An in-depth and high throughput plasma proteomics workflow powered by Orbitrap Exploris 480 mass spectrometer using multi nanoparticle-based workflow

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Introduction

Plasma proteomics using mass spectrometry (MS) remains a promising method to discover disease biomarkers. However, for large-scale plasma proteomics studies, a robust liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS) setup that does not compromise on protein identification, sequence coverage, dynamic range and analysis precision is required. Here we present a high-throughput and a maximum identification (Max-ID) workflow on an Orbitrap Exploris 480 mass spectrometer for in-depth analysis of plasma. The plasma samples were processed with Seer's Proteograph™ XT Assay utilizing multi-nanoparticles (NPs) for an unbiased and deep proteomics enrichment and analysis at scale.

Methods

Human plasma sample (a low complex pooled healthy control plasma) was processed prepared using with an automated, scalable, and robust Seer Proteograph™ Product Suite, SP100 automation system with Proteograph™ XT Assay Kit.

Proteograph XT Assay

Samples are processed using 100 µL aliquots of each plasma sample, mixed with each of two NP wells included in the Proteograph XT Assay Kit. A one-hour incubation allows high-affinity proteins to displace high-abundance proteins, resulting in a reproducible protein corona on each NP surface that probes the depth of the plasma proteome. A series of gentle washes remove non-specific and weakly bound proteins. The paramagnetic property of the NPs allows for accumulation of NPs with protein corona after each wash step. This results in a highly specific and reproducible protein corona that contains the high-affinity protein binding partners selected by the NPs. Protein coronas are reduced, alkylated, and digested with Trypsin/Lys-C to generate tryptic peptides for LC-MS analysis. All steps are performed in a one-pot reaction directly on the NPs. The in-solution digestion mixture is then desalted, and all detergents are removed using a mixed-media filter plate and positive pressure (MPE) system. Clean peptides are eluted in a high-organic buffer into a deep-well collection plate. A 0.5 µg of tryptic peptides were analyzed on the Orbitrap Exploris 480 MS with both nanoflow and capillarity flow LC methods.

LC Method

High throughput method:

- Thermo Scientific™ Vanquish™ Neo UHPLC system utilizing "Fast Loading" and "Fast Equilibration" features.
- Thermo Scientific™ EASY-Spray™ PepMap™ Column, 2 µm C18, 150 µm x 15 cm
- Thermo Scientific™ PepMap Neo Trap Cartridge, 5 µm 300 µm x 5 mm
- Flow rate: 1.5 µL/min
- LC workflow: Trap & Elute

Max-ID method:

- Thermo Scientific™ EASY-Spray™ PepMap™ Neo Column, 2 µm C18, 75 µm x 75 cm
- Flow rate: 0.25 µL/min
- LC workflow: Direct Injection
- Mobile phases: [A] 0.1% FA in H_2O, [B] 0.1% FA in 80% ACN

Methods

LC Gradient

High throughput

No	Time	Duration [min]	Flow [µl/min]	%B	Volume [µl]	No. of Column Volumes
1	0.000	Run				
2	0.000	0.000	2.000	4.0	0.00	0.00
3	0.200	0.200	2.000	8.0	0.40	0.23
4	14.600	14.400	1.500	20.0	25.20	14.19
5	21.500	6.900	1.500	35.0	10.35	5.83
6	21.500	Column Wash				
7	21.900	0.400	2.000	99.0	0.70	0.39
8	22.600	0.700	2.000	99.0	1.40	0.79
9	22.600	Stop Run				
10	22.600	Column Equilibration				

Max-ID

No	Time	Duration [min]	Flow [µl/min]	%B	Volume [µl]	No. of Column Volumes
1	0.000	Run				
2	0.000	0.000	0.250	1.0	0.00	0.00
3	0.100	0.100	0.250	6.0	0.03	0.01
4	60.100	60.000	0.250	20.0	15.00	6.76
5	90.100	30.000	0.250	35.0	7.50	3.38
6	90.100	Column Wash				
7	91.100	1.000	0.250	99.0	0.25	0.11
8	102.000	10.900	0.250	99.0	2.73	1.23
9	102.000	Stop Run				
10	102.000	Column Equilibration				

MS Method

The Proteograph XT Assay Kit generates two sets of enriched peptides at the end of analysis. For the high throughput method, 2 individual injections of 24 minutes each were used for a total instrument time of 48 minutes per sample. For the Max ID method, the two peptide wells were pooled and LC-MS analysis was done in single injection using a 102 minutes total gradient.

	MS Parameter	Max ID Method	High Throughput Method
MS1	Resolution	60K	60K
	AGC	300%	300%
	Max-IT	Auto	Auto
MS2	Resolution	15K	15K
	AGC	800%	1000%
	Max-IT	Auto	28ms
	Isolation Window	4Da	4Da

Data Analysis

Proteograph™ Analysis Suite (PAS) with match between run (MBR) was used for data analysis of the resulting LC-MS files unless stated otherwise. Data was exported and processed by Pandas and Seaborn packages in Python for data visualization. Spectral library free search was done on Spectronaut 18 software, DIA-NN (v1.8.1) or Proteome Discoverer 3.1 software using CHIMERYS intelligent search algorithm by MSAID. In all software packages, 1% FDR cut off was applied at both protein and peptide levels.

Results

The optimized DIA method enabled the identification of > 3,000 protein groups, > 20,000 peptides from the high-throughput method (Figure 1 A and B) and > 3,800 protein groups, > 27,000 peptides in the Max-ID method (Figure 1C and D) using the Proteograph Analysis Suite with match between run (MBR).

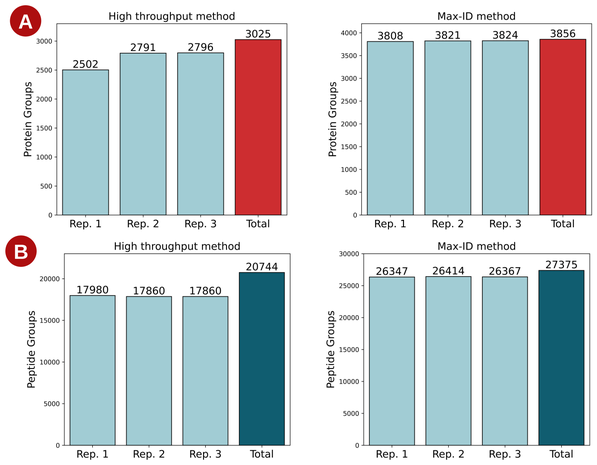

Figure 1. (A) Number of protein groups in the high throughput (>3,000) and Max-ID (>3,800) method. **(B)** Number of peptide groups in the high throughput (>20,000) and Max-ID (>27,000) method.

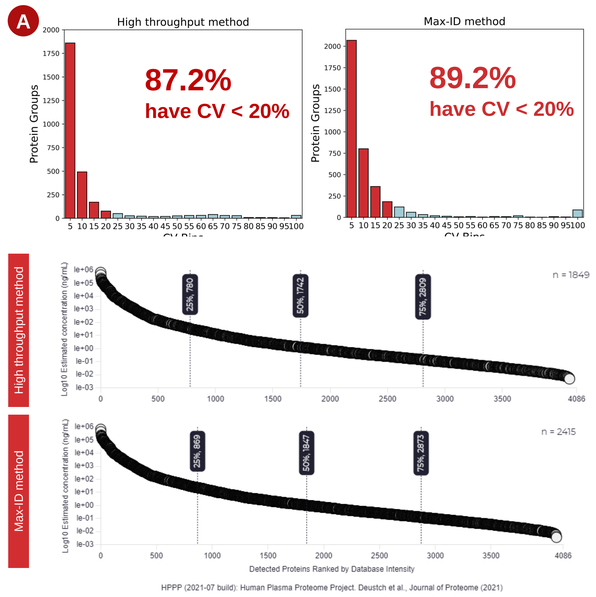

Figure 2. (A) Protein group coefficient of variance (CV) distribution of the high throughput and Max-ID method demonstrate the excellent quantitation and precision from Orbitrap Exploris 480 mass spectrometer. **(B)** Dynamic range of proteins identified in one run compared to a deep plasma proteome coverage reported in human plasma proteome project (HPPP) index.

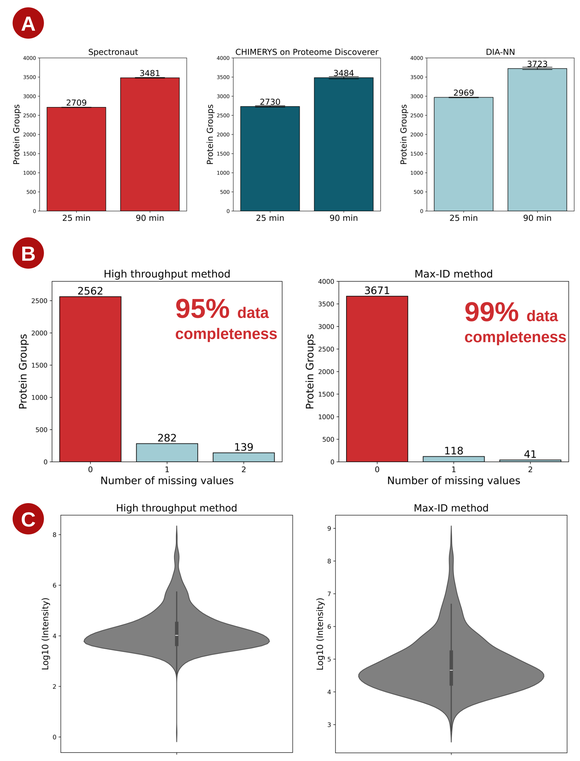

Figure 3. (A) Number of protein groups obtained from library free searched on Spectronaut, CHIMERYS on Proteome Discoverer and DIA-NN. **(B)** Data completeness of high throughput (95%) and Max-ID (99%) method across three injections. **(C)** Wide dynamic range covered by Orbitrap Exploris 480 mass spectrometer in both the high throughput and Max-ID method. Data was obtained from PAS.

CONCLUSIONS

- Enrichment of plasma proteins using Seer's Proteograph XT technology helps dig deeper into the plasma proteome dynamic range.
- LC-MS workflow with Vanquish Neo UHPLC system with a PepMap Easy-Spray column coupled to an Orbitrap Exploris 480 MS provides a robust and reproducible setup for identification and quantification of plasma proteins.
- High throughput capillary flow method enables identification of over 3,000 protein groups, of which 87.2% have a CV below 20%.
- Max-ID method allows for deeper proteome coverage along with excellent quantitation performance on Orbitrap Exploris 480 MS.

TRADEMARKS/LICENSING