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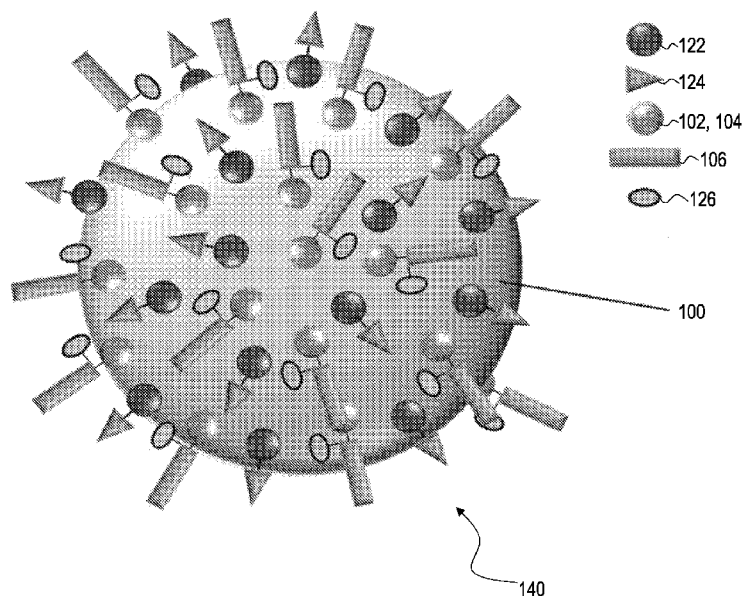


FIG. 4

(57) Abstract: An antibacterial nanoparticle (ANP) and related methods and antibacterial medical products are disclosed. An ANP includes a silica core with a plurality of gold nanospheres conjugated thereto and at least some of the gold nanospheres being silver-coated gold nanospheres. Iron oxide nanospheres may also be conjugated to the silica core, and at least some of the silver-coated gold nanospheres, or iron oxide nanospheres, if present, can be conjugated to one or more polycationic polymers and/or one or more antibacterial peptides.



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PHAGE MIMICKING NANOPARTICLES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority to US provisional patent application 62/757,086 filed
5 November 07, 2018 entitled “PHAGE MIMICKING NANOPARTICLES” and to US
provisional patent application 62/869,648 filed July 02, 2019 entitled “PHAGE MIMICKING
NANOPARTICLES” which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Technical Field

10 The present disclosure relates generally to silica core nanoparticles. More specifically,
the present disclosure relates to silica core nanoparticles with antibacterial properties.

Background and Relevant Art

The pathogens *Enterococcus faecium*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*,
Acinetobacter baumannii, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Enterobacter* species (often referred
15 to as the ESKAPE pathogens) are a leading cause of nosocomial bacterial infections, which
often result in chronic, skin, or high-density biofilm infections that are difficult to treat by
reason of their virulence and adaptivity (particularly in the geriatric population). The ESKAPE
pathogens often exhibit multidrug resistance to most or sometimes all available classes of
antibiotics. Antibiotic discovery and development are stagnating and unable to keep pace with
20 the adaptive multidrug resistance of many pathogens. Absent another solution, antibiotic-
resistant bacterial strains are poised to cause widespread, untreatable infections, and presently
treatable infections, such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhea, and salmonellosis, could
become more difficult to treat thereby increasing the morbidity and/or mortality rate associated
with these infections.

25 The use of nanomaterials as antibacterial alternatives to antibiotics has shown promise
owing to their unique physical and chemical properties. Nanoparticles are typically below 100
nm in size and exhibit a high surface-to-volume ratio, giving them the potential to closely
interact with microbial membranes. Specifically, the use of metal and metal oxide nanoparticles
as a new class of antibacterial agents have received increased attention over the last decade due
30 to their bactericidal properties. For example, Zinc oxide nanoparticles can inhibit the growth
of *S. aureus* by a combination of mechanisms (e.g., induction of oxidative stress, cell
membrane disruption, and/or the release of heavy metals).

Although bacterial resistance to metal nanoparticles is less likely, bacteria have been
known to utilize efflux pumps to effectively rid themselves of nanoparticles, reducing the

antibacterial effects of such nanoparticles. Furthermore, some nanoparticles are toxic to eukaryotic cells, which further limits their therapeutic dosage window.

Accordingly, there is an urgent need for broad-spectrum antibacterial agents, independent of antibiotics, to effectively prevent the progression of antibiotics resistance and to provide the necessary alternative to fight infectious diseases.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

Embodiments of the present disclosure are directed to antibiotic-free strategies to fight infectious diseases and to combat antibiotic resistance. Disclosed embodiments include antimicrobial nanoparticle-based systems that structurally mimic the capsid structure and/or density distribution of protein turrets on the head of bacteriophages and can act to primarily inhibit bacterial growth and in some cases kill pathogenic bacteria.

For example, disclosed antibacterial nanoparticles (ANPs) include a silica core and a plurality of gold nanospheres conjugated to (or immobilized on) the silica core. At least some of the gold nanospheres are coated with a layer of silver. Iron oxide nanospheres may also be conjugated to the silica core.

In one aspect, the gold nanospheres, or iron oxide nanospheres, if any, are conjugated to the silica core such that a surface density of the gold nanospheres, and/or iron oxide nanospheres, if any, is at least 60% similar to a surface density of protein turrets on a bacteriophage, preferably above 80%.

In one aspect, at least some of the plurality of gold nanospheres, or at least some of the plurality of iron oxide nanospheres, if any, are conjugated to one or more polycationic polymers.

In one aspect, at least some of the gold nanospheres or iron oxide nanospheres, if any, are conjugated to one or more antibacterial peptides, such as Mutant chensinin-1-2 having amino acid sequence SAVWRWRRFWLRKRK, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 1; synthetic safencin-20 having amino acid sequence AWKKTIRQYLKNKIKKKGRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 2; synthetic safencin-96 having amino acid sequence AWKEKIRKCLKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 3; synthetic safencin having amino acid sequence AGKETIRQYLKNEIKKKGRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 4; peptide 20 having amino acid sequence AWKKTIRQYLKNKIKKKGRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 5; peptide 52 having amino acid sequence AGKKTIRQYLKNKIKKKWRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 6; peptide 60 having amino acid sequence AGKKTIRQYLKNKIKKKGRKWVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 7; peptide 90 having amino acid sequence

AWKKTIRQYLKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 8; peptide 91 having amino acid sequence AWKETIRQYLKNIKKKWRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 9; peptide 92 having amino acid sequence AWKKTIRQYLKNIKKKWRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 10; peptide 93 having amino acid sequence
5 AWKEKIRQYLKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 11; peptide 94 having amino acid sequence AWKETIRQYLKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 12; and/or peptide 96 having amino acid sequence AWKEKIRKKLKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW, corresponding to SEQ ID NO: 13.

10 In one aspect, a cell penetrating peptide is anchored to at least some of the iron oxide nanospheres.

In one aspect, the antibacterial nanoparticle also includes a fluorescein molecule anchored to the (silver-coated) gold nanospheres (*e.g.*, by degradable or non-degradable linkers).

15 Embodiments of the present disclosure additionally include an antibacterial medical product having a plurality of antibacterial nanoparticles disposed on a medical implant, such as a permanent implant or a temporary implant, a dental implant, or a surgical instrument. In one aspect, antibacterial nanoparticles are added to a topological cream.

20 This summary is provided to introduce a selection of concepts in a simplified form that are further described below in the detailed description. Additional features and advantages of the disclosure will be set forth in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by the practice of the disclosure. The features and advantages of the disclosure may be realized and obtained by means of the instruments and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims. These and other features of the present disclosure will become more fully apparent from the following description and
25 appended claims or may be learned by the practice of the disclosure as set forth hereinafter.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

30 In order to describe the manner in which the above recited and other advantages and features of the disclosure can be obtained, a more particular description of the disclosure briefly described above will be rendered by reference to specific embodiments thereof, which are illustrated in the appended drawings. It is appreciated that these drawings depict only typical embodiments of the disclosure and are not therefore to be considered to be limiting of its scope. The disclosure will be described and explained with additional specificity and detail through the use of the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates a conceptual representation of an antibacterial nanoparticle of the present disclosure, as well as a conceptualization of a method for creating an antibacterial nanoparticle, according to the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 illustrates a conceptual representation of antibacterial peptides conjugated to the silver-coated gold nanospheres of an antibacterial nanoparticle of the present disclosure;

FIG. 3 illustrates a conceptual representation of polycationic polymers conjugated to the silver-coated gold nanospheres of an antibacterial nanoparticle of the present disclosure;

FIG. 4 illustrates a conceptual representation of a modular ANP with iron oxide nanospheres, cell penetrating peptides, silver-alloyed gold nanospheres, antimicrobial peptides, and fluorescein molecules modularly anchored thereto;

FIG 5A illustrates a surface rendering of procapsid particles of bacteriophage Φ X174 obtained by cryo-electron microscopy data;

FIG. 5B is a cryo-high-resolution transmission electron microscopy (cryo-HRTEM) image of procapsid particles of bacteriophage Φ X174;

FIG. 5C is an HRTEM image of 45 nm $\text{SiO}_2@Au@Ag$ antibacterial nanoparticles with high silver coating on the gold nanospheres;

FIG. 5D is an HRTEM image of 130 nm $\text{SiO}_2@Au@Ag$ antibacterial nanoparticles with high silver coating on the gold nanospheres;

FIG. 5E is a graphical representation of the average diameter of the gold nanospheres, the 45 nm SiO_2 cores, and the 130 nm SiO_2 cores;

FIG. 5F is a graphical representation of the amount of gold nanospheres that were counted on both silica core sizes;

FIG. 6A–6D illustrates cell viability (represented as a % relative to a control). FIG. 6A is a graph of cell viability using various nanoparticles: SiO_2 , $\text{SiO}_2@Au$, $\text{SiO}_2@Au@Ag$ with low silver coating (LS), $\text{SiO}_2@Au@Ag$ with medium silver coating (MS), $\text{SiO}_2@Au@Ag$ with high silver coating (HS) at both low concentration (LC) and high concentration (HC) and for various SiO_2 core sizes (65 nm and 130 nm); FIG. 6B illustrates antibacterial nanoparticles (ANPs), $\text{SiO}_2@Au@Ag$, of various SiO_2 core sizes conjugated to mutant chensinin-1-2 (MC1-2) with various silver coating thicknesses (LS, MS, HS) and at various concentrations (LC, HC); FIG. 6C graphically illustrates cell viability after treatment with antibacterial nanoparticles (ANPs), $\text{SiO}_2@Au@Ag$, of various SiO_2 core sizes conjugated to synthetic safencin-20 (Syn20) with various silver coating thicknesses (LS, MS, HS) and at various concentrations (LC, HC); FIG. 6D illustrates cell viability following treatment with antibacterial nanoparticles (ANPs), $\text{SiO}_2@Au@Ag$, of various SiO_2 core sizes conjugated to

synthetic safencin-96 (Syn96) with various silver coating thicknesses (LS, MS, HS) and at various concentrations (LC, HC);

FIG. 7A–7F illustrates the growth of *Staphylococcus aureus* USA300 with various concentrations and types of nanoparticles, including 45 nm (SiO₂ core diameter) SiO₂@Au@Ag (ANPs) with LS (FIG. 7A); 45 nm ANPs with MS (FIG. 7B); 45 nm ANPs with HS (FIG. 7C); 130 nm ANPs with LS (FIG. 7D); 130 nm ANPs with MS (FIG. 7E); and 130 nm ANPs with HS (FIG. 7F);

FIG. 8A and 8B illustrate the growth of *Corynebacterium striatum* in various conditions, including with 1 mL of 45 nm ANPs with LS, MS, and HS (FIG. 8A) or 1 mL of 130 nm ANPs with LS, MS, and HS (FIG. 8B);

FIG. 9A and 9B illustrate the growth of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* FRD1 in various conditions, including with 0.1 mL of 45 nm and 130 nm ANPs with MS (FIG. 9A) and 0.5 mL of 45 nm and 130 nm ANPs with MS (FIG. 9B);

FIG. 10A illustrates the growth of *Enterococcus faecalis* with 0.1 mL of 45 nm and 130 nm ANPs with MS;

FIG. 10B illustrates the growth of *Enterococcus faecalis* with 0.5 mL of 45 nm and 130 nm ANPs with MS;

FIG. 11A illustrates the growth of *Corynebacterium striatum* with 65 nm ANPs with various silver concentrations conjugated to a polycationic polymer;

FIG. 11B illustrates the growth of *Corynebacterium striatum* with 130 nm ANPs with various silver concentrations conjugated to a polycationic polymer;

FIG. 12A illustrates a scanning electron micrograph (SEM) image of ANPs conjugated to a polycationic polymer immobilized on an implant-grade metal surface;

FIG. 12B illustrates images of simultaneous green (left) and red (right) fluorescence of ANPs conjugated to a polycationic polymer immobilized on an implant-grade metal surface where only green fluorescence indicates viable bacteria and simultaneous green and red fluorescence from the same location indicates non-viable bacteria;

FIG. 13 illustrates the growth of various pathogens with various concentrations of 65 nm and 130 nm ANPs with LS conjugated to synthetic safencin-20;

FIG. 14 illustrates the growth of various pathogens with various concentrations of 65 nm and 130 nm ANPs with MS conjugated to synthetic safencin-20;

FIG. 15 illustrates the growth of various pathogens with various concentrations of 65 nm and 130 nm ANPs with HS conjugated to synthetic safencin-20;

FIG. 16 illustrates the growth of various pathogens with various concentrations of 65 nm and 130 nm ANPs with LS conjugated to mutant chensinin-1-2;

FIG. 17 illustrates the growth of various pathogens with various concentrations of 65 nm and 130 nm ANPs with MS conjugated to mutant chensinin-1-2;

5 FIG. 18 illustrates the growth of various pathogens with various concentrations of 65 nm and 130 nm ANPs with HS conjugated to mutant chensinin-1-2; and

FIG. 19 illustrates an exemplary flow diagram depicting a method for creating an antibacterial nanoparticle, according to the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

10 Before describing various embodiments of the present disclosure in detail, it is to be understood that this disclosure is not limited to the parameters of the particularly exemplified systems, methods, apparatus, products, kits, and/or processes, which may, of course, vary. Thus, while certain embodiments of the present disclosure will be described in detail, with reference to specific configurations, parameters, components, elements, etc., the descriptions
15 are illustrative and are not to be construed as limiting the scope of the claimed invention. In addition, the terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing the embodiments and is not necessarily intended to limit the scope of the claimed invention.

Unless defined otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art to which the present
20 disclosure pertains.

While the detailed description is separated into sections, the section headers and contents within each section are not intended to be self-contained descriptions and embodiments. Rather, the contents of each section within the detailed description are intended to be read and understood as a collective whole where elements of one section may pertain to
25 and/or inform other sections. Accordingly, embodiments specifically disclosed within one section may also relate to and/or serve as additional and/or alternative embodiments in another section having the same and/or similar systems, modules, devices, methods, and/or terminology.

As described briefly above, the increasing frequency of nosocomial infections caused
30 by antibiotic resistance strains of bacteria in conjunction with the stagnated discovery of new classes of antibiotics has led to a race against time for the development of new antibacterial agents. In addition to acquisition of genomic antibiotic resistance cassettes, many bacterial strains can form thick mono- or polyclonal biofilms (*e.g.*, at interfaces between medical

implants and muscle, bone, or other tissue) that provide a structural and/or biochemical protection against most known antibiotics.

The use of nanomaterials as antibacterial alternatives to antibiotics has shown promise, owing to their unique physical and chemical properties. Nanoparticles are typically below 100 nm in size and exhibit a high surface-to-volume ratio, giving them the potential to closely interact with microbial membranes. Specifically, the use of metal and metal oxide nanoparticles as a new class of antibacterial agents have received increased attention over the last decade due to their bactericidal properties. However, bacteria have been known to utilize efflux pumps to effectively rid themselves of nanoparticles, reducing the antibacterial effects of such nanoparticles. Furthermore, some nanoparticles are highly toxic to eukaryotic cells, which further limits their therapeutic dosage window.

There is an outstanding need in the industry for antibacterial alternatives to the canonical antibiotics, and there is an additional need for improved nanoparticles that can combat antibiotic resistant bacterial strains and/or biofilm formation in a clinical setting.

15 Exemplary Antibacterial Nanoparticles

Embodiments disclosed herein address one or more of the foregoing problems in the art of antibiotic compositions and/or treatments and can be implemented in various disclosed strategies for fighting infectious diseases and combatting antibiotic resistance. For example, disclosed embodiments include improved antimicrobial nanoparticle-based systems that structurally mimic the capsid structure and/or density distribution of protein turrets on the head of a bacteriophage and can act to primarily inhibit bacterial growth and, in some instances, ultimately kill pathogenic bacteria. A disclosed antibacterial nanoparticle (ANP) may include a silica core and a plurality of gold nanospheres conjugated to (or immobilized on) the silica core. At least some of the gold nanospheres can be coated with a layer of silver. Iron oxide nanospheres may also be conjugated to the silica core.

Such—and other—disclosed ANPs can provide individually potent antibacterial elements that are modularly assembled so as to accentuate the desired antibacterial properties of the individual components while beneficially minimizing their toxicity to eukaryotic tissue (*e.g.*, within a patient or mammalian subject in need thereof or who is receiving prophylactic treatment). These ANPs can at least partially mimic the structure and/or dimensions of bacteriophages that infect only bacterial hosts using structure-based interactions with the appropriate nanofeatures on the bacterial membrane, cell wall, or other surface receptors.

The phage-mimicking ANPs disclosed herein may (a) selectively associate with bacterial membranes and, owing to the structural and chemical properties of the disclosed

ANPs, disrupt cellular division and/or metabolic functions of the bacterial cell to cause stasis or death, (b) create a high surface area of antibacterial silver coating at silver concentrations that are lower than current antibacterial formulations—but which, within the context of the presently disclosed ANPs, are still providing antibacterial effects—(c) otherwise inhibit
5 bacterial growth, (d) be non-toxic (and in some cases growth-promoting) to mammalian (*e.g.*, human) cells, and (e) be quickly and modularly personalized on a case by case basis.

The ANPs of the present disclosure provide additional advantages, including the ability to be conjugated to other antimicrobial agents to increase their effectiveness in treating and/or reducing a likelihood of bacterial infections. For example, ANPs may be capped with
10 antimicrobial peptides (AMPs), such as mutant chensinin-1-2, synthetic safencin-20, synthetic safencin-96, or AMPs disclosed herein. Additionally, or alternatively, ANPs may be conjugated to a polycationic polymer as a means of increasing bacterial association and antibacterial effectiveness of the associated ANPs.

Due to the adaptability and relative resilience of the disclosed ANPs, these particles can
15 be combined with various medical products to treat or prevent (and/or reduce the likelihood of) bacterial infections. For example, ANPs disclosed herein may be added to a topological agent or disposed/coated on permanent implants, temporary implants, dental implants, surgical instruments, etc. to provide an antibacterial or disinfectant effect and/or to prevent the adhesion and/or growth of biofilms on associated implants/surgical instruments.

Those skilled in the art will recognize that the ANPs of the present disclosure provide
20 additional benefits. For example, as with bacteriophages, the antibacterial properties of the presently disclosed ANPs are largely unaffected by genomically-acquired antibiotic resistance. Additionally, ANPs may be disposed on surfaces before bacterial colonization/infection can take place, thereby preventing (and/or reducing a likelihood of) pathogenic colonization and/or
25 infection, in contrast to the reactive approach of administering broad-spectrum antibiotics after an infection is identified in a symptomatic patient. Accordingly, the use of ANPs, whether singly or in combination with other antimicrobials, may slow the increasing incidence of bacterial antibiotic resistance and may provide a viable alternative treatment (*e.g.*, prescribed or prophylactic) for infectious diseases.

30 One additional advantage is that the ANPs of the present disclosure do not disrupt or mutate the DNA sequence of the antibiotic-resistant cassette in the infectious bacteria, as the mode of killing is through disruption of the bacterial membrane and not via DNA dimerization and fragmentation as in other techniques of incapacitating bacteria (*e.g.*, radiation or heat killing). One beneficial effect of the disclosed ANPs preserving the antibiotic cassette sequence

is that it allows for isolation of intact DNA from drug-resistant infections to determine how the pathogen has mutated using DNA sequencing. Such understanding of the various mutations can inform the design of treatment regimens and future therapies for combatting drug-resistant infections.

5 Attention is now directed to FIG. 1, which illustrates a conceptual representation of an ANP 120 of the present disclosure, as well as a conceptualization of a method for creating an ANP 120. As shown, an ANP includes a silica core 100. The silica core 100 may be synthesized, for example, by a sol-gel method such as the Stöber process involving hydrolysis and condensation of silica precursor tetraethyl orthosilicate ($\text{Si}(\text{OEt})_4$, TEOS). The diameter of
10 the resulting silica core 100 may be varied by varying the amount of ethanol, water, NH_4OH solution, TEOS, and the material of the reaction vessel.

Although FIG. 1 indicates embodiments in which the silica core 100 has a diameter of approximately 45 nm or 130 nm, it will be appreciated that other diameters are within the scope of this disclosure. For example, a silica core 100 may have a diameter of 65 nm, 85 nm, 105
15 nm, or any diameter within a range, for example, of 12 nm to 800 nm, preferably between 20 nm to 200 nm.

In some instances, 45 nm silica cores 100 may be formed by combining and stirring 30 mL ethanol, 6 mL of deionized water, 1.125 mL TEOS, and 1.8 mL of 20% w/v NH_4OH in water in a covered glass reactor for approximately eight hours or longer. In other instances,
20 130 nm silica cores 100 may be formed in a Teflon reactor by first stirring 5 mL ethanol with 1.3 mL TEOS and then adding a mix of 22 mL ethanol and 7 mL of 20% w/v NH_4OH in water solution into the Teflon beaker, set to stir for approximately eight hours or longer at room temperature. For either desired silica core size, after stirring, the solutions may be centrifuged for approximately thirty minutes at room temperature to settle the synthesized nanoparticles and to separate them from the supernatant. The silica cores may then be washed, sonicated
25 (*e.g.*, for 20 seconds at 40% amplitude), and centrifuged with 10 mL ethanol twice.

FIG. 1 also illustrates that gold nanospheres 102 are conjugated to the silica cores 100 in an intermediate step to form an ANP 120. FIG. 1 depicts an embodiment in which the gold nanospheres have a diameter of approximately 5 nm, but other diameters are also usable. For
30 example, gold nanospheres 102 may have a diameter within a range of 1.5 nm to 15 nm.

Gold nanospheres 102 may be formed, for example, by combining and stirring 40.4 mL deionized water, 400 μL NaOH (1M), 3 mL sodium citrate dihydrate (68 mM), and 1 mL THPC (85 mM) for approximately ten minutes at room temperature and then adding 2 mL gold chloride (25 mM) and then covering and stirring for another approximately eight hours or more.

The silica cores 100 may be prepared for adsorption by stirring for approximately eight hours or more with an additional 15 mL ethanol, 5 mL deionized water, and 1 mL APTES and then centrifuging the SiO₂-APTES cores for approximately thirty minutes at room temperature. The cores 100 may then be separated from the supernatant, and the amino-functionalized nanoparticle pellets may be washed, sonicated (*e.g.*, for 20 seconds at 40% amplitude), and centrifuged with 10 mL ethanol twice at 9,000 rpm. The supernatant may then be discarded, and the residual pellets may be resuspended in 10 mL deionized water and sonicated (*e.g.*, for 20 seconds at 40% amplitude).

Then, with a ratio of 1:2, for instance, the gold nanospheres solution may be mixed into the SiO₂-APTES cores solution and covered and stirred for approximately eight hours or more, resulting in gold nanospheres 102 conjugated to (or immobilized on) the silica cores 100 (referred to sometimes herein as SiO₂@Au). The SiO₂@Au nanoparticle solution may then be centrifuged at 9,000 rpm for approximately fifteen minutes at room temperature, followed by one or more washing-sonication, centrifugation cycles in, for example, 10 mL deionized water. It should be appreciated that the foregoing is an exemplary formulation and protocol for synthesizing silica cores and gold nanospheres.

In some instances, the gold nanospheres are conjugated to the silica core 100 so that the surface density of the gold nanospheres on the silica core 100 is similar to the surface density of protein turrets on bacteriophages. As an illustrative example, a 45 nm silica core 100 may include a 0.0077 1/nm² surface density of gold nanospheres, which is 88% similar to the surface density of protein turrets of the bacteriophage SpV4 (0.0068 1/nm²). In other instances, the distance between the gold nanospheres disposed on the silica core 100 is such that the ratio of the silica core diameter to the distance between the gold nanospheres is within a range of 2 to 4. In other instances, the gold nanospheres are conjugated to the silica core 100 such that the ratio of the diameter of the silica core to the distance between the gold nanospheres is greater than 4. Additional discussion regarding the structural similarities between the ANPs and various bacteriophages is included hereinafter.

FIG. 1 also illustrates embodiments of ANPs having a silver coating 104 alloyed to the surface of the gold nanospheres 102 on the silica core 100. To accomplish this, in some instances, the SiO₂@Au nanoparticle solution is mixed with 10 mM AgNO₃ and 10 mM freshly prepared hydroquinone solution. Different proportions of AgNO₃ and hydroquinone solution may be utilized for alloying different concentrations of silver on the gold nanospheres 102. For example, a low concentration of silver (referred to herein as LS) may utilize 3 mL AgNO₃ and 337.5 μL hydroquinone solution, a medium concentration of silver (referred to herein as MS)

may utilize 3 mL AgNO₃ and 1.8 mL hydroquinone solution, and a high concentration of silver (referred to herein as HS) may utilize 7.2 mL AgNO₃ and 5.76 mL hydroquinone solution.

Additional exemplary gold and silver concentrations for ANPs can include those detailed in Table 1 below.

5 Table 1

ANPs	Gold concentration $\mu\text{g/ml}$ ($\pm\text{SD}$)	Silver concentration $\mu\text{g/ml}$ ($\pm\text{SD}$)
45nm LS	637.61 (± 52.91)	17.64 (± 9.77)
130nm LS	679.59 (± 51.04)	26.62 (± 13.57)
45nm MS	624.86 (± 39.65)	92.15 (± 58.60)
130nm MS	652.48 (± 67.73)	141.63 (± 81.42)
45nm HS	665.21 (± 66.93)	123.25 (± 87.91)
130nm HS	635.32 (± 50.35)	189.22 (± 122.13)

After mixing the SiO₂@Au nanoparticle solution is mixed with a desired quantity of 10 mM AgNO₃ and 10 mM hydroquinone solution, in some instances, the mixed solution is covered completely with aluminum foil (*e.g.*, to limit UV exposure) and stirred for approximately one hour. Then, the silver coating reaction may be stopped by centrifugation and discarding the supernatant. Various final concentrations of coated silver 104 are within the scope of this disclosure, depending on the size of the silica core 100, the gold nanospheres 102, and/or the intended concentration profile (*e.g.*, LS, MS, HS). In some embodiments, the final silver coating 104 concentration ranges from 5 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ to 350.5 $\mu\text{g/mL}$. Furthermore, it will be appreciated that, in some embodiments, less than all of the gold nanospheres 102 are coated with silver coating 104, whereas in other embodiments, all of the gold nanospheres 102 are coated with silver coating 104. In some implementations, coating fewer than all of the gold nanospheres 102 with silver coating 104 provides ANPs that are more easily implemented into antibacterial applications for use within the human body (*e.g.*, orthopedic implants). By way of illustrative example, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established a chronic oral Reference Dose (RfD) of 5 $\mu\text{g/kg/day}$ for silver, which broadly translates to 250 μg to 750 μg per person per day (depending on the weight of the person). At least some of the presently disclosed phage-mimicking ANPs include a maximum silver content of less than 200 μg (*e.g.*, 189 $\mu\text{g/mL}$), with a predicted <1 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ of silver ion leaching into solution, which is well below the EPA prescribed safety limit for silver exposure. Reducing the amount of silver coating 104 on gold nanospheres of the ANPs may provide even lower levels of silver.

The resulting SiO₂@Au@Ag nanoparticles 120 (ANPs) may then be washed and centrifuged (*e.g.*, two additional times in 10 mL deionized water) and stored in darkness until intended use. As discussed hereinbelow, the ANPs 120 at least partially mimic the structure and/or dimensional characteristics of certain bacteriophages with icosahedral capsids (*e.g.*, ΦX174) and exhibit unexpected antibacterial properties. After all, adhesion of bacteriophages to a host bacterium is not usually antibacterial. Most phages require a metabolically active host to replicate their genomic nucleic acid and to form new virions. Thus, the infection following adhesion and the replication of phages within the bacterial host is typically the mode of bactericidal activity exhibited by phages.

In addition to silver-coated gold nanospheres, FIG. 2–4 illustrate that an ANP 120 may include additional modularly attached additives to accomplish or customize antibacterial activity or other properties of the ANPs. For example, FIG. 2 illustrates an ANP 120 with a plurality of antimicrobial peptides 106 (AMPs) conjugated thereto (referred to sometimes herein as ANP@AMP). Naturally occurring AMPs often have broad and numerous bacterial targets and are used by many organisms to control bacterial populations or to compete within their environments. Synthetic AMPs may mimic naturally occurring AMPs and may be more easily produced for medicinal applications and may also beneficially be less prone to bacterial resistance than alternative antibiotic moieties. AMPs 106 may be attached to the ANPs 120, for example, by a linking group (*e.g.*, a silane or a thiol group).

It should be noted that a plurality of different AMPs 106 may be conjugated to an ANP 120 of the present disclosure. In some embodiments, the peptides contain only amino acids. That is, in some instances, the peptides are not post-translationally modified. It should be appreciated, therefore, that the synthetic AMPs may include peptides containing unmodified amino acids and are not lipopeptides or any other form of peptide that is modified with another class of organic molecule. For example, an ANP may be conjugated to one or more synthetic antimicrobial peptides disclosed in Table 2 below.

Table 2

AMP Name	Amino Acid Sequence	SEQ ID NO
Mutant chensinin-1-2	SAVWRWRRFWLRKRK	SEQ ID NO: 1
Safencin-20	AWKKTIRQYLKNIKIKKKGRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 2
Safencin-96	AWKEKIRKCLKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 3
Safencin	AGKETIRQYLKNEIKKKGRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 4
Peptide 20	AWKKTIRQYLKNIKIKKKGRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 5
Peptide 52	AGKKTIRQYLKNIKIKKKWRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 6
Peptide 60	AGKKTIRQYLKNIKIKKKGRKWVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 7

Peptide 90	AWKKTIRQYLNKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 8
Peptide 91	AWKETIRQYLNKNIKKKWRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 9
Peptide 92	AWKKTIRQYLNKNIKKKWRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 10
Peptide 93	AWKEKIRQYLNKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 11
Peptide 94	AWKETIRKYLNKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 12
Peptide 96	AWKEKIRKLLKNEIKKKWRKAVIAW	SEQ ID NO: 13

It will be appreciated that the foregoing list of AMPs 106 is exemplary only and non-limiting. As will be discussed hereinafter, in some instances, conjugating one or more AMPs 106 with ANPs 120 improves the antibacterial effectiveness of the ANPs 120.

5 In addition to, or as an alternative to, AMPs 106, FIG. 3 shows a plurality of standard model polycationic polymers 108 conjugated to an ANP 120. The polymers 108 impart a net positive charge on the ANP 120, and conjugating one or more polycationic polymers 108 with ANPs 120 may affect the antibacterial effectiveness of the ANPs 120 (*e.g.*, when immobilized on an implant-grade metal surface).

10 Polycationic polymers can be conjugated to ANPs by any method known in the art. By way of example and not limitation, polycationic polymers can be conjugated to ANPs via chemisorption of thiol to the Au/Ag or noble metal surface. The thiol group can be introduced by incorporating cysteine as an end amino acid in the peptide sequences. For polycationic polymers, a thiol derived acid group (*e.g.*, 11-mercaptoundecanoic acid or 3-mercaptopropionic acid) can be linked to linear polycationic polymers such as linear Polyethyleneimine in, for
15 example, a 1:1 ratio. The amine group can then be covalently linked to the acid group by employing carbodiimide/N-hydroxy succinimide chemistry (EDC/NHS). The resultant thiol derivatized polycationic polymer can then be immobilized onto the ANPs by means of chemisorption of the thiol on the Au/Ag nanospheres.

20 Additionally, or alternatively, other nanospheres may be directly fused to the surface of the silica core 100. For example, FIG. 4 illustrates a conceptual representation of a modular ANP 140 with iron oxide nanospheres 122, cell penetrating peptides (CPPs) 124, silver-alloyed gold nanospheres (102, 104), AMPs 106, and fluorescein molecules 126 modularly anchored thereto. In some instances, iron oxide nanospheres (Fe_3O_4) 122 are conjugated to the silica core
25 100 by being directly fused thereto or by being linked to the amine groups on the silica core using carbodiimide chemistry. The diameter of the iron oxide nanospheres 122, in some embodiments, is within a range of 3 nm to 10 nm, and the iron oxide nanospheres 122 may be, in some instances, conjugated to AMPs 106 described above.

In some instances, as shown in FIG.4, the iron oxide nanospheres 122 are interspersed in between the discontinuous shell of silver-alloyed gold nanospheres (102, 104) of the silica core 100 to generate a magnetic hyperthermia inducing shell around the silica core 100, which may physically disrupt the bacterial cells by inducing localized magnetic hyperthermia on the modular ANPs 140 through an externally applied magnetic AC field, thereby limiting the possible recurrence of infection. Furthermore, in some embodiments, silane-modified cell-penetrating peptides (CPPs) 124 for penetrating eukaryotic cells are immobilized on the iron oxide nanospheres through silanization to target intracellular bacterial pools that are often the main reason for recurring infections (*e.g.*, urinary tract infections caused by Extraintestinal Pathogenic *Escherichia coli*).

Additionally, in some implementations, modular ANPs 140 include fluorescein reporter molecules 126 anchored in between the ANPs 106 on the surface of the silver-alloyed gold nanospheres 102, 104. The fluorescein reporter molecules 126 may be anchored by a cephalosporin linker or a thiol linker, as shown in FIG.4. When in close proximity to the silver-alloyed gold nanospheres 102, 104, the fluorescein reporter molecules are blacked out because of metal quenching. The fluorescein molecules 126 may, in some instances, become dissociated from the modular ANPs 140 by enzymes (*e.g.*, β -lactamase) secreted by infectious bacteria, and therefore avoid metal quenching and become detectable by fluorescence detection methods to indicate the presence of a bacterial infection.

Accordingly, an ANP 120 of the present disclosure may be modularly outfitted with various components (*e.g.*, antimicrobial/antibacterial peptides, polycationic polymers, iron oxide nanospheres, cell-penetrating peptides, fluorescein molecules, etc.) according to the desired therapeutic treatment or purpose. In some instances, a modular ANP 140 may provide an antibiotic-independent platform that can treat persistent infection, prevent (and/or reduce a likelihood of) recurrent infection, and/or promote complete long-term recovery.

FIG. 5A–5F illustrate a surface rendering of procapsid particles of bacteriophage Φ X174 (FIG. 5A), a high-resolution transmission electron microscopy (HRTEM) image procapsid particles of bacteriophage Φ X174 (FIG. 5B), an HRTEM image of 45 nm SiO₂@Au@Ag ANPs with high silver coating on the gold nanospheres (FIG. 5C), an HRTEM image of 130 nm SiO₂@Au@Ag antibacterial nanoparticles with high silver coating on the gold nanospheres (FIG. 5D), a graphical representation of the average diameter of the gold nanospheres, the 45 nm SiO₂ cores, and the 130 nm SiO₂ cores (FIG. 5E), and a graphical

representation of the amount of gold nanospheres that were counted on exemplary ANPs with 45 nm and 130 nm silica core sizes (FIG. 5F).

Ninety-seven percent of bacteriophages infecting ESKAPE organisms belong to *Caudovirales*, an order of tailed bacteriophages with icosahedral capsids (45-170nm). At least
5 some of the ANPs of the present disclosure target the evolutionarily constant bacterial cell wall/membrane with high specificity by structurally mimicking the capsid architecture and/or function of phages that target only bacterial cells. At least some ANPs include a silica core studded with smaller, silver coated gold nanospheres on their surface, recreating the high surface area and 'bubble-wrap' structure of icosahedral capsids (e.g., Φ X174, as shown in
10 FIG.5, A, B).

The production of phage-mimicking ANPs disclosed herein (e.g., $\text{SiO}_2@Ag@Au$, without any attached AMPs, polymers, etc.) was investigated by Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM). FIG. 5C shows TEM images of 45 nm silica core and FIG. 5D shows TEM images of 130 nm silica core ANPs with HS. TEM image analysis, represented in FIG. 5E,
15 reveals that the small and large SiO_2 cores had diameters of approximately 45 nm(± 8.25 nm) and 130 nm (± 10.36 nm), respectively, and were covered with 3.5nm (± 1.57 nm) gold-nanospheres. Additionally, FIG. 5F shows that the number of gold nanospheres was approximately 50 for the 45 nm silica core size and approximately 105 for the 130 nm silica core size.

In general, as compared with various tailed bacteriophages (e.g., P68, ϕ 812, ϕ KZ) and tailless bacteriophages (e.g., Φ X174, PM2, PRD1, STIV, SpV4) the size of smaller ANPs (e.g., 45nm) relates better to the capsid sizes of tailless bacteriophages than larger (e.g., 130 nm) ANPs. Both 45 nm and 130 nm cores sizes carry more gold nanospheres per unit area in comparison to the number of protein turrets on the heads of the bacteriophage's capsids (e.g.,
25 approximately 4 times and 8 times higher, respectively). Regardless, the interspacing between the gold nanospheres of small ANPs (e.g., 2.02 nm for 45 nm ANPs) is much smaller than the geometrically consistent distance between the protein-turrets covering the surface of the phage capsids. On the other hand, the gold nanospheres interspaced on larger ANPs (e.g., 9.87 nm for 130 nm ANPs) is comparable to the protein turret interspacing found on smaller bacteriophages
30 (e.g., P68, Φ X174, and SpV4, with interspacing 11.33nm, 8.28nm, and 9.31nm, respectively).

Interestingly, the bacteriophage SpV4 possesses a surface density of protein turrets (0.0068 1/nm^2) that is 88% similar to the surface density of gold nanospheres (0.0077 1/nm^2) on small (45nm) ANPs. The SpV4 bacteriophage belongs to the viral family of *Microviridae* which are small (25 – 27 nm), tailless bacteriophages with icosahedral capsids. The genus of

SpV4 is a close match to the family of *Chlamydiaphages*, which, as the name suggests, are known to infect various species of the obligate intracellular and pathogenic chlamydia. The *Chlamydiaphages* are known to initiate infection with the bacterial host cell by pilus adsorption which is dependent on the shape and structure of the phage. Additionally, the surface density of protein turrets on the *S. aureus* infecting bacteriophage P68 (0.0023 1/nm²) is 85% similar to the surface density of gold nanospheres on the larger (130 nm) ANPs (0.0020 1/nm²). Thus, the surface density of silver-coated gold nanospheres on the silica cores of both 45 nm and 130 nm ANPs sizes is closely related to the surface density of protein turrets of pathogen-infecting bacteriophages which is indicative of the phage structure mimicking properties of at least some of the disclosed ANPs (e.g., SiO₂@Ag@Au).

For reference, Table 2 below shows structural comparisons of the heads of tailed (P68, phi8812, φKZ) and tailless bacteriophages (ΦX174, PM2, PRD1, STIV, SpV4) with small (45nm) and large (130nm) phage-mimicking ANPs with respect to number of protein turrets per capsid (number gold nanospheres per silica core), capsid diameter (silica core diameter), interspacing between protein turrets on capsid (interspacing between gold nanospheres on silica core), surface area of the capsid (surface area silica core), and surface density of protein turrets (surface density of gold nanospheres).

Table 2

Tailed bacteriophage	Number of protein turrets/capsid	Capsid diameter (nm)	Interspacing between protein turrets on capsid (nm)	Surface area of capsid (nm²)	Surface density of protein turrets (1/nm²)
P68	12	48	11.33	5191	0.0023
phi8812	12	90	29.58	24916	0.0005
φKZ	12	145	59.80	46407	0.0003
Tailless bacteriophage	Number of protein turrets/capsid	Capsid diameter (nm)	Interspacing between protein turrets on capsid (nm)	Surface area of capsid (nm²)	Surface density of protein turrets (1/nm²)

ΦX174	12	28	8.28	3068	0.0039
PM2	12	59	28.61	10120	0.0012
PRD1	12	64	17.32	11898	0.0010
STIV	12	70	27.25	14496	0.0008
SH1	12	82	36.44	15827	0.0008
SpV4	18	31	9.31	2635	0.0068
phage-mimicking ANPs	Number of Au nanospheres/silica core	Silica core diameter (nm)	Interspacing between Au nanospheres on silica core (nm)	Surface area of silica core (nm²)	Surface density of Au Nanospheres (1/nm²)
small (45nm)	49	45	2.02	6362	0.0077
large (130nm)	106	130	9.87	53093	0.0020

Furthermore, although there is a broad range of values for the interspacing of protein turrets on bacteriophages (*e.g.*, approximately 8 nm to 29 nm for ΦX174, PM2, PRD1, STIV, SpV4), the range of ratios of the capsid diameter to the interspacing of the spikes on various bacteriophage capsids appears to be much more compact (*e.g.*, approximately 2 to 3.9 for ΦX174, PM2, PRD1, STIV, SpV4). For at least some ANPs disclosed herein, the ratio of the silica core nanoparticle diameter to the interspacing of the mini Au-Ag nanospheres on the core is 10.8 for a 45 nm core and 13 for a 130 nm core. Even though the ratio of the core nanoparticle diameter to the interspacing of mini Au-Ag nanospheres on a core may be different from the ratio of the capsid diameter to the interspacing of the spikes on the bacteriophage capsids, the ANPs with AMPs capped on their surface exhibited broad-spectrum bactericidal activity (as discussed hereinbelow).

For example, PRD1 is a phage that attacks a broad swathe of Gram-negative bacteria. The ratio of PRD1 capsid diameter to protein turret interspacing is approximately 2.6. The ratio of the core diameter of an exemplary 45 nm silica core ANP to the interspacing of the mini Au-Ag nanospheres on the silica core was approximately 4x higher than the ratio of the PRD1 capsid diameter to protein turret interspacing. The ratio was 5x higher than PRD1's ratio for an exemplary 130 nm silica core ANPs. This indicates that, in at least some instances, phage mimicking structures (*e.g.*, ANPs) do not have to be exact replicates of the natural bacteriophages, so long as the structural characteristics of interspaced protein turrets/spikes are mimicked by the ANPs. As discussed herein, the structure-function relationship seen in

bacteriophages can be replicated synthetically using, for example, peptide capped Au-Ag mini nanospheres on ANPs with peptide spacing ratios that result in ratios of the core nanoparticle diameter to the interspacing of mini Au-Ag Nanospheres on the core that are whole integer multiples (within a 10% \pm deviation) of the ratio of the capsid diameter to the interspacing of the protein turrets/spikes on the bacteriophage capsids.

FIG. 6A–6D illustrates cell viability (represented as a % relative to a control) using various nanoparticles: SiO₂, SiO₂@Au, SiO₂@Au@Ag with low silver coating (LS), SiO₂@Au@Ag with medium silver coating (MS), SiO₂@Au@Ag with high silver coating (HS) at both low concentration (LC) and high concentration (HC) and for various SiO₂ core sizes (65 nm and 130 nm). For the cytotoxicity data represented in FIG. 6A–6D, HaCaT human epithelial keratinocytes were used, maintained in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle's Medium (DMEM) with 10% heat-inactivated fetal bovine serum (FBS), and incubated at 37° C with 5% CO₂ in 100 mm culture dishes. The ethidium homodimer cell death assay was used to determine the cytotoxicity of all five synthesized nanoparticle variations (SiO₂, SiO₂@Au, SiO₂@Au@Ag LS (low silver), SiO₂@Au@Ag MS (medium silver), and SiO₂@Au@Ag HS (high silver). For this assay, HaCaT cells were grown to approximately 80% confluency in 24 well tissue culture plates with DMEM. Before the nanoparticle treatment, DMEM was aspirated from the wells, and the cells were washed with PBS. Then PBS was aspirated from the wells, and the nanoparticle solution (in DMEM) was added in two concentrations. The ratio of nanoparticles per HaCaT cell used in this assay was adapted to the ratio of nanoparticles per bacterial cells used in the biocidal activity assays. "LC" (low concentration) is approximately 6.99x10¹¹ particles/mL for the 65 nm ANP@ANPs and 1.09x10¹¹ particles/mL for the 130 nm ANP@ANPs. The high concentration (HC) was approximately 1.40x10¹² particles/mL for the 65 nm ANP@ANPs and 2.19x10¹¹ particles/mL for the 130 nm ANP@ANPs. Cells were then incubated for 16 hours at 37° C with 5% CO₂. After incubation, the DMEM medium was aspirated, and cells were washed with PBS to remove the majority of the nanoparticles. 4 μ M ethidium homodimer in PBS was added, and cells were incubated for 30 minutes. The level of fluorescence was determined using a plate reader set to 528 nm excitation and 617 nm emission with a cut-off value of 590 nm. The percentage of dead cells was determined by adding 0.1% (w/v) Saponin (Sigma) to each well following the initial reading and allowing the plate to incubate for an additional 20 minutes at room temperature and shaking before reading the plate a second time at the same settings. Percent membrane permeabilization was calculated by dividing the fluorescence values with intact cells by the fluorescence values after cell disruption by saponification. Each treatment condition was performed in triplicate at least, the

average as % cell viability (relative to the control) plus standard deviation of all condition was plotted together for comparison. Significance was determined by ANOVA and t-test (one tail and two tail).

As shown in FIG. 6A, all five synthesized nanoparticle variations (SiO₂, SiO₂@Au, SiO₂@Au@Ag LS, SiO₂@Au@Ag MS, and SiO₂@Au@Ag HS) are highly biocompatible with human skin cells (e.g., HaCaT). Subsamples of the HaCaT left in incubation with the nanoparticles for approximately 12 h showed growth and a healthy appearance of the cells. The LC of Ag nanoparticles ≤10 nm (1180 ± 140 μg/mL) against eukaryotic fibroblasts cells is lower than that of Ag nanoparticles >10 nm (1760 ± 110 μg/mL) since the smaller Ag nanoparticles are easily taken up by cells and concentrated intracellularly, much more than the >10 nm Ag nanoparticles. The lack of abundance of cysteine residues on eukaryotic cell membranes combined with the size of the eukaryotic cells being ~200 fold larger than the nanoparticles and the multiple points of simultaneous contact between the negatively charged Au/Ag nanospheres with the negatively charged cell membrane appears to increase the repulsion of the ANPs from the surface of eukaryotic cells. The arrangement of the sub-5 nm Au/Ag nanospheres on a >45 nm silica core may also ensure that the Au/Ag nanospheres do not present themselves as ≤5 nm Ag nanoparticles, thereby reducing the probability of the ANPs from permeabilizing the eukaryotic cell membrane and increasing the biocompatibility of the ANPs towards eukaryotic cells.

FIG. 6B–D illustrate cell viability (represented as a % relative to a control) during treatment with antibacterial nanoparticles (ANPs), SiO₂@Au@Ag, of various SiO₂ core sizes conjugated to the antimicrobial peptide (AMP) mutant chensinin-1-2 (MC1-2) with various silver coating thicknesses (LS, MS, HS) and at various concentrations (LC, HC, C), ANPs, SiO₂@Au@Ag, of various SiO₂ core sizes conjugated to synthetic safencin-20 (Syn20) with various silver coating thicknesses (LS, MS, HS) and at various concentrations (LC, HC, and D), and ANPs, SiO₂@Au@Ag, of various SiO₂ core sizes conjugated to synthetic safencin-96 (Syn96) with various silver coating thicknesses (LS, MS, HS) and at various concentrations (LC, HC). As is evident in FIG. 6B, 6C, and 6D, many of the ANPs@AMPs are not significantly cytotoxic and therefore may be used in medical applications, such as topological applications, medical implants, surgical instruments, etc.

Examples of Antibacterial Activity of ANPs

S. aureus strain USA300 is a methicillin-resistant (MRSA) strain predominantly associated with skin and soft tissue infections, although it has also been recovered from severe cases of invasive disease including bacteremia, endocarditis, necrotizing pneumonia, and

osteomyelitis. FIG. 7A–7F illustrate the growth of *S. aureus* USA300 with various concentrations of ANPs, including 45 nm (SiO₂ core diameter) SiO₂@Au@Ag (ANPs) with LS (FIG. 7A), 45 nm ANPs with MS (FIG. 7B), 45 nm ANPs with HS (FIG. 7C), 130 nm ANPs with LS (FIG. 7D), 130 nm ANPs with MS (FIG. 7E), and 130 nm ANPs with HS (FIG. 7F). FIG. 7A–7F indicate that with increasing silver coating, the ANPs slow down the growth of the microorganism more and more as well and suppress the optical density (OD)—a surrogate for monitoring bacterial growth within *in vitro* broth culture, as known in the art—from reaching the maximum (possibly lower) cell count. The highest silver concentration used in the experiment represented in FIG. 7A–7F was approximately 95 µg/mL (on 130 nm ANPs HS; considering the dilution factor), which was quite effective in inhibiting the growth of *S. aureus* USA300.

It should be appreciated that the OD measurement is a surrogate for cell number within a broth culture. Because OD is essentially the measurement of the turbidity of the sample, additional bacterial cells in the solution cause an increase in the OD reading. Thus, if a culture is inoculated with a relatively low abundance of bacteria, any growth thereof can be observed by monitoring the optical density of the sample. However, an increase in the OD measurement of a culture is not necessarily congruous with an increase in the number of viable cells within that culture, as a metabolically inactive cell refracts light—and consequently affects the OD measurement of a broth culture—similar to a metabolically active cell. Further, OD measurements for monitoring growth characteristics of a bacterial population in response to a stress are typically performed in a fixed volume of liquid culture. This allows for the three basic phases of bacterial growth to be observed (*i.e.*, lag phase, exponential growth phase, and stationary phase) and compared. For example, an increased lag phase and/or delayed onset of exponential growth can indicate an immediate stress upon the inoculum. A slower exponential phase can similarly indicate a stress on the dividing culture (*e.g.*, replication time is increased and/or death rate is increased). Also, if the volume is constant, the toxic byproducts of cellular division and/or limited resources can cause a predictable onset of (or the predictable transition from exponential growth to) stationary phase, leading to an expected maximum OD for the given bacterium in the provided culture conditions. Any decrease to the expected maximum OD can correspond with, for example, an underutilization of resources (*i.e.*, a metabolic deficiency), a sensitivity to metabolic byproducts (*i.e.*, a structural or metabolic deficiency), and/or an expenditure of the available resources amounting to a lower number of cells (or morphologically smaller cells)—which can occur as a result of an increased killing of cells within the media. Accordingly, one having skill in the art recognizes that the OD measurement,

while having some flaws, is a useful tool for measuring the effects of various stresses and/or potential antibacterial compositions—particularly when compared to non-stressed, control cultures.

FIG. 7A shows that a 1 mL solution of 45 nmSiO₂@Au@Ag (ANPs) with low silver caused the *S. aureus* USA 300 culture to reach only 79% of the maximum expected OD and that a 2 mL ANPs solution caused the associated *S. aureus* USA300 culture to reach only 60% of the maximum expected OD (when compared with control). FIG. 7B shows that a 1 mL solution of 45 nm ANPs with medium silver caused slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 95% of the maximum expected OD and that a 2 mL ANPs solution caused slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 82% of the maximum expected OD. FIG. 7C shows that a 0.5 mL solution of 45 nm ANPs with high silver caused slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 87% of the maximum expected OD, that a 1 mL ANPs solution caused slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 83% of the maximum expected OD, and that a 2 mL ANPs solution caused slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 64% of the maximum OD. FIG. 7D shows that a 1 mL solution of 130 nm ANPs with low silver caused the associated *S. aureus* USA300 culture to reach only 79% of the maximum expected OD and that a 2 mL ANPs solution caused the associated *S. aureus* USA300 culture to reach only 63% of the maximum expected OD. FIG. 7E shows that a 1 mL solution of 130 nm ANPs with medium silver caused slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 85% of the maximum expected OD and that a 2 mL ANPs solution caused slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 80% of the maximum expected OD. FIG. 7F shows that a 0.5 mL solution of 130 nm ANPs with high silver delayed the onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 4.7 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 77% of the maximum expected OD, that a 1 mL ANPs solution delayed the onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 6.2 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 60% of the maximum expected OD, and that a 2 mL ANPs solution delayed onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 8.4 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *S. aureus* USA300 culture reaching 21% of the maximum expected OD.

The antibacterial efficacy of the SiO₂@Au@Ag ANPs was then tested on 3 other species of bacteria: *Corynebacterium striatum*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* FRD1, and *Enterococcus faecalis*. Together with *S. aureus*, these four species are often regarded as opportunistic nosocomial pathogens and represent a high risk for immunocompromised

patients in the clinical environment in addition to a cohort of bacteria that are commonly associated with increased antibiotic resistance.

C. striatum is often resistant to several antibiotics, and it is associated with wound infections, pneumonia, and meningitis. As with *S. aureus* USA300, FIG. 8A and 8B show that the growth of *C. striatum* was considerably slowed down by ANPs with increasing silver coating on the gold nanospheres. FIG. 8A shows that a 1 mL solution of 45 nm ANPs with low silver delayed onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 4.7 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *C. striatum* culture reaching 55% of the maximum expected OD, that a 1 mL medium silver ANPs solution similarly delayed the onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 7.5 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *C. striatum* culture reaching 80% of the maximum expected OD, and that a 1 mL high silver ANPs solution delayed the onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 10.5 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *C. striatum* culture reaching 53% of the maximum expected OD.

FIG. 8B shows that a 1 mL 130 nm low silver ANPs solution delayed the onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 5.0 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *C. striatum* culture reaching 67% of the maximum expected OD, that a 1 mL medium silver ANPs solution delayed the onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 8.7 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *C. striatum* culture reaching 71% of the maximum expected OD, and that a 1 mL high silver ANPs solution delayed the onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 10.5 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *C. striatum* culture reaching 52% of the maximum expected OD.

Pseudomonas aeruginosa FRD1 is a mucoid strain originally isolated from a chronically infected cystic fibrosis patient with the ability to overproduce exopolymeric alginates, favorable for biofilm formation. FIG. 9A and 9B show that *P. aeruginosa* FRD1 also presented a strong sensitivity towards higher concentrations of ANPs of the medium silver coating, which can cause slower growth and had a maximum OD that was a fraction of the maximum expected OD. FIG. 9A, for example, shows that 0.1 mL 45 nm & 130 nm ANPs medium silver solutions delayed the onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 1 h) by *P. aeruginosa* FRD1. FIG. 9B shows, for example, that 0.5 mL 45 nm & 130 nm ANPs medium silver solutions caused slower growth with the *P. aeruginosa* FRD1 culture reaching 75% (for 45nm) and 79% (for 130 nm) of the maximum expected OD.

Enterococcus faecalis can cause endocarditis, septicemia, urinary tract infections, and meningitis. Of the four species tested in FIG. 7–10, *E. faecalis* appears to be the most sensitive to treatment by the disclosed ANPs. As shown in FIG. 10A and 10B, for example, ANPs

containing medium silver appear to slow growth rate of *E. faecalis* and reduced the maximum observed OD to a fraction of the maximum expected OD in comparison to the normal, unstressed growth of the *E. faecalis* culture. FIG. 10A shows that 0.1 mL 45 nm & 130 nm ANPs medium silver solutions resulted in the *E. faecalis* culture reaching only 75% of the maximum expected OD, and FIG. 10B shows that 0.5 mL 45 nm & 130 nm ANPs medium silver solutions delayed the onset of the exponential growth phase (approximately 1 h) and resulted in slower growth with the *E. faecalis* culture reaching 75% (for 45nm) and 82% (for 130 nm) of the expected maximum OD.

Referring now to FIG. 11A and 11B, illustrated are growth curves of *Corynebacterium striatum* cultured with 65 nm ANPs with various silver concentrations conjugated to a polycationic polymer (FIG. 11A) and 130 nm ANPs with various silver concentrations conjugated to a polycationic polymer (FIG. 11B). *C. striatum* was pre-cultured at 37° C for 12 hours in the nutrient rich lysogeny broth (LB) media prior to incubation and measurement with the plate reader (*i.e.*, OD measurement device). Media (6 mL), ANP solutions, and microbial pre-culture (0.01 mL) were mixed within a growth tube and 0.2 mL of samples were directly pipetted into a 96-well plate. The plate was incubated at 37° C for 24 hours under continuous shaking. Starting OD₆₀₀ cell density measurements were taken.

Interestingly, *C. striatum* responded to the incubation with Polymer@Ag@Au@SiO₂ ANPs with complete cell death (*i.e.*, no growth), which indicates that presenting a mixed surface through controlled surface architecture and controlled charged distribution (*e.g.*, by using polycationic polymers) may show high potency to specific bacterial species.

Furthermore, it should be noted that ANPs@Polymer immobilized on an implant grade metal surface (*e.g.*, for medical implants) have unexpectedly exhibited > 99.99% bactericidal effect against antibiotic-resistant *S. aureus*, confirmed by scanning electron microscopy and simultaneous green and red fluorescence from the 'Bacteria Live/Dead' fluorescent assay, represented in FIG. 12A and 12B.

FIG. 13–15 illustrate the growth of *S. aureus* USA300, *P. aeruginosa* FRD1, *C. striatum*, and *E. faecalis* when incubated with various concentrations of ANPs conjugated to synthetic safencin-20 (ANPs@Syn20). FIG. 16–18 illustrate the growth of *S. aureus* USA300, *P. aeruginosa* FRD1, *C. striatum*, and *E. faecalis* when incubated with various concentrations of ANPs conjugated to mutant chensinin-1-2 (ANPs@MC1-2). Pre-cultures of the four bacteria were grown for 12 hours at 37° C in LB broth to about 1x10⁷ CFU/mL. For the bactericidal test, the bacteria were incubated in LB broth with two concentrations of ANPs@AMPs (low

and high concentration, for both Syn20 and MC1-2 in separate tests) for 24 hours at 37° C in a 96 well plate under continuous shaking.

At least three or more replications were performed for each condition. The solid curves represent the baseline of ANPs@AMPs in LB broth as a control. The normal growth curves represent the respective bacterial species growth in LB broth. All other curves represent
5 respective bacterial species grown in LB broth containing ANPs@AMPs. As is evident from FIG. 13–18, in many instances, the ANPs@AMPs exhibited bactericidal effects by inhibiting growth and/or killing each tested bacterial species, especially ANPs@MC1-2 high silver, which, in some instances, exhibited broad-spectrum antimicrobial activity with > 99.9% kill
10 rate against all four tested pathogens. In such implementations, the peptide concentration of ANPs@MC1-2 was approximately ten times lower than the concentration of free MC1-2 peptides required to achieve similar results. Accordingly, by controlling the steric presentation of the peptides immobilized on the surface of the ANPs, as provided by ANPs disclosed herein, an increased efficacy of the antibacterial peptides is attainable while simultaneously decreasing
15 material costs.

Exemplary Methods and Applications

The following discussion now refers to a number of methods and method acts that may be performed. Although the method acts may be discussed in a certain order or illustrated in a flow chart as occurring in a particular order, no particular ordering is required unless
20 specifically stated, or required because an act is dependent on another act being completed prior to the act being performed.

FIG. 19 illustrates an exemplary flow diagram 1900 depicting a method for creating an antibacterial nanoparticle. Flow diagram 1900 depicts acts of synthesizing a silica core (1902), synthesizing a plurality of gold nanospheres (1904), immobilizing the plurality of gold
25 nanospheres on the silica core (1906), coating the gold nanospheres with a layer of silver (1908), immobilizing a plurality of iron oxide nanospheres on the silica core (1910), conjugating peptides to the silver-coated gold nanospheres and/or the iron oxide nanospheres (1912), and anchoring fluorescein molecules to the silver-coated nanospheres (1914). It should be noted that not all of the foregoing acts are necessary to create an antibacterial nanoparticle, according to the present disclosure. For example, an antibacterial nanoparticle may omit iron
30 oxide nanospheres, peptides, and/or fluorescein molecules, and therefore acts 1910, 1912, and/or 1914 may be omitted.

As noted above, act 1902 includes synthesizing a silica core. As noted above, a silica core may be synthesized, for example, by a sol-gel method (*e.g.*, the Stöber process) involving

hydrolysis and condensation of TEOS. In some instances, the silica core has a diameter within a range of 25 nm to 150 nm. It will be appreciated, however, that the synthesizing a silica core is not an essential aspect of the present disclosure, and a silica core may be simply obtained rather than synthesized in accordance with the method represented in flow diagram 1900.

5 Act 1904 includes synthesizing a plurality of gold nanospheres. As described above, gold nanospheres may be formed by alkaline reduction (*e.g.*, at room temperature). In some embodiments, the gold nanospheres have a diameter within a range of 3 nm to 10 nm. It will be appreciated, however, that the synthesizing a plurality of gold nanospheres is not an essential aspect of the present disclosure, and gold nanospheres may be simply obtained rather than
10 synthesized in accordance with the method represented in flow diagram 1900.

Act 1906 includes immobilizing the plurality of gold nanospheres on the silica core. For instance, the gold nanospheres may be mixed into a prepared SiO₂-APTES cores solution and covered with stirring for approximately eight hours or more. In some embodiments, the gold nanospheres are conjugated to the silica core 100 such that the ratio of the silica core
15 diameter to the distance between the gold nanospheres is within a range of 2 to 4, or greater than 4 (*e.g.*, 8 to 15).

Act 1908 includes coating the gold nanospheres with a layer of silver. In some implementations, 10 mM AgNO₃ and 10 mM hydroquinone solution is mixed with the gold nanospheres disposed on the silica core. Various silver concentrations are within the scope of
20 this disclosure, and the silver concentration may be varied by utilizing different proportions of AgNO₃ and hydroquinone solution.

Act 1910 includes immobilizing a plurality of iron oxide nanospheres on the silica core. In some embodiments, the iron oxide nanospheres have a diameter within a range of 3 nm to 10 nm. The iron oxide nanospheres may be conjugated to the silica core by being directly fused
25 thereto or by being linked to the silica core using carbodiimide chemistry. The iron oxide nanospheres may be interspersed between the discontinuous shell of the silver-alloyed gold nanospheres. In some implementations, the iron oxide nanospheres generate a magnetic hyperthermia inducing shell around the silica core.

Act 1912 includes conjugating peptides to the silver-coated gold nanospheres and/or
30 the iron oxide nanospheres. In some instances, the peptides are joined to the nanospheres by a linking group, such as a silane or a thiol group. The peptides may include, for example, antimicrobial peptides, such as MC1-2, Syn20, and/or Syn96, conjugated to the silver-coated gold nanospheres. Additionally, or alternatively, the peptides may include cell penetrating peptides conjugated to the iron oxide nanospheres, if any.

Act 1914 includes anchoring fluorescein molecules to the silver-coated nanospheres. In some implementations, fluorescein molecules are linked by a cephalosporin linker, or a thiol linker, to the nanospheres. The fluorescein molecules may avoid metal quenching caused by the metals of the ANP when disassociated from the ANP (*e.g.*, by bacterial enzymes) and
5 become usable for fluorescence detection methods to detect the presence of a bacterial infection.

It should be appreciated that different linkers can be bound to different fluorescent molecules with each linker being susceptible to degradation by a specific bacterium. In this manner, the fluorescence color signals emitted from the sample can be used as a quasi-
10 diagnostic tool for quickly identifying different strains of bacteria present in the infection or sample.

A modular ANP created according to at least some of the acts represented in flow diagram 1900 will include various combinations of gold nanospheres, iron oxide nanospheres, silver coating, peptides, and/or fluorescein molecules disposed on a SiO₂ core. Because of their
15 biocompatibility, as discussed hereinabove, ANPs of the present disclosure may be implemented into various medical products. For example, as noted above, Polymer@Ag@Au@SiO₂ ANPs may exhibit > 99.99% bactericidal effect against *S. aureus* when disposed on an implant-grade metal surface. In other instances, ANPs are coated and/or printed (*e.g.*, by chemisorption using silane or thiol or by click chemistry) on the surface(s) of
20 medical implants, such as permanent implants including, but not limited to, orthopedic implants, pacemakers, and/or dental implants, or temporary implants including, but not limited to, catheters, cannulas, and/or drainage materials. Furthermore, ANPs may be coated and/or printed on surgical and/or dental instruments and provided as part of a pre-sterilized kit, which may prove particularly useful in non-hospital environments where tools are not kept sterile on-
25 site (*e.g.*, for use by first responders in hazardous environments). Additionally, the ANPs of the present disclosure may be added to a topological cream (*e.g.*, an ointment or cosmetic cream) for treating bacterial infections by coming into contact with the bacteria.

Various alterations and/or modifications of the inventive features illustrated herein, and additional applications of the principles illustrated herein, which would occur to one skilled in
30 the relevant art and having possession of this disclosure, can be made to the illustrated embodiments without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the claims, and are to be considered within the scope of this disclosure. Thus, while various aspects and embodiments have been disclosed herein, other aspects and embodiments are contemplated. While a number of methods and components similar or equivalent to those

described herein can be used to practice embodiments of the present disclosure, only certain components and methods are described herein.

It will also be appreciated that systems, devices, products, kits, methods, and/or processes, according to certain embodiments of the present disclosure may include, incorporate, or otherwise comprise properties, features (*e.g.*, components, members, elements, parts, and/or portions) described in other embodiments disclosed and/or described herein. Accordingly, the various features of certain embodiments can be compatible with, combined with, included in, and/or incorporated into other embodiments of the present disclosure. Thus, disclosure of certain features relative to a specific embodiment of the present disclosure should not be construed as limiting application or inclusion of said features to the specific embodiment. Rather, it will be appreciated that other embodiments can also include said features, members, elements, parts, and/or portions without necessarily departing from the scope of the present disclosure.

Moreover, unless a feature is described as requiring another feature in combination therewith, any feature herein may be combined with any other feature of a same or different embodiment disclosed herein. Furthermore, various well-known aspects of illustrative systems, methods, apparatus, and the like are not described herein in particular detail in order to avoid obscuring aspects of the example embodiments. Such aspects are, however, also contemplated herein.

The present disclosure may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from its spirit or essential characteristics. The described embodiments are to be considered in all respects only as illustrative and not restrictive. The scope of the invention is, therefore, indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description. While certain embodiments and details have been included herein and in the attached disclosure for purposes of illustrating embodiments of the present disclosure, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes in the methods, products, devices, and apparatus disclosed herein may be made without departing from the scope of the disclosure or of the invention, which is defined in the appended claims. All changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are to be embraced within their scope.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An antibacterial nanoparticle, comprising:
 - a silica core;
 - a plurality of silver-coated gold nanospheres conjugated to the silica core; and
 - optionally a plurality of iron oxide nanospheres conjugated to the silica core, wherein at least some of the plurality of silver-coated gold nanospheres, or at least some of the plurality of iron oxide nanospheres, if any, are conjugated to one or more polycationic polymers and/or one or more antibacterial peptides.
2. The antibacterial nanoparticle of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of iron oxide nanospheres conjugated to the silica core, wherein a surface density of the plurality of iron oxide nanospheres on the silica core is at least 60% similar to a surface density of protein turrets on a bacteriophage, preferably above 80%.
3. The antibacterial nanoparticle of claim 1 or claim 2, wherein a surface density of the plurality of silver-coated gold nanospheres on the silica core is at least 60% similar to a surface density of protein turrets on a bacteriophage, preferably above 80%.
4. The antibacterial nanoparticle of any one of claims 1–3, wherein the one or more antibacterial peptides include at least one of mutant chensinin-1-2 (SEQ ID NO: 1), synthetic safencin-20 (SEQ ID NO: 2), synthetic safencin-96 (SEQ ID NO: 3), synthetic safencin (SEQ ID NO: 4), peptide 20 (SEQ ID NO: 5), peptide 52 (SEQ ID NO: 6), peptide 60 (SEQ ID NO: 7), peptide 90 (SEQ ID NO: 8), peptide 91 (SEQ ID NO: 9), peptide 92 (SEQ ID NO: 10), peptide 93 (SEQ ID NO: 11), peptide 94 (SEQ ID NO: 12), or peptide 96 (SEQ ID NO: 13).
5. The antibacterial nanoparticle of any one of claims 1–4, wherein the plurality of silver-coated gold nanospheres include a medium silver coating or a high silver coating and at least some of the plurality of silver-coated gold nanospheres, or at least some of the plurality of iron oxide nanospheres, if any, are conjugated to mutant chensinin-1-2 (SEQ ID NO: 1) and/or synthetic safencin-20 (SEQ ID NO: 2).
6. The antibacterial nanoparticle of any one of claims 1–5, further comprising a fluorescein molecule anchored to at least some of the silver-coated gold nanospheres.
7. The antibacterial nanoparticle of any one of claims 2–6, further comprising a cell penetrating peptide anchored to at least some of the iron oxide nanospheres.
8. An antibacterial medical product, comprising a plurality of antibacterial nanoparticles according to any one of claims 1–7.

9. The antibacterial medical product of claim 8, wherein the plurality of antibacterial nanoparticles is disposed on a medical or dental implant.
10. The antibacterial medical product of claim 8, wherein the plurality of antibacterial nanoparticles is disposed on a surgical instrument.
11. The antibacterial medical product of claim 8, wherein the plurality of antibacterial nanoparticles is added to a topological cream.
12. A method for creating an antibacterial nanoparticle, the method comprising:
 - immobilizing a plurality of gold nanospheres on a silica core;
 - coating at least a portion of the plurality of gold nanospheres with a layer of silver;
 - optionally immobilizing a plurality of iron oxide nanospheres on the silica core; and
 - conjugating one or more antibacterial peptides to the silver-coated gold nanospheres, or the iron oxide nanospheres, if any.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein coating the portion of the plurality of gold nanospheres with the layer of silver comprises coating with a low level of silver, a medium level of silver, or a high level of silver.
14. The method of claim 12 or claim 13, wherein conjugating the one or more antibacterial peptides to the silver-coated gold nanospheres, or the iron oxide nanospheres, if any, comprises conjugating at least one of mutant chensinin-1-2 (SEQ ID NO: 1), synthetic safencin-20 (SEQ ID NO: 2), synthetic safencin-96 (SEQ ID NO: 3), synthetic safencin (SEQ ID NO: 4), peptide 20 (SEQ ID NO: 5), peptide 52 (SEQ ID NO: 6), peptide 60 (SEQ ID NO: 7), peptide 90 (SEQ ID NO: 8), peptide 91 (SEQ ID NO: 9), peptide 92 (SEQ ID NO: 10), peptide 93 (SEQ ID NO: 11), peptide 94 (SEQ ID NO: 12), or peptide 96 (SEQ ID NO: 13).
15. The method of any one of claims 12–14, further comprising anchoring one or more fluorescein nanospheres to the silver-coated gold nanospheres.
16. An antibacterial nanoparticle, comprising:
 - a silica core;
 - a plurality of iron oxide nanospheres conjugated to the silica core,
 - wherein at least some of the plurality of iron oxide nanospheres are conjugated to one or more polycationic polymers and/or one or more antibacterial peptides, and
 - wherein a surface density of the plurality of iron oxide nanospheres on the silica core is at least 60% similar to a surface density of protein turrets on a bacteriophage, preferably above 80%.

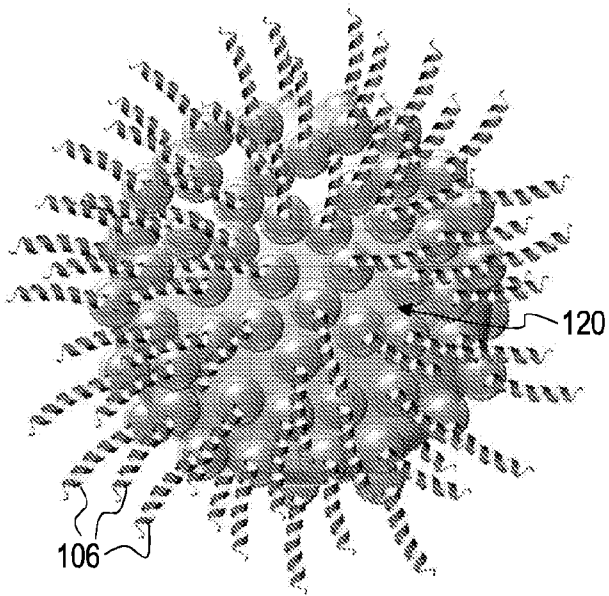
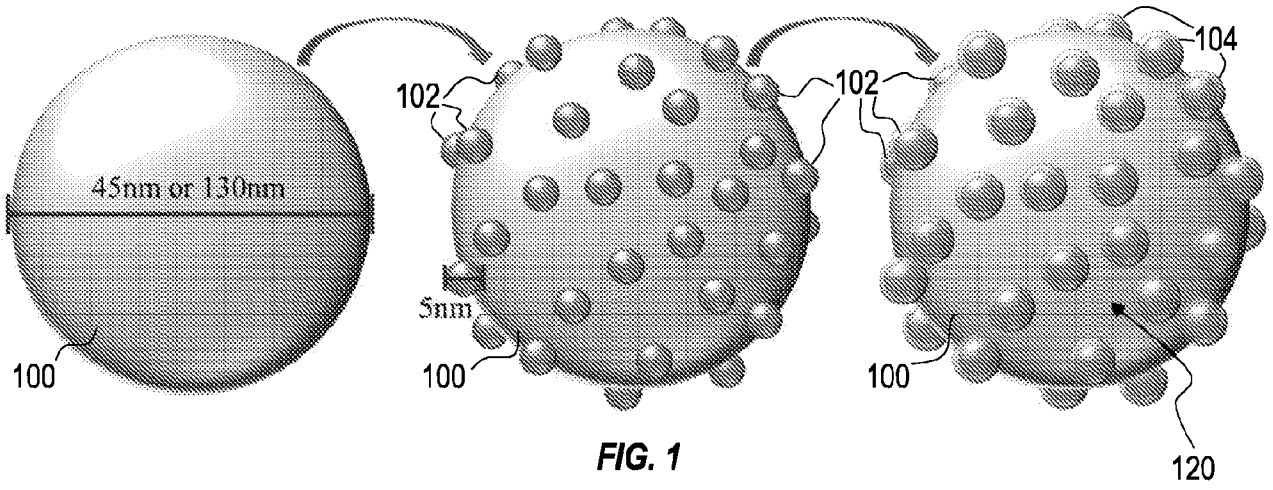


FIG. 2

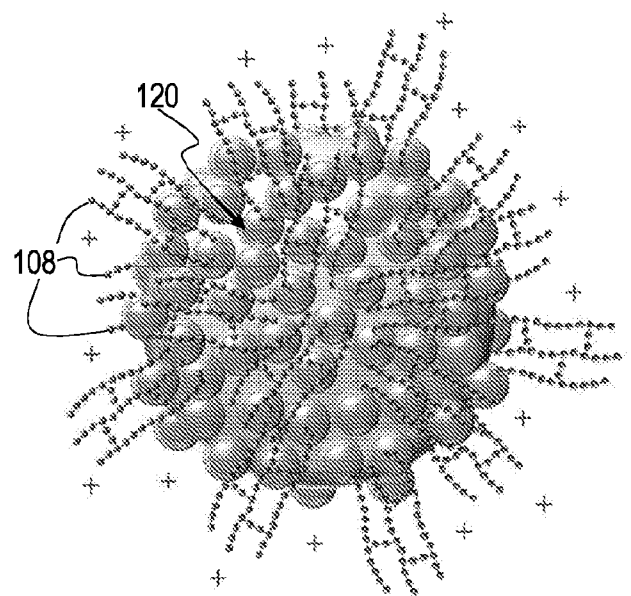


FIG. 3

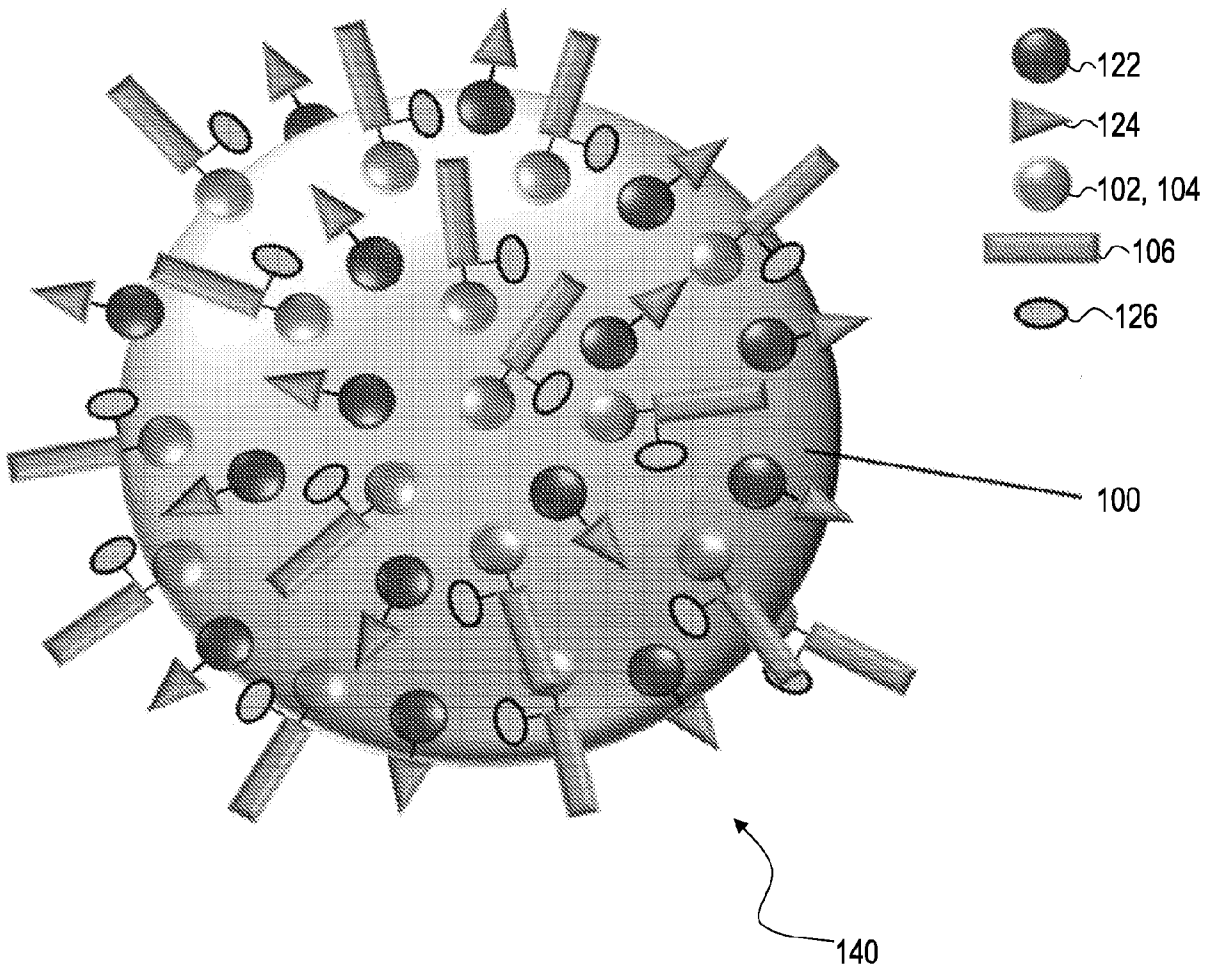


FIG. 4

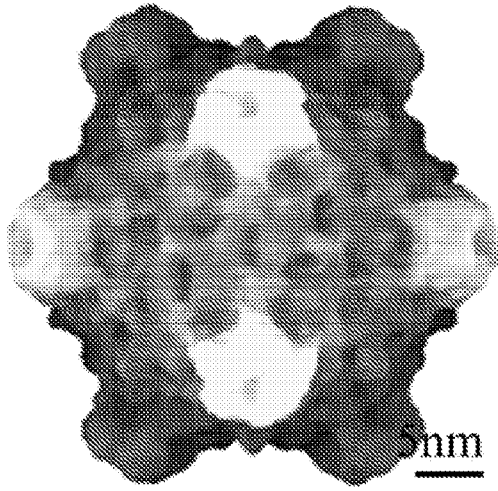


FIG. 5A

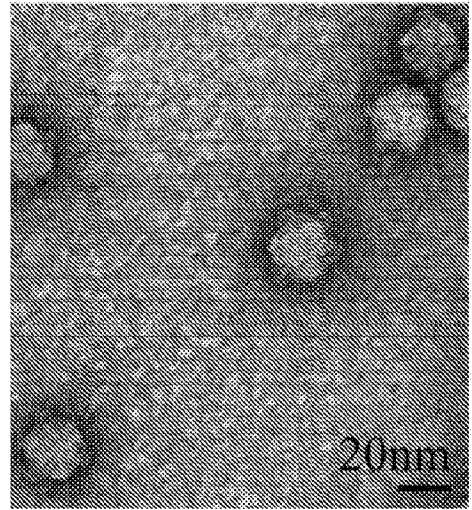


FIG. 5B

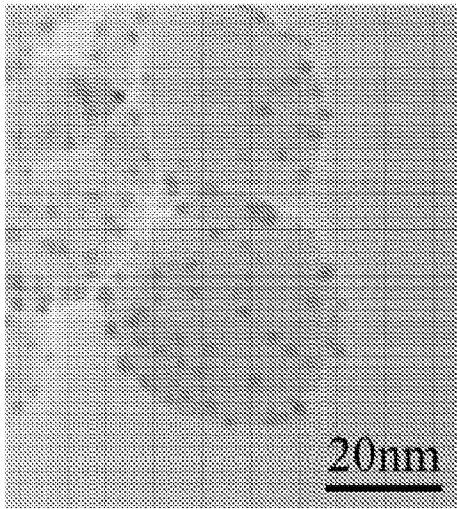


FIG. 5C

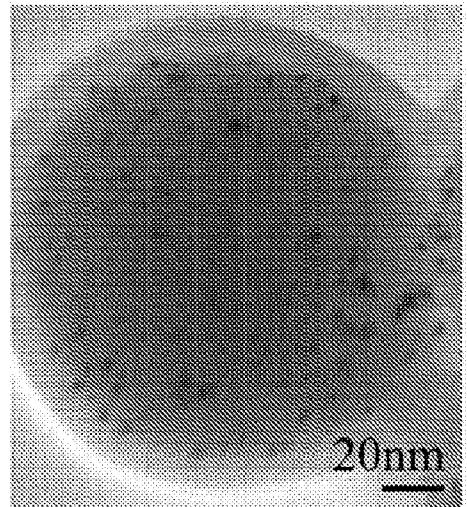


FIG. 5D

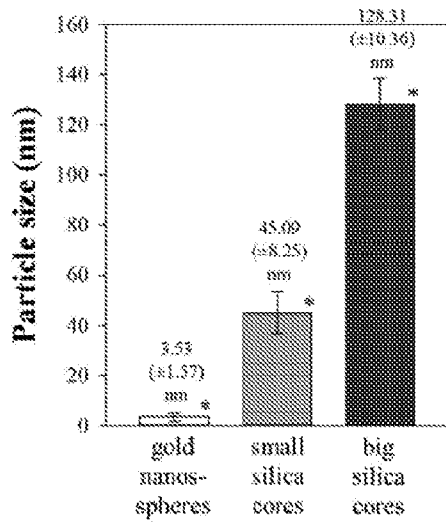


FIG. 5E

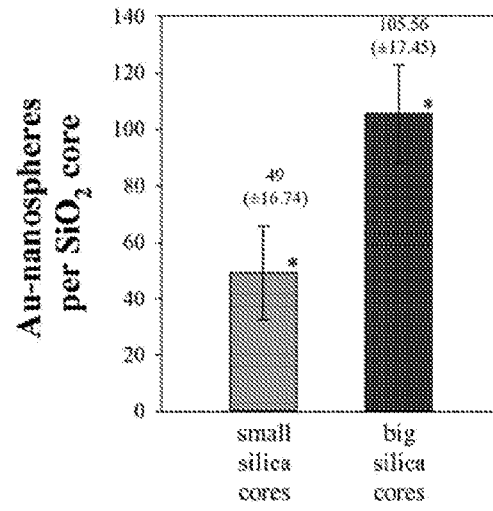


FIG. 5F

FIG. 5

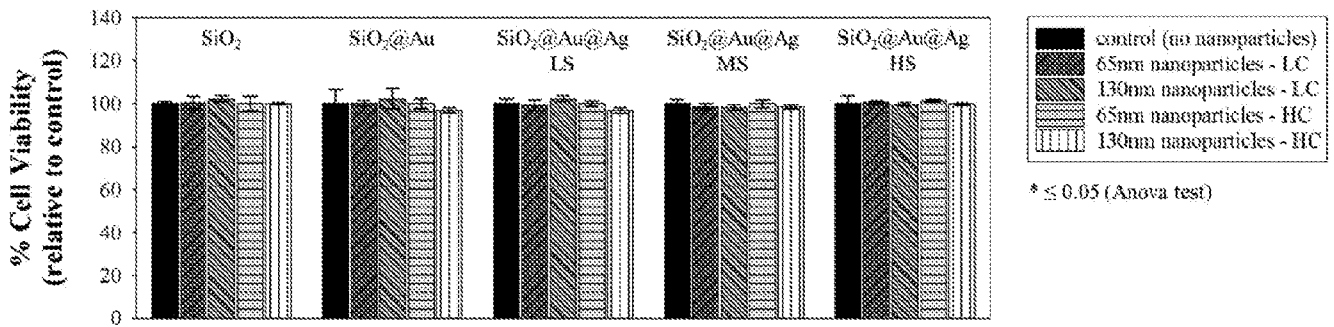


FIG. 6A

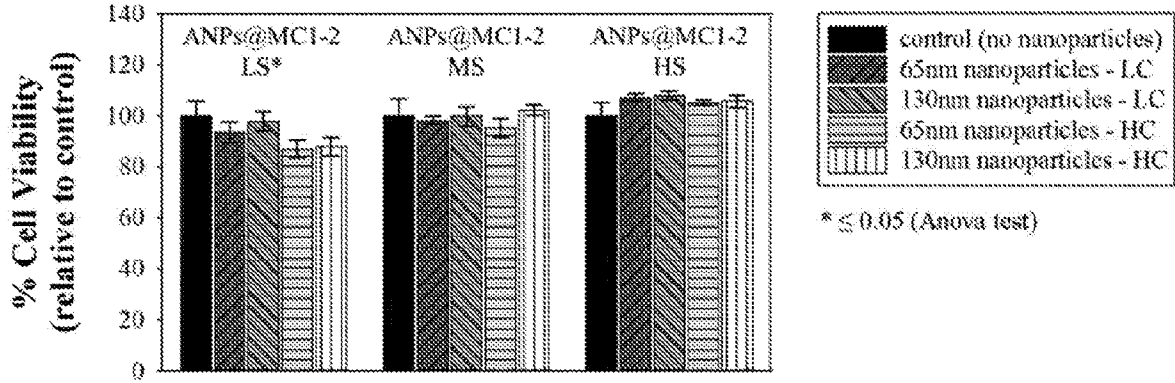


FIG. 6B

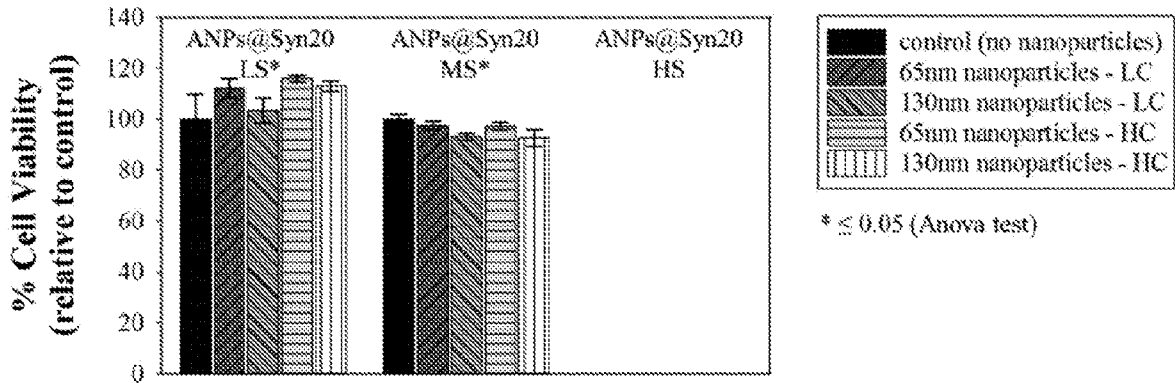


FIG. 6C

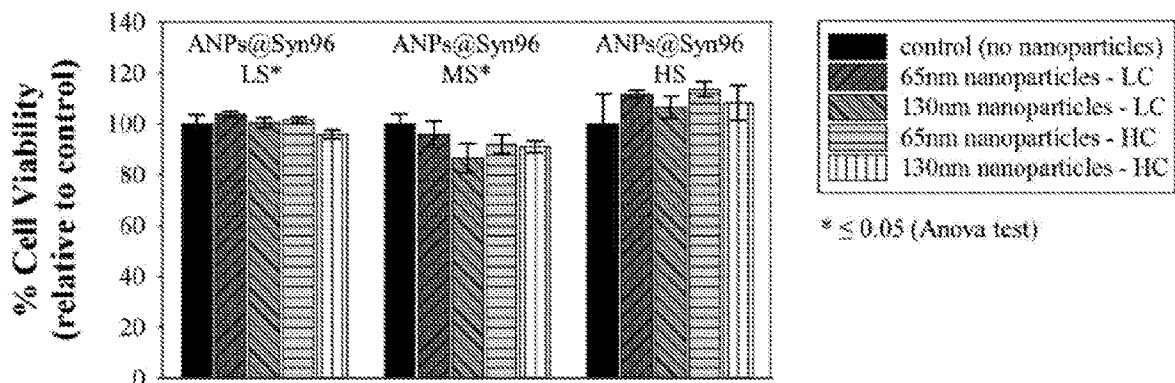


FIG. 6D

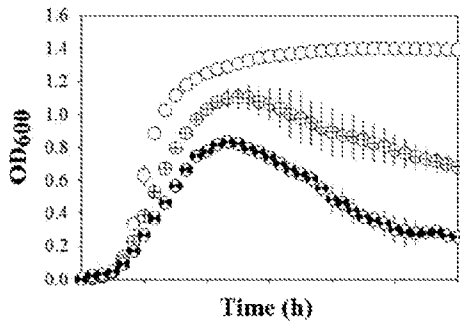
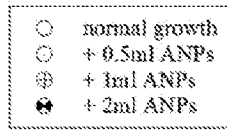


FIG. 7A

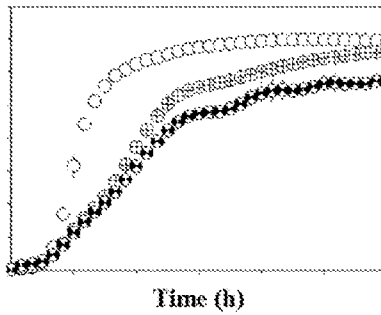


FIG. 7B

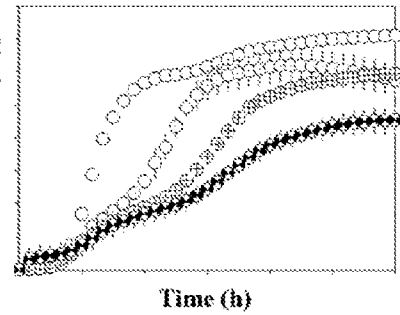


FIG. 7C

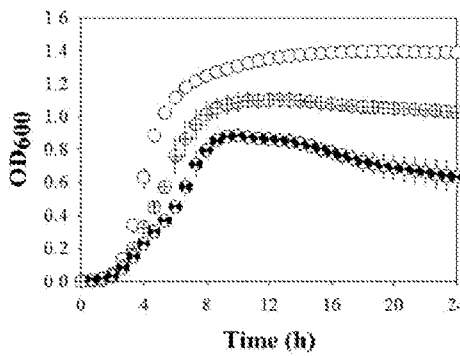


FIG. 7D

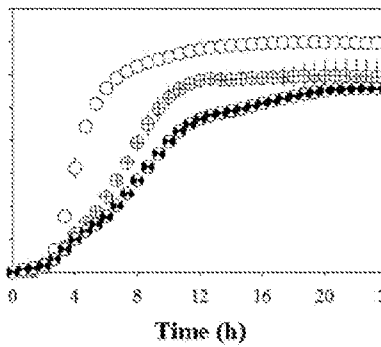


FIG. 7E

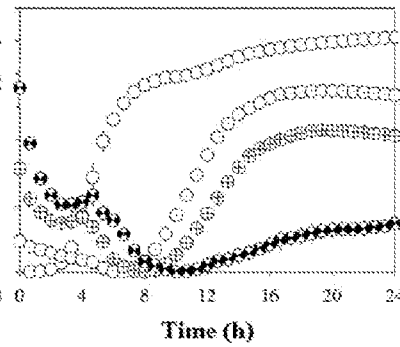


FIG. 7F

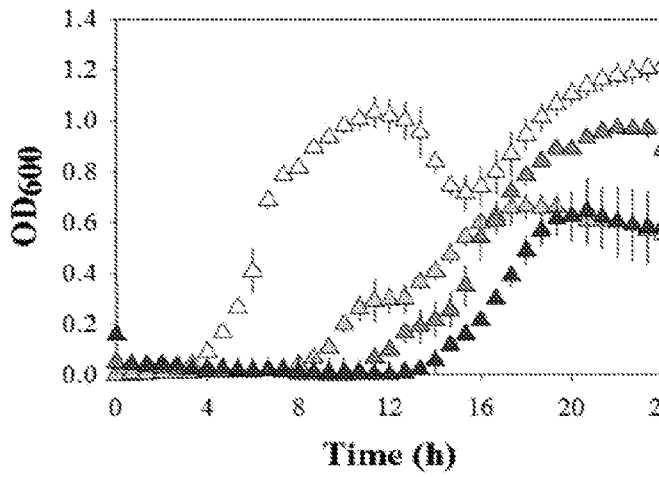
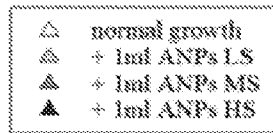


FIG. 8A

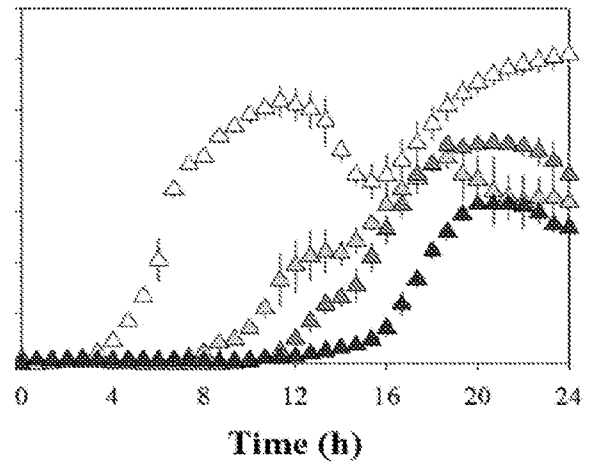


FIG. 8B

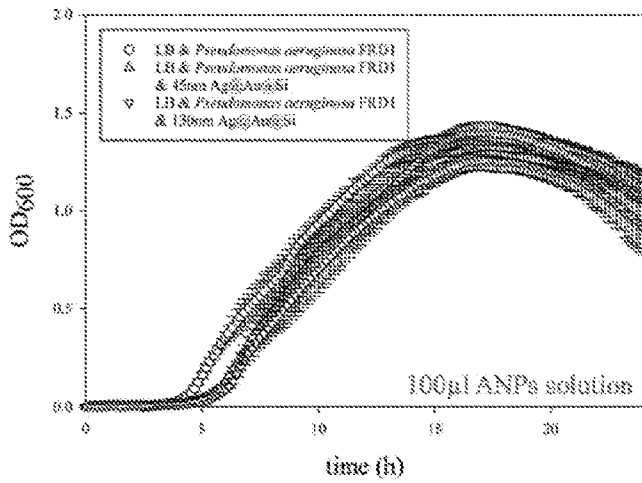


FIG. 9A

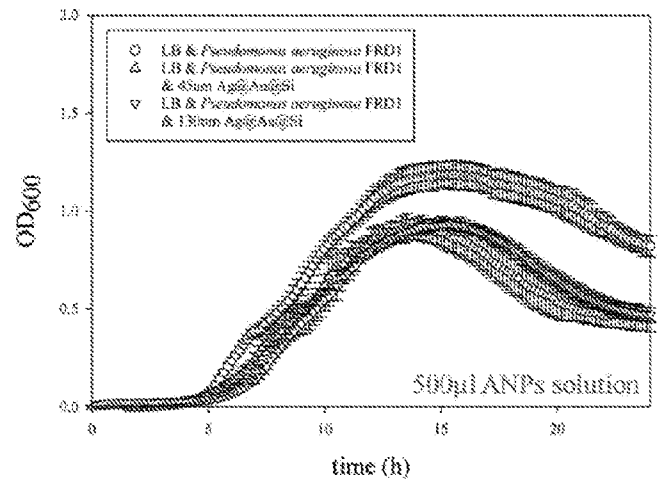


FIG. 9B

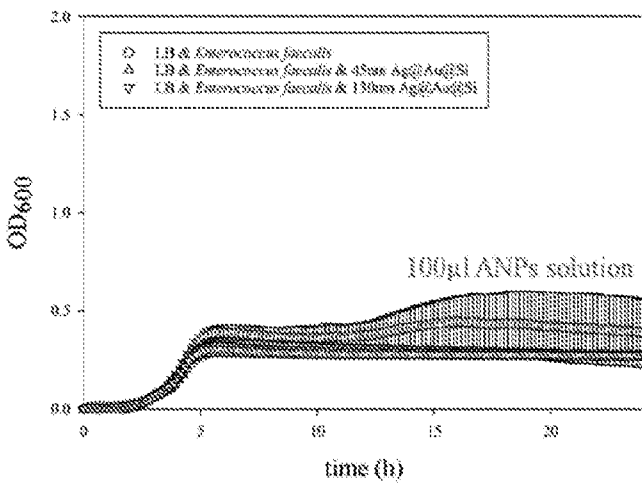


FIG. 10A

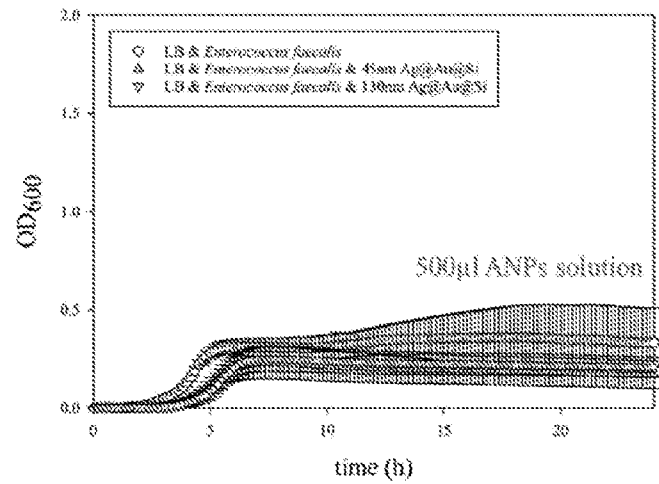


FIG. 10B

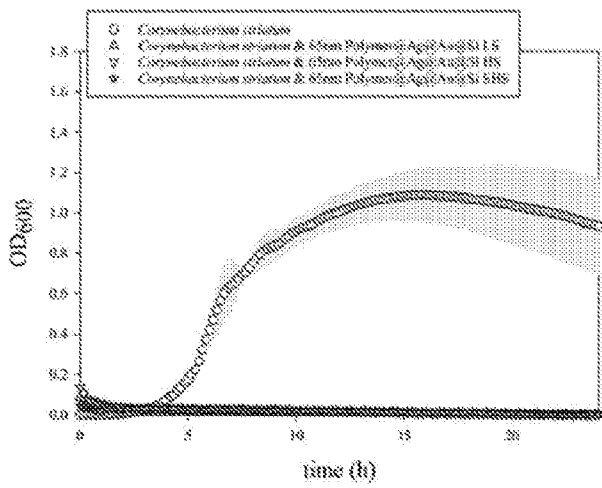


FIG. 11A

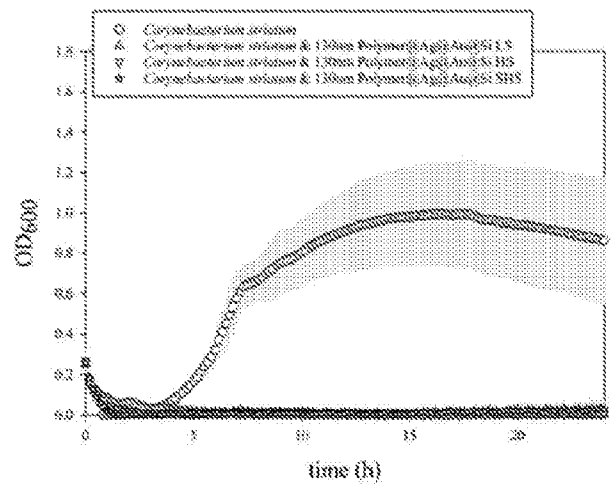


FIG. 11B

11 / 15

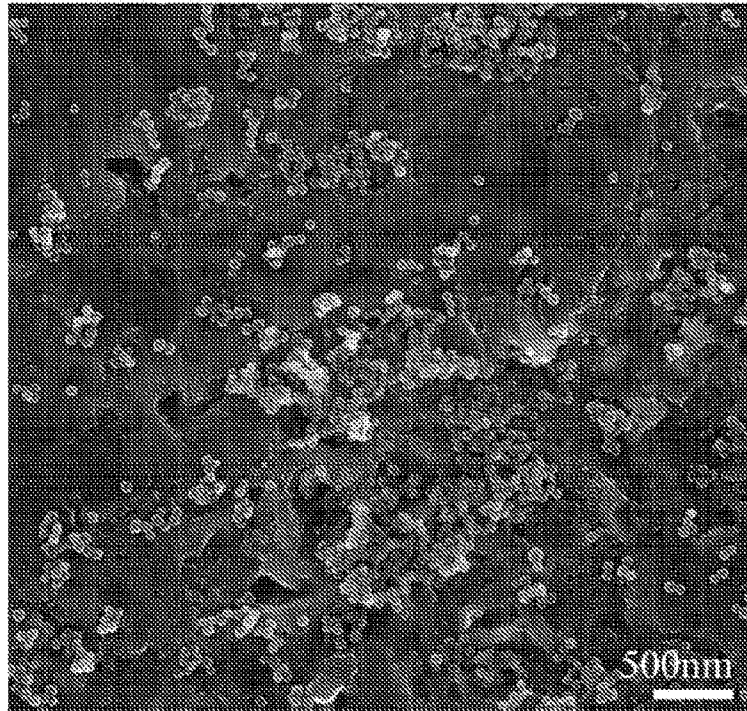


FIG. 12A

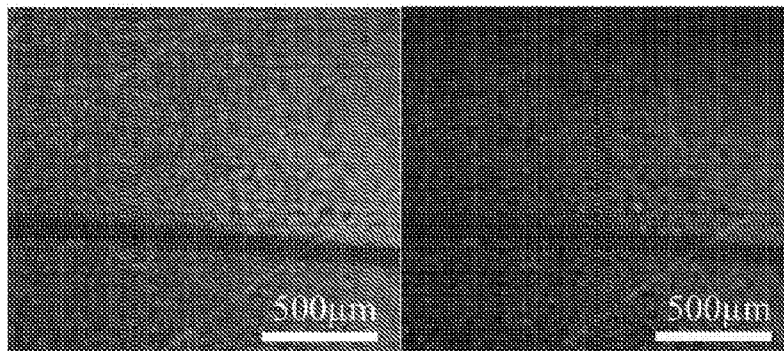


FIG. 12B

12/15

ANPs@Syn20
low silver

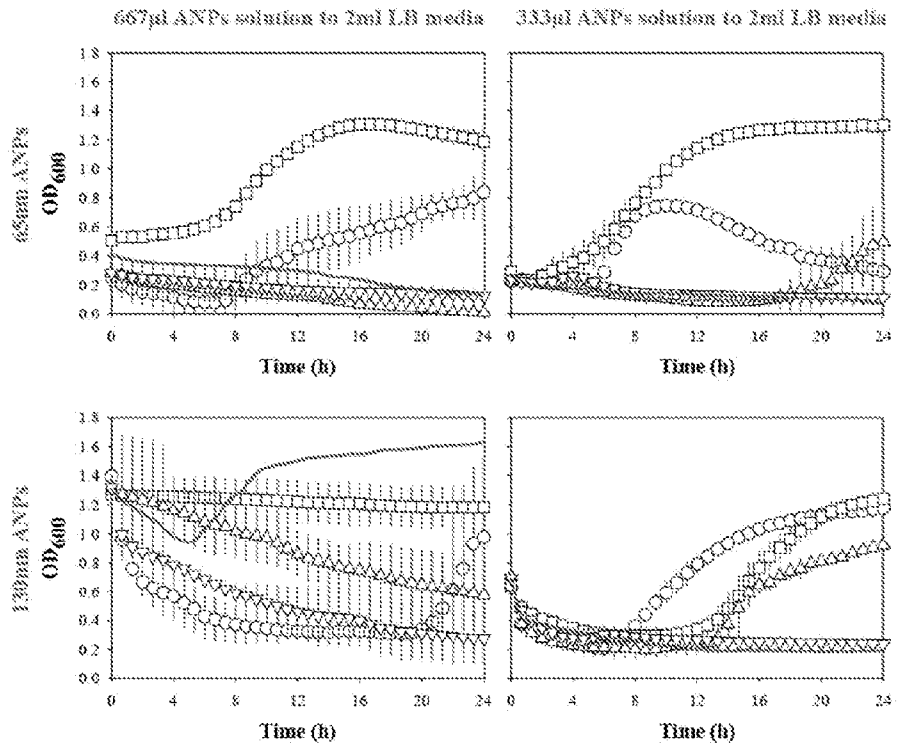
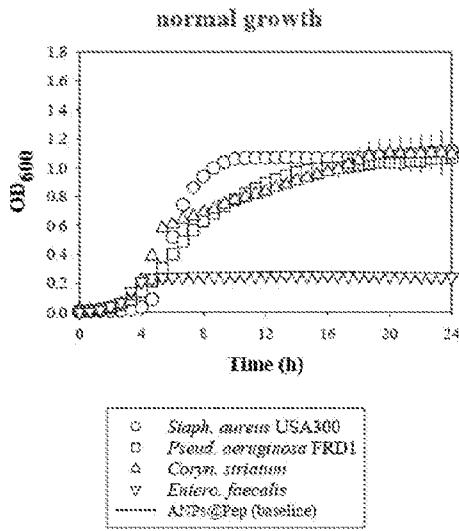


FIG. 13

ANPs@Syn20
medium silver

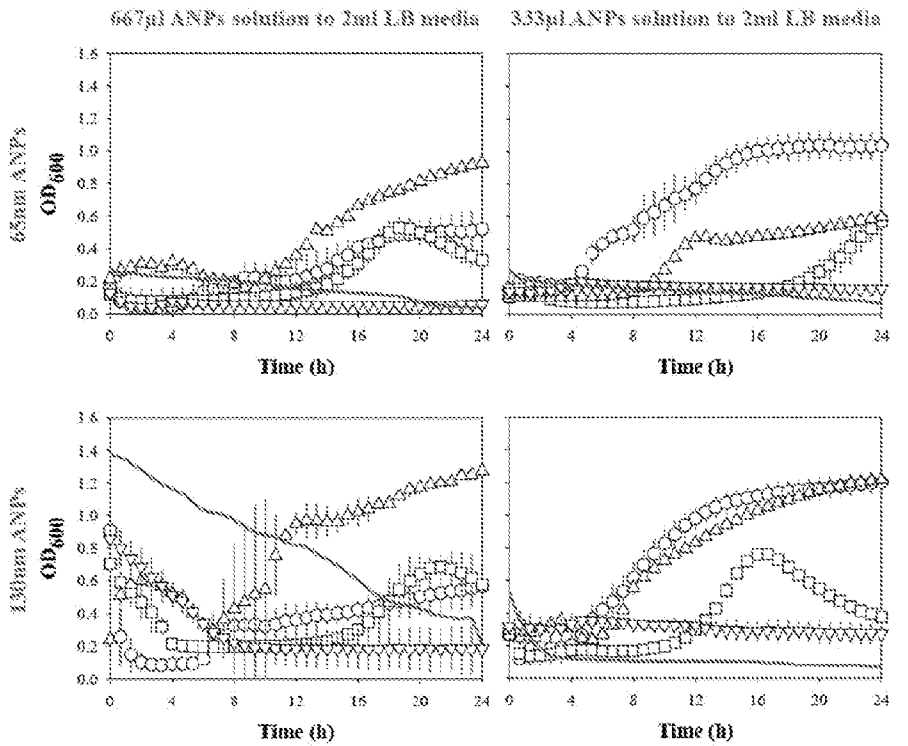
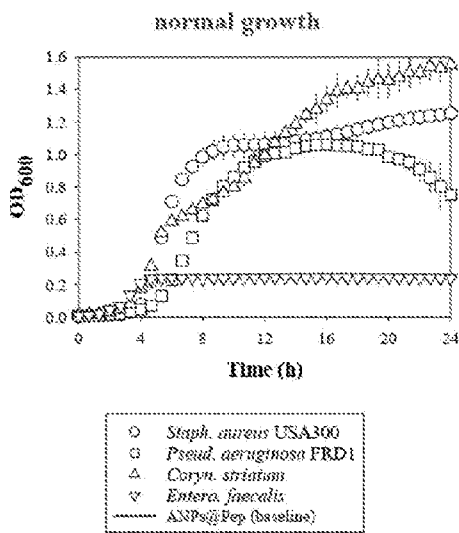


FIG. 14

ANPs@Syn20 high silver

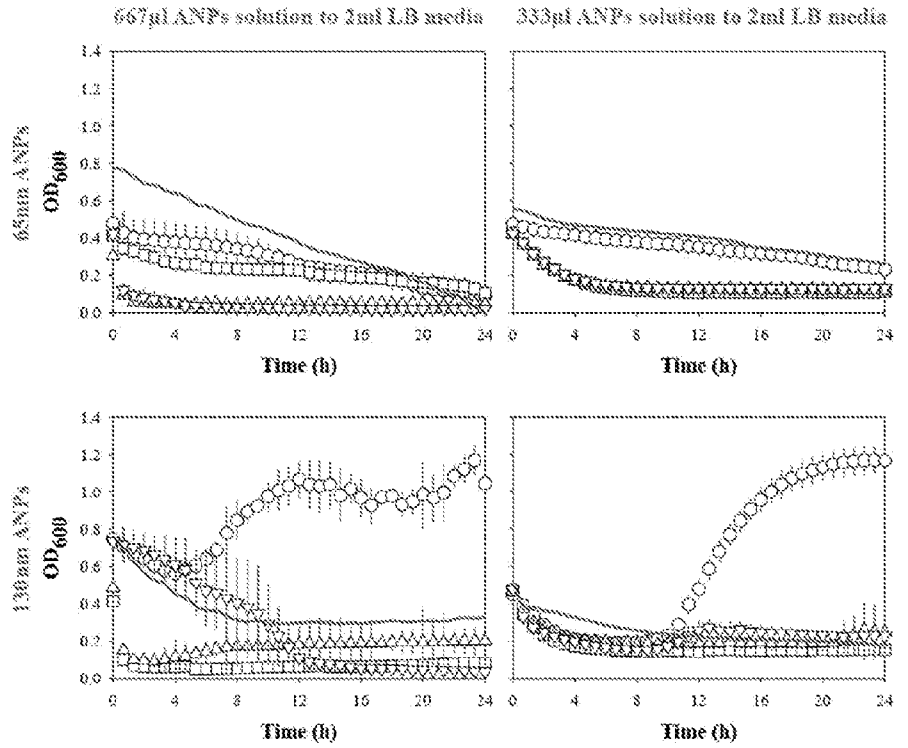
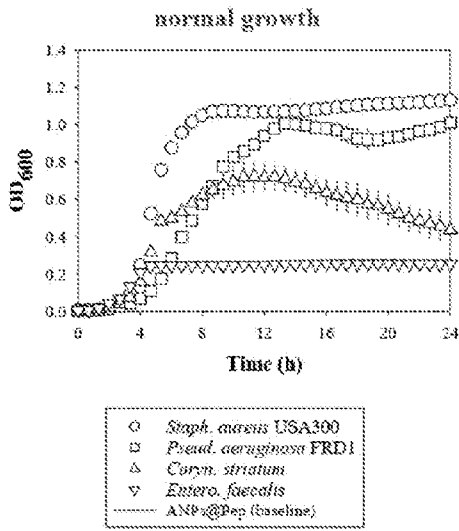


FIG. 15

ANPs@MC1-2 low silver

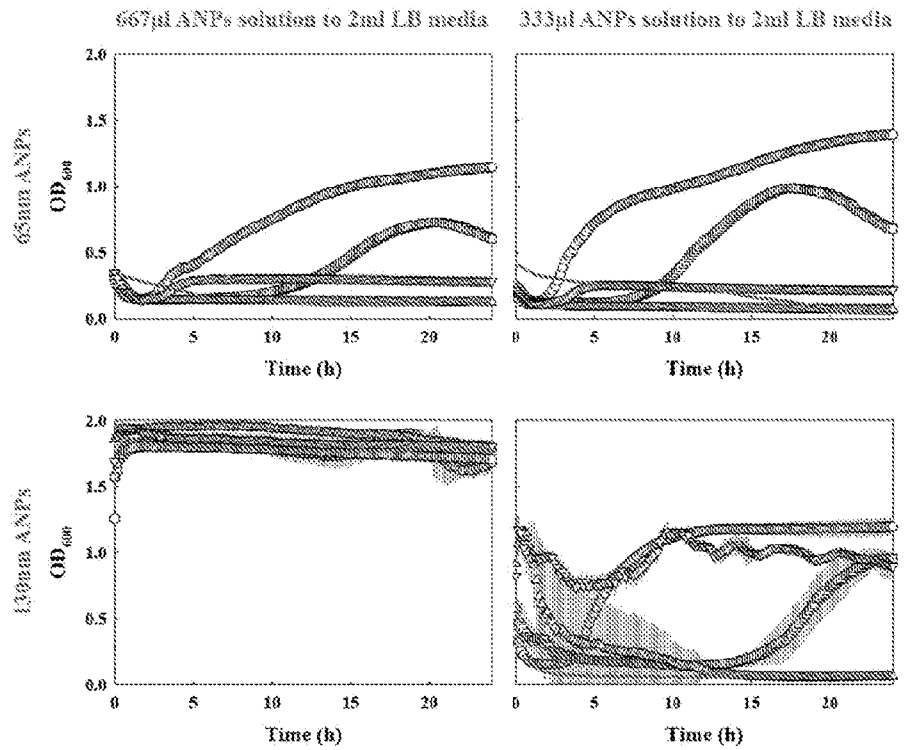
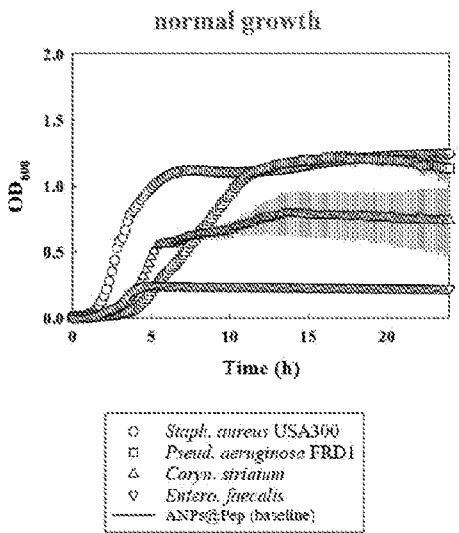


FIG. 16

ANPs@MC1-2
medium silver

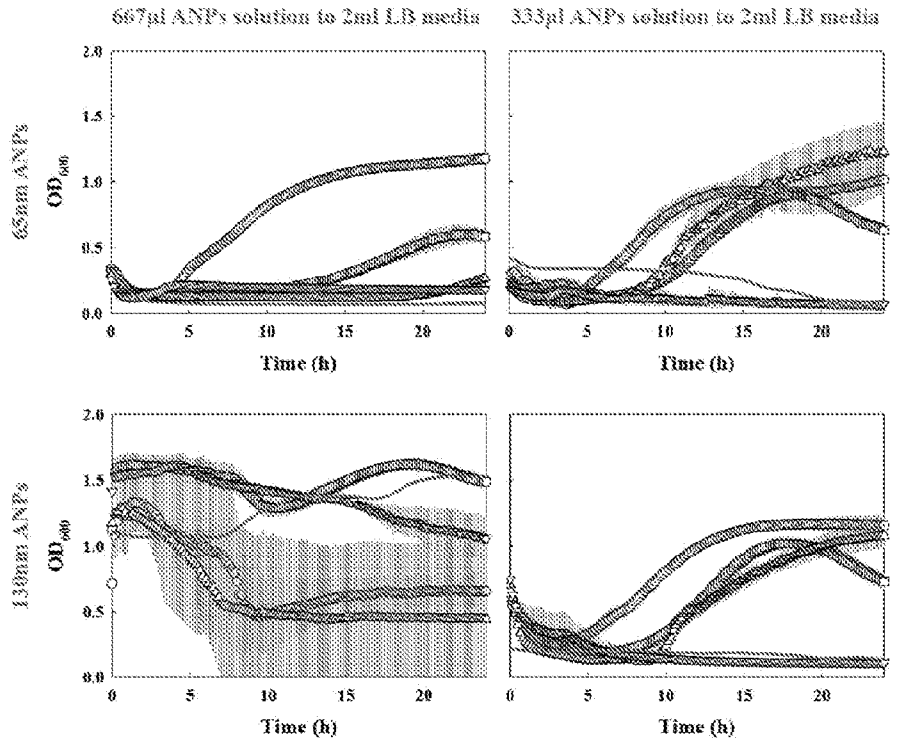
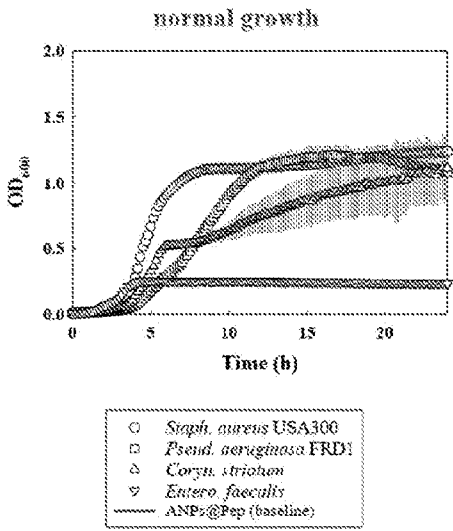


FIG. 17

ANPs@MC1-2
high silver

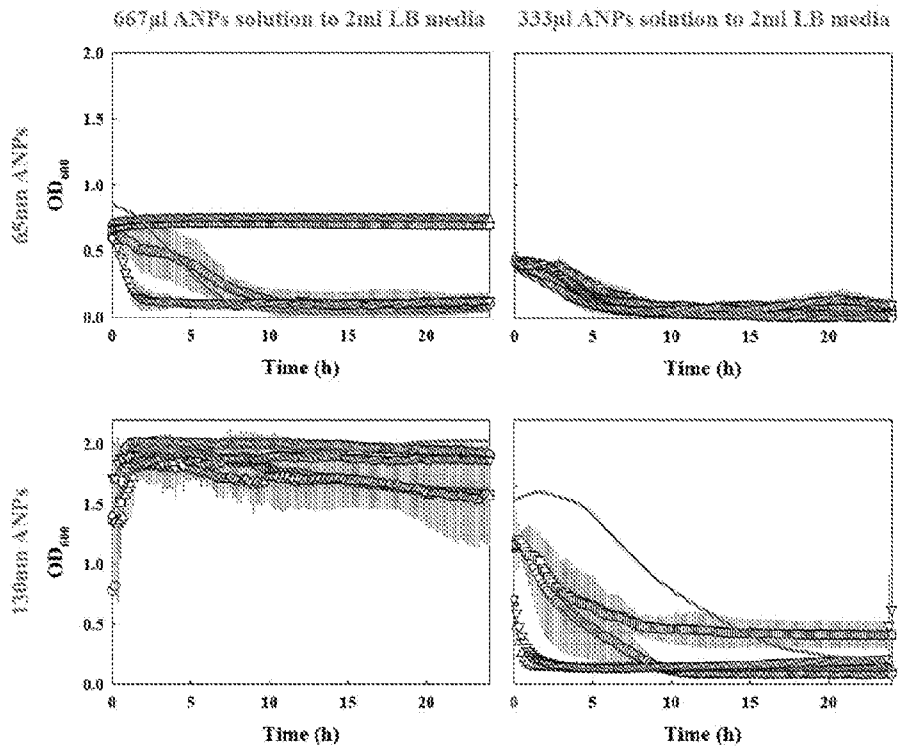
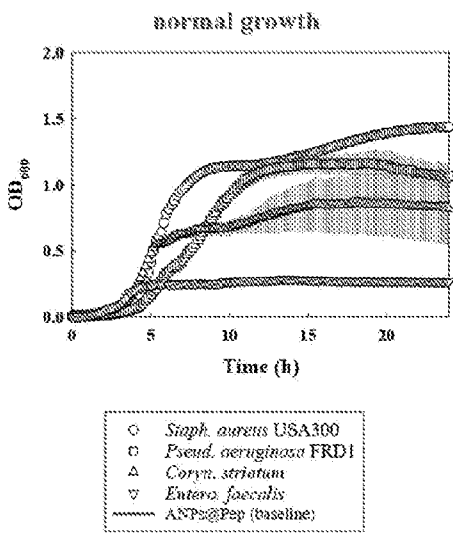
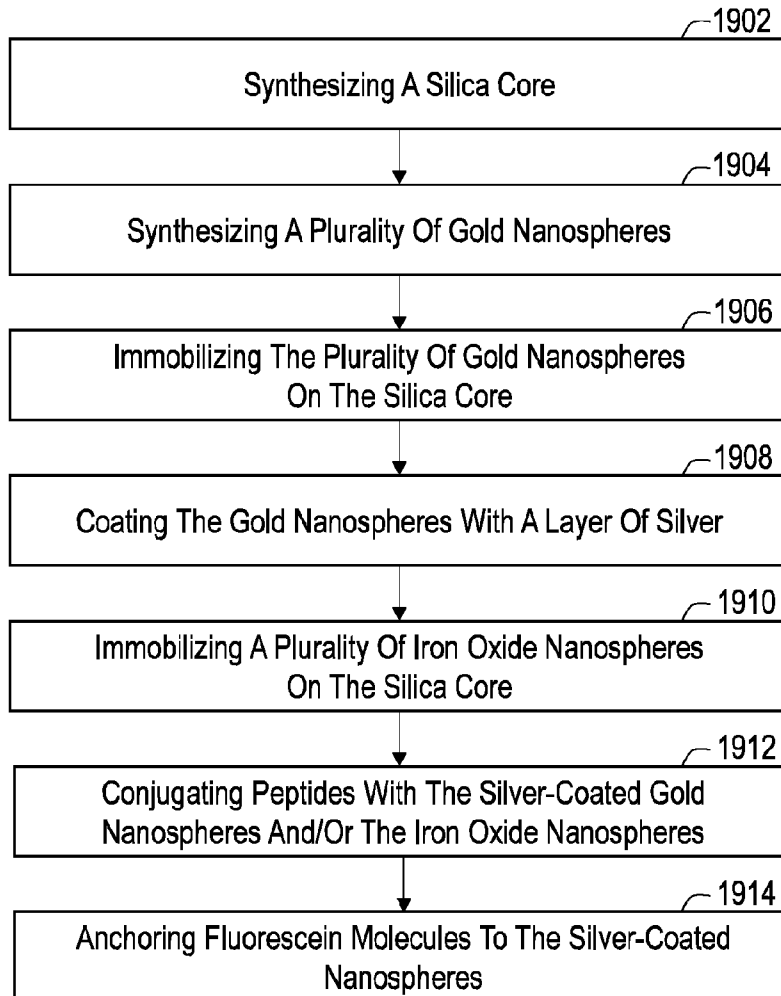


FIG. 18

15 / 15

1900**FIG. 19**

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US19/60202

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC - A61K 9/14, 33/242, 33/38; A61P 31/04; B82B 1/00; B82Y 5/00, 40/00; G01N 21/65, 33/58 (2020.01)

CPC - A61K 9/14, 33/242, 33/38; A61P 31/04; B82B 1/00; B82Y 5/00, 40/00; G01N 21/65, 33/587

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

See Search History document

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

See Search History document

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

See Search History document

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	✓ KR 10-2013-0118086 A (SIK, LN et al.) 29 October 2013; abstract; page 6, 1st paragraph; page 7, 5th paragraph; claims 1, 3, 4, 5; Fig. 1A, 2A	1-2, 3/1-2, 12-13, 14/12-13
A	✓ (MORALES-AVILA, E et al.) Antibacterial Efficacy of Gold and Silver Nanoparticles Functionalized with the Ubiquicidin 29-41 Antimicrobial Peptide. Journal of Nanomaterials. 26 March 2017, Vol. 2017, Article ID 5831959; pages 1-10; abstract; page 7, 2nd column, 2nd. paragraph; DOI: https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/5831959	1-2, 3/1-2, 12-13, 14/12-13
A	US 2003/0108612 A1 (XU, XN et al.) 12 June 2003; abstract; paragraphs [0012], [0032], [0033], [0034]	1-2, 3/1-2, 12-13, 14/12-13
A	✓ KR 10-2013-0042363 A (SOO, SK et al.) 26 April 2013; abstract	1-2, 3/1-2, 12-13, 14/12-13
A	✓ (LEE, B et al.) Antimicrobial peptide-loaded gold nanoparticle-DNA aptamer conjugates as highly effective antibacterial therapeutics against <i>Vibrio vulnificus</i> . Scientific Reports. 19 October 2017, Vol. 7, No. 13572; pages 1-10; DOI: 10.1038/s41598-017-14127-z	1-2, 3/1-2, 12-13, 14/12-13
A	✓ (YUAN, K et al.) Antimicrobial peptide based magnetic recognition elements and Au@Ag-GO SERS tags with stable internal standards: a three in one biosensor for isolation, discrimination and killing of multiple bacteria in whole blood. Chemical Science. 2 November 2018, Vol. 9, No. 47; pages 8781-8795; DOI: 10.1039/c8sc04637a	1-2, 3/1-2, 12-13, 14/12-13

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"D" document cited by the applicant in the international application

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

2 March 2020 (02.03.2020)

Date of mailing of the international search report

12 MAR 2020

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

Facsimile No. 571-273-8300

Authorized officer

Shane Thomas

Telephone No. PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US19/60202

Box No. II Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

- 1. Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

- 2. Claims Nos.:
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:

- 3. Claims Nos.: 4-11, 15
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box No. III Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 3 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

-Please see supplemental page-

- 1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
- 2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying additional fees, this Authority did not invite payment of additional fees.
- 3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

- 4. No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:
1-3, 12-14 and SEQ ID NO: 1 (antimicrobial peptide)

- Remark on Protest**
- The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee.
 - The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation.
 - No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

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---Continued from Box No. III: Observations where unity of invention is lacking---

This application contains the following inventions or groups of inventions which are not so linked as to form a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1. In order for all inventions to be examined, the appropriate additional examination fees must be paid.

Groups I+, Claims 1-3, 12-14 and SEQ ID NO: 1 (antimicrobial peptide) are directed toward ANP includes a silica core with a plurality of gold nanospheres conjugated thereto and at least some of the gold nanospheres being silver-coated gold nanospheres.

The antibacterial particle will be searched to the extent that they encompass an antimicrobial peptide comprising SEQ ID NO: 1 (first exemplary antimicrobial peptide). Applicant is invited to elect additional antimicrobial peptide(s), with specified SEQ ID NO: for each, and available as an option within at least one searchable claim, to be searched. Additional antimicrobial peptide(s) will be searched upon the payment of additional fees. It is believed that claims 1-3, 12-13 and 14 (in-part) encompass this first named invention and thus these claims will be searched without fee to the extent that they encompass SEQ ID NO: 1 (antimicrobial peptide). Failure to clearly identify how any paid additional invention fees are to be applied to the "+" group(s) will result in only the first claimed invention to be searched/examined. An exemplary election would be a target sequence encompassing SEQ ID NO: 2 (antimicrobial peptide).

Group II, Claim 16 is directed toward an antibacterial nanoparticle, comprising: a silica core; a plurality of iron oxide nanospheres conjugated to the silica core, wherein at least some of the plurality of iron oxide nanospheres are conjugated to one or more polycationic polymers and/or one or more antibacterial peptides, and wherein a surface density of the plurality of iron oxide nanospheres on the silica core is at least 60% similar to a surface density of protein turrets on a bacteriophage, preferably above 80%.

The inventions listed as Groups I+ and II do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, under PCT Rule 13.2, they lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons: the special technical features of Groups I+ include silver-coated gold nanospheres, which is not present in Group II; the special technical features of Group II include iron oxide nanospheres on the silica core that are at least 60% similar to a surface density of protein turrets on a bacteriophage, which is not present in any of Groups I+.

Groups I+-II share the technical features including: an antibacterial nanoparticle, comprising: a silica core; a plurality of nanospheres conjugated to the silica core, wherein at least some of the plurality of the nanospheres are conjugated to one or more antibacterial peptides.

However, these shared technical features are previously disclosed by KR 20130118086 A (SNU R&DB FOUNDATION) (hereinafter 'Snu') in view of the publication entitled 'Antibacterial Efficacy of Gold and Silver Nanoparticles Functionalized with the Ubiquicidin (29-41)

Antimicrobial Peptide' by Morales-Avila, et al. (hereinafter 'Avila').

Snu discloses a nanoparticle (abstract), comprising: a silica core (comprising: a silica core; abstract; page 5, paragraphs 4-5; claim 1); a plurality of silver and gold nanospheres conjugated to the silica core (a hollow metal nanoparticle layer surrounding the silica center particle, wherein the hollow metal nanoparticles are nanospheres comprised of silver and gold alloy (a plurality of silver and gold coated nanospheres conjugated to the silica core); page 3, paragraph 9; claims 1, 3; figure 1). Snu does not disclose an antibacterial nanoparticle, wherein at least some of the plurality of the nanospheres are conjugated to one or more antibacterial peptides.

Avila discloses an antibacterial nanoparticle (nanoparticle that are functionalized with UPI; abstract) and wherein the nanoparticles are conjugated to one or more antibacterial peptides (nanoparticle that are functionalized with UPI; abstract).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify disclosure of Snu to include an antibacterial nanoparticle, wherein the nanoparticles are conjugated to one or more antibacterial peptides, as disclosed by Avila, in order to provide a superior alternatives for peptide transport and targeted delivery with strongly enhanced biocidal properties and significant reduction of toxicity.

No technical features are shared between the antibacterial peptides sequences of Groups I+ and, accordingly, these groups lack unity a priori.

Groups I+ share the technical features including: an antibacterial nanoparticle, comprising: a silica core; a plurality of silver-coated gold nanospheres conjugated to the silica core; and optionally a plurality of iron oxide nanospheres conjugated to the silica core, wherein at least some of the plurality of silver-coated gold nanospheres, or at least some of the plurality of iron oxide nanospheres, if any, are conjugated to one or more polycationic polymers and/or one or more antibacterial peptides; a method for creating an antibacterial nanoparticle, the method comprising: immobilizing a plurality of gold nanospheres on a silica core; coating at least a portion of the plurality of gold nanospheres with a layer of silver; optionally immobilizing a plurality of iron oxide nanospheres on the silica core; and conjugating one or more antibacterial peptides to the silver-coated gold nanospheres, or the iron oxide nanospheres, if any.

However, these shared technical features are previously disclosed by Snu in view of Avila, as above.

Snu discloses a nanoparticle (abstract), comprising: a silica core (comprising: a silica core; abstract; page 5, paragraphs 4-5; claim 1); a plurality of silver and gold nanospheres conjugated to the silica core (a hollow metal nanoparticle layer surrounding the silica center particle, wherein the hollow metal nanoparticles are nanospheres comprised of silver and gold alloy (a plurality of silver and gold coated nanospheres conjugated to the silica core); page 3, paragraph 9; claims 1, 3; figure 1); a method for creating a nanoparticle (a method of creating a nanoparticle; page 3, paragraph 17; claim 15), the method comprising: immobilizing a plurality of gold nanospheres on a silica core (the method comprising: immobilizing a plurality of nanospheres on a silica core; page 3, paragraph 17).

Snu does not disclose an antibacterial nanoparticle and silver-coated gold nanospheres; wherein at least some of the plurality of silver-coated gold nanospheres, if any, are conjugated to one or more polycationic polymers and/or one or more antibacterial peptides; coating at least a portion of the plurality of gold nanospheres with a layer of silver; and conjugating one or more antibacterial peptides to the silver-coated gold nanospheres, or the iron oxide nanospheres, if any.

---Continued Within the Next Supplemental Box---

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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-Continued from Previous Supplemental Box--

Avila discloses an antibacterial nanoparticle (nanoparticle that are functionalized with UPI; abstract) and wherein the nanoparticles are conjugated to one or more antibacterial peptides (nanoparticle that are functionalized with UPI; abstract).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the disclosure of Snu to include silver-coated gold nanospheres and coating at least a portion of the plurality of gold nanospheres with a layer of silver, as the previous disclosure of Snu provides guidance for coating the nanospheres (page 5, paragraph 8), and such nanospheres could have been readily achieved and implemented through routine experimentation and testing. Furthermore, it would have been a obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify disclosure of Snu to include an antibacterial nanoparticle, wherein the nanoparticles are conjugated to one or more antibacterial peptides, as disclosed by Avila, in order to provide a superior alternatives for peptide transport and targeted delivery with strongly enhanced biocidal properties and significant reduction of toxicity.

Since none of the special technical features of the Groups I+ inventions is found in more than one of the inventions, and since all of the shared technical features are previously disclosed by a combination of the Snu and Avila references, unity of invention is lacking.