

CENTRIFUGE-LESS IMMUNOSTAINING OF SUSPENSION CELLS FOR FLOW CYTOMETRY ANALYSIS USING THE DROPARRAY™ SYSTEM

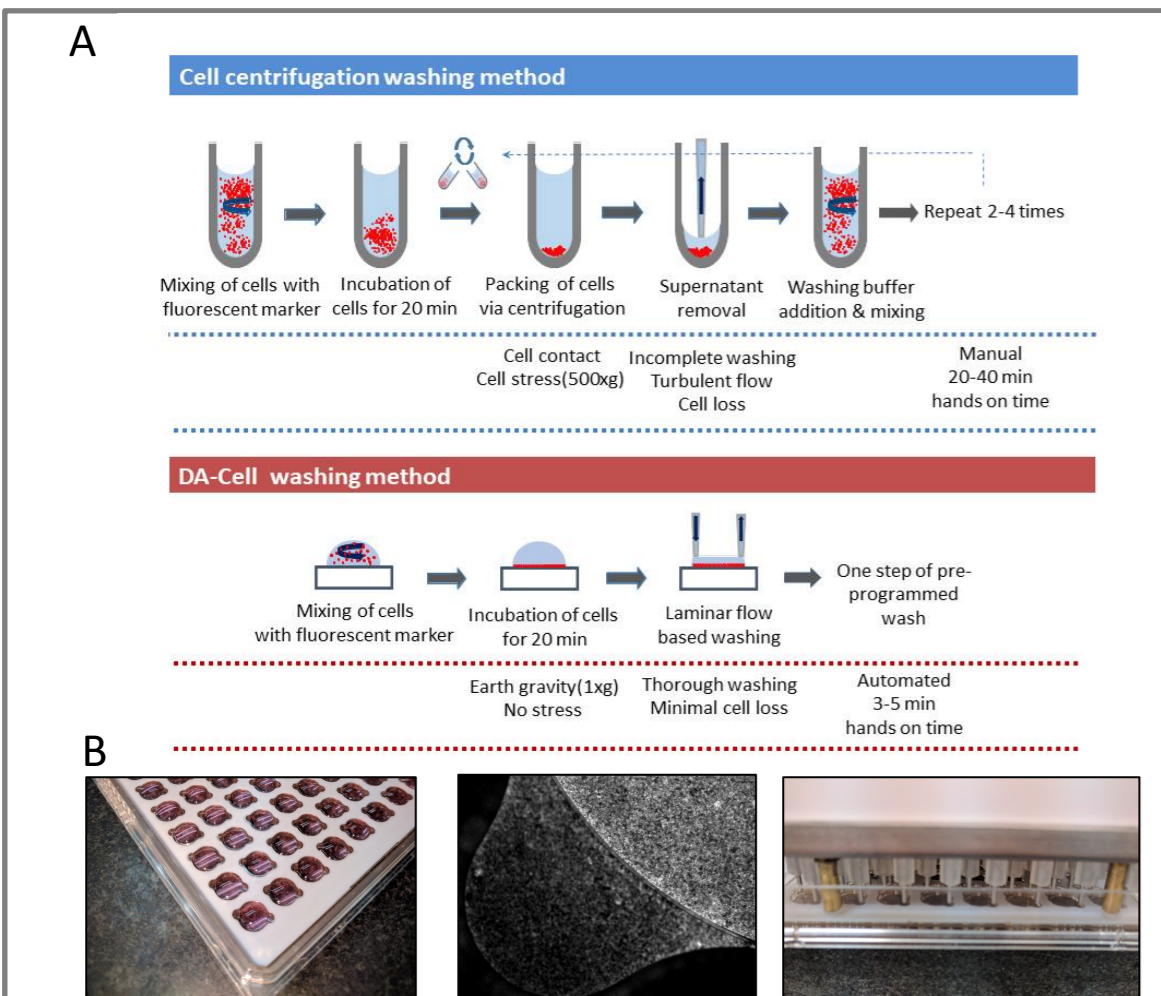
Kong Leong Cheng, Ih Chin Kon, Ralph Lim, Melvin Lye, Xavier Le Guezennec and Namyong Kim from Curiox Biosystems, San Carlos, CA 94070
 Weili Xu, Joni Chong, Brian Abel and Anis Larbi from A*STAR Singapore Immunology Network, Singapore



PURPOSE:

The preparation of samples for flow cytometry typically involves staining of cells with fluorescently-conjugated antibodies that enable the detection of cell populations of interest and their corresponding phenotypes. The standard preparation for flow cytometry analysis requires a centrifugation step to spin down the cells and enable the removal of unbound antibodies. However, such a washing procedure is inherently stressful on the cells and may have an impact on cell integrity and viability. Here, we present a new convenient methodology to wash suspension cells based on unique laminar flow properties of DropArray plate technologies, DA-Cell. This technology offers greater than 95% retention of suspension cells without a centrifugation step. As an automated method, it performs washing (2-4 minutes) and minimises hands-on time to 3-5 minutes compared with 20-40 minutes for a centrifugation based method. Additionally, DA-Cell automation generates consistent and reproducible data independent of an operator. Here, we compared DA-Cell and a conventional centrifugation method in the processing of peripheral blood mononuclear cell (PBMC) samples for flow cytometric analysis.

Figure 1: (A) Comparison of centrifuge vs DA-Cell wash method, (B) Droplet on DA-Cell plate, (C) Close-up of a DA-Cell μ well and (D) Close-up of DA-Cell washer.



METHOD:

PBMC samples were subjected to a conventional staining preparation with Annexin V/Propidium Iodide or a custom 21-antibody panel in FACS tube or U-bottom microtiter plate. In parallel, the same sample was prepared with DA-Cell using a 96-drop based plate format and equivalent ratios of antibodies and cell numbers as the classical preparation. For removal of unbound antibody, classical sample preparation used a 4X centrifugation based wash while DA-Cell sample preparation used 1 X DA-Cell wash cycle of 4 minutes. Samples were analyzed on BD FACSymphony™. Multi-color and multi-parametric analysis was conducted using both Cytokit Bioconductor package and Flowjo.

Figure 2: Assessment of PBMC viability after washing with DA-Cell or Microtiter plate (MTP) methods: Analysis of (A) DA-Cell or (B) MTP methods, and (C) Summary statistics of 5 samples.

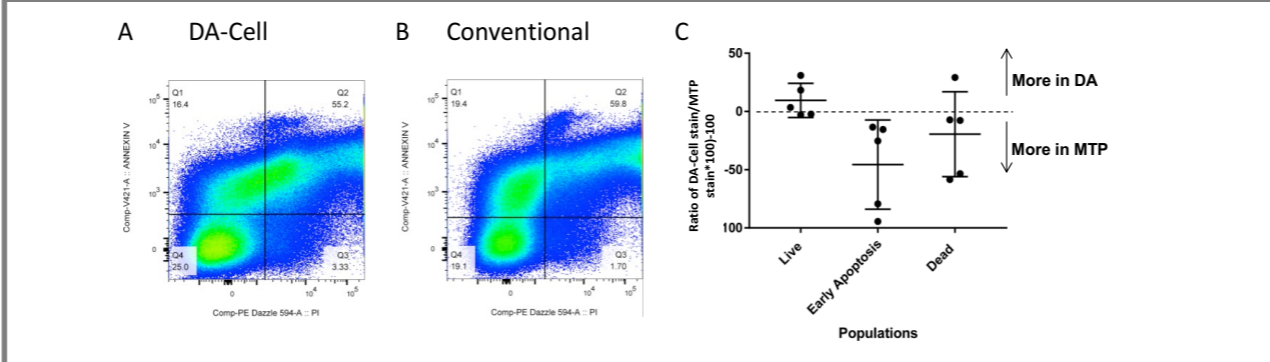


Figure 3: A comparison of flow cytometry cell population separation & frequencies after staining PBMCs with a multi-color panel using a 2ml FACS tube based or DA-Cell based wash.

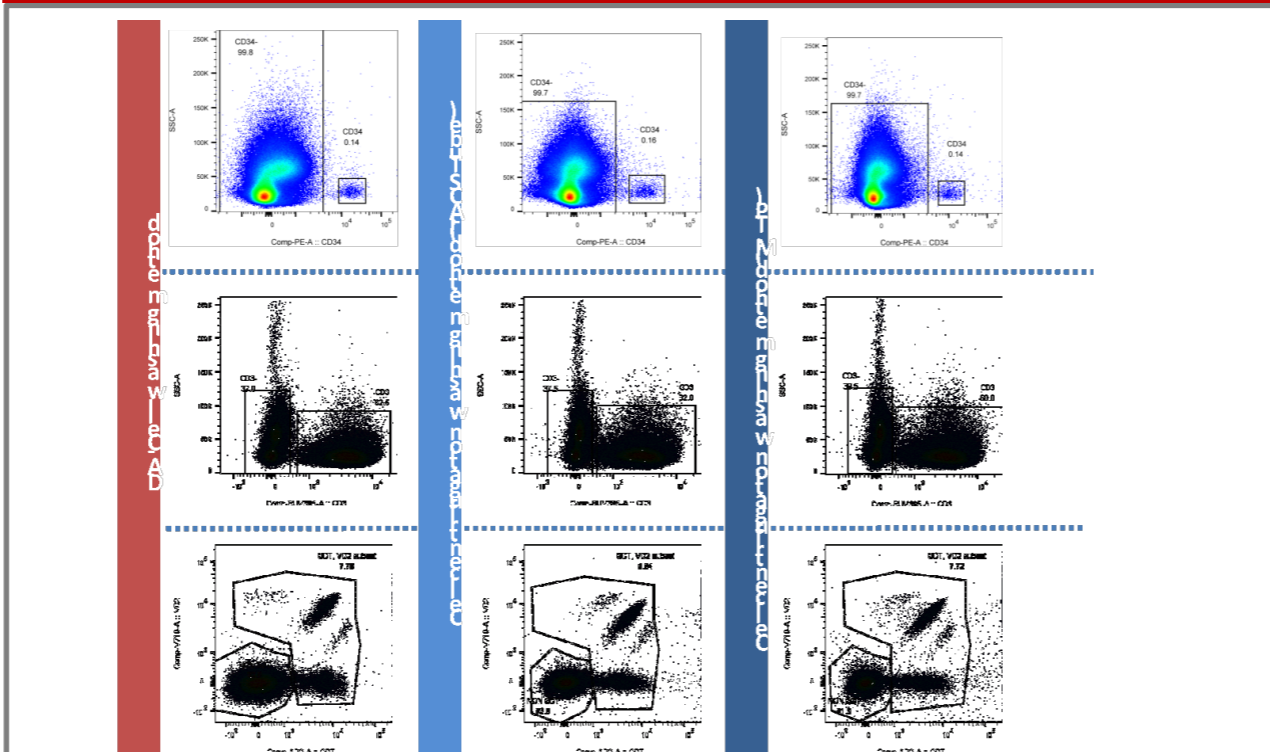


Figure 4: A) Unsupervised multi-parametric data analysis of a 21-antibody panel using combined t-SNE (Cytokit) on PBMCs processed with either DA-Cell based wash or MTP. B) Actual FACS Plot of the Sample

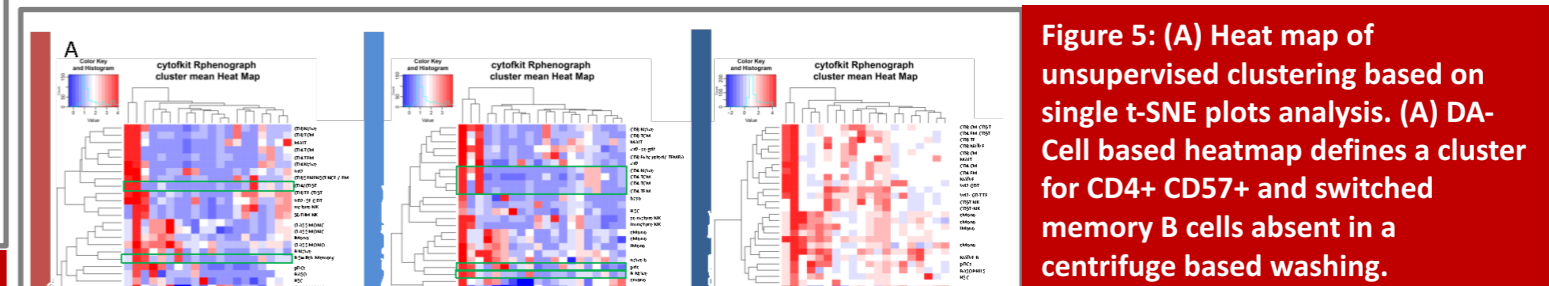
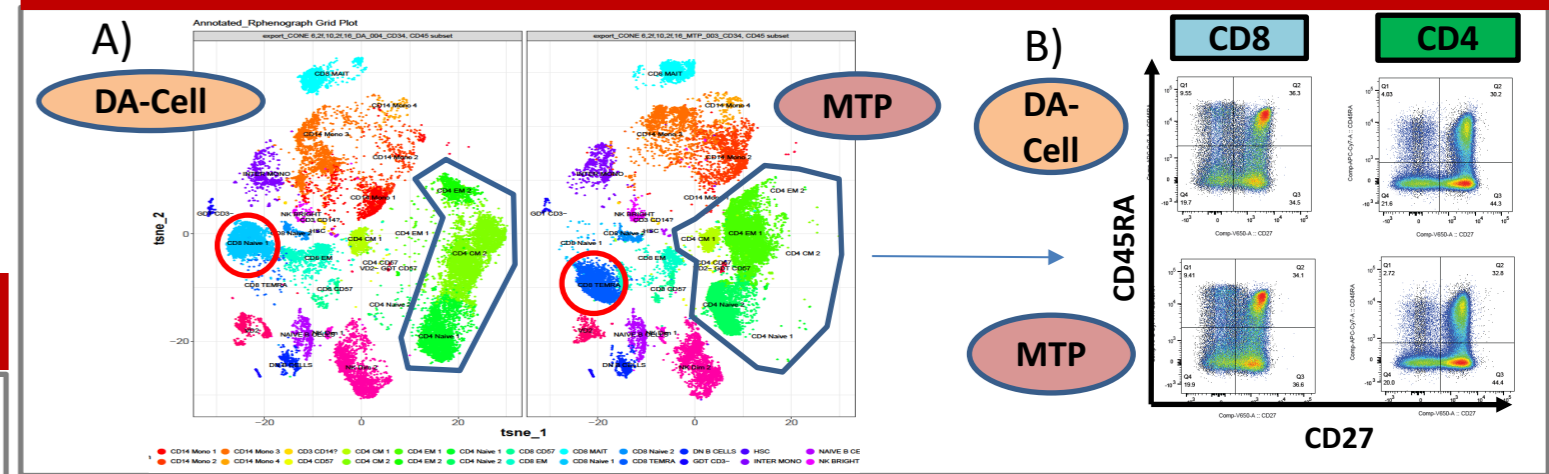


Figure 5: (A) Heat map of unsupervised clustering based on single t-SNE plots analysis. (A) DA-Cell based heatmap defines a cluster for CD4+ CD57+ and switched memory B cells absent in a centrifuge based washing.

RESULTS & CONCLUSION:

Results demonstrate that DA-Cell technology delivers:

- Improved viability of cells (Fig 2),
- Improved separation between cell populations leading to more reliable gating of distinct cell subsets (Fig 3).
- Improved outcomes with unsupervised multi-parametric data analysis, e.g. detection of CD4+CD57+ or switched memory B cell subsets in DA-Cell data but not in classical wash procedure data (Fig 4&5).

Overall DA-Cell benefits include: improved cell viability, retention >95% cells regardless of the number of washes, easier segregation of cell populations, consistent & reproducible data even without an operator, 3-5 minute washing, and improved output of high-dimensional data. With minimal hands on time, DA-Cell technology enables researchers to conduct complex multi-parametric flow cytometry cell assays without the cellular stress and time associated with centrifugation based procedures.