MAY 07, 2020

OPEN ACCESS

DOI:
dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.4bigske

Protocol Citation: Jessica Riesterer, Erin Stempinski, Claudia Lopez 2020. Sample fixation of biopsy tissue for Electron Microscopy (EM). **protocols.io**
<https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.4bigske>

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Protocol status: Working
 We use this protocol in our group and it is working for traditional electron microscopy. This protocol may need modification for specific electron microscopy techniques, such as correlative light and electron microscopy (CLEM) or when perfusion of animals is possible.

Created: Jun 17, 2019

Last Modified: May 07, 2020

Sample fixation of biopsy tissue for Electron Microscopy (EM)

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ABSTRACT

The most crucial step in the entire electron microscopy workflow is sample fixation. Tissue needs to be preserved in strong fixative as soon as possible to maintain cellular ultrastructure. In a clinical setting, fixation time is critical in order to capture precious human tissue adequately. Of course, priority is given to patient care, and therefore, the tissue sometimes cannot be handled as quickly as needed for optimal ultrastructure preservation. However, we recommend 2 minutes as a “best practice” time to start of preservation.

CITATION

Karnovsky, Morris J.. A Formaldehyde-Glutaraldehyde Fixative of High Osmolality for Use in Electron Microscopy. *Journal of Cell Biology*.

SAFETY WARNINGS

Researchers are advised to wear safety glasses, lab coats, and gloves when handling fixative.

Keywords: electron
microscopy, sample fixation

- 1 In order to facilitate quick fixation, the team of clinical coordinators should be provided with Eppendorf tubes containing 1.5 mL of fixative solution to have on-hand in the operating room during biopsies using 18-gauge core needles where 3-4mm of core is preserved. Larger volumes may be required for resections.
- 2 Karnovsky's fixative (2.5% paraformaldehyde, 2.5% glutaraldehyde in 0.1M Na Cacodylate buffer (pH 7.4)) is the solution of choice (Karnovsky, 1965).
- 3 Tissue should be placed gently into the Eppendorf tube, ensuring that the tissue is completely submerged in fixative solution to prevent drying out. Use of forceps should be avoided whenever possible to minimize mechanical damage. An orange stick or scalpel blade can be used to "scoop" the tissue into the tube. 2m
- 4 Eppendorf tubes with and without tissue are stored at 4 °C .