
513 value closer to that expressed as fresh weight. This notion is likely to reflect the drying of the  
514 biological sample due to high He flow in the ablation cell during the imaging run or during the  
515 storage of the section before analysis. Thus, thinner sections would dry faster than the thicker  
516 during the ablation process. The use of a cryocell would be beneficial to better control this  
517 parameter in fresh biological samples analysis. Another alternative would be to dry (under  
518 light vacuum for example) the biological section immediately after its deposition on the  
519 polymer film without damaging the film substrate. In summary, the values determined by LA-  
520 ICP MS fall within intervals of fresh-dry weight concentrations, ensuring the validity of our  
521 methodology. In addition, the bias with the FW value can be assessed according to the  
522 thickness of the section under such analytical conditions.

523

#### 524 **Application to human clinical samples (ovaries and tumoral tissues)**

525 The methodology was applied to map elements in two types of samples from different  
526 patients. The standard protocol for woman treated by Hyperthermic Intraoperative Peritoneal  
527 Chemotherapy (HIPEC) for a peritoneal carcinomatosis is the removal of both ovaries. The  
528 HIPEC protocol involves the intraperitoneal application of a circulating bath of a  
529 chemotherapeutic solution heated at  $42^\circ\text{C}$  for 30 minutes. Platinum salts (cisplatin or  
530 oxaliplatin) are the onco-drugs most commonly used in this protocol. We have access to  
531 peritoneal tumoral nodules and ovaries resected before and after HIPEC. **Figure 5** shows the  
532 quantitative distribution of Pt derived from the drug, endogenous elements (Cu, Zn and Mo)  
533 and Cd. Of note, the qualitative and quantitative distributions were identical for all these  
534 elements, confirming that polymeric film and internal standards were homogeneous even  
535 after the drying step under a light vacuum. The highest concentrations ( $15\text{-}20 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ) of Pt  
536 were mostly determined at the periphery of the ovary given the type of treatment, which  
537 facilitated direct contact of the drug with the tissues and organs. In addition, approximately  
538  $5\text{-}10 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  of Pt spots could be quantified in some central parts of the ovary, which potentially

539 correspond to residual Pt from prior systemic chemotherapy. Zn is homogeneously distributed  
540 in the ovary at approximately  $10 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ . However, considering the quite important bias  
541 determined from the kidney standard, this value is certainly underestimated. Cu is also  
542 homogeneously distributed at lower concentrations, i.e.,  $2.5\text{-}5 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ . Mo, an element involved  
543 in some biological processes, was also detected at quantifiable ( $0.1 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ) levels but close to  
544 background level. The presence of  $1\text{-}2 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  Cd, which is quite unexpected, leaves us with  
545 unanswered questions about its origin and its potential toxic effects on ovary functionality  
546 [30].

547 This methodology was also applied to paraffin-embedded biological tissues, which is the most  
548 common protocol used for the preparation of tissue sections for the creation of clinical tissue  
549 banks. As shown in **Figure 6**, this preparation involving paraffin and polymer film immersion  
550 in a warm bath did not hamper quantification given that internal standards remained  
551 homogeneous after this entire process. Quantitative maps could be obtained for Pt, Cu, Zn  
552 and Ni among all the set of elements monitored. The others were under LODs. Although Pt  
553 was primarily found in the tissues surrounding the ovary, Pt concentrations were increased  
554 and in the range of  $30\text{-}60 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ . In contrast to the ovary sample, the highest concentrations  
555 ( $30\text{-}90 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ) of Cu and Zn were mostly noted at the periphery of the tumor tissue where  
556 some ( $10 \mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ) Ni was also quantified.  
557 This bioimaging analysis allowed to assess the penetration of Pt drug into tissues of patients,  
558 thus enabling comparisons of clinical protocols and their efficacy in a long term study. Finally,  
559 the quantification of endogenous elements (Cu, Zn, Ni, Mo) is also of paramount importance  
560 as it could enable us to follow the potential impact of the drug on these essential elements.

561

## 562 **Conclusion**

563 Given that most bioimaging studies report quantitative mapping for one or two elements, the  
564 developed methodology based on the use of a water-soluble polymer to produce metal-spiked  
565 polymer film standards allows the simultaneous quantitative mapping of a set of eight  
566 elements in biological samples for the first time. The 8 elements exhibited different behaviors  
567 as a function of the internal standards used for normalization and experimental conditions for  
568 analysis. Elements with low and medium first ionization potential ( $<9 \text{ eV}$ ) can be easily  
569 quantified in  $8\text{-}30\text{-}\mu\text{m}$  tissue sections. For higher FIP elements, which are more subjected  
570 to matrix effects, quantification is limited to  $<10\text{-}\mu\text{m}$  sections. The methodology was validated

571 on kidney matrix standards, and LODs in the range of 0.1 - 1  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  were determined for 8- $\mu\text{m}$   
572 thin-sections. This quantitative bioimaging methodology was successfully applied to two  
573 different samples following different sample preparations (fresh-frozen and fixed-embedded  
574 sample) without impacting polymer film homogeneity, thus ensuring the use of this  
575 methodology for clinical tissue banking.

576

577

## 578 **Acknowledgments**

579 Aquitaine Region and Feder are acknowledged for funding the laser ablation system through  
580 the AQUITRACE project (convention number 20131206001-13010973) and the profilometer.

581

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### 688 **Table and figures caption**

689 **Table 1.** Chemical composition, weight and thickness of polymer film standards prepared by  
690 spin-coating. Concentration ranges (0-400  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$  and 0-80  $\mu\text{g g}^{-1}$ ) are reported for major  
691 elements (P, Fe, Cu, Zn, and Pt) and minor (Ni, Co, Se, Mo, Cd, and Hg) elements, respectively.  
692 Rh, In and Ir are internal standards.

693 **Figure 1.** LA-ICP MS element calibration curves obtained as a function of internal standard  
694 (Normalized Intensity on the Y-axis) after spin-coating and LA-ICP MS analysis.

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696 **Figure 2.** Influence of O<sub>2</sub> addition to ICP plasma on **A)** Co, Pt and Zn sensitivity according to  
697 internal standard (Y-axis: Normalized Intensity) and element responses normalized **C)** or not  
698 **B)** during analysis of the 10- $\mu$ m sections of matrix-matched kidney standard.

699 **Figure3.** Influence of laser energy and section thickness on element response according to the  
700 three internal standard normalizations. Unless specified on the X-axis, experiments are run at  
701 3.3 j cm<sup>-2</sup> fluency.

702 **Figure4.** Methodology validation with determination of element concentrations by LA-ICP MS  
703 imaging in matrix-matched kidney standards at 2.5, 50 and 250  $\mu$ g g<sup>-1</sup> (expressed as major  
704 element concentrations) in 8-, 10-, 14- and 30- $\mu$ m sections with In normalization.  
705 Concentrations in fresh weight and dry weigh kidney standards were also determined by  
706 ICPMS following acid mineralization of the standards.

707 **Figure 5.** Example of quantitative mapping of elements in an 8- $\mu$ m section of a fresh frozen  
708 ovary from patients under oxaliplatin treatment with a photography before LA-ICP MS  
709 imaging..

710 **Figure 6.** Example of quantitative mapping of elements in an 8- $\mu$ m section of a fixed and resin-  
711 embedded tumor tissue from patients undergoing oxaliplatin treatment with a photography  
712 before LA-ICP MS imaging.

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