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Title

Tissue engineering: construction of a multicellular 3D scaffold for the delivery of layered cell sheets.

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Tissue Engineering: Construction of a Multicellular 3D Scaffold for the Delivery of Layered Cell Sheets and Matrix --Manuscript Draft--

Manuscript Number:	
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Order of Authors:	William Turner William S Turner Nabjot Sandhu Kara E McCloskey
Abstract:	<p>Some tissues, such as the adult human hearts, are unable to adequately regenerate after damage. Strategies in tissue engineering (TE) propose innovations to assist the body in recovery and repair. For example, TE approaches may be able to attenuate heart remodeling after myocardial infarction. As with any functional tissue, successful regeneration involves the proper delivery of specific cell types (cardiomyocytes, endothelial-cells, and most likely smooth-muscle-cells, as well as cardiac-fibroblasts) and environmental cues favoring integration and survival. Engineered cardiac-tissues address elements of soluble signals, cell-to-cell interactions or the use of extracellular matrix materials as delivery vehicles, where other techniques of cell injection ignore these tenants. To date, a patch design combining these ingredients has yet to be examined due to various levels of difficulty in manipulation of the engineered materials. We have developed a method of patch construction that combines cell-encapsulation, cell-sheet-engineering, as well as, the use of natural fibrous matrices for the purpose of delivering cells for tissue regeneration. We demonstrate that cells with pre-established cell-to-cell interaction, in a sheet can be integrated into this construction. Our Patch architecture provides a nutrition rich protective environment permissive of allowing cellular retention. This patch design can be applied to other organs other than heart with minimal design and material changes, and is meant to be a quickly built, off-the-shelf product for regenerative therapies. This protocol has five detailed steps. First we use the temperature-sensitive Poly(N-isopropylacrylamide) pNIPAAm to coat our tissue culture dishes. Then we culture our tissue specific cells on the surface of those plates to form cell-sheets with strong lateral adhesions. Thirdly, we create a base for the patch by combining porous matrix with neo-permissive hydrogels and endothelial cells. Finally, we lift the cell-sheets from the pNIPAAm coated dishes and transfer the sheet to the base element, making the complete construct.</p>

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April 2, 2013

Dear Editor,

Please find an attached manuscript by W.S. Turner et al, titled "Tissue Engineering: Construction of a Multicellular 3D Scaffold for the Delivery of Layered Cell Sheets and Matrix," which we feel would be a superb candidate for publication in the Journal of Visualized Experiments. This original submission relates our technique for construction of a tissue engineering patch that can be applied to solid organs of the body. The patch is unique in its ability to offer a shelter for protecting cells in a nutrient rich environment as well as organizing multiple cell types into unique patterns.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing your impressions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W.S. Turner', on a light-colored background.

William S. Turner, Ph.D.

Suggested 5 peer reviewers with their institutional affiliation and email address.

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TITLE:

Tissue Engineering: Construction of a Multicellular 3D Scaffold for the Delivery of Layered Cell Sheets and Matrix

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Keywords:

Cell Delivery, Matrices, Tissue Engineering, Cardiac Patch, Cell Sheet Engineering

Short Abstract:

The assembly of multiple materials and cell types into a composite “patch” is necessary to recapitulate highly organized structures, such as heart and muscle. Injection of cells and/or single materials alone has shown variable success in other organ systems and limited success in cardiac regeneration.¹⁻⁷ Currently, stem cell-derived cells are delivered to damaged tissue using a variety of delivery methods including: direct cell injection, coronary artery perfusion (for the case of the heart), and multiple material carriers like hydrogels, synthetic polymers, and natural matrices. Our method of patch construction is aimed at enhancing cell packaging by using a combination of cell sheet and materials-based components for the delivery of both tissue specific functional cells and endothelial cells. This design combines strengths of both materials and multiple cell types. The base fibrous matrix, provides the physical strength to the construct which is also filled with a neo-vessel permissive hydrogel with endothelial cells for establishing vascularization and integration of the cell sheets.

Long Abstract:

Some tissues, such as the adult human hearts, are unable to adequately regenerate after damage.^{8,9} Strategies in tissue engineering (TE) propose innovations to assist the body in recovery and repair. For example, TE approaches may be able to attenuate heart remodeling after myocardial infarction (MI) and possibly increase total heart function to a near normal pre-MI level.¹⁰ As with any functional tissue, successful regeneration of cardiac tissue involves the proper delivery of specific cell types (cardiomyocytes, endothelial cells, and most likely smooth muscle cells, as well as cardiac fibroblasts) and environmental cues favoring integration and survival. Engineered cardiac tissues address elements of soluble signals, cell-to-cell interactions or the use of extracellular matrix materials as delivery vehicles, where other techniques of cell injection ignore these tenants.^{9, 11,12} To date, a patch design combining these ingredients have yet to be examined due to various levels of difficulty in manipulation of the engineered materials. Here, we have developed a method of patch construction that combines cell encapsulation, cell sheet engineering, as well as, the use of natural fibrous matrices for the purpose of delivering cells with the specific purpose of tissue regeneration. Furthermore, we demonstrate that cells with pre-established cell-to-cell interaction, in a sheet can be integrated into this construction. Patch architecture is aimed at providing a

nutrition rich protective environment permissive of allowing cellular retention. This patch design can be applied to other organs other than heart with minimal design and material changes, and is meant to be a quickly built, off-the-shelf product for regenerative therapies. This protocol has five detailed steps. First we use the temperature sensitive Poly(*N*-isopropylacrylamide) pNIPAAm to coat our tissue culture dishes. Then we culture our tissue specific cells on the surface of the coated plates to form sheets of cells with strong lateral adhesions. Thirdly, we create a base for the patch by combining porous matrix with neo-permissive hydrogels and endothelial cells. Finally, we lift the cell sheets from the pNIPAAm coated dishes and transfer the sheet to the base element, making the complete construct.

Protocol Text:

The overall production process for our layered cellular patch is outlined by the flowchart in **Figure 1**. Here we use pNIPAAm-treated surfaces to culture muscle cells. These cells are incubated at 37°C for a minimum of 24 hours at confluence to establish lateral connections between adjacent cells. To release the cell sheet, the plate is subjected to temperatures below 32°C. The cell sheet is then moved to the base matrix containing a neovascular-permissive hydrogel with vascular endothelial cells embedded into a stronger fibrous matrix.

1.) Creation of pNIPAAm-coated plates

- 1.01) Weigh out 2.6 grams of pNIPAAm (Sigma-Aldrich)
- 1.02) Make a 60% toluene / 40% hexane (Sigma-Aldrich) solution
- 1.03) Dissolve the 2.6 grams of pNIPAAm in the 60%toluene/40%hexane solution.
- 1.04) Heat the mixture to 60°C.
- 1.05) Cut filter paper into a circle and place paper in the Buchner funnel.
- 1.06) Weigh a glass beaker.
- 1.07) Filter the solution through Buchner Funnel into the glass beaker (hexane will melt plastics)
- 1.08) Vacuum the beaker and contents overnight.

Note: Until it is reacted with isopropyl it will oxidize so make sure it does not come into contact with oxygen.

- 1.09) Weigh the beaker to establish the weight of the pNIPAAm.

- 1.10) Add the same amount of isopropyl alcohol in weight as the pNIPAAm creating a 50/50 solution.
- 1.11) Place the solution on surface to coat, allowing it to sit for 5 minutes under UV light.
- 1.12) Wash the plate with warm PBS 2x before use.

2.) Creation of Cell Sheets

Note 1: Cell sheets of primary cells for the target organ can be created using a number of different methods, or by coating tissue culture surfaces with thermo-responsive polymer as we have done here. Pre-coated thermo-sensitive plates are also offered by a number of vendors.

Note 2: This protocol is for culture using a 35mm dish.

2.01) Isolate the cell population. (This method is dependent on the individual derivation procedures and the type of muscle cells used.) Rat aortic smooth muscle cells (RAOSMC) are used in this example. These are primary smooth muscle cells isolated from the abdominal aorta of a rat and used below passage # 50 (Lonza).

2.02) Wash the cells with 2ml of warm PBS.

2.03) Add 3ml of trypsin for 5 minutes.

2.04) Inhibit trypsin by addition of culture media, or phosphate buffer solution (PBS) containing 10% Fetal Bovine Serum (FBS).

2.05) Count the cells.

2.06) Spin the cells at 1000rpm for 5min.

2.07) Aspirate the supernatant and resuspend the cells in SmGM2 plus bullet kit (Lonza) culture medium.

2.08) Place the media containing the cells on a 35ml thermo-sensitive plate – pNIPAAm coated plate at a concentration that will achieve 100% confluence. For RAOSMCs we have determined that number to be 100,000 cells/cm². However, due to loss of cells during the passing, we use 120% of our final value.

2.09) Place into an incubator at 37C overnight.

3.) Preparation of Foundational Matrix

3.01) Various 3D fibrous matrices can be used to layer strong fibrous matrix between the delicate cell sheets. Some examples include: gelfoam (Pfizer), bioglass, natural acellularized materials¹³ or nanospun materials^{14,15} The porcine urinary bladder matrix (UBM) used in these studies was generously provided from our collaborator, Dr Badylak.¹⁶

3.02) Prior to use, matrix characteristics should be determined including the lack of cellular content if decellularized matrix is used,^{14,15} cell specific viability, and void space.¹⁷

3.03) Sterilize the fibrous matrix with 40 Gray (40 J/kg), over a 10 min period.¹⁸

3.04) Cut the matrix into a desired size and shape. Here, we use a hole-punch to cut a 4mm diameter circle.

4.) Seeding Endothelial Cells into a Neovascular Permissive Hydrogel

4.01) Endothelial cells can be obtained from primary variety of sources, including differentiation from stem or progenitor cells. Here, we use HuVECs (Invitrogen).

4.02) Any permissive hydrogel can be used as long as the cross-linking time is short enough to allow the cells stay viable. Here, we use HyStem (produced by Glycosan, a subsidiary of Biotime; Alameda, CA)

4.03) Preparation of the hydrogel is done in accordance with the company protocol.

4.04) Collect endothelial cells and disperse into a single cell solution using 1x trypsin (Accutase or Cell Dissociation Buffer could also be used for single cell dispersion)

4.05) Deactivate the trypsin enzyme by using an equal amount of soybean trypsin inhibitor or 10% FBS in PBS, collecting the solution/cells into a 15ml falcon tube.

4.06) Count the cells, and calculate the volume needed for the patch dimensions (previously quantified). For a 4mm patch we will use 2 million endothelial cells.

4.07) Extract 2 million cells, and place into a new 15ml falcon tube.

4.08) Spin at (1000rpg) for 5 minutes.

4.09) Aspirate the supernatant, leaving the cells as a pellet in a falcon tube

4.10) Add 4/5 of the total volume desired from the 1:1 mixture of HyStem:Gelatin-S.

4.11) Resuspend the endothelial cells in the mixture

4.12) Place resuspended cells onto the base fibrous matrix cut in Step 2.

4.13) Add 1/5 of the total volume desired from the Extralink (crosslinker).

4.14) Incubate for 1 hour at 37C.

5. Isolation of Cell Sheets

5.01) Remove the 35mm pNIPAAAM -treated plates from the incubator and place in a cell culture hood at room temperature.

5.02) Quickly remove the media from the cells, and add in 2ml of 6% gelatin that has been heated to 37°C.

5.03) While the gelatin is still warm, place the metal lattice into the gelatin, submerging it below the surface of the gelatin (Movie 1).

5.04) Place the plate onto ice for 5 to 7 minutes, allowing the gelatin to harden.

5.05) After 7 minutes, use a spatula to carefully ring the plate, and then use forceps to lift the metal lattice from the plate (the 6% gelatin, and the cell sheet should lift with the lattice)

5.06) Move the cell sheet to the dish with the based matrix with hydrogel, and carefully set the lattice on top of the construct. (The apical side of the cell sheet will still be in the top position)

5.07) Add 2ml of warm media (37C).

5.08) Incubate overnight allowing the sheet of cells to adhere to the hydrogel surface, and remove the lattice after 24 hours

Representative Figures and Results:

The flow diagram (**Figure 1**) shows the overall method of making the multilayered patch. Cell sheets are detached from the pNIPAAAM treated plate by dropping the temperature below 32°C. Then the cell sheet is placed on top of the cross-linked hydrogel containing the endothelial cells seeded into the underlying fibrous matrix (**Figure 1**). The pretreated thermo-sensitive plates (UpCell) can also be used for creating the cell sheets. Special topological surfaces are used to specifically pattern (i.e. align) the cells¹⁹.

The base fibrous matrix can be generated from decellularizing native tissue matrix or electrospun. Here, we show the fibrous material sheet cut to a 4mm diameter for the patch base (**Figure 2A**). The characterization of this material is important for determining the amount of hydrogel that can be used to fill the void spaces. The matrix that we used here has been previously characterized and published.¹⁷

The hydrogels containing endothelial cells are cross-linked after application of the HyStem liquid components to the fibrous matrix. Fluorescence/transmission microscopy shows living cells stained with Calcein AM (**Figure 2B**) that have been captured in the cross-linked hydrogel.

The process of creating the cell sheet is imaged (**Figure 3**), including comparison between our own pNIPAAm-coated plates and pre-coated plates purchased from a vendor, (UpCell plates; Nunc). RAOSMC are plated on the pNIPAAm treated surface for at least 16 hours at 37°C. This minimum time allows the cells to establish their lateral boarder adhesions with neighboring cells (**Figure 3A**). Note: The cells must be at confluence to establish these lateral borders. After culturing for at least 16 hours, the plate of cells must be moved to room temperature for the a drop below 32°C, and using ice for 5-8 minutes speeds up the cooling process (**Figure 3B**). The temperature drop changes the conformational contact angle of the material coating allowing the cell sheet to lift off of the plate. **Figure 3C** shows the cell sheet lifting from the plate.

Plates coated in the laboratory worked well, after some optimization, for creating and moving the cell sheets. Figure 4D shows a confluent monolayer of RAOSMC prior to transfer. When the cells were allowed to lift, the sheets tended to fold and stick to itself (**Figure 3E**). In fact, manipulating the cell sheets on pNIPAAm or purchased UpCell plates was difficult and often resulted in tearing of the sheets (**Figure 3F**). Therefore, we needed to come up with a solution for transferring the sheets. Once the cells are removed from the incubator and start to cool, 6% gelatin was used to cover the cells with an additional metal lattice embedded within the gel (**Figure 3G**). As the plate cooled, the cells lifted, and the gelatin hardens. Using forceps, the gelatin- lattice and cell sheet can be removed together from the culture plate; all at the same time (**Figure 3H**). Then these three components are placed on top of the based construct (**Figure 3I**). Here, the cell sheet (pink) is much larger than the underlying base matrix (thick white matrix under the pink cell sheet). The cell sheet can easily be trimmed to size.

The final cell patch (**Figure 4**) is created by layering the cell sheet onto the preformed complex of the patch base and permissive hydrogel. From bottom to top, the patch consists of a fibrous matrix seeded with hyaluronan hydrogel containing the endothelial cells, and then the cell sheet is layered on top of this matrix. Early attempts to manipulate the cell sheets without the use of the gelatin/lattice apparatus resulted in very small cell sheets that often folded and were torn (**Figure 4A-D** top down view). Figure 4A represents an early patch design composite picture combining the mitotracker red dyed RAOSMC (**Figure 4B**), calcein AM green fluorescent HuVECs (**Figure 4C**), and the transmitted light image (**Figure 4D**). Closer 10x images are supplied for the cell sheet and HA/Hydrogel without matrix (**Figure 4E-H**). **Figure 5E** is the composite of the mitotracker red (**Figure 4F**), the Calcein AM green HuVECs (**Figure 4G**) and the transmitted light (**Figure 4H**). The bottom up view (base matrix, HA/HuVEC), and cell sheet images of each component is show in **Figures 5I-L**. The composite images is **Figure 5I**, with the individual parts represented in **Figure 5J-L**, **Figure 4J** shows the cell sheet (red), the endothelial cells (green) are in **Figure 4K**, and the transmission image (**Figure 4L**) The composite image (**Figure 4M**) shows the patch with a uniform cell-

sheet covering the entire area of the matrix without any folding or tearing. **Figures 4M-P** are also from the bottom looking up into the matrix. **Figure 4N** is the cell sheet, containing Neutral Red. Again, thick red strips appear around the matrix because the sheet folds in these areas directly adjacent to the edge of the matrix. Transmission light imaging (**Figure 4O**) shows the morphology of the cells, and the structure of the matrix. Finally (**Figure 4P**), our matrix has a special quality of fluorescing at the same wavelength as Dapi. Therefore we can use the ultraviolet excitation of the matrix to clearly separate it from the cell sheet (bright red). The edges of the patch can be trimmed to remove any edges of the sheet that are hanging over the edges of the matrix.

Tables and Figures:

Figure 1: Flow Chart. PDMS plates are treated with pNIPAAm monomer solution. Then cell-sheets are created by seeding cells onto the surface of the coated plate. The plate is kept at an incubation temperature of 37°C allowing the cells to reach confluence and establish lateral connections to neighboring cells. Upon the drop in temperature, the pNIPAAm changes its conformation and become hydrophobic, thus allowing the cell sheet to detach (yellow disk). Concurrently endothelial cells are captured in a neovascular permissive hydrogel (Glycosan HyStem-C from BioTime, Inc) by crosslinking the mixture after placing it upon the surface of the fibrous matrix (white disk). The cell sheet is then transferred on top the combination (Matrix + Hydrogel) completing the construction of the patch.

Figure 2: A. The fibrous matrix is punched into a round shape 4mm in diameter to create small patches. The endothelial cells are then embedded in the fibrous matrix using a hydrogel. **B.** HuVECs stained with mitotracker green (Calcein AM) suspended in HA hydrogels on the surface of the base matrix (10x).

Figure 3: Cell Lifting - Creation of Cell Sheets: **A.** RAOSMC (1million) were cultured on Upcell-treated 35mm-dishes for 16 hours. The cells are adherent to the surface at 37C. (10x) **B.** RAOSMC were lifted by placing the plate on ice for 5-7 minutes. **C.** Edge of the lifted cell sheet created on UpCell surface (10x). **D.** RAOSMC grown on 60/40 Hexan-Toluen/NIPAAm coated 35mm standard tissue culture plates. (4x) **E.** When cooled, the cell sheets contracted and folded as they detached from the surface of the NIPAAm plate. (4x) **F.** Due to the fragility of the single-cell sheet, the cell sheet often gets damage during lifting or other manipulations. (4x) **G.** We, therefore, introduced a metal screen support to aid the transfer of the cell sheets. Here, the RAOSMC - stained Neutral Red (Invitrogen) – were grown on a pNIPAAm coated plate and then lifted onto 6% gelatin with a porous metal screen support **H.** and transferred to another plate without damage. (4x) **I.** The larger RAOSMC cell sheet layer (pink color) was then placed on top of the fibrous patch/hydrogel (arrow). The metal screen can then be easily removed, washed, autoclaved, and reused.

Figure 4: Final Layered Cellular Patch: Cells were cultured on a pNIPAAm coated surface and then moved as a sheet to the surface of the fibrous matrix. Early trials that were not transferred with the gelatin/metal lattice resulted in small tattered patches (A-

D). **A.** Composite image of (B-D), RAOSMCs in two sheets stained with **B.** Mitotracker Red, with **C.** HuVECs stained with green, and **D.** in transmitted light. **E.** Composite image of a cell-sheet combined with the matrix/HA-hydrogel containing Calcein AM stained HuVECs (green) **F.** Red fluorescent RAOSMCs in a sheet. **G.** Green fluorescent HuVECs suspended in a hydrogel. **H.** Transmission image of (E). **I.** Composite image looking from the bottom of the patch upwards through the base matrix (not stained), HA containing HuVECs (green), and cell sheet of RAOSMCs (red), respectively. **J.** Red fluorescent RAOSMCs sheet, as seen through the matrix **K.** Green fluorescent HuVECs. **L.** Transmission image of the patch construct. **M.** Composite picture of cell-sheets (red) over the base matrix (autofluorescent-blue). Cell sheets were maintained without tearing in making patches by implementing the use of the gelling/metal lattice construction technique. **N.** Cells in the sheet cover the base matrix, increased fluorescence at the edges is due to bunching of the cells. **O.** Transmission image of the construct. **P.** Natural matrix is autofluorescent in the Dapi (blue wavelength).

Discussion: The method presented in this manuscript is a fairly low cost means of creating a cell sheet for the purpose of tissue engineering applications. Creating pNIPAAm coated plates within a university laboratory can be standardized with this method. The most significantly challenging component of this protocol centers on the manipulation of the cell sheet. The cell sheet is rather fragile and will tear if manipulated with forceps. Moreover, when the cell sheet is not held in place, it tends to contract. The current construction allows for the use of multiple cell types and some organization. The use of cell constructs (sheets) rather than single cells, may increase the likelihood of survival and integration for tissue engineered regenerative medicine applications. It is now possible to work with implanting tissues rather than just the cells that make them up. Furthermore, this will allow scientist to study the nature of tissue structure in its importance for cell survival and function after implantation.

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Disclosures: I have nothing to disclose.

Table of Specific Reagents and Equipment:

Name of the reagent	Company	Catalogue number	Comments (optional)
Calcein-AM	Invitrogen	C3099	Cell tracker / live dye
Lysotracker Red	Invitrogen	L7528	Cell tracker
Neutral Red	Sigma	N7005	Visible Cell dye

Supplementary Movie:

The process by which we can transfer the sheets of cells is highlighted in the supplemental movie submitted with the document. The movie shows, in step-wise process, the removal of the cells from the incubator; replacement of the media with 6% gelatin, the insertion of the metal screen, chilling of the cells on ice, transfer of the cells from the pNIPAAAM coated dish to another dish, an image of the cells during transfer, and finally the removal of the screen from the sheet.

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Figure 1
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Flow Chart

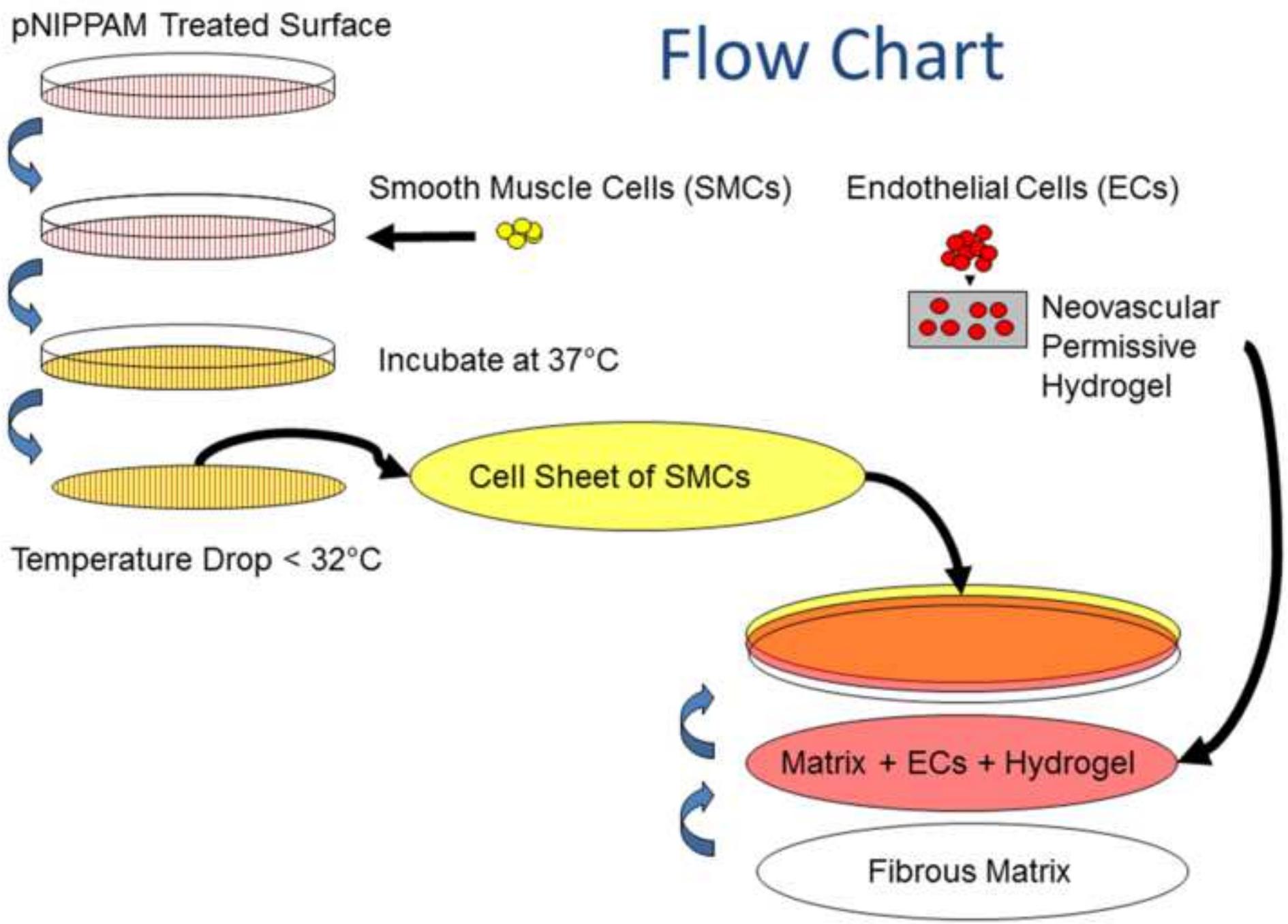


Figure 2
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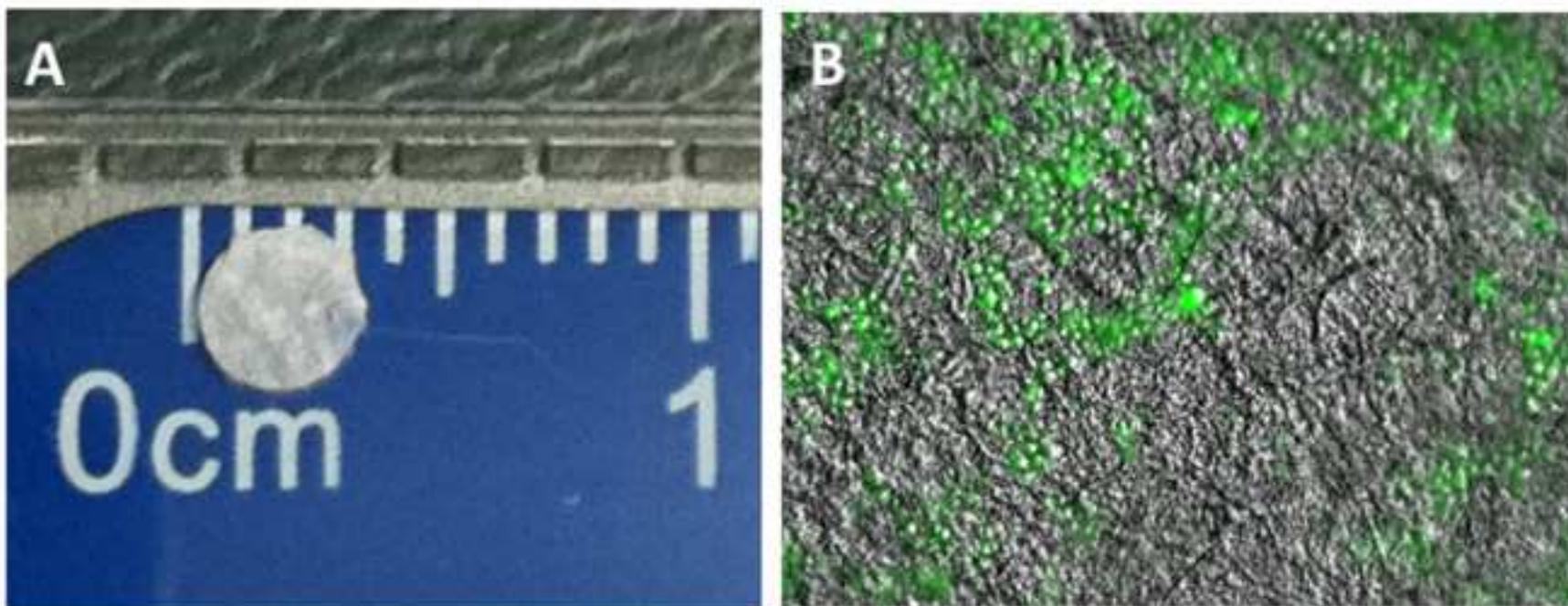


Figure 3
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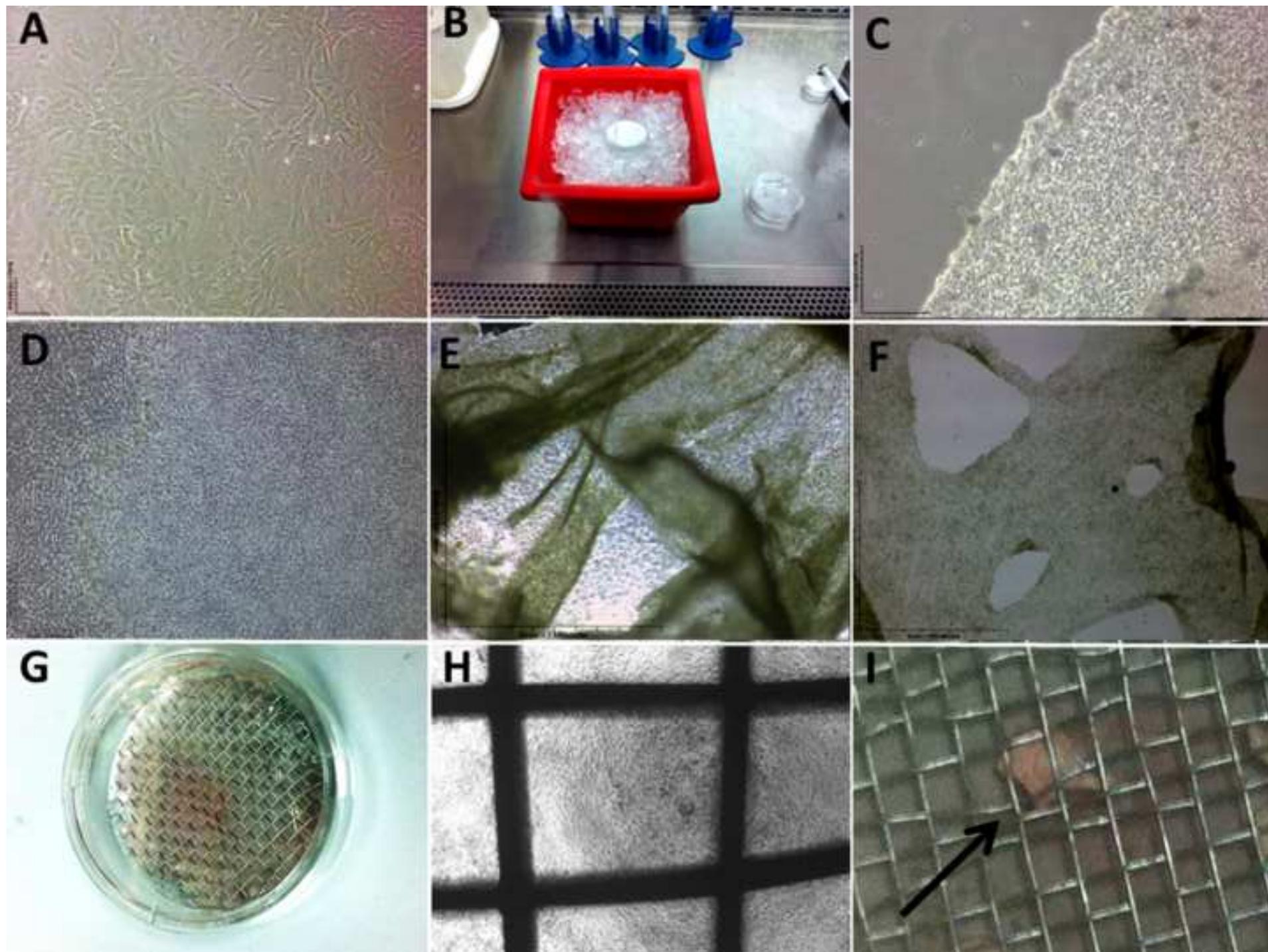


Figure 4
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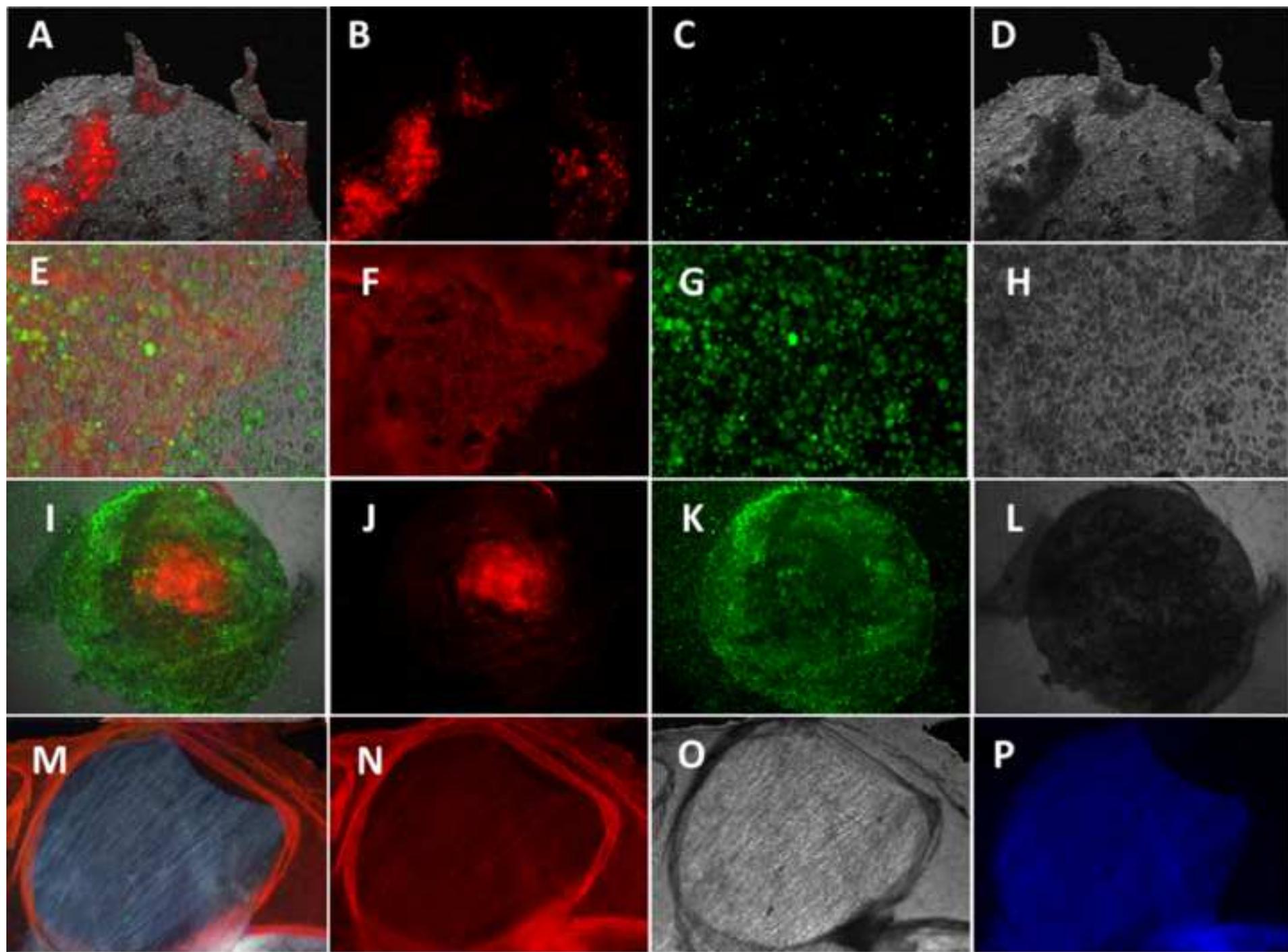


Table of Specific Reagents:

Name of the reagent	Company	Catalogue number	Comments (optional)
Calcein-AM	Invitrogen	C3099	Cell tracker / live dye
Lysotracker Red	Invitrogen	L7528	Cell tracker
Neutral Red	Sigma	N7005	Visible Cell dye

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