

# Gold nanoparticle assemblies of controllable size obtained by hydroxylamine reduction at room temperature



István Sz. Tódor, László Szabó, Oana T. Marişca, Vasile Chiş, Nicolae Leopold  
Faculty of Physics, Babeş-Bolyai University, Kogălniceanu 1, 400084  
Cluj-Napoca, Romania

## Introduction

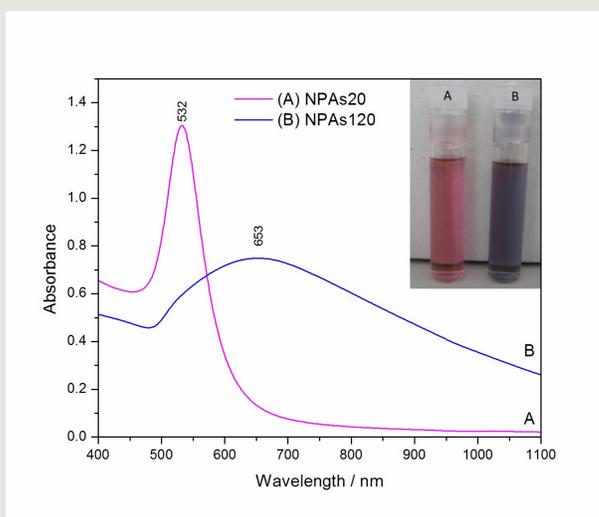
In recent years metal nanoparticle synthesis has evolved substantially, now being possible to control their shape, size and surface chemistry. Gold nanoparticles are one of the most important types of nanoparticles with biomedical application, due to their utilization in live tissue as contrast agents, delivery vehicles, therapeutics etc [1]. Nanoparticles are known to self-assemble into larger structures during the growth processes, which are governed by a delicate balance between electrostatic repulsion and Van der Waals attraction [2]. Many nanoparticle superstructures with new properties and applications have been developed, mimicking the behavior of efficient natural machines (e.g., enzymes, proteins, biopolymers, or viruses) [3].

## Methods

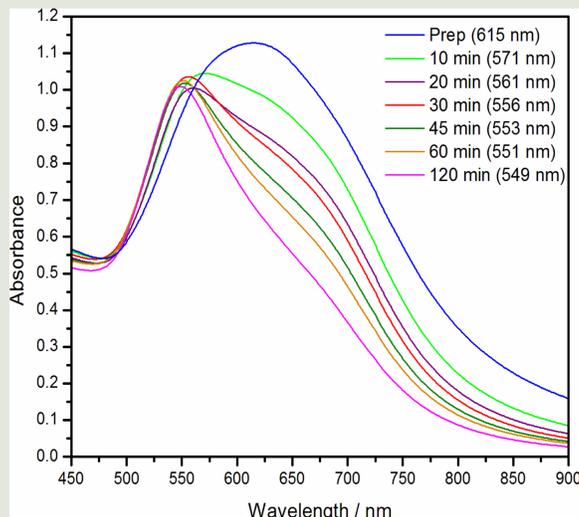
A novel synthesis approach for gold nanoparticles assemblies (NPAs) at room temperature is proposed in this study. The nanoparticles were prepared at room temperature using hydroxylamine as reducing agent. By varying the experimental conditions, two main nanoparticles categories can be obtained, NPAs20 and NPAs120. Moreover, by stabilizing the colloid with bovine serum albumin (BSA) at different time moments after synthesis, NPAs of controlled size between 20 and 120 nm, could be obtained. The characterization of the nanoparticles were carried out by using UV-Vis, TEM and surface-enhanced Raman scattering (SERS) spectroscopy.

## Results

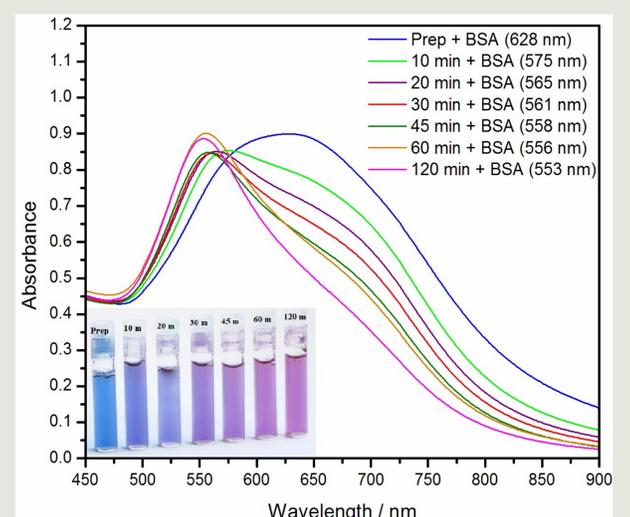
As described in the methods section, by changing the addition order of the reactants, colloidal gold NPAs with different morphological and optical properties were obtained. UV-Vis absorption and electron microscopy provide important insights concerning size and morphology of the colloidal nanostructures and contribute also to the understanding of the stabilization process after colloids synthesis. The NPAs of the size of 20 and 120 nm show absorption maxima at 532 and 653 nm, respectively. SEM and TEM measurements revealed a popcorn-like shape of the NPAs. The NPAs20 have shown an at least ten times higher surface-enhanced Raman scattering (SERS) activity than the conventional citrate reduced gold nanoparticles.



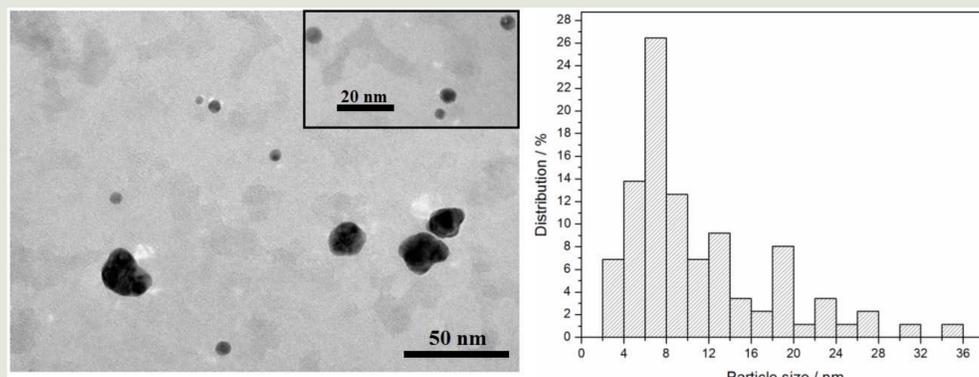
UV-Vis spectra of NPAs20 (A) and NPAs120 colloids (B) recorded one day after preparation. The inset image shows a picture of the two colloids.



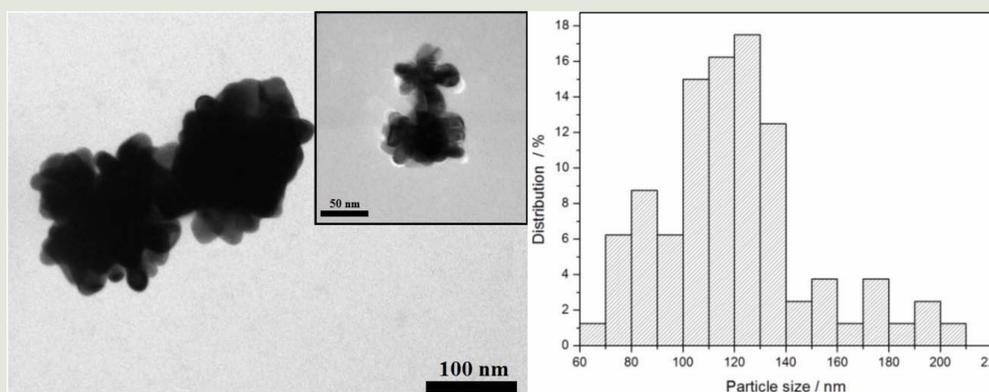
UV-Vis absorption spectra of the NPAs20 colloid recorded at different time moments after synthesis.



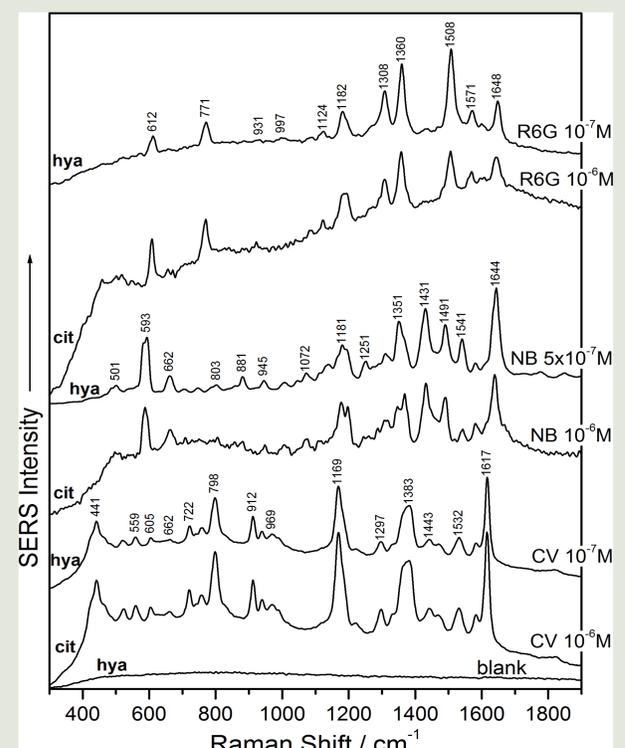
UV-Vis absorption spectra of the NPAs20 colloid, recorded one week after stabilization with albumin. The inset image shows a picture of the albumin stabilized gold colloids.



TEM images (left) and nanostructures size distribution analysis (right) for the NPAs20 colloid.



TEM images (left) and size distribution analysis (right) of the NPAs120 colloid.



SERS spectra of Crystal Violet (CV), Niel Blue (NB) and Rhodamine 6G (R6G) obtained by using hydroxylamine (hya) and citrate (cit) reduced gold colloids. The analyte concentrations are indicated for each spectrum in the figure.

## Conclusions

A new, effective and simple procedure for preparing gold nanoassemblies with mean diameters of 20 and 120 nm based on reduction with hydroxylamine hydrochloride has been described. Due to the irregular, popcorn like shape the 120 nm nanoassemblies show absorption in the NIR spectral region, a feature which provides them potential for photo-thermal application. By surface modification with bovine serum albumin at different time moments after synthesis, highly stable nanoparticle assemblies of controllable dimension can be obtained. SERS spectra at  $10^{-7}$  M analyte concentration were recorded using the 20 nm hydroxylamine reduced nanoassemblies as substrate, showing a better SERS enhancement property, compared to conventional citrate reduced colloidal nanoparticles.

## Acknowledgements

This work was supported by CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-TE-2012-3-0227/2013.

## References

- [1] E. C. Dreaden, et al., Chemical Society Reviews 41, 2740-2779 (2012).
- [2] Y. Xia, et al., Nature Nanotechnology 6, 580-587 (2011).
- [3] B. Pelaz et al., ACS Nano 6, 8468-8483 (2012).