

SINGLE-USE TECHNOLOGY IN BIOPHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURE

2ND EDITION

EDITED BY

REGINE EIBL | DIETER EIBL



Single-Use Technology in Biopharmaceutical Manufacture

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Second Edition

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Contents

List of Contributors *xvii*

Preface *xxi*

Part I Basics *1*

- 1 Single-Use Equipment in Biopharmaceutical Manufacture: A Brief Introduction** *3*
Dieter Eibl and Regine Eibl
 - 1.1 Background *3*
 - 1.2 Terminology and Features *3*
 - 1.3 Single-Use Systems in Production Processes for Therapeutic Proteins such as mAbs: Product Overview and Classification *5*
 - 1.4 Single-Use Production Facilities *7*
 - 1.5 Summary and Conclusions *7*
 - Nomenclature *9*
 - References *9*
- 2 Types of Single-Use Bag Systems and Integrity Testing Methods** *13*
Jens Rumsfeld and Regine Eibl
 - 2.1 Introduction *13*
 - 2.2 Bags for Fluid and Powder Handling *13*
 - 2.2.1 Tank Liners *13*
 - 2.2.2 Two-Dimensional Bags *14*
 - 2.2.2.1 Bags for Fluid Handling *14*
 - 2.2.2.2 Bags for Powder Handling *14*
 - 2.2.3 Three-Dimensional Bags *15*
 - 2.3 Bag-Handling and Container Systems *15*
 - 2.3.1 Bag-Handling Systems *15*
 - 2.3.2 Container Systems for in-House Applications *17*
 - 2.3.3 Container Systems for Liquid Shipping *17*
 - 2.4 Single-Use Bag Systems for Freezing and Thawing *18*
 - 2.5 Container Closure Integrity Testing *18*
 - 2.6 Summary and Conclusions *22*
 - Nomenclature *22*
 - References *22*
- 3 Mixing Systems for Single-Use** *25*
Sören Werner, Matthias Kraume, and Dieter Eibl
 - 3.1 Introduction *25*
 - 3.2 The Mixing Process *25*
 - 3.2.1 Definition and Description *25*
 - 3.2.2 Mixing Quality *26*

3.2.3	Mixing Time	26
3.2.4	Residence Time Distribution	27
3.2.5	Reynolds Number	27
3.2.6	Specific Power Input	27
3.3	Single-Use Bag Mixing Systems	27
3.3.1	Overview and Classification	27
3.3.2	Mixing Systems with Rotating Stirrer	28
3.3.2.1	Levitated Mixers	28
3.3.2.2	Magnetic Mixers	29
3.3.2.3	Mixers with Sealing	30
3.3.3	Mixing Systems with Tumbling Stirrer	31
3.3.4	Mixing Systems with Oscillating Devices	31
3.3.5	Hydraulically Driven Mixing Systems	32
3.4	Summary and Conclusions	33
	Nomenclature	33
	References	33
4	Single-Use Bioreactors – An Overview	37
	<i>Valentin Jossen, Regine Eibl, and Dieter Eibl</i>	
4.1	Introduction	37
4.2	SUB History	38
4.2.1	Phase 1: Early Beginnings	38
4.2.2	Period 2: Establishment of Disposable Membrane Bioreactors, Multitray Cell Culture Systems, and the First Bag Bioreactors	38
4.2.3	Period 3: Expansion of Wave-Mixed, Stirred, Orbitally Shaken, and Further SUB Types	40
4.3	Comparison of the Current, Most Common SUB Types	40
4.3.1	Wave-Mixed SUBs	40
4.3.2	Stirred SUBs	43
4.3.3	Orbitally Shaken SUBs	46
4.4	Decision Criteria for Selection of the Most Suitable SUB Type	47
4.5	Summary and Future Trends	48
	Nomenclature	48
	References	48
5	Systems for Coupling and Sampling	53
	<i>Cedric Schirmer, Sebastian Rothe, Ernest Jenness, and Dieter Eibl</i>	
5.1	Introduction	53
5.2	Components of Single-Use Transfer Lines	53
5.2.1	Tubes	53
5.2.2	Fittings and Accessories	54
5.2.3	Connectors	55
5.2.4	Valves and Clamps	55
5.2.5	Pumps	55
5.3	Systems for Aseptic Coupling	57
5.3.1	Connection under Laminar Flow	57
5.3.2	Steam-in-place Connection	57
5.3.3	Aseptic Coupling	57
5.3.3.1	Aseptic Connectors	57
5.3.3.2	Welding	59
5.3.4	Aseptic Transfer Systems	59
5.4	Aseptic Disconnection	62
5.5	Systems for Sampling	64
5.5.1	Single-Use Sampling Systems for Conventional Systems	64

5.5.2	Single-Use Sampling Systems for Single-Use Systems	65
5.6	Summary and Conclusion	66
	Nomenclature	66
	References	66
6	Sensors for Disposable Bioreactor Systems	69
	<i>Tobias Steinwedel, Katharina Dahlmann, Dörte Solle, Thomas Scheper, Kenneth F. Reardon, and Frank Lammers</i>	
6.1	Introduction	69
6.2	Interfaces for Sensor Technology	70
6.3	Considerations of Extractables and Leachables from Integrated Sensors	71
6.4	Optical Chemosensors	72
6.4.1	Overview	72
6.4.2	Optical Oxygen Sensors	72
6.4.3	Optical pH Sensors	73
6.4.4	Optical Carbon Dioxide Sensors	73
6.5	Spectroscopic Sensors	73
6.5.1	Overview	73
6.5.2	UV/VIS Spectroscopy	74
6.5.3	Infrared Spectroscopy	74
6.5.4	Fluorescence Spectroscopy	75
6.5.5	Raman Spectroscopy	75
6.6	Capacitance Sensors	75
6.7	Electrochemical Sensors	76
6.7.1	Overview	76
6.7.2	Single-Use pH Electrode	76
6.7.3	Field-Effect Transistors	77
6.8	Biosensors	78
6.9	Conclusions and Outlook	78
	Nomenclature	79
	References	79
7	Bioinformatics and Single-Use	83
	<i>Barbara A. Paldus</i>	
7.1	Introduction	83
7.2	Bioinformatics and Single-Use	84
7.3	Smart Sensors	86
7.4	Intelligent Control Systems	87
7.5	Continuous Processing	88
7.6	Conclusions	92
	Nomenclature	94
	References	94
8	Production of Disposable Bags: A Manufacturer's Report	95
	<i>Steven Vanhamel and Catherine Piton</i>	
8.1	Introduction	95
8.2	Materials	95
8.2.1	Most Important Polymeric Materials Used in Disposable Bags	95
8.2.1.1	Polyethylene	95
8.2.1.2	Polypropylene	96
8.2.1.3	Ethylene Vinyl Acetate	96
8.2.1.4	Polyamide or Nylon	96
8.2.1.5	Polyethylene Terephthalate	97
8.2.1.6	Ethylene Vinyl Alcohol	97
8.2.1.7	PVDC	97

8.2.2	Material Properties	97
8.2.2.1	PE	97
8.2.2.2	PP	98
8.2.2.3	EVA	98
8.2.2.4	PA	98
8.2.2.5	PET	98
8.2.2.6	EVOH	98
8.2.2.7	PVDC	98
8.3	Film Manufacturing and Molding	98
8.3.1	Introduction	98
8.3.2	Film Manufacturing	99
8.3.2.1	Blown Film Extrusion	100
8.3.2.2	Cast Film Extrusion	101
8.3.2.3	Extrusion Lamination	101
8.3.2.4	Film Extrusion for Disposable Bags Used in Biopharmaceutical Manufacturing	101
8.3.3	Molding	102
8.3.4	Quality Insurance	104
8.3.4.1	Mechanical Tests	105
8.3.4.2	Physical Testing	105
8.3.4.3	Biological Testing	105
8.3.4.4	Material-Dependent Tests	105
8.3.4.5	Extractables and Leachables	105
8.3.4.6	Chemical Compatibility Tests	108
8.3.4.7	Functional Tests – Assembly Test	108
8.3.4.8	Functional Test – Differential Scanning Calorimetry (DSC)	109
8.3.4.9	Sterility Tests	109
8.3.4.10	Contamination Requirements	110
8.3.4.11	Expiry Date	110
8.4	Bag Manufacturing	110
8.4.1	Most Important Manufacturing Processes Used in the Production of Disposable Bags	110
8.4.2	Quality Insurance	112
8.4.2.1	Control of Incoming Material	112
8.4.2.2	Release of Disposable Bags	112
8.5	Summary and Conclusions	113
	Nomenclature	115
	References	116
9	Single-Use Downstream Processing for Biopharmaceuticals: Current State and Trends	117
	<i>Britta Manser, Martin Glenz, and Marc Bisschops</i>	
9.1	Introduction	117
9.2	Single-Use DSP Today	117
9.2.1	Benefits and Constraints of Single-Use DSP	117
9.2.2	Trends in Single-Use DSP	117
9.2.3	Single-Use and Continuous DSP Platforms	118
9.3	Technologies in Single-Use DSP	120
9.3.1	Clarification	120
9.3.2	Capture and Polishing	120
9.3.3	Virus Removal	121
9.3.4	Formulation	121
9.4	Single-Use Continuous Downstream Processing	121
9.4.1	Clarification	121
9.4.2	Capture and Polishing	122
9.4.3	Virus Removal	122
9.4.3.1	Continuous In-Process Mixing and Hold	123

9.4.3.2	Plug-Flow Reactors	123
9.4.3.3	Filtration	123
9.4.3.4	Chromatography	123
9.4.4	Formulation	124
9.5	Integrated and Continuous DSP	124
9.6	Summary and Conclusions	124
	Nomenclature	124
	References	125
10	Application of Microporous Filtration in Single-Use Systems	127
	<i>Christian Julien and Chuck Capron</i>	
10.1	Introduction	127
10.2	Microporous Filters	128
10.2.1	Nominal Versus Absolute Removal Ratings	128
10.2.2	Particle Retention Mechanisms	128
10.2.3	Filter Media	128
10.2.4	Membrane Filters	131
10.2.5	Depth Filters	132
10.2.6	Sterilizing-Grade Filters	133
10.2.7	Mycoplasma Retentive Filters	134
10.2.8	Virus Retentive Filters	134
10.3	Filter Selection	134
10.3.1	The Need for Filter Testing	134
10.3.2	Flow Decay Studies	134
10.3.3	Meeting Process Objectives	135
10.3.4	Applications Orientation	136
10.4	Final Sterile Filtration	136
10.4.1	Regulatory Highlights	136
10.4.2	Serial and Redundant Filtration	136
10.5	Filter Integrity Testing	138
10.5.1	Regulatory Highlights	138
10.5.2	PUPSIT	138
10.5.3	Filter Integrity Tests	138
10.6	Filter Qualification and Validation	139
10.6.1	Regulatory Highlights	139
10.6.2	Product-Based Tests	139
10.7	Summary and Conclusions	140
	Nomenclature	140
	References	140
11	Extractables/Leachables from Single-Use Equipment: Considerations from a (Bio) Pharmaceutical Manufacturer	143
	<i>Alicja Sobańska and Christian Weiner</i>	
11.1	Introduction	143
11.2	Regulatory Environment	144
11.2.1	Pharmacopeia Chapters	144
11.2.2	Biological Reactivity and Chemical Safety	145
11.2.3	“Pharma Grade,” “Medical Grade”	145
11.2.4	Code of Federal Regulations – Food Grade	145
11.2.5	REACH	146
11.2.6	Regulatory Responsibility Chart	146
11.3	The (Bio)Pharmaceutical Manufacturer’s Approach	146
11.3.1	Risk Mitigation	146
11.3.1.1	Chemical Compatibility	146

11.3.1.2	Clearance Steps	147
11.3.1.3	Pre-Flush	147
11.3.2	Chemical Safety Assessment	148
11.3.2.1	Extractables Profiling	148
11.3.2.2	Controlled Extractables Study	149
11.3.2.3	Sum Parameters	149
11.3.2.4	Unknown Compounds	151
11.3.2.5	Simulated-Use Extractables Study	151
11.3.2.6	Leachables Study	152
11.3.2.7	Exposure Scenario	153
11.3.2.8	Toxicological Risk Assessment	153
11.4	The (Bio)Pharmaceutical Manufacturer's Challenges	153
11.4.1	Supply Chain of Single-Use Equipment	153
11.4.2	Cost Factor	155
11.4.3	Time Factor	155
11.4.4	Production Outsourcing and Contract Manufacturers	155
11.4.5	Life-Cycle Management	155
11.5	Summary	155
11.6	Discussion and Outlook	156
	Acknowledgments	156
	Nomenclature	157
	References	157
12	The Single-Use Standardization	159
	<i>P.E. James Dean Vogel</i>	
12.1	Introduction	159
12.2	Alphabet Soup	159
12.3	History	161
12.4	Compare and Contrast	161
12.5	Collaboration and Alignment Lead to Standardization	162
12.6	General SUT Efforts	163
12.7	Leachables and Extractables	164
12.8	Particulates in SUT	164
12.9	Change Notification	165
12.10	SUT System Integrity	165
12.11	SUT User Requirements	165
12.12	Connectors	165
12.13	SUT Design Verification	165
12.14	Summary and Conclusions	166
	Nomenclature	166
	References	166
	Further Reading	166
13	Environmental Impacts of Single-Use Systems	169
	<i>William G. Whitford, Mark A. Petrich, and William P. Flanagan</i>	
13.1	Introduction	169
13.2	Sustainability	169
13.3	The Evolution of SU Technologies	169
13.4	Implications in Sustainability	172
13.5	LCA – A Holistic Methodology	172
13.6	LCA Applied to SU Technologies	173
13.6.1	Early Attempts to Examine the Environmental Aspects of SU Technologies	173
13.6.2	LCA Applied to SU Technologies	173
13.7	Sustainability Efforts in the BioPharma Industry	175

13.8	End-of-Life (Waste) Management	177
13.9	Summary and Conclusions	178
	Nomenclature	178
	References	178
14	Design Considerations Towards an Intensified Single-Use Facility	181
	<i>Gerben Zijlstra, Kai Touw, Michael Koch, and Miriam Monge</i>	
14.1	Introduction	181
14.2	Moving Towards Intensified and Continuous Processing	181
14.3	Methodologies for Continuous and Intensified Single-Use Bioprocessing	183
14.4	Process Development for Intensified Biomanufacturing Facilities	184
14.5	The Intensified Biomanufacturing Facility	184
14.6	Process Automation for Commercial Manufacturing Facilities	187
14.7	Intensified Upstream Processing	187
14.8	Intensified Downstream Processing	189
14.9	Summary and Conclusions	191
	Acknowledgments	191
	Nomenclature	191
	References	191
15	Single-Use Technologies in Biopharmaceutical Manufacturing: A 10-Year Review of Trends and the Future	193
	<i>Ronald A. Rader and Eric S. Langer</i>	
15.1	Introduction	193
15.2	Background	193
15.3	Methods	194
15.4	Results	194
15.4.1	Market (Facilities) Distribution	194
15.4.2	Single-Use Systems Market Estimates	195
15.4.3	Market Trends and Perceptions	196
15.5	Discussion	197
15.6	Conclusions	199
	Nomenclature	200
	References	200
	Part II Application Reports and Case Studies	201
16	Single-Use Process Platforms for Responsive and Cost-Effective Manufacturing	203
	<i>Priyanka Gupta, Miriam Monge, Amelie Boulais, Nitin Chopra, and Nick Hutchinson</i>	
16.1	Introduction	203
16.2	Standardized Single-Use Process Platforms for Biomanufacturing	204
16.3	Implementing Single-Use Process Platforms	204
16.4	Economic Analysis Comparing Stainless Steel with Single-Use Process Platforms	207
16.5	Summary and Conclusions	209
	Nomenclature	209
	References	210
17	Considerations on Performing Quality Risk Analysis for Production Processes with Single-Use Systems	211
	<i>Ina Pahl, Armin Hauk, Lydia Schosser, and Sonja von Orlikowski</i>	
17.1	Introduction	211
17.2	Quality Risk Assessment	211
17.3	Terminology and Features	212
17.4	Current Industrial Approach for Leachable Assessment in Biopharmaceutical Processes	212

17.5	Holistic Approach to Predict Leachables for Quality Risk Assessment	214
17.6	Summary and Conclusions	215
	Nomenclature	217
	References	217
18	How to Assure Robustness, Sterility, and Performance of Single-Use Systems: A Quality Approach from the Manufacturer's Perspective	219
	<i>Simone Biel and Sara Bell</i>	
18.1	Introduction	219
18.2	Component Qualification	219
18.3	Validation of Product Design	220
18.3.1	Sterility Validation and Quarterly Dose Audit Approach	220
18.3.1.1	Initial Validation of Gamma Sterilization	220
18.3.1.2	Quarterly Dose Audits	221
18.3.1.3	Dose Maps	221
18.3.2	Integrity Assurance	222
18.3.2.1	Manufacturers' Integrity Testing	222
18.3.2.2	Packaging and Shipping Validation	222
18.3.2.3	Point-of-Use Integrity Testing	223
18.3.3	Stability Studies	223
18.4	Manufacturing and Control	224
18.4.1	Process Flow	224
18.4.2	Cleanroom Classification	224
18.4.3	Validation of Single-Use System Manufacturing Process	224
18.5	Operator Training, Performance Culture	225
18.5.1	In-Process Controls	225
18.5.2	Quality Control: Release Tests	225
18.6	Particulate Risk Mitigation	225
18.7	Change Management	225
18.7.1	Levels of Change	226
18.7.2	Qualification	226
18.8	Summary and Conclusions	226
	Nomenclature	227
	References	227
19	How to Design and Qualify an Improved Film for Storage and Bioreactor Bags	229
	<i>Lucie Delaunay, Elke Jurkiewicz, Gerhard Greller, and Magali Barbaroux</i>	
19.1	Introduction	229
19.2	Materials, Process, and Suppliers Selection	229
19.3	Biological Properties	229
19.4	Specifications and Process Design Space	231
19.5	Process Control Strategy	233
19.6	Summary and Conclusions	233
	Nomenclature	233
	References	233
20	An Approach for Rapid Manufacture and Qualification of a Single-Use Bioreactor Prototype	235
	<i>Stephan C. Kaiser</i>	
20.1	Introduction	235
20.2	About the Development Process of a Single-Use Bioreactor	235
20.2.1	Conceptual Design and Software Tools	235
20.2.2	Molding vs. Rapid Prototyping	236
20.2.3	Engineering Characterization, Sterilization, and Qualification	239
20.3	Summary and Conclusions	243

	Nomenclature	244
	References	244
21	Single-Use Bioreactor Platform for Microbial Fermentation	247
	<i>Parrish M. Galliher, Patrick Guertin, Ken Clapp, Colin Tuohey, Rick Damren, Yasser Kehail, Vincent Colombie, and Andreas Castan</i>	
21.1	Introduction	247
21.2	General Design Basis for Microbial SUFs	247
21.3	SUF Design Criteria and Approach – Heat Transfer	247
21.3.1	Engineering Principles – Total Heat Load and Transfer	247
21.3.2	Approach to Design of Heat Transfer/Removal Features for SUFs	248
21.4	SUF Design Criteria and Approach – Oxygen Transfer	249
21.4.1	Engineering Principles for Total Oxygen Demand and Transfer	249
21.4.2	Approach to Design Oxygen Transfer Features for SUFs	249
21.4.2.1	Vessel Pressure	249
21.4.2.2	Oxygen Enrichment of Sparge Gas	249
21.4.2.3	Microporous Spargers Versus Drilled Hole Spargers	250
21.4.2.4	Power of the Agitation System to Supply High OTR	250
21.4.2.5	Calculating Agitation Power Required to Meet the Maximum OUR	250
21.5	SUF Design Criteria and Approach – Mixing	251
21.5.1	Engineering Principles of Mixing	251
21.5.2	Modeling and Empirical Measurements of Mixing Time	251
21.5.3	Effect of Different Impeller Types	251
21.6	Operational Considerations for SUFs	252
21.6.1	Liquid Management	252
21.6.2	Media Sterilization	252
21.7	Case Studies	252
21.7.1	Heat Transfer Tests of SUFs (50 and 500l)	252
21.7.2	Oxygen Mass Transfer Tests of SUFs (50 and 500l)	252
21.7.3	<i>Escherichia coli</i> Fermentation in a 50l SUF	252
21.7.4	Yeast Fermentation in a 50l SUF	253
21.7.5	<i>Pseudomonas fluorescens</i> Fermentation in a 50l SUF	254
21.7.6	Fermentation of <i>E. coli</i> in a 500l SUF	254
21.7.7	Fermentation of <i>Haemophilus Influenzae</i> in a 500l SUF	254
21.8	Summary and Conclusions	256
	Nomenclature	257
	References	258
22	Engineering Parameters in Single-Use Bioreactors: Flow, Mixing, Aeration, and Suspension	259
	<i>Martina Micheletti and Andrea Ducci</i>	
22.1	Introduction	259
22.2	Stirred Bioreactors	259
22.2.1	Flow Dynamics in Mobius CellReady	260
22.2.2	Mixing Dynamics in Mobius CellReady	260
22.3	Orbitally Shaken Bioreactors	262
22.3.1	Flow Dynamics	262
22.3.2	Aeration – Interfacial Area	263
22.3.3	Mixing Dynamics	265
22.3.4	Suspension Dynamics	265
22.4	Rocking Bag	267
22.5	Summary and Conclusions	268
	Nomenclature	268
	References	268

23	Alluvial Filtration: An Effective and Economical Solution for Midstream Application (e.g. Cell and Host Cell Protein Removal)	271
	<i>Ralph Daumke, Vasily Medvedev, Tiago Albano, and Fabien Rousset</i>	
23.1	Introduction	271
23.1.1	Alluvial Filtration	271
23.1.2	Diatomaceous Earth Filtration	271
23.1.3	Depth Filtration	272
23.1.4	DAISEP MabXpure Technology	272
23.2	Case Study 1: Cell Removal	272
23.2.1	Background	272
23.2.2	Materials and Methods	272
23.2.2.1	Reagents and Equipment	272
23.2.2.2	Experimental Methods	272
23.2.2.3	Analytical Methods	273
23.2.3	Results and Discussion	273
23.2.3.1	Results	273
23.2.3.2	Discussion	273
23.3	Case Study 2: HCP Removal	275
23.3.1	Background	275
23.3.2	Materials and Methods	275
23.3.3	Procedure	275
23.3.3.1	Static Mode	275
23.3.3.2	Dynamic Mode	275
23.3.4	Results	275
23.3.5	Discussion	276
23.4	Summary and Conclusions	276
	Nomenclature	277
	References	277
24	Single-Use Continuous Downstream Processing for Biopharmaceutical Products	279
	<i>Marc Bisschops, Britta Manser, and Martin Glenz</i>	
24.1	Introduction	279
24.2	Continuous Multicolumn Chromatography	279
24.3	Single-Use Continuous Downstream Processing	280
24.3.1	Continuous Chromatography for Fed-Batch Processes	280
24.3.2	Continuous Chromatography for Perfusion Processes	282
24.4	Summary and Conclusions	283
	References	283
25	Single-Use Technology for Formulation and Filling Applications	285
	<i>Christophe Pierlot, Alain Vanhecke, Kevin Thompson, Rainer Gloeckler, and Daniel Kehl</i>	
25.1	Introduction	285
25.2	Challenges in Formulation and Filling	285
25.3	End-User Requirements	286
25.4	Quality by Design	287
25.5	Hardware Design and Usability	288
25.6	Single-Use Technology, Arrangement, and Operation	290
25.7	Summary and Conclusions	293
	Nomenclature	294
	References	294
26	Facility Design Considerations for Mammalian Cell Culture	295
	<i>Sue Walker</i>	
26.1	Introduction	295
26.2	Generic Case Study	295

26.2.1	Generation of the Process Model	295
26.2.2	Generation of the Facility Description	297
26.2.2.1	Manufacturing Areas	299
26.2.2.2	Support Areas	300
26.3	Summary and Conclusions	301
	Nomenclature	301
	References	301
27	Progress in the Development of Single-Use Solutions in Antibody–Drug Conjugate (ADC) Manufacturing	303
	<i>Diego R. Schmidhalter, Stephan Elzner, and Romeo Schmid</i>	
27.1	Introduction	303
27.2	Challenges for the Use of Disposables in ADC Processes	304
27.2.1	Use of Organic Solvents	304
27.2.2	Safety and Handling of HPAPIs	305
27.3	Key Unit Operations	306
27.3.1	Reactions in Stirred Tanks	306
27.3.2	Tangential Flow Filtration	306
27.3.3	Chromatography	306
27.3.4	Filtration and Transfers	306
27.3.5	Bulk Drug Substance Freeze and Thaw	306
27.4	Cysteine Conjugation Process – An ADC Production Process Case Study	308
27.5	Summary and Conclusions	309
	Acknowledgment	309
	Nomenclature	309
	References	310
28	Single-Use Processing as a Safe and Convenient Way to Develop and Manufacture Moss-Derived Biopharmaceuticals	311
	<i>Holger Niederkrüger, Andreas Busch, Paulina Dabrowska-Schlepp, Nicola Krieghoff, Andreas Schaaf, and Thomas Frischmuth</i>	
28.1	Introduction	311
28.2	Case Study	311
28.2.1	Introduction to Greenovation Biotech's Bryotechnology	311
28.2.2	Frame of Case Study	312
28.2.3	Process Description	312
28.2.3.1	Moss Cell Line	312
28.2.3.2	Cell Banking	312
28.2.3.3	USP and DSP	313
28.2.3.4	Moss Metabolite Study	315
28.2.3.5	Development of a Moss-Specific HCP Assay	315
28.2.3.6	L&E Study for Illuminated Bag Films	315
28.2.4	Assessment of Case Study	317
28.3	Summary and Outlook	317
	Nomenclature	317
	References	318
29	Single-Use Technologies Used in Cell and Gene Therapy Manufacturing Need to Fulfill Higher and Novel Requirements: How Can this Challenge Be Addressed?	319
	<i>Alain Pralong and Angélique Palumbo</i>	
29.1	Introduction	319
29.2	Promise of Cell and Gene Therapy	320
29.2.1	Cancer – A Long-Known Disease	320
29.2.2	Evolution of Cancer Treatment	321
29.2.3	The Process of Adoptive T-Cell Therapy	322

29.2.3.1	Manufacturing of Autologous Engineered Adoptive T-Cell Therapeutics	322
29.2.3.2	Manufacturing of Allogeneic Engineered Adoptive T-Cell Therapeutics	322
29.3	Considerations for Biopharmaceutical Industry and Conclusion	322
	Nomenclature	325
	References	325
30	Single-Use Bioreactors for Manufacturing of Immune Cell Therapeutics	327
	<i>Ralf Pörtner, Christian Sebald, Shreemanta K. Parida, and Hans Hoffmeister</i>	
30.1	Introduction	327
30.2	The Particular Nature of Immune Cell Therapeutics	327
30.3	Uncertain Mass Production of Immune Cells for Therapy	328
30.4	Technical Standards Required for Immune Cell ATMP Manufacturing	329
30.5	Techniques for Expansion of Immune Cells	329
30.6	Case Study ZRP System Consisting of GMP Breeder, Control Unit, and Software	330
30.7	Summary and Conclusions	330
	Nomenclature	332
	References	332
	Index	335

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Preface

Single-use devices have become a major part of the biopharmaceutical production process. They now make up 85% of the equipment in preclinical bioprocessing and are increasingly being employed in the commercial manufacture of biopharmaceuticals. It is in upstream processing, which can be accomplished entirely with single-use technology, where they are used with greatest diversity, for example, in the manufacturing of modern antibodies and vaccines. Single-use solutions are also, however, available for downstream processing and for Fill & Finish which are accepted by users. Today, the first fully single-use production facilities have already become a reality.

It seems that users have more confidence in single-use technology, which can be explained by the further development and the improved design of such devices. The new generations of single-use devices are more robust and easier to handle than their predecessors. Possible problems, such as leakage and integrity, have already been addressed by the suppliers during the manufacturing process. Moreover, progress has been made in film technologies, bioreactor design, sensor techniques, and automation.

The second edition of the book *Single-Use Technology in Biopharmaceutical Manufacture* consists of an introduction section for beginners and a case-study

collection for advanced-level readers. It summarizes the latest developments in single-use technologies. In addition to a presentation of single-use systems as applied to different unit operations and to platform technologies, their selection, implementation, and level of trouble-free usage are discussed. This includes approaches to intensify bioprocesses and to realize continuous processes but also to aspects of quality assurance and standardization, the influence of single-use technology on the environment, and the importance of risk analysis.

We would like to thank all authors for their valuable contributions to the new edition of this book. We would also like to extend our special thanks to the management of the Department for Life Sciences and Facility Management of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences for their support in realizing this book. We hope that the new edition of *Single-Use Technology in Biopharmaceutical Manufacture* will be helpful for bachelor and master students of biotechnology and related fields, for experienced practitioners who are developing as well as producing biopharmaceuticals and designing production facilities, and, finally, for those who intend to begin using disposables.

Regine and Dieter Eibl

Part I

Basics

1

Single-Use Equipment in Biopharmaceutical Manufacture

A Brief Introduction

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1.1 Background

The term “biopharmaceutical” was first used in the early 1980s [1] when recombinant, commercially manufactured insulin, a therapeutic protein for diabetes patients, was introduced. In the United States and Europe, the most frequently used definition is that of a pharmaceutical manufactured by biotechnological methods with organisms, or their functional components, which have a biological origin. Following this definition, all recombinant proteins, monoclonal antibodies (mAbs), vaccines, blood/plasma-derived products, nonrecombinant culture-derived proteins, and cultured cells, in addition to tissues from human or animal origin and nucleic acids, are considered to be biopharmaceuticals [2–4]. The majority of the above are classified as biologicals (or biologics) by regulatory agencies [5]. Traditional pharmaceutical products, such as chemical compounds extracted from plants, secondary metabolites from microbial and plant cell cultures, and synthetic peptides, which may not comply with the above definition, are more often regarded as non-biopharmaceuticals. Irrespective of differences in definition, recombinant protein pharmaceuticals constitute an important category of biopharmaceuticals.

The most significant protein pharmaceuticals available include hormones such as erythropoietin, enzymes such as the human plasminogen activator, vaccines such as Flucelvax, and mAbs such as bevacizumab. It is worth mentioning that the top 10 best-selling drugs are dominated by therapeutic mAbs today [5].

In most cases, protein pharmaceuticals are produced with mammalian cell lines. During the last few years, Chinese hamster ovary cell lines have increasingly displaced earlier mammalian cell production systems such as hybridomas or embryonic feline lung fibroblast cell lines [6, 7]. Further production organisms of choice for

protein pharmaceuticals are microbial cells [8] (see also Chapter 21), plant cells [9] (see also Chapter 28), and insect cells cultivated in conjunction with the baculovirus expression vector system [10].

The worldwide demand for protein pharmaceuticals (and, in particular, protein therapeutics) has resulted in increased efforts to expand the process efficiency over the past 10 years. It is undoubtedly the case that the huge growth in knowledge in molecular and cell biology has led to high-productivity cell lines and improved culture media. These cell lines provide product titers exceeding 3 g/l in fed batch mode and contribute to shrinking bioreactor size, which is associated with cost savings [11]. Further cost savings can be achieved by replacing stainless steel with single-use equipment in the production process [12, 13].

The present chapter introduces the reader to the area of single-use technology. In addition to terminology, advantages and disadvantages of existing single-use devices will be described. Based on a schematic of a typical production process for a protein therapeutic, an overview of currently available single-use devices and a categorization approach will be presented. Moreover, the main criteria for implementing single-use systems in biopharmaceutical production processes are summarized, and current concepts concerning single-use production facilities are briefly explained.

1.2 Terminology and Features

As the term “single-use” (or “disposable”) implies, such systems are only ever used once. Disposables currently in use originated in the fields of medical care (e.g. rubber gloves, sterile swabs, and the technology for intravenous applications) and infant care (e.g. paper towels and disposable diapers). With the exception of special

protective clothing and consumables (e.g. swabs and paper towels), single-use products are typically fabricated from plastics approved by the Food and Drug Administration (see also Chapter 8), such as polyethylene, polystyrene, polytetrafluoroethylene, polypropylene, or ethylene vinyl acetate. These materials are typically supplemented with additives to aid performance and/or prolong usable life [14, 15], thereby ensuring their suitability in biopharmaceutical manufacturing applications. In all cases, the product contact surfaces are free of animal-derived components.

Disposables can be rigid (molded systems) or flexible (bags made from multilayer films) and are often supplied presterilized, having been gamma irradiated at dose levels between 25 and 50 kGy [16, 17], although some are autoclaved or sterilized with gas. This eliminates the need for subsequent sterilization of the equipment, such as the steam sterilization normally required for stainless-steel components. Disposables can, therefore, quickly be brought into operation. On completion of the process operations, the disposables used are decontaminated and discarded. Thus, time-consuming and expensive cleaning procedures which may require the use of corrosive chemicals (which could potentially pose a health hazard to the operator) and water-for-injection, often considered as a bottleneck in traditional biopharmaceutical facilities, are no longer required.

Disposable technology is often regarded as greener, due to the reduced requirements for cleaning and sterilization (see also Chapter 13). Furthermore, equipment turnaround time is reduced, and process and product changes can be more easily accommodated (a particular advantage in the manufacture of multiple products) when neither cleaning nor sterilization is required [17]. Similarly, the potential for product cross contamination and microbial contamination is reduced, and the requirements for validation and in-process documentation are minimized [15, 18, 19]. Further benefits of disposables include savings in time (e.g. development time, manufacturing time, and time to market), cost reductions (e.g. capital investment and cost of goods sold), and a reduction of the facility's footprint. It can be concluded that disposables may offer distinct advantages compared to their reusable counterparts when selected and used correctly. To summarize, they can be smaller, safer, greener, faster, and more flexible, while offering savings both in terms of capital outlay and operating costs (see Table 1.1).

Yet, there are still limitations to the use of disposables due to the chemical, biological, and physical properties of the plastic material. Besides leakage (see also Chapter 2), the primary risk associated with the use of disposables is the potential migration of undesired components from the plastic material (see also Chapters 8, 11, 17, and 18). Main undesired contaminants may either

Table 1.1 Summary of advantages and limitations of single-use equipment.

Pros	Cons
<p><i>Safer: High bio- and process safety</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterilized • Preamsembled • Decreased risk of microbial contamination and cross contamination • Facilitates qualification and validation <p><i>Greener</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced requirements for cleaning and sterilization <p><i>Faster and more flexible</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier process and product change <p><i>Cheaper: Saving of time and cost</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of cultivation, cleaning, sterilization, qualification, and maintenance requirements • Lower capital investment, reduced infrastructure and maintenance costs <p><i>Smaller</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced facility footprint 	<p><i>Material properties</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakage and leakage • Leachables and extractables, particulates <p><i>Scalability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited by the properties and fabrication of the polymer materials <p><i>Running costs and wastes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased operating costs (costs of solid waste disposal and consumables) • Ongoing replacement of the disposables <p><i>Automation level, sensors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No high-level automation solutions • Restricted availability of disposable sensors <p><i>Lack of standardization</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier dependence <p><i>Training of staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing requirement with rising culture volume

be leachables (which may migrate under process conditions over time) or extractables (which may migrate when exposed to aggressive process conditions such as high temperatures) [20, 21]. Another topic that has been raised by the increasing implementation of single-use devices for final Fill & Finish is the detection of particulate contamination over the past years (see also Chapter 18) [22, 23]. Additional issues which limit the use of disposables are restricted scalability (due to the mechanical strength of the material), the limited availability of single-use sensors (see also Chapter 6), and the lack of advanced automation techniques (see also Chapter 7).

So far, the replacement of disposable components constitutes an increase in operating costs and contributes to the increased cost of solid waste disposal and consumables. Another weakness of single-use systems is the dependence on suppliers (see also Section 1.4) resulting from lack of standardization (see also Chapter 13). Furthermore, it is worth noting that extra training of staff may be necessary as the scale of a manufacturing facility incorporating disposables increases. A challenge that should also not be underestimated is the packaging of single-use systems which covers the system integrity at the supplier level as well as in manufacturing and the maintenance of sterility. Thus, a thorough investigation

is recommended to determine whether the benefits of disposable systems are sufficient to overcome their disadvantages in any particular manufacturing scenario.

1.3 Single-Use Systems in Production Processes for Therapeutic Proteins such as mAbs: Product Overview and Classification

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, a typical process for the manufacture of a drug product (DP) such as therapeutic proteins (mAbs) includes four main processing stages: (i) upstream processing, (ii) downstream processing, (iii) final formulation and filling, and (iv) labeling and packaging. In the upstream processing stage, culture media and buffers are prepared (mixed, sterilized by 0.1 and 0.2 μm filters, stored, and transported), seed and inoculum train are produced, and a so-called active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) is expressed in the production bioreactor (see Figure 1.1). The API which is, with only a few exceptions such as membrane proteins, normally secreted into the culture broth has to be separated from cells and clarified after harvesting. The subsequent downstream procedures [24–30] (see also Chapters 9,

10, 23, and 24), which produce a drug substance (DS), ensure the reduction of product impurities (e.g. protein A, host cell proteins, desoxyribonucleic acid, and aggregates) to an acceptably low level and include virus clearing (inactivation and removal by filtration). Consequently, the API must be further concentrated, separated, and purified, requiring chromatography processes (affinity chromatography, anion-exchange chromatography, cation-exchange chromatography, and hydrophobic interaction chromatography) and crossflow filtration (ultra and diafiltrations). Liquid storage and transportation, and buffer preparation also form part of the downstream processing stage. The liquid DS solution is formulated through the addition of stabilizers prior to being sterilized by filtration and/or aseptically poured into sterile containers. The DS may also be stored or transported when it is deep frozen prior to the Fill & Finish operations. The DS is then labeled and packaged to become the commercially available DP.

Nowadays, the developer and manufacturer of a therapeutic protein can choose among a multitude of single-use devices from different suppliers for all stages of the production process. Figure 1.2 provides an overview of the primary disposables currently utilizable in therapeutic protein manufacturing.

Single-use devices can be classified into three groups: expendable laboratory items, simple peripheral elements

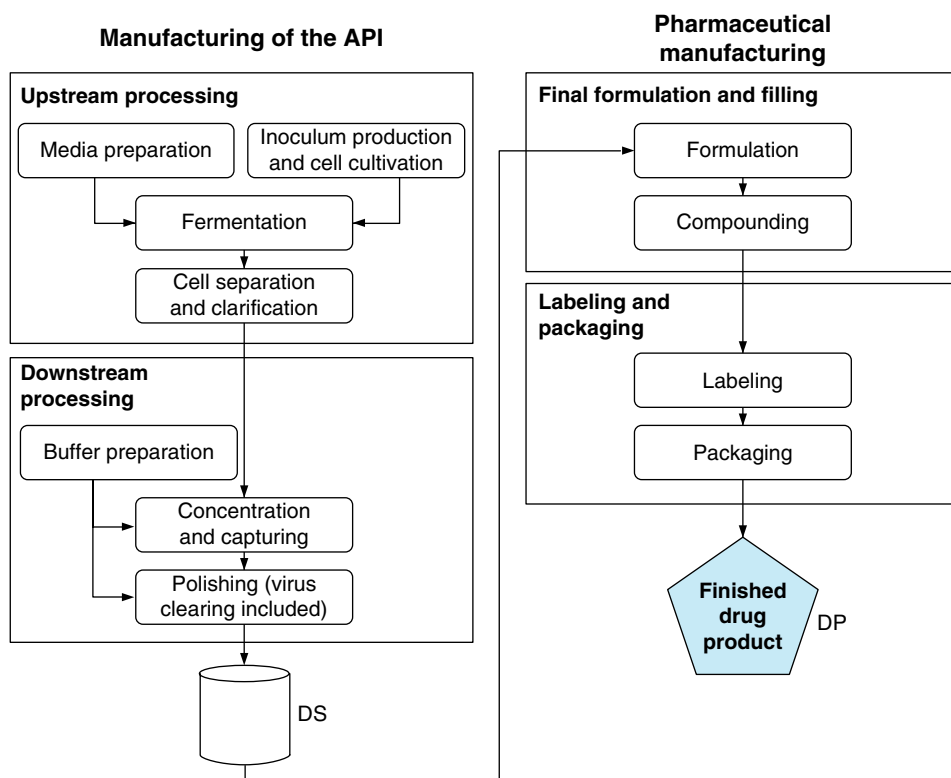


Figure 1.1 Schematic of a typical manufacturing process for therapeutic proteins such as mAbs.

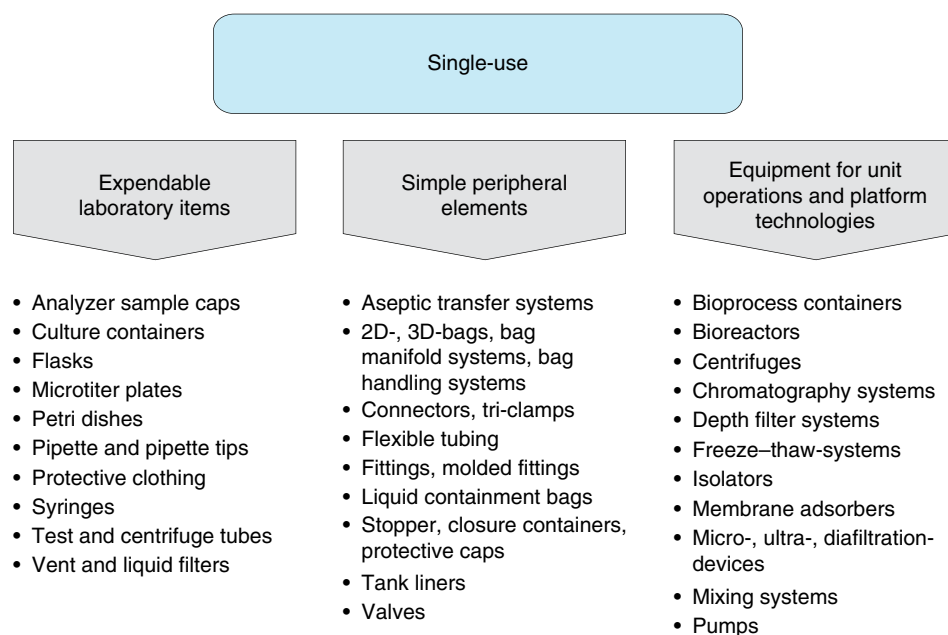


Figure 1.2 Primary categories of disposables utilizable for the development and manufacture of therapeutic proteins [31].

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(stand-alone components), and multi-component systems for unit operations and platform technologies. Thanks to single-use bioreactors (Chapter 4) together with bags for storage as well as transportation (Chapter 2), single-use mixers (Chapter 3), single-use plastic hoses, single-use plastic fittings, single-use connectors and sampling systems, and single-use pumps (Chapter 5), upstream processing carried out entirely with single-use technology up to the mid-volume scale has become possible. Leak test systems (Chapter 2) and novel connectors (multi-utilizable, hybrid, and neutral versions) have additionally improved safety in both upstream and downstream processing. Single-use systems preferably applied in downstream processing (Chapters 9 and 10) include those for centrifugation and filtration (micro-, ultra-, and tangential flow filtration), when biomass has to be separated, culture broth has to be clarified, or a virus has to be separated or inactivated. In addition, single-use membrane adsorbers and prepacked single-use chromatography systems have become increasingly common. Finally, the formulation and filling process steps are already able to be executed with single-use systems such as single-use storage systems, single-use filters, single-use mixers, single-use isolators, single-use dosage systems, single-use needles, etc. (Chapter 25).

Each and every key player in single-use technology now offers single-use process platform technologies (for media preparation, inoculum production, fermentation and biomass separation, virus separation and virus inactivation, formulation, and filling). Product examples

include the ReadyToProcess and the FlexFactory series (GE Healthcare), the Mobius series (Merck), the Allegro series (Pall), the FlexAct series (Sartorius Stedim Biotech), and the HyPerforma series (Thermo Scientific). These process platforms support the rational implementation of disposables and process intensification (Chapters 14 and 16).

Disposables may be used in the same manner as their stainless-steel counterparts, provided due consideration is given to their specific characteristics. The user's requirements constitute the primary criteria in the decision-making process, while the projected product demand and the optimized usage of the asset must also be taken into account. The performance of the disposable, the associated costs, and the security of the supply chain must also be considered, while the risk of using a disposable must be minimized. Disposables pose a particular challenge in terms of assessing the technical risk associated with their use and the security of their supply chain. The majority of products have not been standardized, and therefore the security of supply, outlined in Figure 1.3, is of paramount importance when considering the utilization of disposables [32]. The essential prerequisite for the implementation of disposables in biopharmaceutical manufacturing is a thorough understanding of the associated risks and the appropriate management thereof. As described by Pora and Rowlings [33], and Sinclair and Monge [34–37], numerous factors must be considered. A risk analysis has to be done as shown by Merseburger et al. [38, 39] or Merck [40].