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## Dextrans and dextran derivatives as polyelectrolytes in layer-by-layer processing materials – A review

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1                   Dextrans and dextran derivatives as  
2                   polyelectrolytes in layer-by-layer processing  
3                   materials – a review

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19

20 ABSTRACT

21 The layer-by-layer technique (LbL) using polysaccharides is receiving increasing interest as  
22 the preparation of nano- and micro- multilayer objects composed by natural materials is a  
23 promising alternative for actual systems. The use of bacterial polysaccharides and more  
24 particularly, dextrans and dextran derivatives, in LbL assemblies allows the simple formation  
25 of biodegradable and biocompatible multilayers with engineered functionalities. The choice of  
26 dextrans and derivatives along with the assembly conditions can indeed control internal  
27 structure and physical, chemical and biological properties. In this review, we describe the use  
28 of dextrans and dextran derivatives into multilayers presented in literature, from the method  
29 and principles to the key parameters that need to be considered in their formations. We  
30 present their valorisation into nanoobjects with specific and stimuli-responsive properties that  
31 are mainly exploited for biomedical applications as drug delivery devices.

32

33 KEYWORDS

34 Dextrans, layer-by-layer, thin films, dextran derivatives, capsules, multilayers, nanomaterials

35 ABBREVIATIONS

36 LbL, layer-by-layer ; HIV, humain immunodeficiency virus ; DexS, dextran sulfate ; CHI,  
37 chitosan ; QCM, quartz crystal microbalance ; PEI, polyethylenimine ; DEAE-Dex,  
38 diethylaminoethyl dextran/2-(diethylamino) ethyl dextran ; IEP, isoelectric point ; Dex-  
39 HEMA, hydroxyethylmethacrylate-derivatised dextran ; MF, melamine formaldehyde ; HF,  
40 hydrofluoric acid ; PLL, poly-L-lysine ; Cat, catalase ; Ins, insulin ; Apr, aprotinin ;

## 41 1. INTRODUCTION

42           Developing alternative materials and systems based on natural polymers is currently  
43 challenging and yet, one of the key issues in material chemistry and nanotechnology in reason  
44 mainly of current environmental concerns. In the last decades, the scientific community has  
45 started to take an interest in polysaccharides due to their biocompatibility, biodegradability  
46 and low toxicity (de Belder, 1996; Hernández-Rivas et al., 2020; J. Liu et al., 2015; Rinaudo,  
47 2008). Polysaccharides are a large family of polymers, obtained from biomass (animal, plant,  
48 bacterial, algal and fungal), exhibiting various structures and functionalities. They present a  
49 wide variety of structures resulting from the absolute configuration of asymmetric carbons,  
50 the stereochemistry of linkages as well as the branching pattern of polymers that differ  
51 according to their type and their source (J. Liu et al., 2015). Thus, they have been widely  
52 studied and used for their functional properties in the pharmaceutical industry, cosmetic  
53 formulation, paper industry, food industry, oil extraction and many other applications fields  
54 (J. Liu et al., 2015).

55           Among all polysaccharides,  $\alpha$ -glucans are polymers naturally produced by  
56 microorganisms, notably dextrans which are the most widely used bacterial  $\alpha$ -glucans in  
57 many fields, in both industry and research (Mehvar, 2000; Naessens et al., 2005; Yalpani &  
58 Hedman, 1985). Dextran family are D-glucose polysaccharides with a large majority of  $\alpha$ -(1  
59  $\rightarrow$  6) type glycosidic bonds linkages whose structures are dependent on production due to  
60 glucose origin and bacteria involved (Taylor et al., 1985). Those bacterial polysaccharides  
61 present a great interest to the scientific community and find numerous applications in various  
62 areas, especially in the elaboration of bio-based materials: their wide availability, their diverse  
63 structures, their different branching patterns, their 'clean' production, as well as the possibility  
64 of functionalisation with a large variety of groups or active sites. Charged dextrans in  
65 particular have been studied as potential alternatives for many synthetic polyelectrolytes in

66 the elaboration of nanomaterials *i.e.* thin films and coatings, capsules, nanoparticles, etc. The  
67 occurrence of chemical groups onto their polymer chain promotes formation of electrostatic  
68 interactions and facilitates their inclusion with other charged compounds. Pioneering  
69 researches on integration of polysaccharides in multilayered films, by well-known methods  
70 such as layer-by-layer (LbL) method, have been begun in the middle 1990s (Lvov et al.,  
71 1998). The specific integration of dextrans into those thin films, has started in the early 2000s  
72 and their applications are gradually growing since then (Hartley et al., 2002; Serizawa et al.,  
73 2000).

74         Polyelectrolyte films have become an unavoidable way to functionalise surfaces and to  
75 create ordered nanostructures, that found an application range from biomedical devices to  
76 environmental field (Boudou et al., 2010; Gribova et al., 2012; Jaber & Schlenoff, 2006;  
77 Joseph et al., 2014). The principle commonly used for polyelectrolyte multilayers is the LbL  
78 film formation based on the alternate adsorption of polyanions and polycations from aqueous  
79 solutions which was investigated firstly by Decher and Hong in the late 1980s. Revised by  
80 Decher *et al.* in the 1990, first research generation in the early 1990s allowed an expansion of  
81 the method to polyelectrolyte films with various materials as well as film characterisation  
82 (Ariga et al., 1997; Decher, 1997; Decher & Hong, 1991a; Lvov et al., 1995). The  
83 polyelectrolyte film construction relies mainly on electrostatic interactions between charged  
84 polymers and is highly dependent on the charge balance of polyelectrolytes and experimental  
85 conditions (Schoeler et al., 2002; Voigt et al., 2002). Indeed, film properties can be controlled  
86 by modulating deposition conditions (deposition time, temperature, etc.), characteristics of  
87 polyelectrolytes (charge density, molecular weight, etc.) and parameters of polyelectrolyte  
88 solution (concentration, pH, ionic strength, etc.) (Dubas & Schlenoff, 1999; Guzmán et al.,  
89 2020). In the last two decades, the interest of the research community for bio-based  
90 alternatives for LbL assembly from charged polypeptides and polysaccharides, including

91 dextran derivatives grew significantly (Crouzier et al., 2010; Elbert et al., 1999; Picart et al.,  
92 2001, 2002).

93           General information on dextrans and dextran derivatives (Figure 1) as well as their  
94 versatility for applications in various fields (Figure 2) are reported in this study. This review,  
95 more precisely, focuses on the use of dextran derivatives into polyelectrolytes multilayers and  
96 the elaboration of dextran-based multilayered structures. Reviewing of the extensive use of  
97 dextrans as polyelectrolytes for LbL assembly construction, including the main parameters to  
98 be controlled, is proposed in this report. Properties and applications of dextran-based  
99 multilayered films and other objects as micro- and nano-capsules may give indications for the  
100 elaboration of multilayer structures for future works.

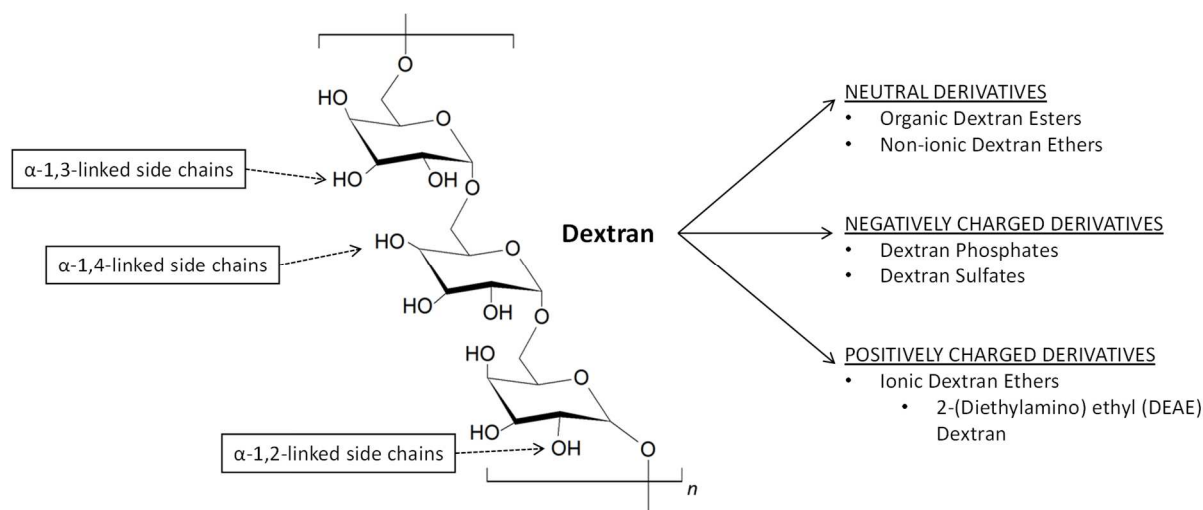
## 101 **2. DEXTRANS**

### 102 2.1. Dextrans: sources and structures

103           The primary reports of dextran focused on the studies of "viscous fermentation" by  
104 early chemists when fermentative mechanisms understanding was not related to  
105 microorganisms yet (Braconnot, 1813). Later on, observations on "viscous fermentation"  
106 (dextrans) were done in the 1800s by Desfosses who explained that sugar was able to form a  
107 viscous material with carbonic acid and hydrogen emissions. Further analysis suggested that  
108 "sugar water" contained a material able to transform sugar into a viscous substance without  
109 any gas emission (Desfosses, 1829). A few years later, Gay-Lussac and Pelouze discovered  
110 that mannite and lactic acid compounds were the result of viscous fermentation of sugar beet  
111 juice (Gay-Lussac & Pelouze, 1833). In 1861, Pasteur had found that slimes on fermented  
112 food with plant origins were caused by microbial action that he reported as "viscous  
113 fermentation" or "alcoholic fermentation" (Pasteur, 1861). The term "dextran" was first used  
114 to name the segregated carbohydrate found in aging sugar juices in 1874 by Scheibler, who

115 demonstrated that dextran was a carbohydrate with the formula  $(C_6H_{10}O_6)_n$  and with a positive  
 116 optical rotation (Scheibler, 1874). Back in 1878, Van Tieghem named the bacterium  
 117 responsible, for that mysterious thickening gum that he called “gomme de sucrerie”,  
 118 *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* (Van Tieghem, 1878). Later studies have shown that this family  
 119 of  $\alpha$ -D-glucans can be produced from sucrose by several bacterial strains, mostly gram-  
 120 positive cocci, including *Leuconostoc*, *Gluconobacter*, *Streptococcus* and *Lactobacillus*  
 121 strains (Chludzinski et al., 1974; Hehre, 1956; Jeanes et al., 1954). Out of  $\alpha$ -D-glucans,  
 122 bacterial extracellular enzymes, dextransucrases, can commonly form dextrans with their  
 123 action on sucrose. Those enzymes are synthesised from different mesophilic and thermophilic  
 124 bacteria such as genera of *Leuconostoc* and *Streptococcus*.

125



126

127 **Figure 1.** General structure of dextrans with D-glucose main chain linked by  $\alpha$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 6) type  
 128 glycosidic bonds and branches based on  $\alpha$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 3),  $\alpha$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 4) and  $\alpha$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 2) linkages and main  
 129 derivatives obtained by chemical functionalisation of dextran.

130 Dextran is a family of neutral polysaccharides, produced by microorganisms, whose  
 131 main chain consists of D-glucose units as illustrated by Figure 1. The structure of those  $\alpha$ -

132 glucans is highly dependent on the bacterium strains from which they are produced, which  
133 leads to dextrans with various sizes and substitution patterns (Díaz-Montes, 2021). Dextran is  
134 a homopolymer of glucose whose backbone chain presents a number of consecutive  $\alpha$ -(1→6)  
135 linkages that can vary from 50 to 97% of total glycosidic bonds (Leathers, 2002). Side chains  
136 of D-glucose units occur in  $\alpha$ -(1→3),  $\alpha$ -(1→4) and  $\alpha$ -(1→2) linkages as indicated on Figure  
137 1. The production of dextran determines the branch density and their nature on polymer  
138 backbone as well as its molecular weight (Hehre, 1956; Ruckel & Schuerch, 1967). Dextrans  
139 display broad range of average molecular weight ( $M_w$ ) ( $10^5$  to  $10^8$  g.mol<sup>-1</sup>) with different  
140 polydispersity ( $M_w/M_n = 1 - 25$ ) that tends to increase with the degree of branching (Antonini  
141 et al., 1964; Bovey, 1959; Confer & Logan, 1997; Ioan et al., 2000).

142 The high content of  $\alpha$ -(1→6) linkages leads to important chain mobility as the presence of  $\alpha$ -  
143 (1→6) linkages between sugar rings provides a considerably wider range of accessible  
144 relative orientations of successive sugar rings in dextrans chain (Burton & Brant, 1983;  
145 Kadkhodaei et al., 1991). Due to this chain flexibility and occurrence of hydroxyl groups,  
146 dextrans display a good solubility in water and most various polar solvents including organic  
147 and alcoholic solvents (Heinze et al., 2006; Leathers, 2002; Masuelli, 2013). Most dextrans  
148 demonstrate that increasing of the polymer concentration impacts the viscosity of solution that  
149 allows the formation of hydrogel (McCurdy, Goff, Stanley, et al., 1994).

## 150 2.2. Modification routes of dextrans

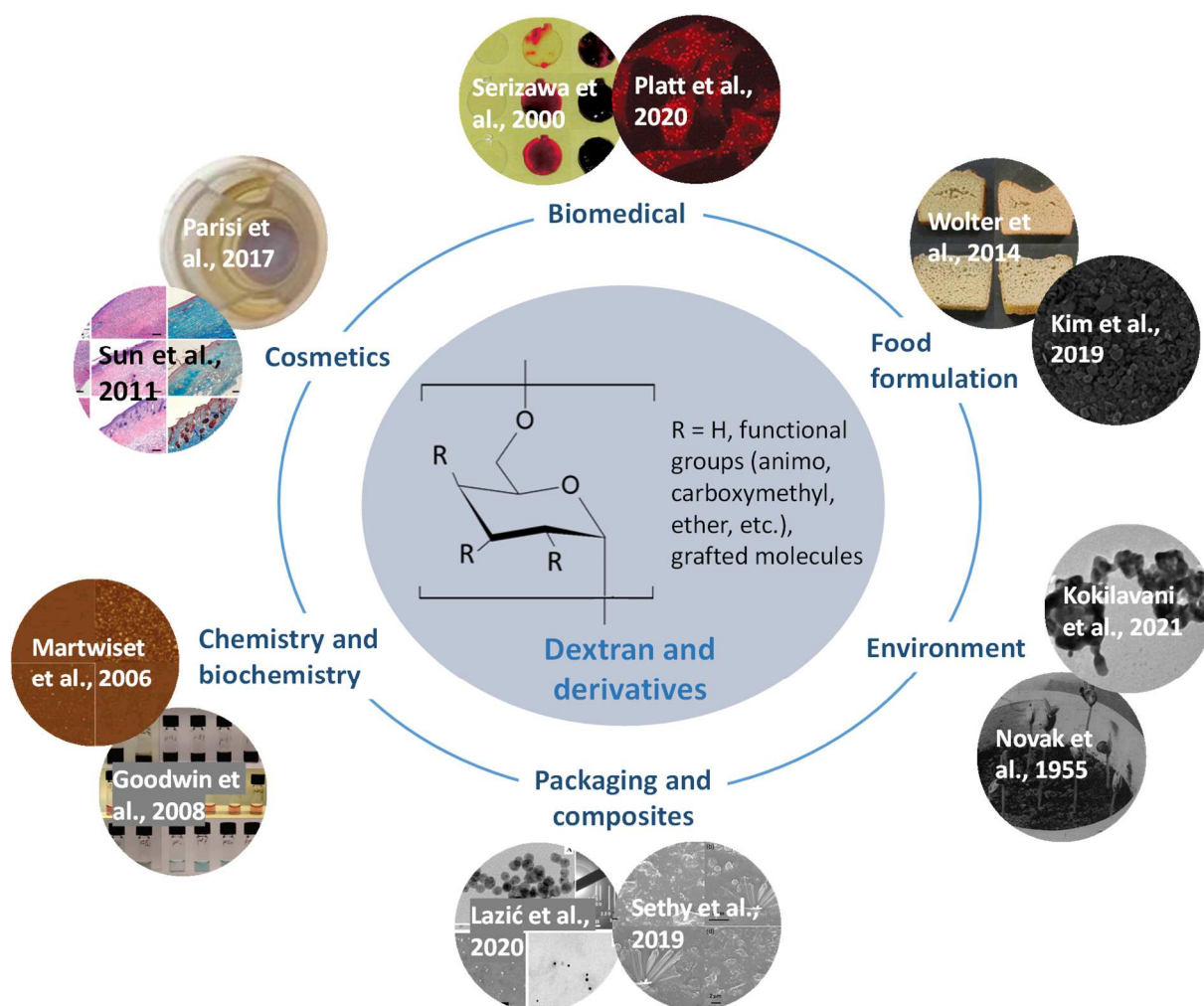
151 Due to the occurrence of hydroxyl groups on the surface of dextrans main chain and  
152 branches, the polymer promotes a large possibility of functionalisation to a large variety of  
153 neutral and charged dextran derivatives as indicated on Figure 1 (Ahmad et al., 2015; Heinze  
154 et al., 2006; Lindenbaum et al., 1977). The two major chemical modifications are esters of  
155 dextrans and ethers of dextrans that allow to obtain both neutral and charged dextran



156 derivatives (R. Li et al., 2017). Neutral dextrans represents both organic esters of dextrans and  
157 non-ionic ethers. Organic esters of dextrans demonstrate a larger interest as they are used for  
158 the coupling with bioactive compounds and for the binding of unsaturated moieties. Among  
159 the etherification reactions, about twenty of them are considered as the most frequently used  
160 for dextrans modifications and lead to both neutral and charged dextrans (Heinze et al., 2006;  
161 Rogovin et al., 1972). Out of the inorganic esters of dextran, mainly negatively charged  
162 dextrans, only dextran sulfates (dextran sulfuric acid half esters) and dextran phosphates  
163 present a notable interest as they lead to polyelectrolytes presenting interesting biological  
164 activity and properties (Bamford et al., 1986; Kagimura et al., 2015; R. Li et al., 2017; Mei et  
165 al., 2015). In fact, dextran sulfates have shown anti-inflammatory properties in several  
166 studies, anticoagulant capacity as well as anti-viral activity for a few viruses (de Raucourt et  
167 al., 1998; Hall & Ricketts, 1952; Jing et al., 2016; Mauzac & Jozefonvicz, 1984; Mitsuya et  
168 al., 1988). The introduction of ether-type groups in dextrans structure often results in stable  
169 positively charged dextran derivatives such as 2-(diethylamino) ethyl (DEAE) dextrans, with  
170 new biological properties such as immunological properties and new physico-chemical  
171 properties such as complexing or adhesives properties (Naessens et al., 2005). Even though  
172 chemical modifications remained major, cross-linking and grafting are also included in  
173 current interest to form esters and ethers of dextrans (R. Li et al., 2017).

### 174 2.3. Applications of dextrans and its derivatives

175           There is a significant literature on the various uses of dextrans from bacterial origins  
176 and their derivatives for medical and industrial applications as summarised on Figure 2.



177

178 **Figure 2.** Overview of the most important applications of dextrans and their derivatives in  
 179 industries. Adapted with permission from (Goodwin et al., 2009), © 2009 American Chemical  
 180 Society. Adapted with permission from (Martwiset et al., 2006), © 2006 American Chemical  
 181 Society. Adapted with permission from (Novak et al., 1955), © 1955 American Chemical  
 182 Society. Adapted with permission from (Serizawa et al., 2000), © 2000 American Chemical  
 183 Society. Adapted from (Kim et al., 2019; Kokilavani et al., 2021; Lazić et al., 2020; Wolter et  
 184 al., 2014), with permission from Elsevier. Adapted from (Parisi et al., 2017; Platt et al., 2010;  
 185 Sethy et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2011).

186 Dextran and dextran derivatives have been widely used for years in the biomedical  
 187 field, as dextrans are physiologically harmless biopolymers. Unlike high molecular weight

188 native dextran, dextrans with low molecular weight (40 000 – 100 000 Da) are suitable as  
189 therapeutic agents in restoring moderate blood volume (Robyt, 1985). The retention of low  
190 molecular weight dextrans in plasma is high enough to lead to a volume expansion without  
191 causing clogging. In addition, they help to improve blood flow by reducing blood viscosity  
192 and inhibiting erythrocyte aggregation (de Belder, 1996). However, sulfate esters of dextrans  
193 are mostly used for their anticoagulant properties, similar to the ones of heparin ; by forming  
194 complexes with several proteins, dextran sulfates avoid clotting mechanism of blood (de  
195 Raucourt et al., 1998; Hall & Ricketts, 1952; Mauzac & Jozefonvicz, 1984; Serizawa et al.,  
196 2000). Studies also highlight the use of dextran sulfates as antiviral drugs, laboratory tests  
197 showing the possibility of dextrans as anti-HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) agents as  
198 well as anti-viral against several other viruses (Mitsuya et al., 1988; Platt et al., 2010).

199         Beside the medical field, the variety of structures and functionalities found in dextrans  
200 and dextran derivatives presents a great interest in numerous industrial domains, mainly in  
201 cosmetics formulation and in food formulation. The occurrence of hydroxyl groups and high  
202 molecular weights of native dextrans is a source of hydrogen bonds for the formulation of  
203 viscous solutions and hydrogels, that are suitable as emulsifiers and as thickening agents  
204 (Leemhuis et al., 2013; McCurdy, Goff, & Stanley, 1994). Dextrans and dextran derivatives  
205 present a great biocompatibility, moistening properties and excellent solubility, which make  
206 them great candidates for the formulation of skin-care products in several cases such as skin  
207 regeneration (Sun et al., 2011). In 2017, Parisi *et al.* also highlighted the potential of dextran  
208 derivatives as polymeric antioxidants for skin whitening (Parisi et al., 2017).

209         Moreover, they are often used in the preparation of baked products to improve baking  
210 properties and sensory profiles (Lacaze et al., 2007). For instance, dextrans can be used to  
211 improve softness, crumb texture and loaf volume in the formulation of gluten-free and wheat  
212 breads (Wolter et al., 2014). Dextrans can also find applications as additives to give improved

213 rheological (gelling, thickening) or physico-chemical (emulsion stabilisation, particle  
214 suspension, etc.) properties in several industrial products (Kothari et al., 2014). Recently,  
215 more and more studies used dextrans for the elaboration of functional foods such as  
216 prebiotics, that can provide health benefits and protection against risk of several diseases  
217 (Kim et al., 2019). Since  $\alpha$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 6) linkages and  $\alpha$ -(1 $\rightarrow$ 2) linkages are known to be resistant to  
218 human intestinal enzymes, the digestion of dextrans is relatively slow yielding prebiotic  
219 activity (Olano-Martin et al., 2000).

220 Dextran derivatives have potential for the conception of functional materials with  
221 great biocompatibility and degradability in the fields of chemistry and biochemistry as they  
222 provide a large range of charged or neutral biomacromolecules with different types of  
223 substituents, degrees of substitution and molecular weights (Naessens et al., 2005). For  
224 example, it was shown that amphiphilic dextrans form stable layers onto surfaces that  
225 improve *in vivo* imaging and encapsulation yield (Goodwin et al., 2009). Another study  
226 highlighted how grafted dextrans and oxidised dextrans on silicon wafer lead to non-fouling  
227 surfaces that can be valorised in the elaboration of biomaterials (Martwiset et al., 2006).

228 In the environmental applications, charged dextran derivatives are used for separation  
229 and detection of particles, soil conditioners, explosives, oil drilling muds, recovery of  
230 petroleum or high-viscosity gums. Ionic dextran derivatives have shown potential of  
231 flocculants for cleaning of wastewater, as they presented high efficacy for removal of both  
232 inorganic and organic particles (Ghimici et al., 2009; Ghimici & Nichifor, 2018). More  
233 recently, Kokilavani *et al.* proposed multifunctional materials based on Cu–Ag  
234 nanocomposites stabilised with dextrans for selective and sensitive detection of mercury  
235 (Kokilavani et al., 2021). Authors also highlighted that this dextran-based nanocomposite  
236 presents efficient photocatalytic and anti-microbial behaviour. Dextrans and dextran  
237 derivatives also found uses in agriculture as, in the late 1900s, studies proved that inclusion of

238 certain dextrans affects several aspects of soils. Depending on dextran structure, increasing  
239 wet-sieve stability of soils studied, percent seedling emergence, rate of plant growth and crop  
240 yield for plant used were observed (Novak et al., 1955).

241         Among packaging applications, dextrans and derivatives can be employed in different  
242 ways, such as coating for improving compatibility of particles or performance in food  
243 packaging as suggested by Lazić *et al.* (Lazić et al., 2020). In this study, dextran used as  
244 coating on silver nanoparticles helped to improve barrier properties, *i.e.* oxygen permeability  
245 and anti-microbial activity of nanocellulose films. Dextran-composites are also widely studied  
246 for elaboration of biocompatible and eco-friendly packaging materials. Sethy *et al.* proposed  
247 matrix of dextran-grafted poly(acrylic acid) hybrid nanocomposites and nano-CaCO<sub>3</sub> filler to  
248 design materials with oxygen barrier, thermal, and antimicrobial properties (Sethy et al.,  
249 2020).

250

### 251 **3. DEXTRAN DERIVATIVES AS POLYELECTROLYTES FOR 2-DIMENSIONAL** 252 **MULTILAYER FILMS**

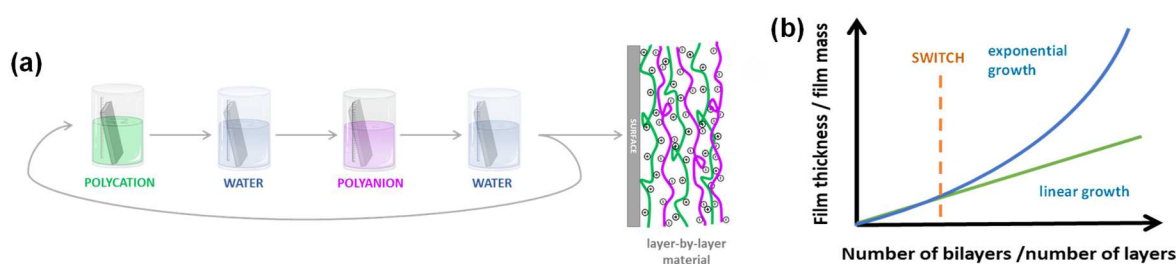
#### 253 3.1. Principle of layer-by-layer fabrication of multilayers

254         In current technologies, nanostructures and nanomaterials found an important place in  
255 the development of ultra-small devices and are mainly prepared by top-down fabrication  
256 techniques (Baig et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2020; Khin et al., 2012; Moon et al., 2011;  
257 Pomerantseva et al., 2019; Roduner, 2006; Wang et al., 2021). However due to physical  
258 limitations of those techniques, bottom-up techniques are presently gaining in interest and  
259 micro- or nano- materials based on self-assembly approaches are becoming more and more  
260 present in nanotechnologies (Abid et al., 2022; Lombardo et al., 2020). These methods have

261 great potential in all fields of research: biomedical (Deng et al., 2010), paper industry (Wu &  
262 Farnood, 2014), functional materials (Damasceno Borges et al., 2018), composites (Sher et  
263 al., 2010), cosmetics (Yoo et al., 2016), food (Treviño-Garza et al., 2017), electronics (de  
264 Oliveira Farias et al., 2015) or even environment (Ma et al., 2011). Among bottom-up  
265 approaches, the LbL method is a way to build complex self-assemblies from charged  
266 molecules/nanoparticles with controlled architectures. Introduced by Iler in 1966, the LbL  
267 method was firstly applied to the alternative deposition of oppositely charged colloidal  
268 particles for the electrostatic self-assembly of multilayers (Iler, 1966). In 1991-1992, Decher's  
269 group revised the principle for manufacturing polyelectrolyte multilayers on a solid substrate  
270 for the first time (Decher et al., 1992; Decher & Hong, 1991a, 1991b). In those studies, the  
271 authors presented a simple method to achieve "soft" multilayered films with controlled  
272 architectures by adsorption of polyelectrolytes (Decher, 1997). The advantages of the LbL  
273 assembly techniques include its simplicity, its versatility but also control of the film  
274 architecture (thickness, mass, porosity, etc.) (Figure 3b). The properties of the system are  
275 governed to the greatest extent by the choice of polyelectrolytes pair.

276 Mainly based on Decher group's works, LbL assemblies are traditionally produced by  
277 dipping deposition, *i.e.* immersive LbL assembly (Decher et al., 1992; Decher & Hong,  
278 1991a, 1991b; Lvov et al., 1994, 1998). Figure 3a illustrates the formation of LbL films onto a  
279 substrate based on the alternate immersion of the substrate in oppositely charged polymer  
280 solutions. During immersion, the polymer is adsorbed onto the surface and intermediate  
281 rinsing steps allow washing off loosely bound material leading to a layer formation. The  
282 dipping procedure is repeated with the opposite charged polymer to form a bilayer. The  
283 process is repeated until a multilayer with  $n$  bilayers, composed of two layers of  
284 polyelectrolytes with opposite charges, is obtained. In addition to the dipping method, there  
285 are currently two other deposition processes to form LbL assemblies: spin-coating and

286 spraying (Richardson et al., 2015). Film fabrication by spin-coating is based on alternative  
 287 deposition of charged polymer solutions onto a solid substrate immediately followed by a  
 288 rinsing and drying step, while the substrate undergoes spinning at constant velocity. While  
 289 polymers are enforced to adsorb during the “classical” spin-coating procedure, spin-assisted  
 290 LbL assembly of thin films from polyelectrolytes and/or biopolymers have been used in  
 291 which polymers are allowed to adsorb before spinning steps (Cerclier et al., 2010). During the  
 292 substrate rotation, the polymer solutions spread onto the surface to obtain layers with  
 293 complete evaporation of the solvent, generally water. Finally, another alternative of the LbL  
 294 approach is the consecutive spraying (spray LbL assembly) of polyelectrolytes solutions and  
 295 rinsing solution on a substrate. This method has been used since the 1970s for the  
 296 construction of films, but it was introduced into the field of polyelectrolytes in 2000 by  
 297 Schlenoff, Dubas and Farhat (Félix et al., 2009; Schlenoff et al., 2000).



298  
 299 **Figure 3.** (a) Schematic representation of LbL technique by dipping and (b) graphic  
 300 representation of film growth behaviour as function of the number of bilayers/layers and the  
 301 film thickness/film mass.

302 LbL polyelectrolytes films formation relies on spontaneous adsorption, of at least two  
 303 species, generally both driven and limited by entropy increase in the system and Coulombic  
 304 interactions. However, it is important to note that the driving forces involved in multilayers  
 305 construction are not restricted to electrostatic interactions. More and more multilayer films are  
 306 exploited for their capacities to form multilayer *via* other interactions than electrostatic ones.

307 Hydrogen bonds, hydrophobic interactions and van der Waals forces also operate in the  
308 formation of the layers and influence the stability of the LbL assemblies (Borges & Mano,  
309 2014; Clark & Hammond, 2000; Kotov, 1999). During deposition, polymers diffuse and  
310 adsorb onto the surface and find their equilibrium concentration and configuration. The  
311 adsorption process included charge inversion of the surface, indeed adsorption does not yield  
312 to surface neutralisation but end with charge overcompensation of the surface that induces  
313 repulsive interaction with polymers in solution (Hoogeveen et al., 1996; Schlenoff & Dubas,  
314 2001). The surface charge reversal allows the adsorption of the following layer with  
315 composed of oppositely charged polyelectrolyte and thus the growth of the film. From  
316 literature, two types of film's growths can be distinguished: linear and non-linear growths.  
317 The growth type depends on the polymer couple and experimental conditions and can be  
318 identified by the relation between the adsorbed quantity and the number of bilayers differs as  
319 presented on Figure 3b (Elzbieciak et al., 2009; Y. Li et al., 2012; Schlenoff & Dubas, 2001).  
320 In the first case, polyelectrolyte multilayers growth presents a linear increase of the mass  
321 and/or the thickness onto the surface after each bilayer deposition. In the second case, films  
322 present a non-linear increase of mass (or thickness) with each adsorbed bilayer, also called  
323 supra-linear or exponential growth (Haynie et al., 2011; Picart et al., 2002). Growth  
324 mechanisms can be explained by effective charge density of polyelectrolytes, molar mass and  
325 are also dependent of characteristics of polymers and the processing parameters (Elzbieciak et  
326 al., 2009; Picart et al., 2002; Schlenoff & Dubas, 2001).

327 More generally, polyelectrolyte multilayer's films and their characteristics are related  
328 to the nature of polyelectrolytes and assembly conditions and result in films with different  
329 internal structures (morphology, porosity, etc.) and physico-chemical properties (water  
330 content, mechanical properties, permeability, etc.) (Borges & Mano, 2014; Dubas &  
331 Schlenoff, 1999; Guzmán et al., 2020). Some experimental parameters are crucial for the



332 assembly of polyelectrolyte multilayers and associated morphologies: physico-chemical  
333 characteristics of substrates (roughness, hydrophilicity, charges), physico-chemical  
334 characteristics of the polyelectrolytes (charge density, conformation, molecular weight) and  
335 the experimental parameters of the deposition procedure (adsorption time, drying step,  
336 temperature) and solution parameters (ionic strength, pH, concentration) (Devi et al., 2014;  
337 Moreau et al., 2012). The chemistry and structure of polyelectrolytes used in solution have an  
338 important role on the formation of LbL films, as they affect the interactions between polymers  
339 themselves and with the surface. Charge density of polymer is a key factor that influences the  
340 LbL assembly by impacting electrostatic interactions (Calvo et al., 2010; Delvart et al., 2022;  
341 Glinel et al., 2002; Schlenoff & Dubas, 2001). While a minimal charge density is necessary to  
342 have electrostatic attraction between polyelectrolytes, the adsorption mechanism and the final  
343 architecture result from a balance between charge densities of polyelectrolytes employed. An  
344 increase or a decrease of charge balance can both evenly lead to complexes formation or  
345 absence of LbL assembly (Glinel et al., 2002). Charge density can be tuned by adjusting the  
346 pH of the solution for weak polyelectrolytes and charges equilibrium can be switched by  
347 further addition of counterions and modification of ionic strength (Dubas & Schlenoff, 2001;  
348 Guzmán et al., 2020; Pechenkin et al., 2012). Increasing ionic strength often results in thicker  
349 layers due to the screening of charges and changes in polymer conformation (Lundström-  
350 Hämälä et al., 2010; McAloney et al., 2001). It can also prevent multilayers formation at some  
351 point since it can limit or break the interactions between polyelectrolytes (Dubas & Schlenoff,  
352 2001; Feldötö et al., 2010; Lundström-Hämälä et al., 2010; McAloney et al., 2001). Effects of  
353 the counterions types are also of importance: small ions result in lower charge screening and  
354 reduced hydration and thickness of the adsorbed layer/film due to weak bonding while larger  
355 polarisation of big ions promote thicker layers. Though LbL principle is an easy method,

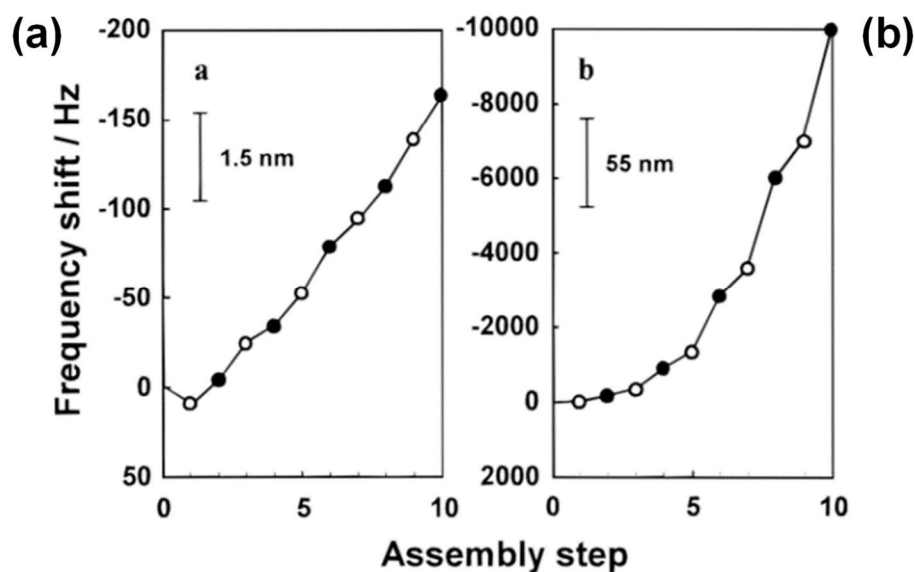
356 examining all the assembly parameters is critical to control the thickness/growth and the  
357 morphology of resulting polyelectrolyte multilayers.

### 358 3.2. Dextran sulfates in multilayered films

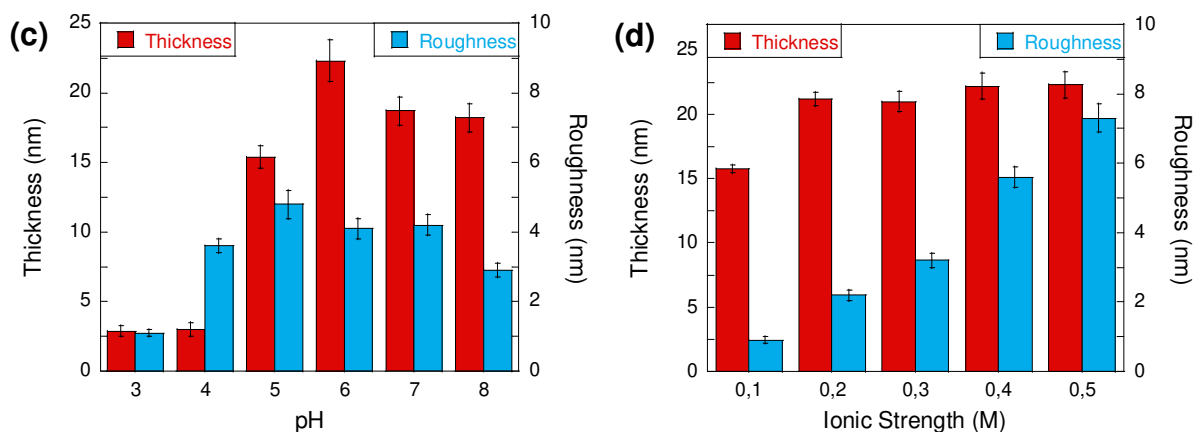
#### 359 *3.2.1. Dextran sulfates and chitosan multilayered films*

360 Among dextrans used in multilayered materials, dextran sulfates (DexS) are  
361 commonly encountered since different molecular weights and sulfate contents are  
362 commercially available, expanding the range of materials implementation.

363 One of the most employed polycation used in combination with DexS is chitosan  
364 (CHI), poly[(1→4)-β-linked 2-amino-2-deoxy-D-glucose], a biocompatible and  
365 biodegradable anionic biopolymer with NH<sub>2</sub>/NH<sub>3</sub><sup>+</sup> groups (pKa between 6 and 7). CHI is  
366 prepared by N-deacetylation of chitin extracted from the outer shells of crustaceans or insect  
367 wings (Jayakumar et al., 2010; Shukla et al., 2013). The first studies about CHI/DexS based  
368 materials were reported by Kikuchi and Fukuda in the 1970s (Fukuda & Kikuchi, 1977, 1978;  
369 Kikuchi & Fukuda, 1974). The authors highlight the ability of DexS and CHI to form  
370 polyelectrolyte complexes and the water-insoluble complex created was sensitive to the  
371 reaction conditions such as pH and concentration of the polyelectrolyte solutions (Fukuda &  
372 Kikuchi, 1978). This polyelectrolyte pair was later applied to multilayers for the first time in  
373 the 2000s by Serizawa's research group who used LbL principle to build DexS/CHI films  
374 (Sakaguchi et al., 2003; Serizawa et al., 2000, 2002, 2003).



375



376

377 **Figure 4.** QCM frequency shift as function of adsorbed layer number up to 10 bilayers of  
 378 (CHI/DexS) films on silver quartz crystal at pH depending on added salt content, (a) 0 M  
 379 NaCl and (b) 1M NaCl. Frequency shift and the corresponding thickness is indicated.  
 380 Reprinted with permission from (Serizawa et al., 2000), © 2000 American Chemical Society.  
 381 Thickness and roughness of 10 bilayers (CHI/DexS) films grown on silica wafer with (c) pH  
 382 (at 0.5 M ionic strength) and (d) ionic strength (at pH 6) obtained with ellipsometer analysis  
 383 respectively, data from (Devi et al., 2014).

384 In 2000, Serizawa *et al.* investigated the assembly process of CHI/DexS films and a  
 385 key parameter of the construction of multilayers: the impact of salt addition on film growth.  
 386 Using Quartz crystal microbalance (QCM) to investigate films growth, the authors found out

387 that 10 bilayers of CHI/DexS with no salt addition lead to thin films displaying a thickness of  
388 3.7 nm (corresponding to quartz frequency shift of  $\Delta f = -163$  Hz) while adding 1M NaCl to  
389 both polymer solutions leads to an increase of the thickness of the films of 227 nm ( $\Delta f = -$   
390 9946 Hz) as reported on Figure 4a. They explained the low thickness value of no salt film by  
391 possible incomplete coverage of the surface and non-accurate QCM values due to the very  
392 low thickness and uneven repartition of the polymer on the surface. Nevertheless, results  
393 showed a shift from linear film growth at 0M NaCl (figure 4a, left) to an exponential film  
394 growth at 1M NaCl (figure 4a, right) as well as a six-fold mass/thickness increase with the salt  
395 addition. In 2014, Devi *et al.* studied the formation of 10 bilayers DexS/CHI film on silica  
396 using dipping method (Devi et al., 2014). Authors observed an exponential growth in  
397 thickness of the CHI/DexS film with increasing number of layers at 0.5M NaCl and explained  
398 that after the 4<sup>th</sup> layer, the film growth changes from linear to exponential showing the  
399 influence of the substrate on the first adsorbed layers. This observed exponential growth  
400 mechanism is related to the ability of the CHI to diffuse in and out of CHI/DexS film and is  
401 often observed for CHI-based multilayered films (Salomäki & Kankare, 2009; Z. Song et al.,  
402 2009).

403 Devi *et al.* also investigate the impact of ionic strength and pH on the surface  
404 morphology of CHI/DexS films (Devi et al., 2014). By increasing ionic strength, *i.e.*  
405 increasing NaCl concentration from 0.1M to 0.5M (Figure 4d), the film thickness increased  
406 from 15 nm to 25 nm. The presence of ions induces a screening of the polyelectrolyte charges  
407 leading to a decrease of the electrostatic repulsion from identical charges on the polymer  
408 chain. Thus, polyelectrolytes display random coil conformation if all charges are screened at  
409 high ionic charges allowing more adsorption onto a surface due to the highest compaction and  
410 decreased repulsion between polymer coils. At low ionic strength polyelectrolytes are in an  
411 extended conformation and higher repulsion between chains occurs. Variation of pH from 3 to

412 8 at fixed ionic strength (Figure 4c) highlighted a clear dependence of the film growth with  
 413 pH as well which was observed for other multilayers based on chitosan (Guzmán et al., 2011).  
 414 As displayed on Figure 4c, average thickness of adsorbed layers increases when increasing  
 415 pH from 1 to 6, then thickness decreases by increasing pH to 8 with an optimum at 23 nm for  
 416 10 bilayers at pH 6. In fact, at high pH ( $> 6$ ), CHI becomes deprotonated and electrostatic-  
 417 driven LbL assembly cannot occur between CHI and DexS. At low pH ( $\text{pH} < 5$ ), amino groups  
 418 of chitosan are protonated allowing a successful LbL adsorption. However, at very low pH,  
 419 authors explained that protonation of chitosan leads to an excess of positive charges from  
 420 DexS and immediate dissolution of multilayers. The variation of charge equilibrium, here  
 421 ionic strength and pH, also affects morphology of layers as illustrated on Figure 4c, d, by  
 422 analysing the roughness and the surface morphologies by AFM. Roughness increases from  
 423 3.75 nm to 8 nm by increasing ionic strength from 0.1 M NaCl to 0.5 M NaCl and pH  
 424 variation induces also significant change of both parameters. Similar effects of the  
 425 modification of charges ratio/ionic equilibrium was observed on the morphology of DexS-  
 426 based multilayers, by shifting charges density balance between polyelectrolytes (Delvart et  
 427 al., 2022).

428 **Table 1.** Chitosan and dextran sulfate (CHI/DexS) multilayered films reported in literature  
 429 and their applications.

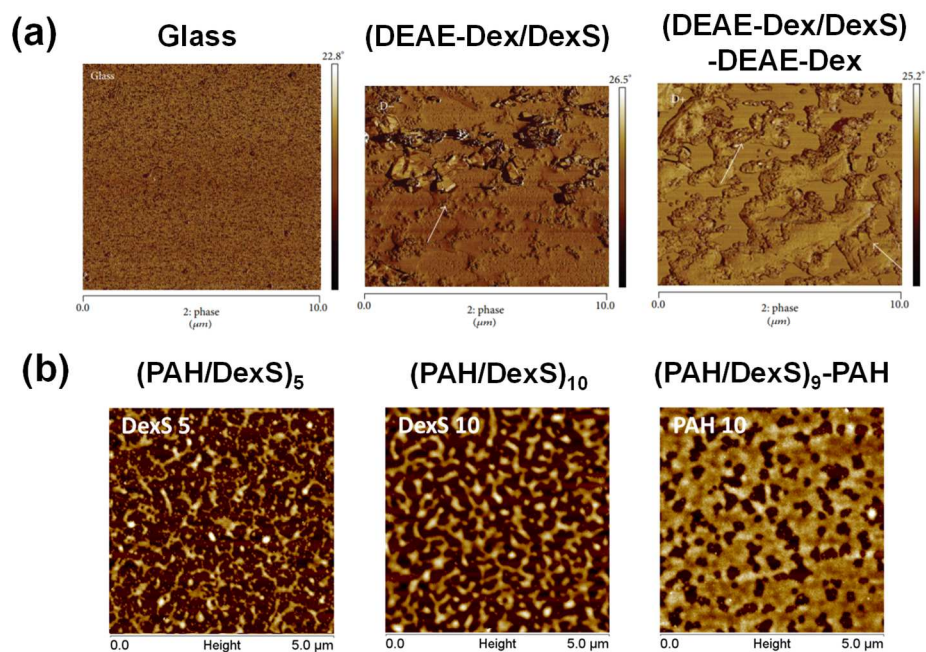
Application(s)	Films	Targeted properties	Ref
<b>Biomedical</b>	(CHI-DexS)-CHI (CHI-DexS) <sub>1 to 40</sub>	Alternating anti- vs procoagulant activity, biodegradability	(Serizawa et al., 2000, 2002)
		Control of blood coagulation, antithrombogenic surface	(Sakaguchi et al., 2003; Yu, Jou, et al., 2007; Yu, Lin, et al., 2007)
		Drug delivery	(Xie et al., 2016; F. Zhang et al., 2019)
<b>Tissue engineering</b>	(CHI-DexS)-CHI (CHI-DexS) <sub>1 to 4</sub>	Bioactivity, fibroblast cell compatibility	(Kulikouskaya et al., 2018; Serizawa et al., 2003)

430 By considering the physico-chemical properties of chitosan and dextran sulfate and  
431 capacity to form films with controlled architecture, (DexS/CHI) multilayers found potential  
432 uses in different fields and mainly in biomedical applications. Table 1 outlines applications  
433 and main targeted properties of (CHI/DexS) films found in literature. Thanks to the ability of  
434 dextran sulfate to prevent blood coagulation, as seen previously in section 2.1, Serizawa's  
435 research group highlighted the potential of CHI/DexS multilayers in blood related devices to  
436 control blood coagulation (Sakaguchi et al., 2003; Serizawa et al., 2000; Yu, Jou, et al., 2007;  
437 Yu, Lin, et al., 2007). Moreover, integration of chitosan into multilayers films allows to block  
438 anticoagulation of DexS and open the possibility to form biodegradable films with both anti-  
439 coagulation and pro-coagulation properties (Serizawa et al., 2000, 2002). More recently, the  
440 interest of the scientific community in CHI/DexS as potential alternatives as multilayered  
441 coating for drug nanocarriers increased. In addition of both polyelectrolytes being  
442 biocompatible, their use as surface functionalisation can improve their dispersibility in  
443 physiological conditions, as it was observed with graphene oxide nanosheets (Xie et al., 2016;  
444 F. Zhang et al., 2019). Moreover, DexS/CHI multilayers were proven to be useful for cell  
445 attachment and their growth on surfaces (Kulikouskaya et al., 2018; Serizawa et al., 2003).  
446 Cell adhesion seems to depend mainly on the stiffness of the multilayers, which can be related  
447 to the growth pattern and thus of the choice of polycations and polyanions and the number of  
448 bilayers deposited (Kulikouskaya et al., 2018). Kulikouskaya *et al.* demonstrated that  
449 multilayered films are formed by alternating adsorption of negatively charged polysaccharides  
450 switched from linear to exponential growth by changing the polycation from  
451 polyethyleneimine (PEI) to CHI (Kulikouskaya et al., 2018). Authors also showed that those  
452 films built with exponential growth had different properties as the surface roughness  
453 increased and the mechanical properties change from elastic to viscous by increasing the  
454 number of bilayers.

455 3.2.2. Dextran sulfates and polyelectrolyte- based multilayered films

456 Apart from chitosan, other polycations were associated with DexS. These include  
457 synthetic and natural polyelectrolytes as well as other dextran derivatives allowing building  
458 different film structures. In 1995, Elferink et de Koster introduced diethylaminoethyl dextran  
459 (DEAE-Dex), polycation derivate from dextran with physiological effects (antibacterial,  
460 antifungal, and antitumor) as a good candidate to substitute synthetic polymers in biomedical  
461 applications (Elferink & de Koster, 1995). The use of DEAE-Dex into LbL assembly  
462 associated with DexS was proposed later by Benni *et al.* to control surface morphology of  
463 films to tune protein adsorption and cell adhesion (Benni et al., 2014). The authors studied  
464 (DEAE-Dex/DexS)<sub>4</sub> and (DEAE-Dex/DexS)<sub>4</sub>-DEAE-Dex films surface morphology and their  
465 properties on glass surface depending on the last layer adsorbed (polycation or polyanion).  
466 Comparison between multilayers ending with polycation DEAE-Dex layer and multilayers  
467 ending with polyanion DexS layer highlighted significant differences in terms of roughness.

468



471 **Figure 5.** (a) AFM images ( $10\ \mu\text{m} \times 10\ \mu\text{m}$ , phase) of bare glass surface, (DEAE-Dex/DexS)  
472 multilayer, and (DEAE-Dex/DexS)-DEAE-Dex multilayer adsorbed on glass surfaces (Benni  
473 et al., 2014). (b) AFM images ( $5\ \mu\text{m} \times 5\ \mu\text{m}$ ) of (PAH/DexS)<sub>5</sub> multilayer, (PAH/DexS)<sub>10</sub>  
474 multilayer and (PAH/DexS)<sub>9</sub>-PAH multilayer adsorbed on silica surfaces, reprinted from  
475 (Delvart et al., 2022), with permission from Elsevier.

476 AFM images (Figure 5a) showed that (DEAE-Dex/DexS) and (DEAE-Dex/DexS)-  
477 DEAE-Dex multilayers display high coverage of the surface and their topographical  
478 morphologies present clusters or granules. Similar morphologies were found with  
479 (PAH/DexS) multilayers that are explained by charge equilibrium that led to polyelectrolytes  
480 complexes formation and dewatering during adsorption steps (Delvart et al., 2022). Analysis  
481 of the multilayers showed an increase of surface roughness with value of 47 nm for (DEAE-  
482 Dex/DexS) and 72 nm for (DEAE-Dex/DexS)-DEAE-Dex multilayers while the bare glass  
483 roughness range about 3 nm. Advancing contact angles monitoring displays the decrease of  
484 hydrophilicity, which may be related to an increase in surface roughness with the number of  
485 adsorption steps in general. Also, a higher hydrophobicity of the surface was observed with  
486 (DEAE-Dex/DexS)-DEAE-Dex multilayers than for (DEAE-Dex/DexS) multilayers.  
487 Consistently, similar surface morphology were obtained with (PAH/DexS) multilayers with  
488 also a roughness variation dependent on the last layer as illustrated on Figure 5b (Delvart et  
489 al., 2022). In 2019, Jang *et al.* demonstrated similar effect of DEAE-Dex/DexS multilayered  
490 coatings on metal stent, both increasing the hydrophilicity and inhibiting cell adhesion of  
491 metal stent (Jang et al., 2019). In this study, authors showed an increase of roughness with  
492 DEAE-Dex/DexS coating compared to DexS coating. Moreover, water contact angle of  
493 (DEAE-Dex/DexS) coated metal stent was significantly higher than water contact angle of the  
494 bare metal stent as well, confirming the potential of (DEAE-Dex/DexS) multilayers in tuning  
495 surfaces for various applications including protein and cell adhesion.



### 496 3.2.3. Dextran sulfates and proteins multilayered films

497 Proteins were associated with DexS to build multilayers for mainly targeting  
498 biomedical applications due to the biocompatibility of dextran sulfates and biological activity  
499 of protein. Investigation of interactions between polysaccharides and proteins in multilayers  
500 films constitutes a topic of interest in biomedical field in order to build films with controlled  
501 organisation of proteins (Brynda & Houska, 1998; J. Zhang et al., 2005). The use of LbL  
502 technique and choice of both assembly parameters and nature of polyelectrolyte-protein  
503 couple allow building of multilayers structured morphology but also regulation of the  
504 conformation of protein within the film (Hong et al., 1993; Lvov et al., 1994, 1995). Similarly  
505 to usual encountered polyelectrolytes, processing parameters (pH, salt concentration,  
506 compound concentrations, temperature, etc.) are of importance for polyelectrolyte-protein  
507 multilayers film construction as well as the nature of protein (Müller et al., 2001; vander  
508 Straeten et al., 2018, 2020). Overall, pH was found to be a key parameter in the LbL assembly  
509 of proteins with polyelectrolyte to promote interactions between proteins and polyelectrolyte,  
510 and pH of the protein solution has to be set apart from the isoelectric point (IEP) (Kayitmazer  
511 et al., 2013; Lvov et al., 1995; vander Straeten et al., 2018). In general, proteins may be prone  
512 to conformation change according to solution conditions and surface properties, which have  
513 an important impact on protein adsorption and multilayer formation.

514 In 1999, Brynda *et al.* used DexS as a building block to fabricate LbL assembly with  
515 human b2-microglobulin antibody cross-linked with glutaraldehyde. The resulting flexible  
516 film can be used as immunosensor for b2-microglobulin (Brynda et al., 1999). More recently,  
517 Damanik *et al.* investigated the growth of collagen/DexS 4 bilayers on  
518 PEI/poly(styrenesulfonate) (PSS) 2 bilayers in order to develop high loading efficiency  
519 systems for biomedical applications. This study highlights the effect of collagen/DexS  
520 multilayers: collagen at pH 7 leads to linear growth while an exponential growth is obtained

521 with collagen at pH 3. At pH 3, collagen used by authors with basal isoelectric point 7.8 may  
522 have more electrostatic interactions with DexS, as well as a compact conformation more  
523 likely to lead to exponential film growth. Moreover, they were able to optimise the  
524 immobilisation of heparin in such multilayer systems, *i.e.* the bioactivity of heparin is retained  
525 on (PEI/PSS)<sub>2</sub>+(collagen/DexS)<sub>4</sub> for 14 days by using collagen in acidic pH and exponential  
526 growth of collagen/DexS 4 bilayers (Damanik et al., 2020). He and Hu first reported in 2004 a  
527 study on the interactions of hemoglobin or myoglobin with DexS presenting more details on  
528 the interactions between proteins and the polyelectrolyte. Authors suggested that localised  
529 electrostatic interactions are the driving force in protein/polymer LbL assemblies such as with  
530 heme proteins (hemoglobin or myoglobin) that have net positive charges or net negative  
531 charges depending on the pH solution (He & Hu, 2004). Houska *et al.* published a report on  
532 the influence of polyelectrolyte chain length on the LbL formation with proteins, especially  
533 albumin. The authors compared multilayers of albumin/DexS with different molecular  
534 weights of DexS and they showed that the assembly of globular proteins and linear strong  
535 polyanions at pH below the isoelectric point (IEP) of the protein is affected by the chain  
536 length of the polyanion (Houska et al., 2004). The study suggested that at lower molecular  
537 weights of DexS, competition with adsorbing protein and absorbed protein might lead to  
538 resolubilisation of the polyelectrolyte. Interactions between polysaccharides and proteins in  
539 LbL process were further investigated by Jourdain *et al.* using caseinate to understand  
540 mechanisms at interfaces for emulsion stabilisation (L. Jourdain et al., 2008; L. S. Jourdain et  
541 al., 2009). LbL construction of (Caseinate/DexS) layers displays linear increase of shear  
542 viscosity with time explained by strong interactions between caseinate and DexS that produce  
543 flat conformation of the layer followed by a slow reorganisation of protein and DexS.

### 544 3.3. Other dextrans derivatives in multilayered films

545 In the late 2000s, Lee, Choi and Tsutsumi built polyaniline and carboxydextran  
546 multilayer films that present an interesting activity for the oxidation of ascorbic acid but also  
547 an excellent electron-transfer mediating capability for oxidation of glucose (Lee et al., 2009).  
548 Oxidised dextrans were used to form a bilayer with PEI to immobilise biocatalyst of  $\beta$ -1,4-  
549 endoxylanase by surface coating for the production of xylooligosaccharides (Romero-  
550 Fernandez et al., 2018). PEI was associated with an amine-substituted dextran, aminodextran  
551 (AMD), as well as with oxidised dextrans using dipping technique to build multilayers  
552 (Heurich et al., 2011; Romero-Fernandez et al., 2018). Heurich *et al.* proposed the use of  
553 biointerfaces for increasing cell compatibility while Romero-Fernandez *et al.* proposed to use  
554 them as coating to immobilise biocatalyst of  $\beta$ -1,4-endoxylanase for the production of  
555 xylooligosaccharides as well. In order to develop bioink for 3-dimensional printing, another  
556 dextran derivative, hydroxyethyl-methacrylate-derivatised dextran (Dex-HEMA), was paired  
557 with hyaluronic acid (HA) to produce bio-based hydrogels *i.e.* bioink (Pescosolido et al.,  
558 2011). In 2019, boronic derivative (the phenylboronic acid-modified alginate) and a diol  
559 biopolymer (a dextran derivative) were applied to the fabrication of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-responsive  
560 microparticles by Mansour, Joukhar and Belbekhouche (Mansour et al., 2019).

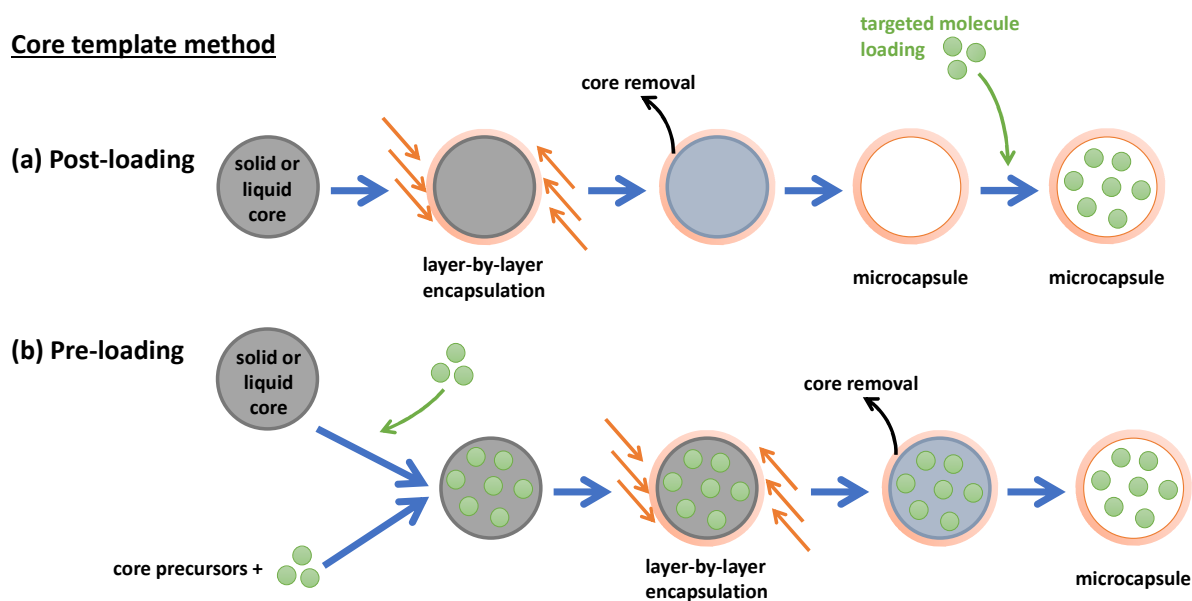
## 561 **4. DEXTRAN AS POLYELECTROLYTES FOR 3-DIMENSIONAL MULTILAYER** 562 **STRUCTURES**

### 563 4.1. Dextran-based multilayer objects: fabrication principle and methods

564 Polyelectrolyte multilayer objects (films or capsules) form an attractive class of  
565 materials which can be designed to achieve multiple functions . Multilayer objects also called  
566 shell objects consist of polyelectrolytes layers that are formed in the presence of a template  
567 produced by LbL assembly leading to a multilayer of an engineered shape. ‘Hollow’  
568 multilayer objects and capsules are mainly fabricated by coating core particles, which served

569 as sacrificial templates, with a shell using LbL technique described in 3.1 (Antipov et al.,  
570 2003; Bao et al., 2016; Hu et al., 2011; Itoh et al., 2004; Parakhonskiy et al., 2014; G. B.  
571 Sukhorukov, Volodkin, et al., 2004). As illustrated in Figure 6a,b, the LbL technique is  
572 applied to a core template by sequential adsorption of oppositely charged substances onto the  
573 core, followed by removal of the core template by dissolution. However, as presented by  
574 Figure 6b, multilayer objects can be built by LbL technique directly onto targeted materials  
575 without the need of a dissolution step.

576 As multilayer films, physical and chemical properties of the multilayered capsules are  
577 strongly dependent on chemical nature and structure of the polyelectrolytes used in their  
578 fabrication and on the template coated (Gil et al., 2008). The size of the microcapsules can be  
579 tuned by varying the size of core template while the thickness of the hollow shell can be  
580 controlled by LbL technique conditions, nature of adsorbed molecules and numbers of layers  
581 adsorbed (Dubas & Schlenoff, 1999; Shiratori & Rubner, 2000; G. B. Sukhorukov, Shchukin,  
582 et al., 2004; G. B. Sukhorukov et al., 2005). Thus, appropriate choice of the template type, of  
583 the polyelectrolytes pair and of the LbL deposition parameters should be done to control the  
584 morphology of such objects and, as a result, their properties such as permeability (G. B.  
585 Sukhorukov et al., 1999; Tong et al., 2005). The choice of polyelectrolytes can also provide  
586 interesting properties to capsules such as sensitive permeability, with a stimuli-responsive  
587 (pH, ionic strength) character, that is a key property for encapsulation and drug delivery  
588 (Delcea et al., 2011; G. Sukhorukov et al., 2001).



590

591 **Figure 6.** Schematic fabrication of micro- and nano- capsules based on LbL  
 592 deposition principle onto sacrificial core template with (a) post-loading method and (b) pre-  
 593 loading method.

594 Multilayer objects and capsules are mainly used in the biomedical sciences as shown  
 595 on Table 2 and 3. The scientific community interest is particularly focused on their potential  
 596 for drug delivery applications that imply loading of active molecules into those objects and  
 597 their release. The versatility of LbL technique allows the fabrication of micro-objects with  
 598 various colloid sizes, shapes, compositions and functionalities that answer the problematics of  
 599 drug delivery devices (Ariga et al., 2011; De Cock et al., 2010; Tong et al., 2012).

600 A wide range of organic and inorganic molecules/polymers were used as suitable core  
 601 materials for dextran-based capsules formation and successful formation of microcapsules  
 602 from the literature is listed in Table 2. Those templates include polymers such as melamine  
 603 formaldehyde (MF) which has drawbacks concerning production, which involves highly toxic  
 604 chemicals, and degradation (N. Balabushevich et al., 2005; N. G. Balabushevich & Larionova,

2009). In addition to the inherent toxicity of the MF, the dissolution of the MF core at very low pH (< 1.6) or with organic solvent limited their biocompatibility or so their applications. Mineral cores such as SiO<sub>2</sub> or CaCO<sub>3</sub> templates are often used for dextran-based capsules (Devi et al., 2015; Gao et al., 2016; Painsi et al., 2015; Pawlak et al., 2022; Reibetanz et al., 2011). They have been found to be nontoxic, biocompatible, thermally and mechanically stable (Bao et al., 2016). However, their dissolution step remains a limiting factor since SiO<sub>2</sub> cores are dissolved by hydrofluoric acid and carbonates cores are dissolved at low pH (< 3) or with ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (Antipov et al., 2003; Sudareva et al., 2014; G. B. Sukhorukov, Volodkin, et al., 2004). Moreover, those inorganic cores usually display larger sizes than organic ones (Table 2) which limit their utilisation in some application where capsules with nanometric size are targeted. Dextran microcapsules fabrication can be also formed onto “soft” core templates in order to avoid the removal step (Grigoriev et al., 2008; Tjipto et al., 2006). Preparation of shell capsules are based on emulsions on micro-aggregate procedures of polyelectrolytes and active molecules which act both as the core templates and loaded substances (Averin et al., 2016; Fukui & Fujimoto, 2009, 2011). Less frequent used templates such as metallic silver and gold nanoparticles have also been reported to form ‘hollow’ capsules of dextrans (Anandhakumar et al., 2011, 2012; Livanovich & Shutava, 2019).

In addition to different sacrificial templates for LbL sequential adsorption, two different approaches for loading active content can be distinguished in literature: pre-loading and post-loading that are illustrated on Figure 6 a and b. With pre-loading procedures, core templates already contain the molecules to encapsulate. It is the case for all the micro-aggregate’s precursors, as the first step is the fabrication of the core by complexation of substance of interest with one of the two coating substances (Averin et al., 2016; N. G. Balabushevich et al., 2006, 2016; Crecente-Campo & Jose Alonso, 2019). For example,

630 Averin and co-workers developed doxorubicin containing micro- and nano- particles by  
 631 preparing insoluble (Doxorubicin-DexS) particles before coating them with  
 632 (CHI/DexS/CHI)<sub>1</sub> (Averin et al., 2016). Pre-loading is also observed with dextran derivatives,  
 633 using solid templates by adding loaded content directly within the cores during their  
 634 preparation and keeping/retaining active compounds inside the hollow shell after core  
 635 dissolution. Selina *et al.* proposed (DexS/PLL)<sub>3</sub> biodegradable microcapsules using CaCO<sub>3</sub>  
 636 core with entrapped protein (DNA) as template (Selina et al., 2009).

## 637 4.2. Dextrans and derivatives for multilayer capsules

### 638 *4.2.1. Overview of dextrans use for micro- and nano- capsules*

639 Table 2 reports the preparation of dextrans-based capsules and their application fields  
 640 which are mainly dedicated to biomedical, and especially drug delivery. The principal dextran  
 641 derivatives used, dextran sulfates (DexS) was shown to be suitable for the encapsulation with  
 642 various macromolecules with control on the quantity and the delivery time of the encapsulate  
 643 substance. Its availability and its properties in multilayers with various counter-  
 644 polyelectrolytes opened potential uses for capsules with monitoring capsules releasing and  
 645 loading by capsule morphology and responsive properties. Although there is a wide of  
 646 counter-polyelectrolytes, literature overview (Table 2) emphasises that most studies focus on  
 647 the capsules based on dextrans and bio-based polyelectrolytes (chitosan (CHI), polyarginine  
 648 including protamine and PLL) for the fabrication of biodegradable and biocompatible objects.

649 **Table 2.** Dextran derivatives as polyelectrolytes for micro- and nano- capsules fabrication  
 650 reported in literature.

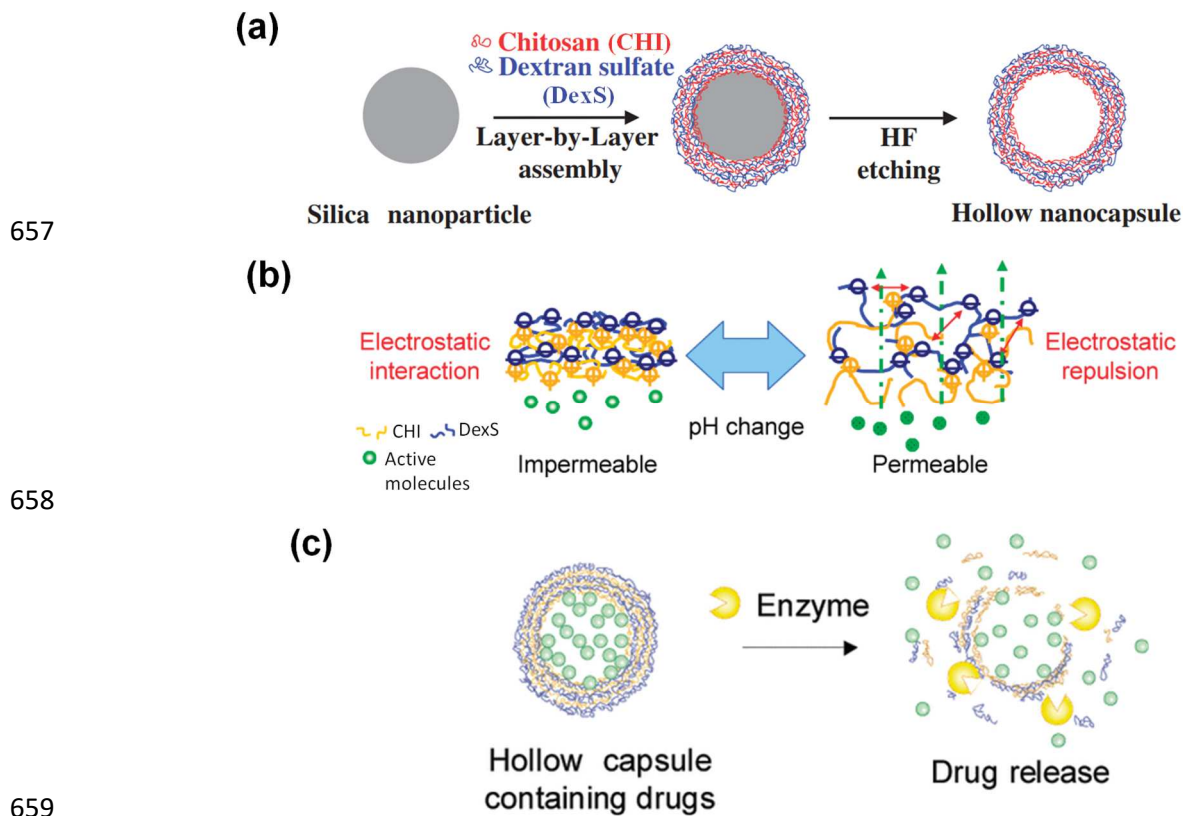
Coating Components	Core Template	Encapsulated species	Size	Applications	Ref
DexS/CHI	SiO <sub>2</sub> cores	FITC-albumin; basic fibroblast	250–350 nm, 3–5 µm	drug delivery	(Devi et al., 2015; Geetha Devi et al.,

		growth factor; vascular endothelial growth factor; rifampicin; ciprofloxacin; ceftriaxone sodium salt; gentamicin sulphate; FITC			2021; Gnanadhas et al., 2013; Itoh et al., 2004, 2006, 2008a, 2008b)
	CaCO <sub>3</sub> cores	bovine serum albumin; polyphenol; protein (DNA); antibiotic	3–6 μm	drug delivery	(Ali Said et al., 2020; Ferrari et al., 2017; Painsi et al., 2015; Selina et al., 2009)
	Drug-DexS microaggregates	doxorubicin; vitamin E and lecithin	various	drug delivery	(Averin et al., 2016; Crecente-Campo & Jose Alonso, 2019)
	Protein-DexS microaggregates	N-benzoyl-L-arginine ethyl ester; N-benzoyl-L-tyrosine ethyl ester; insulin	6–12 μm	drug delivery	(N. G. Balabushevich et al., 2006, 2013)
	Emulsion	Phosphate ions; 1-hydroxy pyrene-3,6,8-trisulfonic acid; amphiphilic alendronate; non-ionic glucose	150–250 nm	drug delivery	(Fukui & Fujimoto, 2009, 2011)
	Silver nanoparticles	silver	30–50 nm	catalysis, photonics, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology	(Livanovich & Shutava, 2019)
<b>DexS/PAH</b>	Silver nanoparticles	silver	20–50 nm		(Anandhakumar et al., 2011, 2012)
<b>DexS/poly-L-arginine</b>	SiO <sub>2</sub> cores	rhodamine B		drug delivery	(Gao et al., 2016)
	CaCO <sub>3</sub> cores	proteins; rhodamine B; messenger RNA; albumin and acid tannic; doxycycline; multikinase inhibitor sorafenib; alpha-2-macroglobulin	4–5 μm, 250–500 nm	drug delivery, cancer therapy, biomedical	(Canova et al., 2015; De Temmerman et al., 2011a, 2011b; Ermakov et al., 2019; Kakran et al., 2015; Karamitros et al., 2013; Kochetkova et al., 2013; W. Liu et al., 2014; Lomova et al., 2015; D. Luo et al., 2016; Novoselova et al., 2020; Poojari et al., 2016)
	Emulsion	acid tannic	150–200 nm	drug delivery	(Kashcooli et al., 2016; Lomova et al., 2010)
<b>DexS/protamine</b>	Melamine formaldehyde core	proteins, enzymes, peroxidases	3–4 μm	food processing, drug delivery, cosmetology	(N. Balabushevich et al., 2005; N. G. Balabushevich & Larionova, 2009)
	SiO <sub>2</sub> cores	kidney cells, various cells	2–4 μm	defoliation, plasmid delivery, drug delivery	(Reibetanz et al., 2006, 2010, 2011)



	CaCO <sub>3</sub> cores	proteins, anti-inflammatory, doxorubicin substances	2–5 μm	drug delivery, thermo-induced degradability	(N. G. Balabushevich et al., 2016; Rathmann et al., 2011; Trushina et al., 2018, 2019)
	Insulin-DexS microaggregates	insulin	7–20 μm	drug delivery	(N. Balabushevich & Larionova, 2004)
<b>DexS/PLL</b>	CaCO <sub>3</sub> cores	protein (DNA)	2–10 μm	biomedical, DNA vaccines	(Campbell et al., 2021; Selina et al., 2009)
	Erythrocyte carriers	erythrocyte	5–8 μm	drug delivery	(R. Luo, Mutukumaraswamy, et al., 2012)
	Poly(DL-lactide-co-glycolide) nanoparticles	poly(DL-lactide-co-glycolide)	50–100 nm	drug delivery	(R. Luo, Neu, et al., 2012)
	Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> nanoparticles	curcumin	10–20 μm	drug delivery	(Mancarella et al., 2015)
	Emulsion	bioactive compounds	100–200 μm	drug delivery	(Pan & Nitin, 2015)
<b>DexS/DEAE-Dex</b>	CaCO <sub>3</sub> cores			antimicrobial agents	(Pawlak et al., 2022)
<b>Animated dextran/ carboxylated nanocellulose</b>	Modified graphene oxide	curcumin	150–200nm	drug delivery, biomedicine, cancer therapy	(Anirudhan et al., 2019)
<b>Carboxymethyl dextran/ PLL</b>	CdSe-ZnS cores	quantum dots	150–250nm	drug delivery, biomedicine	(Chen et al., 2003)
<b>Diol dextran/ modified alginate</b>	CaCO <sub>3</sub> cores	rhodamine b		drug delivery	(Mansour et al., 2019)

651 Similarly, for the construction of LbL films, (DexS/CHI) is a common polyelectrolytes  
652 couple for the fabrication of micro- and nano- capsules, as reported in Table 2. Since they are  
653 biocompatible, biodegradable and pH responsive, (CHI/DexS) capsules present different  
654 advantages for drug delivery systems, especially for release control since they offer different  
655 possibilities for drug release that can be triggered either by chemical or enzymatic action  
656 (Itoh et al., 2004, 2006, 2008a, 2008b).

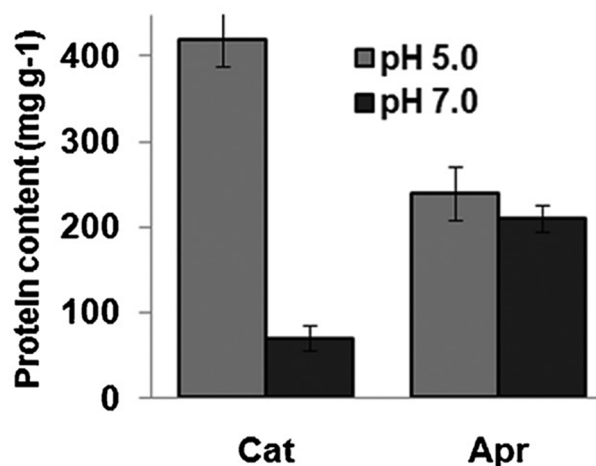


660 **Figure 7.** Schematic representations of (a) the fabrication principle of (CHI/DexS) capsules  
 661 onto SiO<sub>2</sub> cores with dissolution by hydrofluoric acid (HF) (Itoh et al., 2004); (b) sensitive  
 662 (CHI/DexS) multilayer based on pH changes with the impact on multilayer permeability,  
 663 reprinted with permission from (Itoh et al., 2008b), © 2008 American Chemical Society; and  
 664 (c) (CHI/DexS)-based release system of encapsulated drug with enzymatic degradation,  
 665 adapted with permission from (Itoh et al., 2006), © 2006 American Chemical Society..

666 Authors designed (CHI/DexS) hollow capsules by LbL assembly on SiO<sub>2</sub> cores before  
 667 core dissolution, as illustrated by Figure 7a, and obtained capsules with pH-dependent  
 668 morphology and permeability (Itoh et al., 2008b). They observed a significant change in the  
 669 permeability of the capsules between pH 6.8 and 8.0. Capsules (CHI/DexS) are impermeable  
 670 with small pores under pH 6.8 and permeable with larger pores over pH 8.0 due to the pK<sub>a</sub> of  
 671 CHI due to the deprotonation of the amine groups of CHI at basic pH as described in Figure  
 672 7b. The pH-responsive property of (CHI/DexS) capsules allowed an effective loading of

673 fluorescein isothiocyanate-labelled dextran by switching environmental pH from 8.0 to 5.6  
674 but also a release of active molecules triggered by pH change. The advantage of choosing  
675 polysaccharides for polyelectrolytes-based structures is their sensitivity to enzymes that allow  
676 the elaboration of enzyme-responsive devices (Itoh et al., 2006, 2008a). In those systems, the  
677 release is controlled by the selection of the type and amount of enzymes, as illustrated on  
678 Figure 7c. Itoh research group demonstrated the biodegradability of (CHI/DexS) capsules by  
679 using chitosanase that hydrolysed CHI leading to capsules deformation and degradation (Itoh  
680 et al., 2006). Later on, authors also proposed to tune the degradation by building composites  
681 multilayer containing other enzyme-sensitive polyelectrolytes such as PLL that can be  
682 degraded by  $\alpha$ -chymotrypsin. The formation of (CHI/DexS/PLL) allowed the stepwise release  
683 of multiple proteins at different time from i) degradation of PLL in a first step and then ii)  
684 degradation of CHI. More combinations for a controlled release can be designed based on the  
685 choice of polyelectrolyte/enzyme couple and on the characterises of multilayer obtained.

686 Efficiency of dextran sulfates-based capsules and of their release capacity is also  
687 dependent on the quantity of targeted molecules encapsulated into the devices. In 2016,  
688 Balabushevich *et al.* studied the loading of model proteins: catalase (Cat), insulin (Ins) and  
689 aprotinin (Apr) into (DexS/protamine)<sub>2</sub>-DexS multilayer capsules considering the three  
690 approaches (N. G. Balabushevich et al., 2016). 3) Sorption of protein into shell capsules after  
691 capsule formation and core dissolution (post-loading), 2) adsorption of protein solution onto  
692 pre-made CaCO<sub>3</sub> cores before capsule formation (pre-loading and adsorption), 3) co-synthesis  
693 of protein with CaCO<sub>3</sub> cores before capsule formation (pre-loading and co-synthesis).



694  
 695 **Figure 8.** Proteins catalase (Cat) and aprotinin (Apr) contents of (DexS/protamine) capsules  
 696 obtained by post-loading approach (N. G. Balabushevich et al., 2016).

697 Pre-loading by adsorption of protein onto CaCO<sub>3</sub> cores or by co-synthesis is only based on the  
 698 electrostatic interaction between proteins and cores at chosen pH while post-loading approach  
 699 is based on the affinity between proteins and cores. In the post-loading case, it was shown that  
 700 catalase and aprotinin can be adsorbed into (DexS/protamine)<sub>2</sub>-DexS capsules at both pH 5  
 701 and pH 7 with different efficiency, as illustrated on Figure 8. (DexS/protamine)<sub>2</sub>-DexS  
 702 microcapsules have negative charges due to the uncompensated charged groups of DexS,  
 703 since DexS is a stronger polyelectrolyte than protamine. So, catalase is preferably  
 704 incorporated at pH 5 (40% by mass) than at pH 7 (7% by mass) as a result of the occurrence  
 705 of positive charge on catalase at pH 5. For aprotinin, no difference was observed as protein  
 706 content corresponds to 20 – 25% whatever the pH since the protein is negatively charged at  
 707 both pH. Those results confirm that loading is mainly driven by electrostatic interactions  
 708 between loaded molecules and multilayer capsules. Thus, the choice of polyelectrolyte used  
 709 (charge equilibrium) for multilayers and conditions (pH, ionic strength) are important  
 710 parameters to consider for controlled loading.

711 The use of other dextran derivatives remains low compared to dextran sulfates.  
712 However, the use of cationic dextrans can increase potential applications for dextran in  
713 biomedical due to their use with other polyanion, but it can also add properties to multilayers.  
714 In 2019, Anirudhan *et al.* proposed the use of an aminated dextran to create multilayer  
715 capsules with stimuli responsive property due to pH sensitivity of both polyanion (oxidised  
716 nanocellulose) and polycation (aminated dextran) (Anirudhan et al., 2019). As dextran sulfate  
717 is a weak polyanion with high stability in water ( $pK_a \sim 2$ ), the employment of anionic dextran  
718 derivatives with a higher  $pK_a$  can also be useful for the elaboration of stimuli-responsive  
719 objects. Dextran derivatives can also be used to substitute synthetic polyelectrolytes in  
720 specific applications such as reactive oxygen multilayers. Mansour *et al.* proposed for  
721 example the formation of multilayer capsules with hydrogen peroxide sensitivity based on a  
722 diol-dextran (Mansour et al., 2019).

## 723 **5. CONCLUSION**

724 Nanomaterials based on dextran and dextran derivatives built by LbL method present  
725 promising applications in biomedical fields due to their biocompatibility and their  
726 biodegradability. Dextrans and dextran derivatives have been successfully introduced into  
727 multilayer films and structures with control on film growth and characteristics by tuning the  
728 processing parameters. Their great compatibility with other polysaccharides (chitosan,  
729 cellulose, etc.), polyarginines (poly-L-lysine (PLL), etc.) and proteins (insulin, etc.), allows to  
730 form biodegradable multilayers useful for drug delivery systems in particular. Moreover, the  
731 versatility and availability of dextrans and derivatives as well as their water-solubility, are key  
732 advantages for the exploration of assemblies formed by combining two polysaccharides  
733 compared to cellulosic materials (Šimkovic, 2013). The use of different dextrans make  
734 possible the formation of LbL films with control over different types of properties  
735 (bioactivity, chemical, mechanical) and control over different morphologies to design

736 assemblies and surfaces with specific functionalities (Crouzier et al., 2010). Among  
737 derivatives, dextran sulfate seems to present the greater interest for the research community  
738 for its many biological properties such as anticoagulant, anti-inflammatory and anti-viral  
739 properties.

740         Although studies on the applicability of dextrans and dextran derivatives into  
741 multilayers and multilayer objects can be found with various polyelectrolytes, there is a need  
742 of deeper understanding of most dextran-based LbL assemblies beside well studied DexS.  
743 Works considering other dextran derivatives, such as carboxymethyl dextran,  
744 diethylaminoethyl dextran (DEAE-Dex) or other aminated dextrans, are seldom and dedicated  
745 to specific applications so that it is difficult to determine the key parameters controlling the  
746 film growth. Commercially available dextran derivatives are still restricted and the chemical  
747 functionalisation of dextrans limit the employment of dextran derivatives in the development  
748 of innovative structures. Development of new routes of functionalisation of dextrans is  
749 promising to extend the panel of dextran derivatives, with a better environmental impact and  
750 diversified functional properties. One of them is to explore an enzymatic approach to the  
751 custom synthesis of polyelectrolytes based on microbial polysaccharides such as dextrans. In  
752 addition to finely controlled structures and molar masses of dextrans, designed enzymes may  
753 improve the properties of  $\alpha$ -glucans with charged groups (Moulis et al., 2021).

754         Moreover, apart from extensive research on (CHI/DexS) multilayer films and  
755 structures, only a few studies have reported LbL assemblies with other polyelectrolyte  
756 counterpart than chitosan. Functional groups in dextran derivatives as well as chemical  
757 structures provide opening for adsorption. A wider range of other biocompatible and  
758 biodegradable functional species from mineral nanoparticles to polypeptides has to be

759 explored in the next years and will open opportunities for controlled elaboration of dextran-  
760 based multilayer nanoobjects.

761 Finally, studies and applications mostly focused on biomedical fields with drug  
762 delivery applications. The possibility to control the film morphology and the surface pattern  
763 of dextran-based multilayer opens opportunities to create specific surfaces or specific objects  
764 that can be used in wider application fields. LbL assemblies in general still have room for  
765 development in nanoarchitectonics or organized-nanostructures technology from energy  
766 applications to life science (Ariga, 2021; Ariga et al., 2022). This includes nano-printing and  
767 nano-lithography processes used to fabricate patterns of nanometre scales (Vigneswaran et al.,  
768 2014) but also, the possibility to obtain super-hydrophobic coating by tuning hydrophobicity  
769 found and developed for cell adhesion and proliferation (Jafari et al., 2019; Sethi & Manik,  
770 2018; W. Song et al., 2010).

771 AUTHOR INFORMATION

772 **Credit authorship contribution statement**

773 **Aurore Delvart:** Conceptualisation, Investigation, Writing – original draft & editing,  
774 Visualisation. **Céline Moreau:** Conceptualisation, Writing – review & editing, Supervision.  
775 **Bernard Cathala:** Conceptualisation, Writing – review & editing, Project administration,  
776 Funding acquisition.

777 All authors have given approval to the final version of the manuscript.

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781 **Declaration of Competing Interest**

782 The authors declare no competing financial interest or personal relationships that could have  
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787 **6. REFERENCES**

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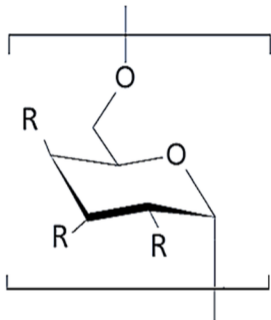
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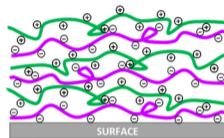
1612

## DEXTRAN AND DERIVATIVES

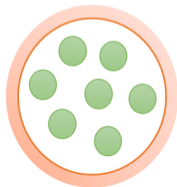


R = H, functional groups (amino, carboxymethyl, ether, etc.), grafted molecules

## MULTILAYERS FILMS



## MULTILAYERS CAPSULES



## APPLICATIONS

pharmaceutics  
biodegradable objects  
antimicrobial agents  
vaccines  
photonics  
**drug delivery**  
food processing  
cell adhesion  
hydrophobic surfaces  
protein organisation  
cancer therapy