Biodegradable Polymers for Pollutant Remediation and Toxin Reduction

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Functionalized Biodegradable Polymers to Neutralize Mixtures of Organic Compounds from Environmental Sources

Market Overview

This innovation is the process of using poly(lactic) (PLA) particles equipped with appropriate functional groups that allow the complex to effectively sequester specific pollutants via chemical reactions. This technology's ability to address complex mixtures of contaminants utilizing an environmentally safe method results in odor absorbing applications, including direct application on odor sources, air filtration, VOC capture, and odor absorbing coatings and paintings. Traditional odor and pollutant elimination methods use toxic material platforms for non-specific reactivity and nondisposable resources. However, Clemson University researchers developed a method to create environmentally friendly, disposable PLA particles decorated with tunable functional groups. These functional groups can be effectively varied in order to successfully allow the complex to react and degrade a variety of pollutants. This technology could benefit companies involved with but not limited to water and air treatment, protective coatings, industrial coatings, plaster and dry wall materials, paint coatings, and advanced material additives.

Technical Summary

This patent pending technology is a method of modular formulation of biodegradable, non-toxic poly(lactic acid) (PLA) materials with surface-decorated nucleophiles/ oxidants for the capture of environmental pollutants and/or toxins. The process involves using PLA particles equipped with the appropriate functionality to react and neutralize aqueous and gaseous pollutants. The surface of the PLA particles, decorated with various functional groups, allows the complex to react and degrade a variety of pollutant classes. The functional groups can be varied to ensure complementary reactivity with different pollutants and successful sequestering via chemical reactions. The technology has been successfully tested into rendering plant sites for capturing malodorous gases. The manufacturing process to scale up the production of the technology has been demonstrated.

Application
VOC capture management; Green materials

Development Stage
Validated Prototype

Advantages

- Raw materials are plant-based and renewable, resulting in environmentally friendly degradation of by- product contaminants in gas and aqueous solutions

- Variety of functional groups can be incorporated on the PLA particle, customizing functionality and degradation time and allowing particles to specifically capture molecules from complex mixtures

App Type	Country	Serial No.	Patent No.	CURF Ref. No.	Inventors
Utility	United States	15/012,991	NA	2013-054	Dr. Frank Alexis Dr. Daniel Whitehead

About the Inventors

Dr. Frank Alexis
Adjunct Associate Professor of Bioengineering at Clemson University

Dr. Zoran Filipi earned his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Belgrade. Prior to joining Clemson, Dr. Filipi was director of the Center for Engineering Excellence through Hybrid Technology and deputy director of the Automotive Research Center, a U.S. Army Center of Excellence for modeling and simulation of ground vehicles.

Dr. Daniel Whitehead
Assistant Professor of Organic Chemistry at Clemson University

Dr. Daniel Whitehead is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemistry at Clemson University. He earned his Ph.D. in Chemistry from Michigan State University after completing his B.S. and M.S. at Furman University. He was previously a postdoctoral fellow at North Carolina State University. His laboratory is broadly interested in synthetic organic chemistry, with projects ranging from new synthetic methodology, bio-organic chemistry, and functional polymeric materials

For more information on this technology contact:

A. Chris Gesswein
Director of Licensing for Technology Transfer

E: agesswe@clemson.edu
P: (864) 656-0797

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RESEARCH FOUNDATION