

1 Article

2 A Rapid, Sensitive, and Portable Biosensor Assay for 3 the Detection of Botulinum Neurotoxin Serotype A in 4 Complex Food Matrices

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12

13 **Abstract:** Botulinum neurotoxin (BoNT) intoxication can lead to the disease botulism,
14 characterized by flaccid muscle paralysis that can cause respiratory failure and death. Due to the
15 significant morbidity and mortality costs associated with BoNTs high toxicity, developing highly
16 sensitive, rapid, and field-deployable assays are critically important to protect the nation's food
17 supply against either accidental or intentional contamination. We report here that the B-cell based
18 biosensor assay (CANARY[®] Zephyr) detects BoNT/A in buffer and various food matrices rapidly in
19 ≤ 40 min, in small volumes ≈ 50 μ L, with minimal processing of samples, and is extremely portable
20 (suitcase-sized equipment). BoNT/A was detected at limits of detection (LOD) < 0.075 ng ± 0.02 in
21 assay buffer while milk matrices (non-fat, 2 %, whole milk) increased the LOD to $< 0.175 - 0.314$ ng.
22 Limits of detection for the assay in complex foods were < 1 ng ± 0.0 (neutralized acidic juices-carrot,
23 orange and apple); < 16.7 ng ± 7.7 (liquid egg); and varied from $< 0.39 - 3.125$ ng for solid complex
24 foods (ground beef, green bean baby puree, smoked salmon). These results show that the
25 CANARY[®] Zephyr assay can be a highly useful tool in clinical, environmental, and food safety
26 surveillance programs.

27 **Keywords:** botulinum neurotoxin, biosensor, CANARY[®], detection, B-cell based assay,
28 immunoassay, food matrices

29 **Key Contribution:** First demonstration using CANARY[®] technology to detect botulinum
30 neurotoxins in particular serotype A in buffer and multiple food matrices with excellent sensitivity
31 and minimal sample preparation. This technology is fast, uses small volumes, and is portable to the
32 field.

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34 1. Introduction

35 *Clostridium* spp. are ubiquitous, gram-positive, anaerobic spore-forming microorganisms that
36 express some of the most potent neurotoxins known to man. Botulinum neurotoxins (BoNTs) cause

37 botulism, which is distinguished by flaccid muscle paralysis [1,2]. There are several antigenically
38 and serologically distinct serotypes (A-H); currently, BoNT serotypes A, B, E, and F are known to
39 cause disease in humans [3-7]. These neurotoxins are a public health and safety threat due to their
40 highly toxic nature with a parenteral lethal dose of 0.1- 1 ng/kg and with an estimated oral
41 intoxication dose of 1 µg/ kg. The significant morbidity and mortality associated with such doses of
42 botulinum neurotoxin intoxication necessitates the development of a field-deployable assay capable
43 of detecting toxins at a high sensitivity and specificity that also is compatible with food and
44 environmental samples. Such diagnostics will allow for both the clinical identification of intoxication
45 and the surveillance of consumables for adulteration as a means to start treatment and dispose of
46 contaminated resources.

47
48 There are numerous methods (*in vivo*, *ex vivo*, and *in vitro*) that are currently used to detect
49 botulinum neurotoxins and/or *C. botulinum* contamination. The *in vivo* mouse bioassay is considered
50 the “gold standard” because of its high sensitivity (LOD \approx 20 – 30 pg) [8,9] and reliability to model all
51 aspects of BoNT intoxication [10,11]. However, this assay is time-consuming, expensive, and
52 requires experienced personnel and specialized facilities. Additionally, the *in vivo* toe spread reflex
53 model has been tested for the detection of BoNT in buffer, serum, and milk [10]. Alternative *ex vivo*
54 animal assays, such as the mouse phrenic nerve hemidiaphragm assay, have been developed and are
55 sensitive and faster than the mouse bioassay, but even such alternatives require special equipment
56 and personnel—and they are not compatible for use with complex matrices.

57
58 In addition to the *in vivo* and *ex vivo* models described above, a plethora of *in vitro* assays also
59 have been developed and described in the literature. These assays may be divided into seven
60 different categories: (1) immunological and antibody-based assays, (2) nucleic acid-based assays, (3)
61 lateral flow methods, (4) mass-spectrometry based methods, (5) enzymatic based assays, (6)
62 cell-based assays, and (7) antibody and biosensor technologies. Some well-known *in vitro* assays are
63 ELISA, ECL, lateral flow, ENDOPEP-MS, ENDOPEP-ELISA, Spin-Dx, Immuno-PCR, ALISSA,
64 SNAPtide, VAMPtide, and SYNTAXtide. Additionally, newer assays have combined different
65 technologies to improve the sensitivity of detection. Depending on the assay, the detection limits
66 range from sub-picogram to nanogram per mL or attomolar to pM for buffer and some food matrices
67 [12-31].

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69 CANARY® (Cellular Analysis and Notification of Antigen Risks and Yields) is a cell-based
70 biosensor technology. The technology relies on immortal B-cell lines that express antibodies that are
71 specific to a target and also contain aequorin, a calcium-sensitive bioluminescent protein from the
72 *Aequoria victoria* jellyfish. Initial work with CANARY® technology resulted in the detection of
73 pathogens such as *Yersinia pestis*, Vaccinia virus, Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus, *E.coli*
74 O157:H7, and *Bacillus anthracis* with specificity, high sensitivity, rapidity, and small volumes [32].
75 Recently, the CANARY® Zephyr system was evaluated against a variety of immunoassays (mostly
76 lateral flow) as well as other biological indicator tests using the potential bioterror threats *Bacillus*
77 *anthracis* and ricin. The study found that the limit of detection of ricin was 3 ng/mL and 10³
78 spores/mL for *B.anthraxis* [33]. The authors found that compared to all of the other commercially
79 available kits, the CANARY® Zephyr platform was 4 orders of magnitude more sensitive for
80 detecting *B. anthracis* and was the most sensitive for ricin.

81
82 Though there are multiple technologies that are used to detect botulinum neurotoxins in buffer
83 and complex matrices, each of the technologies have their strengths and weaknesses. The cons may

84 be due to the time required for experimentation, cost, expert personnel, specialized facilities,
 85 expensive and bulky equipment, sensitivity, or incompatibility with complex matrices such as sera,
 86 milk, juices, ground meat, eggs, and smoked fish. Therefore, the reality is that multiple technologies
 87 may be required for specific conditions to make rapid determinations, especially in clinical, food
 88 safety, and environmental settings. In this study, we sought to evaluate the feasibility of using the
 89 CANARY® Zephyr system to detect botulinum neurotoxin serotype A in buffer as well as in 10
 90 complex matrices. Limits of detection and specific sample preparation protocols will be determined.

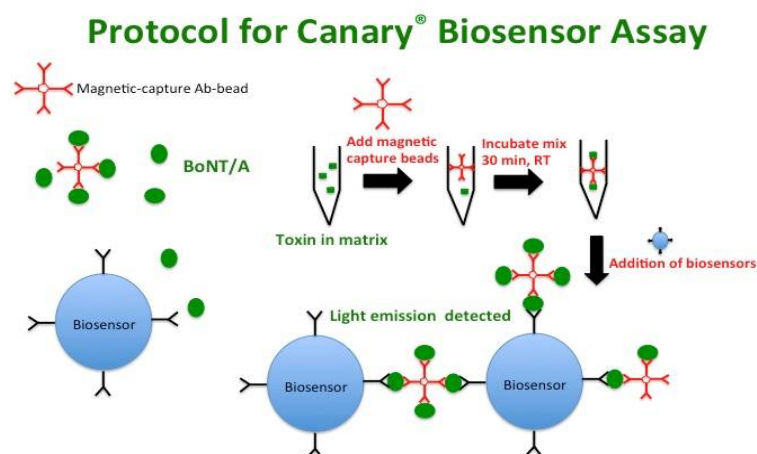
91 2. Results

92 2.1. CANARY® Zephyr B-cell based assay can detect botulinum neurotoxin serotype A with high sensitivity

93 Figure 1A depicts a schematic of the CANARY® biosensor assay. Immunomagnetic capture
 94 beads specific to BoNT/A were incubated with toxin in buffer or matrix for 30 min at room
 95 temperature to allow for the toxin:immunomagnetic bead complex to form a multi-valent epitope.
 96 Biosensors expressing membrane-bound antibodies that are specific to a different epitope of
 97 BoNT/A than those used on the magnetic beads were then added to the reaction. The binding of the
 98 multi-valent epitope on the magnetic beads by the antibodies on the biosensors' surface leads to
 99 antibody clustering or "crosslinking," which results in an intracellular calcium influx that activates
 100 the aequorin molecules and, hence, luminescence. The luminometer detects the light output, which
 101 is expressed as relative light units (RLU) over time (120 sec, read every second).
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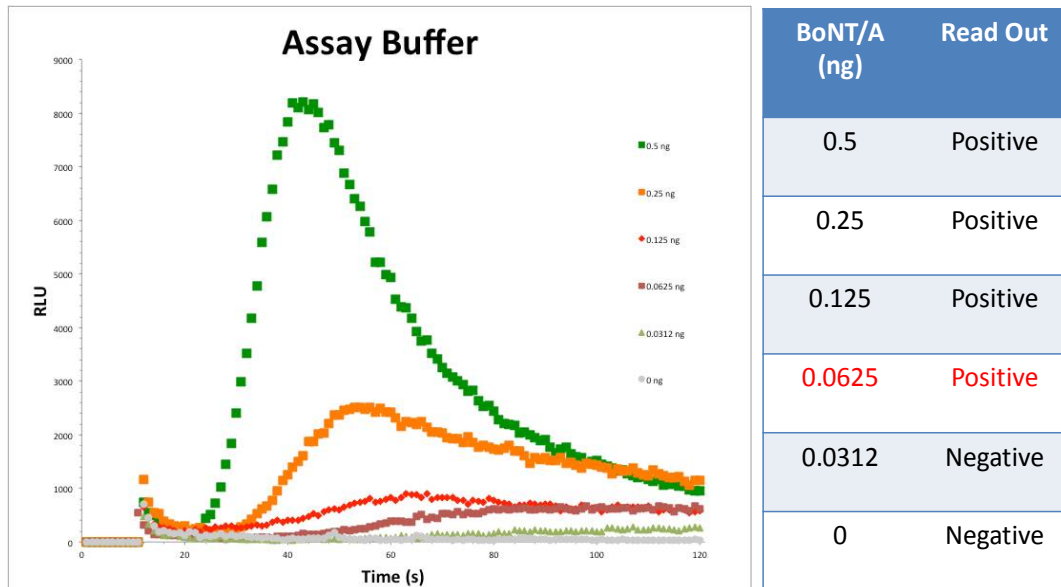
103 Assay sensitivity for BoNT/A was first determined in buffer provided by the manufacturer.
 104 Serial dilutions of toxin in assay buffer were made and the luminescent signal was measured. Figure
 105 1B shows that there is high sensitivity for BoNT/A and the relative light unit detected (RLU) is
 106 concentration-dependent. The Zephyr software depicts the RLU detected by the luminometer as a
 107 graph in real-time (left) and then the sample is determined to be either positive or negative based on
 108 a proprietary algorithm (right table). As one can determine from this representative experiment,
 109 0.0625 ng of BoNT/A was the last positive sample in the experiment while 0.0312 ng did not register
 110 as positive, even though there was some RLU above the zero toxin buffer control (left table).
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Figure 1. CANARY® biosensor assay detects BoNT/A in assay buffer with high sensitivity in a concentration-dependent manner. (A) Schematic of CANARY® biosensor assay. (B) A representative graph depicting the relative light unit (RLU) detected by a luminometer as the concentration of the BoNT/A: immunomagnetic bead complex is bound to the biosensors. One representative data set is presented.

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123 2.2. Zephyr detects BoNT/A in whole milk, 2% milk, and non-fat milk

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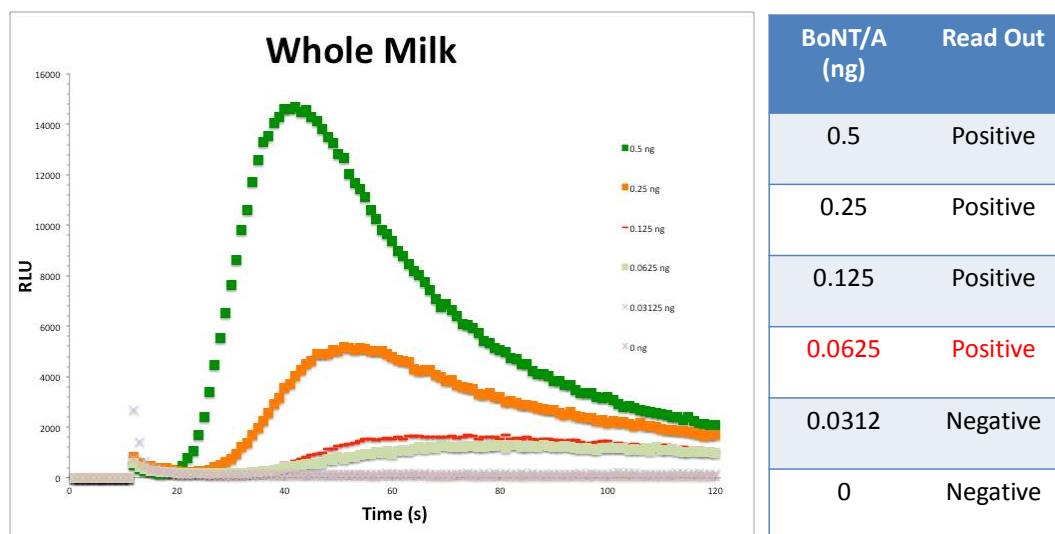
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Based on reports with other toxins, the detection of BoNT/A in assay buffer with a high level of sensitivity is an excellent, and expected, result. However, detection assays should be flexible enough to detect BoNT/A in various complex matrices that may be from clinical, food, and environmental settings, since these would be the types of samples that would be evaluated from governmental, diagnostic, and pharmaceutical laboratories. Therefore, three different milk matrices (whole milk, 2% milk, and non-fat milk) were spiked with toxin and serially diluted in matrix; then, the biosensor assay proceeded in the same fashion as for assay buffer. Figure 2 shows the live graph results using whole milk as well as the table read-out. Similar to assay buffer, RLU is concentration-dependent and the LOD was < 0.0625 from this one experiment. However, the final LOD for whole milk incorporating multiple experiments show some inter-assay variability perhaps due to matrix, toxin stock, etc. (Table 1).



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Figure 2. Whole milk has no effect on the detection of BoNT/A using CANARY®. A toxin concentration-dependent signal similar to assay buffer was detected in the whole milk matrix. Two independent experiments were performed and one representative data set is presented.

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Table 1 shows the estimated limits of detection for the CANARY® assay for BoNT/A in assay buffer and the three milk matrices. The limit of detection was determined to be the average of the last positive sample by the Zephyr program using a proprietary algorithm based upon previous work [32]. Assay buffer shows the highest sensitivity with a LOD of $< 0.075 \text{ ng} \pm 0.02$. The three milk matrices had slightly elevated LODs in comparison to assay buffer but was not statistical significant (two-tailed unpaired Student's *t*-test, $p > 0.05$). The higher LOD in 2% milk as compared to whole milk or non-fat milk is most likely to due to inter-assay variability.

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Table 1. Milk matrices have sensitive detection limits in the CANARY® assay.

Matrix	Detection Limits (ng)
Assay Buffer	$< 0.075 \pm 0.02$
Whole Milk	$< 0.185 \pm 0.18$
2% Milk	$< 0.314 \pm 0.4$
Non-fat Milk	$< 0.175 \pm 0.11$

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Various milk matrices containing different fat content were spiked with BoNT/A in order to evaluate the ability of the CANARY® biosensor assay to detect the toxin. Samples were determined to be either positive or negative by the Zephyr program using a proprietary algorithm. Two to three independent experiments were performed for each milk matrix and assay buffer. The detection limit was calculated using the average of the last positive read out for each experiment \pm SD. There was no statistical significance as determined by two-tailed unpaired Student's *t*-test, $p > 0.05$ for all conditions compared with assay buffer.

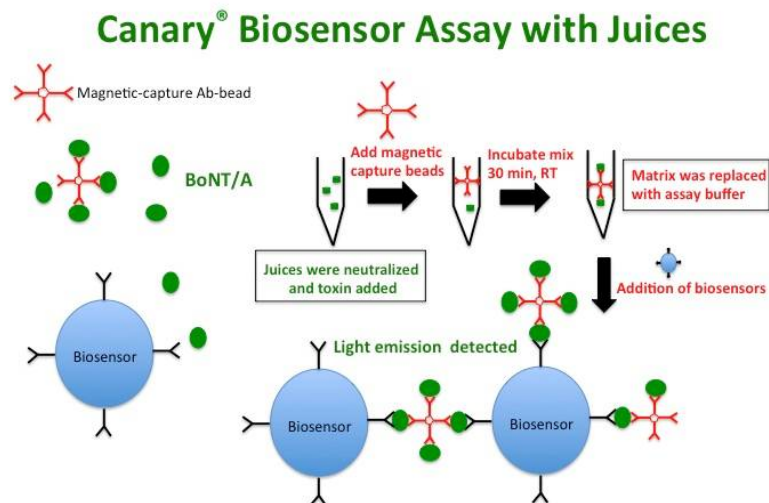
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156 2.3. Detection of BoNT/A in acidified juices requires neutralization

157 Acidic juices such as apple, carrot, and orange have been used as liquid matrices for study
158 by many BoNT detection platforms. We wanted to validate the use of the biosensor assay against
159 these three commonly tested matrices. It was determined that the original CANARY® biosensor
160 assay protocol had to be modified at two key steps (Figure 3A). Acidic juices were first neutralized
161 with 5 M Tris pH 8.0 (10% final volume) and then toxin was spiked into matrix. Serial dilutions from
162 this dose were made sequentially into neutralized juice matrices before adding magnetic capture
163 beads. After incubation with the capture beads, a magnetic separator was used to capture the toxin
164 matrix:immunomagnetic bead complex; removal of matrix, and then replacement with an equal
165 volume of assay buffer. Biosensors were then added and luminescent signal was captured. As seen
166 in Figure 3B, detection of BoNT/A in apple juice was possible but, as compared to assay buffer and
167 milk matrices, the sensitivity (< 1 ng) was decreased.
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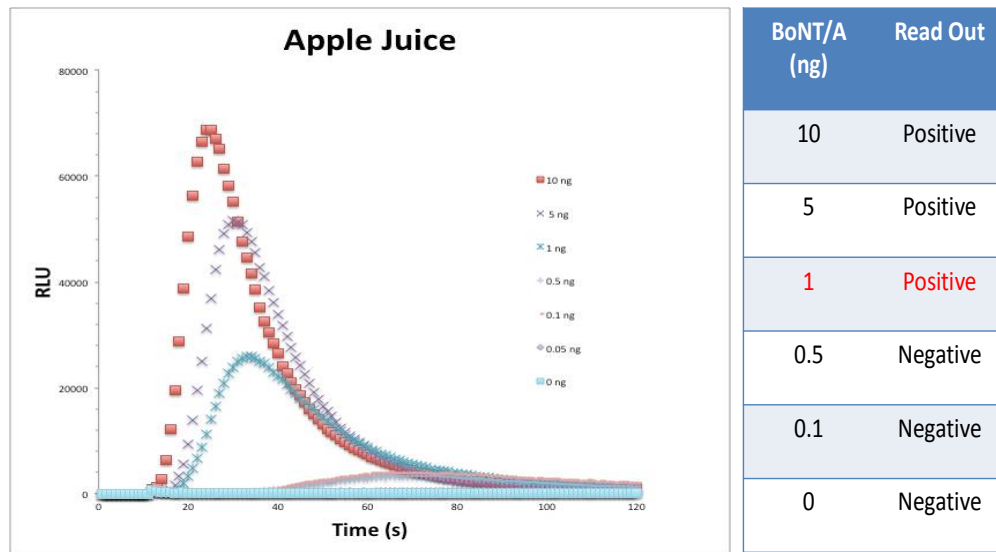
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181 **B**
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184 **Figure 3.** Acidic juices require neutralization before usage with the CANARY[®] biosensor assay. (A)
185 Schematic of the CANARY[®] biosensor assay used with acidic juices. Two key modification steps
186 were added to the protocol: 1) neutralization of the acidic juices with Tris buffer before the addition
187 of BoNT/A and 2) utilization of a magnetic bead separator to capture the toxin:immunomagnetic
188 bead complex to remove matrix and then replacement with an equal volume of assay buffer. (B) A
189 toxin concentration-dependent increase in signal is detected. Three independent experiments were
190 performed and one representative data set is presented.

191 Table 2 shows the estimated limits of detection for the CANARY[®] assay in detection of BoNT/A
192 in neutralized orange, apple, and carrot juices. The three juice matrices had a much higher elevated
193 LOD ($< 1.0 \text{ ng} \pm 0.00$) that was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) as compared to assay buffer (< 0.075
194 $\text{ng} \pm 0.02$).

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Table 2. Detection limits of CANARY[®] biosensor assay in neutralized acidic juices.

Matrix	Detection Limits (ng)
Orange Juice	$< 1.0 \pm 0.00$
Apple Juice	$< 1.0 \pm 0.00$
Carrot Juice	$< 1.0 \pm 0.00$

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197 Acidic juices first were neutralized and then spiked with BoNT/A in order to evaluate the ability of the
198 CANARY[®] biosensor assay to detect the toxin. Samples were determined to be either positive or negative by the
199 Zephyr program using a proprietary algorithm. Two to three independent experiments were performed for
200 each neutralized matrix. The detection limit was calculated using the average of the last positive read-out for
201 each experiment. Statistical significance was determined by using the two-tailed unpaired Student's *t*-test, $p <$
 0.05 for all neutralized acidic juices compared with assay buffer.

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2.4. Detection of BoNT/A in liquid egg, ground beef, green bean baby food, and smoked salmon

203 Since the biosensor assay can detect BoNT/A in assay buffer, milk matrices, and acidic juices
 204 with varying levels of sensitivity, more complex matrices consisting of liquid egg, ground beef,
 205 green bean baby food, and smoked salmon were spiked with toxin and the LOD for each complex
 206 matrix was determined. The estimated limits of detection for the CANARY® assay in the detection
 207 BoNT/A in liquid egg, ground beef, green bean baby puree, and smoked salmon are presented in
 208 Table 3. These complex matrices required minor modifications to the biosensor assay in terms of
 209 sample preparation. Liquid egg was diluted 1:10 into assay buffer and toxin was spiked into each
 210 tube with the 1:10 liquid egg/assay buffer mixture with specific concentrations instead of serially
 211 diluting previously with liquid matrices. 0.025 g of ground beef, green bean baby food, and smoked
 212 salmon were weighed out and put in reaction tubes with specified toxin doses and assay buffer to a
 213 volume of 250 μ L. The samples were incubated at room temperature for 30 minutes before
 214 centrifugation at 10,000 \times g for 5 minutes. 50 μ L of the cleared supernatant was used with the
 215 magnetic capture beads for the continuation of the assay. Amongst these matrices, liquid egg diluted
 216 1:10 matrix gave the highest sensitivity of $< 16.7 \text{ ng} \pm 7.7$; it is at this concentration after a 1:10
 217 dilution indicating that the concentration of BoNT/A actually present in the undiluted matrix is
 218 much higher. BoNT/A was detected by the assay in both ground beef and green bean baby food,
 219 thus indicating that these two types of matrices are amenable to the assay. Smoked salmon had the
 220 lowest level of sensitivity ($< 3.125 \text{ ng} \pm 0.0$) compared to assay buffer and all nine matrices..

221 **Table 3.** Detection limits of CANARY® biosensor assay for liquid egg, ground beef, green bean
 222 baby food, and smoked salmon.

Matrix	Detection Limits (ng)
Liquid egg	$< 16.7 \pm 7.7$
Ground beef	$< 0.39 \pm 0.22$
Green bean baby food	$< 0.91 \pm 0.6$
Smoked salmon	$< 3.125 \pm 0.0$

223 Liquid egg matrix was diluted 1:10 with assay buffer before toxin was added. Ground beef, green bean baby
 224 food, and smoked salmon at 0.025 g were added to assay buffer and toxin was added to a final volume of 250
 225 μ L. After incubation for 30 minutes at room temperature, samples were centrifuged at 10,000 \times g for 5 minutes.
 226 Cleared supernatants were used for the assay. Samples were determined to be either positive or negative by the
 227 Zephyr program using a proprietary algorithm. Two to three independent experiments were performed for
 228 each matrix. The detection limit was calculated using the average of the last positive read-out for each
 229 experiment. Statistical significance as determined by the two-tailed unpaired Student's *t*-test, $p < 0.05$ for all
 230 conditions except for green bean baby food ($p = 0.07$) compared with assay buffer.

231

232 3. Discussion

233 BoNTs are among the most poisonous substances known to man and cause the disease
 234 botulism, which is distinguished by flaccid muscle paralysis that can lead to respiratory failure and
 235 death. Botulism occurs through three routes: foodborne, wound, and infant botulism. BoNTs are
 236 considered Tier 1 Select Agents (CDC) and pose a public health and food safety concern due to the
 237 their potential use by bioterrorists. Assays to detect BoNTs must have high sensitivity and

238 specificity, be compatible with food and environmental samples, and they also should be
239 field-deployable to be of use to a variety of people including first-responders, clinical and diagnostic
240 technicians, and food inspectors.

241
242 BoNT detection assays utilize multiple methods including antibody-based, mass-spectrometry,
243 nucleic acid-based, cell-based, and enzymatic assays, as well as *in vivo* and *ex vivo* mouse assays in
244 buffer and some matrices [8-29]. All of the current technologies have advantages and disadvantages.
245 Advantages are: high sensitivity, faster time, cost-effectiveness, smaller volumes, complex sample
246 compatibility, and multiplex capability. However, the disadvantages are notable and include long
247 experiment times; high costs associated with testing, including the need for expensive (and
248 unwieldy) equipment; the need for expert personnel to conduct the experiments and specialized
249 facilities in which to conduct them; and sensitivity or incompatibility with complex matrices such as
250 sera, milk, juices, ground meat, eggs, and smoked fish. No single technology is adequate for use in
251 clinical, food safety, or environmental settings; thus, all available and new technology platforms
252 should be assessed for their ability to detect BoNTs.

253
254 The CANARY® Zephyr system utilizes a B-cell based biosensor system coupled with
255 immunoprecipitation of the toxin complex to detect BoNT/A. This study has found that the assay is
256 rapid: (< 40 min) from the addition of immunomagnetic capture beads to the reaction matrix to the
257 read out of luminescence and final determination of positive or negative for the sample tested,
258 which is better than most traditional methods. The CANARY® Zephyr system is also portable,
259 suitable for field-deployable because it consists of a laptop, a small centrifuge, and a small
260 luminometer that can fit in a suitcase [33]. Yet, its portability does not sacrifice utility, as the assay
261 also uses small volumes (50 µL) to facilitate multiple sample analysis for precious samples.

262
263 In this study, we have established that CANARY® can detect BoNT/A with a LOD of < 0.075 ng
264 ± 0.02. Milk matrices (non-fat, 2 %, whole milk) slightly increased the LOD to < 0.175 – 0.314 ng,
265 which was not statistically significant compared to assay buffer. Similar to previous work with other
266 technologies such as ELISA and ECL [19], sample preparation of acidic juice (orange, apple, carrot)
267 required neutralization of pH for the CANARY® assay. Neutralized acidic juice samples were not
268 centrifuged to remove particulate matter as used previously with other technologies but a matrix
269 removal step was added using a magnetic bead separator before biosensors were added. All
270 neutralized acid juices (orange, apple, carrot) had a LOD < 1 ng ± 0.0. Diluted liquid egg 1:10 with
271 assay buffer before spiking with BoNT/A and subjected to CANARY® gave a LOD < 16.7 ng ± 7.7.
272 Experiments with undiluted liquid egg were unsuccessful. Solid complex foods also are known to be
273 problematic because of the particulate matter, and so experimental protocols have used the cleared
274 supernatant of ground beef as the matrix to spike toxin into for detection assays [31]. However, in
275 this study, toxin was added directly to the ground beef with assay buffer. After incubation to allow
276 for the dispersal of toxin in the matrix, the mixture was centrifuged to remove the particulate matter
277 before proceeding with the biosensor assay. Using this sample preparation, the limit of detection
278 was < 0.39 ng ± 0.22. The same sample extraction protocol was applied for both green bean baby
279 food as well as smoked salmon. Green bean baby food had an LOD of < 0.91 ng ± 0.6. The highest
280 LOD from all ten complex matrices was smoked salmon, with a LOD of < 3.125 ng ± 0.0. The LODs
281 determined from assay buffer and complex matrices using CANARY® Zephyr are within the range
282 of LODs determined using the different detection technologies (sub-picogram to nanogram per mL
283 or attomolar to pM concentrations).

284
285 In this study, the first reported study using the CANARY® Zephyr biosensor assay system to
286 detect BoNTs, we have shown that CANARY® Zephyr is a useful platform that can be applicable in
287 surveillance, clinical, and environmental testing of BoNT/A with good sensitivity, short time < 40

288 minutes, and reliability. This technology rapidly detects BoNT/A as compared to the extended time
289 periods for other detection methods such as ELISAs (hours) and the mouse bioassay (days). Lateral
290 flow devices, while simple and fast, have complex matrix and sensitivity issues in comparison to
291 CANARY® Zephyr. Further optimization of sample extraction and biosensor protocol may yield
292 improvements in the assay's sensitivity. Development of new BoNT/A or utilizing known BoNT/A
293 monoclonal antibody sequences to generate new immunomagnetic capture beads or biosensors can
294 improve the assay. Additionally, this platform could be further developed into rapid detection kits
295 for the other BoNT serotypes and subtypes.

296 4. Materials and Methods

297 4.1 Reagents

298 Botulinum neurotoxin serotype A (holotoxin and toxin complex) were obtained from
299 Metabionics (Madison, WI). CANARY® Zephyr BoNT/A kit (25 rxns) containing assay buffer,
300 reconstitution buffer, negative control, positive control, B-cell biosensors, microcentrifuge tubes, and
301 immunomagnetic capture beads were obtained from PathSensors, Inc. (Baltimore, MD). The
302 CANARY® detection system consists of a laptop, a small microcentrifuge, and a luminometer.
303 Whole milk, 2% milk, non-fat milk, orange juice (no pulp), carrot juice, apple juice, green bean baby
304 food, 80:20% ground beef, and smoked salmon were bought from a local supermarket.

305 4.2 Biosensor assay protocol for assay buffer and milk matrices

306 Botulinum neurotoxin serotype A at 1 mg/mL was diluted in phosphate gelatin buffer 1:100 to
307 10 µg/mL and allowed to disperse for 30 minutes at room temperature. From the 10 µg/mL stock,
308 toxin was diluted into assay buffer or milk matrices to generate the highest concentration in a total
309 volume of 200 µL. The sample was incubated for 30 minutes at room temperature before serial
310 dilutions down were made in the respective matrices. 50 µL of diluted toxin in matrix was added to
311 CANARY® Zephyr microcentrifuge tubes and then 10 µL of immunomagnetic capture beads was
312 added. The reaction was placed on a rotator for 30 minutes at room temperature. At the end of the
313 reaction time, 20 µL of the B-cell biosensor cells (in reconstitution buffer for at least 30 minutes at
314 room temperature in the dark) was added to the top of the microcentrifuge tubes containing either
315 all of the 50 µL (original concentration) or 11 µL (1:5 of the original concentration) of the toxin
316 matrix:immunomagnetic bead complex. Initiation of the Zephyr software will cause the reaction
317 tube to be centrifuged for 5 seconds before placement into the luminometer to be read immediately.
318 Luminescence was recorded every second for a total of 120 seconds and displayed live in a graph. At
319 the end of the run, the software uses a proprietary algorithm to determine if the sample was positive
320 or negative. The algorithm that determines positive or negative responses is based on the
321 signal-to-background noise ≥ 3 and the luminescent peak occurrence over a particular period of time
322 after initiation of the luminometer run. Detection limits were determined by average of the last
323 positive read out for each buffer/matrix from at 2-3 independent experiments.

324 4.3 Modified CANARY® protocol for acidic juices: carrot, apple, and orange juice

325 The protocol is similar to the one used for assay buffer and milk matrices. However, there are
326 two key modifications: 1) Acidic juices were neutralized with 5 M Tris pH 8.0 (10% final volume)
327 [19] before spiking and serial dilution with toxin. 2) After the 30 minute reaction to allow for binding
328 of toxin:matrix with immunomagnetic capture beads; a magnetic separator was used to capture the
329 complex, removal of the matrix, and replacement with an equal volume of assay buffer. All the
330 subsequent steps following were the same as for 4.2 (assay buffer and milk matrix).

331

332 4.4 Assay protocol for liquid egg, ground beef, green bean baby food, and smoked salmon

333 The protocol is similar to 4.2 with some modifications. Of note, the toxin was spiked directly
334 into each reaction matrix instead of serial dilution as with assay buffer, milks, and acidic juices.
335 Liquid egg (egg yolk and egg white mixed) was diluted 1:10 into assay buffer before the toxin was
336 added into the 1:10 liquid egg/assay buffer mix to give the indicated concentrations. 0.025 g of
337 ground beef (80:20%), green bean baby food, and smoked salmon were added to each tube along
338 with assay buffer and the indicated toxin dose to a volume of 250 μ L. The ground beef, green bean
339 baby food, and smoked salmon with toxin and assay buffer were incubated at room temperature for
340 30 minutes. The samples were vortexed vigorously for 1 minute before centrifugation at 10,000 \times g
341 for 5 minutes to pellet the insoluble particulates. 50 μ L of the cleared supernatants were then used
342 for the CANARY[®] reaction with immunomagnetic beads.

343 4.5 Determination of limits of detection and statistical significance

344 The limit of detection was determined to be the average of the last positive sample
345 determined by the Zephyr program using a proprietary algorithm based upon previous work [32].
346 Statistical significance was determined by two-tailed unpaired Student's *t*-test, for all conditions
347 compared with assay buffer with significance being $p < 0.05$.

348 **Author Contributions:** L.W.C., A.R.F., and C.C.T. conceived and designed the experiments; C.C.T. performed
349 the experiments; L.W.C., A.R.F., and C.C.T. analyzed the data; L.W.C., A.R.F., and C.C.T. wrote the paper.

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352 **Conflicts of Interest:** A.F. is an employee of PathSensors Inc.

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