

Biosensors

JYOTI J. GAVALI, ASHWINI G. DASHPUTRE, M.O.LOKHANDE AND B.A.AGLAVE
Department of Biotechnology, H.P.T. Arts and R.Y.K. Science College, NASHIK (M.S.) INDIA

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A biosensor is an analytical device containing on immobilized biological material enzyme, antibody, nucleic acid, hormone, organelle or whole cell which can specifically interact with an analyte and produce physical, chemical or electrical signals that can be measured. An analyte is a compound (e.g. – glucose, urea, drug, pesticide) whose concentrations has to be measured. Biosensors basically involve the quantitative analysis of various substances by converting their biological actions into measurable signals. A great majority of biosensors have immobilized enzymes. The performance of the biosensors is mostly dependent on the specificity and sensitivity of the biological reaction, besides the stability of the enzyme. The nature of interaction between the analyte and the biological material used in the biosensor may be of 2 types -

- The analyte may be converted into a new chemical molecule by enzymes (such biosensors are called catalytic biosensors)
- The analyte may simply bind to the biological material present on the biosensor (eg- to antibodies, nucleic acids) (these biosensors are known as affinity biosensors)

A successful biosensor must have at least following features:-

- It should be highly specific for the analyte.
- The reaction used should be as independent of factors like stirring, pH, and temperature etc. as is manageable.
- The response should be linear over a useful range of analyte concentration.
- The device should be tiny and biocompatible, in case of it is to be used for analyses within the body.
- The device should be cheap, small and easy to use.
- It should be durable, that is should be capable of repeated use.
- The assay cost should be lower than that of conventional tests.

- Should require small sample volume.
- Assay should be rapid, accurate and repeatable.
- It should be robust, stable and sterilizable. But in any particular biosensors, only some of the above features may be achievable.

General features of biosensors:

A biosensor has 2 distinct components.

- Biological component – enzyme, cell etc.
- Physical component – transducer, amplifier etc.

The biological component recognizes and interacts with and the analyte to produce a physical change (a single) that can be detected by the transducer. In practice, the biological material is appropriately immobilized on to the transducer and the so prepared biosensors can be repeatedly used several times (may be around 10000 times) for a long period (many months)

Principle of a biosensor:

The desired biological material (usually a specific enzyme) is immobilized by conventional methods physical or membrane entrapment, non-covalent or covalent binding). This immobilized biological material is in intimate contact and the transducer. The analyte binds to the biological material to form a bound analyte which in turn produces the electronic response that can be measured.

In some instances, the analyte is converted to a product which may be associated and the release of heat, (gas oxygen), electrons or hydrogen ions. The transducer can convert the product linked changes into electrical signals which can be amplified and measured.

Types of biosensors:

- Electrochemical biosensors
- Amperometric biosensors
- Potentiometric biosensors
- Conductimetric biosensors
- Thermometric biosensors
- Optical biosensors