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Sensitive and reproducible detection of SARS-CoV-2 using SERS-based microdroplet sensor

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Abstract

Surface-enhanced Raman scattering (SERS)-based assays have been recently developed to overcome the low detection sensitivity of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). SERS-based assays using magnetic beads in microtubes slightly improved the limit of detection (LoD) for SARS-CoV-2. However, the sensitivity and reproducibility of the method are still insufficient for reliable SARS-CoV-2 detection. In this study, we developed a SERS-based microdroplet sensor to dramatically improve the LoD and reproducibility of SARS-CoV-2 detection. Raman signals were measured for SERS nanotags in 140 droplets passing through a laser focal volume fixed at the center of the channel for 15 s. A comparison of the Raman signals of SERS nanotags measured in a microtube with those measured for multiple droplets in the microfluidic channel revealed that the LoD and coefficient of variation significantly improved from 36 to 0.22 PFU/mL and 21.2% to 1.79%, respectively. This improvement resulted from the ensemble average effects because the signals were measured for SERS nanotags in multiple droplets. Moreover, the total assay time decreased from 30 to 10 min. A clinical test was performed on patient samples to evaluate the clinical efficacy of the SERS-based microdroplet sensor. The assay results agreed well with those measured by the reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) method. The proposed SERS-based microdroplet sensor is expected to be used as a new point-of-care diagnostic platform for quick and accurate detection of SARS-CoV-2 in the field.

논문정보

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