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1 H₂O₂-Sensitive Delivery Microparticles based On the Boronic acid

2 Chemistry: (Phenylboronic –Alginate Derivative / Dextran) System

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17 Oxidative stress is mainly due to the accumulation of hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) , enabling to distinguish between inflamed tissues from a healthy one. Hydrogen peroxide is then a very 18 promising stimulus for targeted drug delivery to diseased tissue. Herein, we design a new bio-19 20 compatible and -degradable polymeric multilayer film stable in aqueous solution at physiological pH, but which is destabilized upon exposure to a critical hydrogen peroxide 21 22 concentration. More precisely, we exploit the possibility to form "boronate ester" linkage between a boronic derivative (the phenylboronic acid-modified alginate) and a diol 23 biopolymer (the dextran) as a driving force for the multilayer build-up. We show that the 24 resulting LbL films present H₂O₂-responsiveness at physiological pH. The film disruption is 25 26 induced in response to H₂O₂ addition which causes the breakage of the boronate ester bond under this oxidative condition. This strategy is then extended for the fabrication of H₂O₂-27 responsive microparticles (coating of the calcium carbonate microsphere). The porosity of 28 these microparticles has have been judiciously employed to load a probe (rhodamine b). This 29 30 approach represents a complementary approach to biodegradable H₂O₂-triggered release systems. 31

32

33 Keywords: Layer-by-Layer films; H₂O₂-responsive; phenylboronic acid chemistry;
34 olysaccharide; dextran

36 1. Introduction

Reactive oxygen species (ROS) are implied in numeral physiological processes. One may cite 37 apoptosis, cell signaling or even proliferation. Excess ROS production is often associated with 38 diseases such as tumors and inflammatory pathologies.[1, 2] ROS-specific detection systems 39 [3-7] have gained an increase of interest due to the high impact of oxidative stress and 40 reactive oxygen species on several diseases.[8-13] Oxidative stress is correlated to the balance 41 42 of oxidative and reducing species within the cellular medium. Cellular components can be damaged out of the balance due to ROS such as hydrogen peroxide, superoxide or even 43 44 hydroxide radicals.[14] Consequently, some ROS can be considered as a key to cell signaling [15] and defense mechanisms. Furthermore, these species may also contribute to various 45 diseases.[16-18] 46

Smart polymer-based materials (films, particles...) are useful as they can easily be tailored to 47 degrade or release drug under the action of certain stimuli. [19, 20] ROS-responsive materials 48 have then been fabricated using poly(vanillin oxalate) [21], polyoxalate nanoparticles [22], 49 poly(propylene sulfide) polymersomes [23] or polysulfide nanoparticles [10]. These latter has 50 been are evidenced to enable response to ROSs such as hydrogen peroxide leading to the 51 release of encapsulated drugs. Developing new polymer-based materials sensitive to ROSs 52 53 enabling drug delivery undergoing oxidative stress are then highly attractive for instance for treatment of many diseases marked by high concentrations of ROS. 54

Herein, we particularly pay attention to H_2O_2 for triggering the release of cargo or for impacting the multilayer stability. Indeed, excessive production of H_2O_2 may show oxidative stress leading to the development of many diseases such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, Huntington's disease and cardiovascular disease [24, 25]. Stimuli-response to H_2O_2 may then be a key focus of research into the chemical mechanisms evidencing the development and progression of disease. Therefore, the development of material/system presenting sensitivity against H_2O_2 is of major interest.

Here, we report on polysaccharide multilayer film based on phenylboronic acid (PBA) moiety and H_2O_2 -triggered release of a probe based on an oxidative decomposition reaction of boronate ester moiety with H_2O_2 . Boronate esters can be transformed into phenol derivatives due to an oxidative reaction [26] . H_2O_2 -sensitive materials have been developed using PBA derivatives. [1, 2, 8, 27] However, these materials are (i) not entirely based on biopolymer, (ii) sensitive to only a high amount of H_2O_2 (millimolar level) and (iii) the stimuli-response is

68 generally slow (several hours to a few days).

Towards this aim, we may think at using the LbL multilayer approach which has been proven 69 to be useful for drug delivery systems (DDS). [28] Functional layer-by-layer (LbL) multilayer 70 films on a solid substrate are typically prepared by exploiting the electrostatic interactions as 71 driving force.[29] However, various other interactions can also be involved in the elaboration 72 of LbL films. One may cite interactions and hydrogen bonding [30], avidin-biotin [31] or 73 even sugar-lectin. [32] Recently, phenylboronic acid and its derivatives have been are 74 proposed for the elaboration of LbL films. [33-38] However, most of the polymers involved 75 are based on synthetic one. 76 In this paper, we present a complementary polymeric approach specifically sensitive to

In this paper, we present a complementary polymeric approach specifically sensitive to biologically relevant concentrations of H_2O_2 and presenting with fast response to this chemical stimulus. Our research consists in the building-up and the characterization of multilayer films based on phenylboronic-based alginate and dextran (a diol polymer). Indeed, PBA and its derivatives spontaneously form a boronate ester bond with diol derivative. [39] We show the multilayer disassembly upon H_2O_2 exposure. This strategy is then extended to the elaboration of H_2O_2 -responsive microparticles and to-for the entrapment of a probe inside the by involving a porous matrix of the calcium carbonate microparticles.

85

86 **2. Experimental**

87 **2.1. Materials**

Alginate was provided from Cargill (Baupte, France) (alg⁻, mannuronic / guluronic ratio = 1.4, $\overline{Mn} = 2.7 \ 10^5 \text{ g} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$, $\overline{D} = 2.3$), dextran (1.1 $10^5 \text{ g} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$, Biochemica), poly(ethylenimine) (PEI, Sigma- Aldrich aldrich). All the chemicals were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich.

91 The phenylboronic-modified alginate labelled "alg-bor" (grafting ratio of phenylboronic acid
92 groups about 20%) was prepared by using the procedure developed by Belbekhouche *et al.*93 [19].

94

95 **2.2.** Elaboration of H₂O₂-multilayer responsive on flat substrate

96 QCM measurement (Q-Sense E1, Q-Sense, Sweden) was performed to follow in situ all the 97 implemented strategy (i.e. multilayer buildup and H₂O₂-response). To clean the gold coated 98 QCM surface, this later was first flushed with two solvents (water and ethanol), was subjected 99 to a UV/ozone chamber for 20 min and which was followed by a final rinsing with ethanol. 100 Before introducing in the QCM flow chamber, the surface was overnight pretreated with a 101 solution of 4-mercaptophenylboronic acid (10 mg in 2 mL of ethanol). The surface was

- 102 conditioned in the solvent (PBS, pH 7.4) for 10 min. The self-assembly of alg-bor /dextran 103 was achieved onto the gold pretreated substrate through a flushing of stock polymers solutions 104 (1 mg.mL⁻¹, 15 min, flow rate of 250 μ L.min⁻¹). A rinsing step was done with the buffer 105 between each polymer deposition step during 10 min.
- Wetting contact angle measurements were performed with a Kruss goniometer (roomtemperature, sessile drop configuration) on the gold modified surface.
- 108

109 2.3. Elaboration of H₂O₂-responsive microparticles.

Negatively charged CaCO₃ microparticles were fabricated following the process developed by Volodkin et al. [37] Briefly, equal volumes of calcium chloride (CaCl₂, 0.33 M) and sodium carbonate (Na₂CO₃, 0.33 M) solutions were mixed for 3 min under vigorous stirring. This enables enabled rapid precipitation and then fabrication of the CaCO₃ microparticles presenting negatively charged surface. The particles were washed two times with water and then acetone to remove water.

10 mg of CaCO₃ particles were was dispersed in 500 µL of water, followed by the addition of 116 500 μ L of a PEI (polycation, 1 mg.mL⁻¹) solution. The particles were shaken during 15 min. 117 The unadsorbed PEI was removed by a centrifugation process (5 min, 10 000 rpm). The 118 resulting particles were washed with water (5 min, two times). It deserves noting that the final 119 volume was kept during all the experiment at 1 mL. The PEI-coated CaCO₃ particles were 120 suspended in water and 500 µL of alginate derivative (1 mg.mL⁻¹) was added. The 121 polysaccharide excess was removed by centrifugation process (5 min, 10 000 rpm). The 122 particles were suspended in aqueous solution and 500 µL of dextran (1 mg.mL⁻¹) was added 123 and stirred for 15 min. This process presents the assembly of a single bilayer: (alg-bor 124 /dextran)1. The adsorption of the polycation (PEI) and then the polyanion (alg-bor) on the 125 negatively charged CaCO₃ particles was followed by measurement of zeta potential (a 126 127 Zetasizer Nano-ZS, Malvern Instrumente). Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) was performed to show the formation of microparticles and its shape (Leo Elektronenmikroskopie, 128 129 Oberkoche in Germany).

130

131 **2.3. Probes-loaded microparticles.**

A rhodamine b solution (0.5 mg in 5 mL of water) was mixed to 10 mg of bare CaCO₃
microparticles and stirred at room temperature for 24 h. The resulting microparticles were

- centrifuged (5 min, 10 000 rpm) and washed with water to remove the unentrapped rhodamine
 (three times). The LbL process was then performed as discussed in section 2.3. The loaded
 microparticles were subjected to absorbance measurement (554 nm, Varian, Cary 100).
- 137 Equations 1 and 2 enabled to estimate the probe loading as well as the entrapment efficiency.
- 138 Probe loading = (amount of probe in microparticles) / (amount of microparticles) x 100% (1)
- 139 Entrapment efficiency = (amount of entrapped probe) / (initial amount of probe) x 100% (2)
- 140
- The release due to H_2O_2 of the as-obtained microparticle was then investigated. In this aim, loaded microparticles were introduced in a dialysis bag and immersed in H_2O_2 solution at pH 7.4 (final dialysate volume = 400 mL). The used H_2O_2 concentration, named "critical H_2O_2 concentration" will be was estimated by the quartz crystal microbalance study. At different intervals, 1 mL of solution outside the dialysis membrane was removed and replaced with 1 mL of fresh buffer solution.
- 147

148 **3. Results and discussion**

As presented in Figure 1, the developed approach exploits the possibility to form "boronate 149 150 ester" linkage between a boronic derivative (phenylboronic acid-modified alginate) and a diol polymer (dextran) as the driving force for the multilayer build-up. Their chemical structures 151 are shown in figure 2. We will then demonstrate that the resulting LbL films present H₂O₂-152 responsiveness. The strategy will is further be extended for to the elaboration of H_2O_2 -153 responsive microparticles. Toward this aim, calcium carbonate (CaCO₃) microparticles will 154 be was prepared and modified. Calcium carbonate cores have been were selected because of 155 its biocompatibility, low-cost and intrinsic porosity. The stability of the resulting multilayer 156 against H_2O_2 and a cargo entrapment and subsequent release was are finally investigated. 157



Figure 1. (Top) Representative scheme illustrating the preparation of H_2O_2 -responsive 161 multilayer films based on a phenylboronic acid polysaccharide derivative (alg-bor) and 162 dextran. (Bottom) Illustration of the formation of boronate ester upon boronic acid and diol 163 derivatives coupling followed by an oxidation of boronate ester to phenol by H_2O_2 .





167 **3.1.** Incorporation of phenylboronic acid moiety inside the alginate.

Phenylboronic acid moiety was inserting was inserted inside the polysaccharide by reacting 168 the aminophenylboronic acid with the carboxyl functional group of the alginic acid (figure 2). 169 [40, 41] The carboxyl group of the alginate reacts reacted with 1-ethyl-3-(3-170 dimethylaminopropyl)carbodiimide hydrochloride leading to an intermediate which is 171 unstable. An amine-reactive intermediate is was then obtained upon reacting with the NHS. 172 This later then immediately reacts reacted with the amine functionality of the 173 aminophenylboronic acid. The ¹H NMR spectra shows the protons chemical shifts of the 174 alginate (3 to 4 ppm) and phenyl backbone (6.7 to 7.2 ppm) (see SI, Figure S1). Herein, the 175 NMR measurement allows allowed qualitatively demonstrating that the as-obtained alginate 176 indeed contains aromatic groups. A Degree of Substitution "DS" is-was qualitatively 177 estimated by using equation 3. [42] 178

179

$$DS = (I_H \text{ in boronic unit in alg-bor}) / (I_H \text{ in alginate unit in alg-bor})$$
(3)

180 The phenylboronic acid content is-was then estimated to be about 0.20 ± 0.04 .

The FT-IR spectrum (see SI, Figure S2) of the alg-bor is in accordance with the success of the chemical modification of the alginate ($3300 \text{ cm}^{-1} = -\text{OH groups} / 1740 \text{ cm}^{-1} = -\text{C}=\text{O}$ due to the amide /1595 cm⁻¹ and 1412 cm⁻¹ = N-H deformation and C-N stretching vibrations / 1080 cm⁻¹ 184 ¹ = C-N stretching vibration present after the chemical modification with the boronic derivative / 1143 cm⁻¹ = C-O stretching vibration of alcoholic hydroxyl group / 1023 cm⁻¹ = 186 C-O-C stretching vibration / 867 cm⁻¹ and 945 cm⁻¹ = guluronate / mannuronate of (un-)modified alginate).

188

3.2. Design of the H₂O₂-responsive multilayer film onto pretreated flat gold substrate.

190 This implemented approach was first evidenced on a model substrate, i.e. on a pretreated flat gold surface by wettability measurement and adsorption test. Static contact angle tests are was 191 192 done on the flat substrate before and after dipping in solutions containing polysaccharide derivatives, i.e. (alg-bor/dextran)₁₀, to qualitatively show the building up of the multilayer 193 film onto the surface. The contact angle value diminished from 80° to 10° upon coating, 194 which could be correlated to the hydrophilic nature of these polysaccharides, adsorbed on the 195 surface (Figure 3). The variation of the number of bilayers is was found to have no impact on 196 the surface wettability behavior. Interestingly, after flushing with a solution of H_2O_2 , the 197 contact angle value is was 80° which seems to be in accordance with multilayer removal 198 under this oxidizing condition. Note that a simple flushing with water or PBS solution (pH 199

200 7.4) has had no impact on the contact angle value and then on the multilayer stability. The 201 multilayer build-up could then be repeated on this pre-treated substrate. The same contact 202 angle value-is was then obtained - i.e. around 10° - and flushing again this modified substrate 203 with a solution of H₂O₂ leads led to the multilayer removal. These results clearly shown the 204 rapid and reversible H₂O₂-responsive behavior of the developed system.





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Figure 3. Reversible switching of the wettability property under oxidative condition: (A)
precoated with a with 4-mercaptophenylboronic acid and (B) after the multilayer film buildup with (alg-bor/PVPON dextran)₁₀.

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The opportunity to imply both boronic acid of the alginate and the diol from the dextran for 211 212 forming boronate ester was then qualitatively demonstrated by wetting angle contact measurement and will was further quantitatively be evidenced by QCM measurements to (i)213 214 follow the multilayer build-up of the polysaccharides pair, i.e. alg-bor and dextran, and (ii) evidence the possible effect of H₂O₂ on the resulting LbL film. A gold-coated quartz substrate 215 216 is was first pretreated with a 4-mercaptophenylboronic acid to impart boronic acid moiety on the surface. This will enabled the adsorption of the first layer of the diol containing polymer 217 (dextran) followed by alg-bor adsorption (boronate ester interaction). Note that the presence 218 of boronic acid groups was ensured by performing the build-up at pH 7.4 (pKa of phenylboric 219 220 acid ~ 8.9). [43] As evidenced in Figure 4, the multilayer film build-up was monitored on the pre-treated surface of a quartz resonator. This figure shows the change in the resonance 221 frequency during the QCM measurement upon successive deposition of dextran followed by 222 223 phenylboronic acid-modified alginate. The variation of the frequency values decreased upon each polysaccharide deposition. This result strongly suggests that an increase of the mass onto 224

the surface upon the polymer addition and then demonstrates the multilayer buildup (i.e four 225 bilayers of alg-bor/dextran). Figure 1 (bottom) proposes a plausible binding mode between 226 phenylboronic acid-modified and the diol of the dextran in the film [39]. The result strongly 227 suggests that there is formation of boronate ester bonds during the LbL build-up which is 228 involved as the driving force for the preparation of LbL films. As a reference, test of 229 multilayer build-up has been was performed by using native alginate, i.e. (dextran/alginate) 230 pair. Only dextran is was adsorbed as first layer. This is was due to its interaction with 231 boronic acid moieties present on the pretreated surface. Addition of native alginate leads led 232 233 to non deposition of this polymer. This comforts our hypothesis, i.e., the boronate ester bonds act as the driving force during the multilayer build-up of (alg-bor/dextran) film. 234



235

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Figure 4. Evolution of the frequency shift values as a function of time as measured during the
build up at pH 7.4 with (alg-bor/dextran) films (filled arrow: addition of dextran and unfilled
arrow: alg-bor , "*" rinsing step).

The impact of H₂O₂ concentration on the multilayer stability was investigated with QCM 240 device. Towards this aim, the (alg-bor/dextran)₄ multilayer film was exposed to H₂O₂ 241 solutions ranging from 0.1 to 20 mM 500 µM. From Figure 4, it can could be noted that at the 242 end of the dextran/alg-bor build-up the final equilibrium frequency shift values were -150 ± 5 243 Hz. These frequency values $\frac{can}{can}$ could be used as reference to study the H₂O₂ sensitivity of the 244 films. Thus, the film degradation or removal should be correlated to a final value of about 245 +150 \pm 5 Hz. As seen from figure 4, Δ F increases upon exposing the film to H₂O₂ to finally 246 247 attain stable value. The critical H_2O_2 concentration is was found to be around 75 -100 μ M, meaning near biologically relevant H₂O₂ concentrations. This evidences the film 248 249 decomposition upon the increase of the concentration of H₂O₂. In contrast, in a solution without H_2O_2 , the frequency shifts does did not vary, the multilayer film remained then stable (see supporting information, figure S3). These results clearly evidenced that the (algbor/dextran)_n film is sensitive under oxidizing conditions and more precisely decomposes in H_2O_2 solutions at pH 7.4. The boronate ester bond of alg-bor and dextran can could be reversibly cleaved under oxidative condition [44] as illustrated in figure 1 (bottom).



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Figure 5. Effect of increasing concentrations of H_2O_2 at pH 7.4 on (alg-bor/dextran)₄ film.

It has then been proven that the (phenylboronic acid modified alginate /dextran) could form multilayer formation in appropriate condition and to exhibit H_2O_2 -responsive behaviour at pH 7.4. We then proposed to extend the process for the fabrication of microparticles pre-loaded with a cargo and exhibiting H_2O_2 -response.

262

3.3. Elaboration of the H₂O₂ responsive particles based on (phenylboronic acid modified alginate /dextran)

We have used CaCO₃ microparticles as support for the deposition of these biopolymers films, mainly because of its easy elaboration, biocompatibility and intrinsic porosity. [19] (phenylboronic acid-modified alginate/dextran) pair will has then be deposited on this microparticles, used as template. The stability of coated microparticles against H_2O_2 and the cargo entrapment and subsequent release will be have then been investigated.



Figure 6. Preparation of the H_2O_2 -responsive microparticles based on phenylboronic acid containing polysaccharide (alg-bor) and a diol biopolymer (dextran) loaded with probes (The red lines in the left particle represent the loading of the probe inside the porosity of the microparticle. The white lines in the right particle indicate the release of the probe from the particle porosity).

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The CaCO₃ microparticles present a negatively charged surface $(-7 \pm 1 \text{ mV})$ and is then pretreated with the poly(ethylene imine) used as anchoring layer for enabling the subsequent multilayer build-up. The zeta-potential value switchesd to a positive one after the adsorption of the PEI (+ 50 mV). This allows the adsorption of the alg-bor (-23 ± 2 mV). After this step, the boronate ester-bonded layer-by-layer (LbL) approach was applied to prepare the multilayer (particle shell) with the phenylboronic acid modified alginate and dextran and remained stable up to 2 months.

- Preloading enables to greatly increase the efficiency of cargo loading as lower chemicals is are necessary. One may cite, the work of Caruso et al. who presented that this approach allowed reported to significantly concentrate DNA from a dilute solution onto particles used as a matrix to fabricate capsules. [45] In their study, this polyanion was electrostatically bound
- to the surface of particles and then multilayers film were elaborated.
- 290 We have then used this strategy to load a probe (rhodamine derivative rhodamine b) inside the
- 291 particle. The incorporation of rhodamine does did not significantly impact the zeta-potential
- value of the loaded CaCO₃ particle. SEM images show the spherical form and micrometer
- size of the fabricated microparticles (Figure 7).



Figure 7. SEM images of modified microspheres composed by (alg-bor/dextran)₄
biopolymers pair.

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The efficiencies entrapment are was found to be greater than 60% and the rhodamine loading is was above 7%, evidencing that this chemical could be easily entrapped inside the CaCO₃ particles' matrix due to the intrinsic porosity.

When the rhodamine-loaded microparticles composed by (alg-bor/dextran)₄ were suspended 301 302 in into an aqueous solution at pH 7.4 and without hydrogen peroxide, they stay staid stable and intact, i.e. the multilayer was not impacted by this condition (Figure S3). Then, when 303 304 these (alg-bor/dextran)₄ microparticles were suspended in a solution containing H_2O_2 at pH 7.4 and at the critical H_2O_2 concentration determined during the QCM assay, the rhodamine is 305 was gradually released in the medium (see Figure 8) which is was due to the destabilization of 306 307 the (alg-bor/dextran) multilayer. Indeed, high release rate of rhodamine b was initially observed (within the first 5 minutes) and then, release rate gradually decreased and levels off. 308 Upon oxidative condition, the release of rhodamine b from the inner microparticle cavity 309 could be correlated to the multilayer film decomposition as evidenced by QCM measurement 310 (Figure 5, H₂O₂-triggered release of the rhodamine b due to the oxidative decomposition 311 reaction of boronate ester moiety with H₂O₂). 312





Figure 8. Release of rhodamine derivatives from $(alg-bor/dextran)_4$ microparticles with \blacksquare and without H₂O₂ Δ solution (100 μ M) at pH 7.4.

319 4. Conclusion

320 H₂O₂-sensitive assemblies based on dextran (diol biopolymer) and phenylboronic acid containing polysaccharide have been was successfully prepared. This bioresponsiveness of the 321 322 resulting multilayer film is was due to the formation of boronic ester during the build-up 323 which is triggering groups impacted upon exposure to H_2O_2 . Advantages of our system are consisted in biocompatibility, synthetic accessibility, reversibility and fast H₂O₂ triggered 324 cleavage kinetics. Cargo-loaded microparticles were then formulated based on this multilayer 325 film. The morphology of the microparticles was evidenced by SEM. A probe was loaded by 326 taking advantage of the porous calcium carbonate microparticles as template porosity. The 327 fast release contents upon exposure to H₂O₂ were shown at a biologically relevant H₂O₂ 328 concentrations (100 μ M). Herein, the H₂O₂ scavenging by the film was not possible, thus the 329 developed system may mainly be used as H₂O₂ sensor. Ongoing researches are dedicated to 330 evidence the potential of these multilayer films to deliver therapeutic specifically to tissues 331 332 undergoing oxidative stress.

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334 5. References

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Figure S1. A) ¹H NMR spectrum (D₂O) of alginate and alg-bor, B) Zoom-in of graph A.



Figure S3: QCM-D measurements. Flushing of a gold sensor coated with (alg-bor/ dextran)₄
film at pH 7.4. The non variation of the frequency evidences the stability of the multilayer
films under such condition.