Ecotoxicity Evaluation and Suggestion of Remediation Method of ZnO Nanoparticles in Aqueous Phase

Hyunsang Kim, Younghun Kim, Younghee Kim, Sangku Lee

Abstract—We investigated ecotoxicity and performed experiment for removing ZnO nanoparticles in water. Short term exposure of hatching test using fertilized eggs (O. latipes) showed deformity in 5ppm of ZnO nanoparticles solution. And in 10ppm ZnO nanoparticles solution delayed hatching was observed. Herein, chemical precipitation method was suggested for removing ZnO nanoparticles in water. The precipitated ZnO nanoparticles showed the form of ZnS after addition of Na2S, and the form of Zn3(PO4)2 for Na2HPO4. The removal efficiency of ZnO nanoparticles in water was closed to 100% for two cases. In ecotoxicity evaluation of as-precipitated ZnS and Zn3(PO4)2, they did not cause any acute toxicity for D. magna. It is noted that this precipitation treatment of ZnO is effective to reduce the potential cytotoxicity.

Keywords—ZnO nanoparticles, ZnS, Zn3(PO4)2, ecotoxicity evaluation, chemical precipitation.

I. INTRODUCTION

RECENTLY, the consumption of nanomaterials is highly increasing due to their unique physicochemical properties. From 2005 to 2010, annual increasing rate of nanomaterials consumption is about 468% [1]. But research on ecology risk for these nanomaterials have is just beginning step. ZnO nanoparticles are one of the most usually used nanomaterials. They are used a lot in making cosmetics like sunscreen due to their UV-screening effect. In addition, ZnO is also used in making tires as resisting wear agents. ZnO nanoparticles contained in cosmetics are readily exposed into aqueous phase when consumers wash them off after using cosmetics like sunscreen. In the case of tires, when they are weared, ZnO nanoparticles are emitted in air and then settled down on the ground, followed by wash out into the river [2], [3].

Therefore, we need to develop technique for removing ZnO nanoparticles as well as evaluate ecotoxicity about ZnO nanoparticles in water. In this research, we evaluated ecotoxicity of ZnO nanoparticles in water using a fish and water flea. And then we suggested the remediation method for ZnO nanoparticles in water by chemical precipitation method.

II. EXPERIMENT

A. Ecotoxicity Evaluation of ZnO Nanoparticles in Water Short Term Exposure Hatching Test

Orvzias Latipes were used as a fish sample for ecotoxicity evaluation of ZnO nanoparticles in water. Concentration of ZnO nanoparticles was adjusted by diluting with 5000 ppm ZnO colloid solution (Sigma Aldrich). Four fertilized eggs harvested from paired adult fish in each concentration were exposed in concentration of 2.5, 5, 10mg/L ZnO for ten days and its hatching rate and developmental deformity was observed at 20°C in chamber (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Experimental procedure for evaluating ecotoxicity

B. Remediation of ZnO Nanoparticles in Water

0.05-0.25M of Na2S or Na2HPO4 was added in 100ppm ZnO nanoparticles solution and the resulting solutions was mixed with voltax mixer (G560E, Scientific Ind.). And then immediately UV analysis (UV-18000, Shimadzu) of the solutions was performed to check the removal efficiency of ZnO nanoparticles. The morphology and species of precipitates were analyzed by TEM (JEM-1010, JEOL) and EDX (7200-H, Horiba), respectively.

C. Acute Toxicity Evaluation of as Precipitated ZnS and Zn3(PO4)2

ZnO nanoparticles are readily precipitated in the form of ZnS or Zn3(PO4)2 for reducing the potential risk. But if the precipitate has another risk, this precipitation technique is useless. Therefore, We conducted 48 hr acute toxicity test to evaluate toxicity reduction of ZnS or Zn3(PO4)2 using D. magna. Twenty neonates less than 24 hr old were exposed in...
four replicates of each concentration. Endpoint was immobility and EC50s was used for toxicity values.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Ecotoxicity Evaluation of ZnO Nanoparticles in Water

After exposure of Oryzias latipes eggs into prepared test solutions, its hatching rate, and deformity was observed. After 9 days exposure, all eggs including comparison group were hatched, except 10 mg/L ZnO nanoparticles. Also we found that the occurrence of deformity in 5 mg/L ZnO nanoparticles. And all eggs in 10 mg/L ZnO nanoparticles were hatched at 10 days. Namely, we could see 10 mg/L ZnO nanoparticles affect growth-retardation (Fig. 2).

![Fig. 2 Result of ecotoxicity evaluation using Oryzias latipes with different concentration of ZnO nanoparticles on ninth day after exposure](a) comparison group, (b) occurrence of deformity in 5mg/L ZnO nanoparticles, (c) growth retardation in 10mg/L ZnO nanoparticles)

B. Remediation of ZnO Nanoparticles in Water

We put 0.05–0.25M Na2S as a source of sulfur supply and Na2HPO4 as a source of phosphorus supply into 100 ppm ZnO nanoparticles respectively. When Na2S were mixed with 100ppm ZnO nanoparticles, the solution became opaque. As the concentration of salt was increasing, the color of precipitate was changing from white to yellow. On the other hand when we put Na2HPO4 into the same condition, the solution was murky at low concentration and transparent at high concentration because Zn3(PO4)2 was precipitated immediately when we put Na2HPO4 a lot (Fig. 3).

![Fig. 3 Photo of precipitating ZnO nanoparticles using Na2S and Na2HPO4 with different concentration](0.05, 0.10, 0.25 N)

After putting precipitant and mixing, we performed UV analysis of the solution immediately. Because ZnS floated in water, the turbidity was increased so that UV detected it. And we saw irregular peak on 370 nm about ZnO. In the case of Zn3(PO4)2, any peak was not detected because most Zn3(PO4)2 were already precipitated. We calculated removal efficiency from the result of UV analysis and removal efficiency was almost 100% on all of both methods (Fig. 4 and Table I).

![Fig. 4 UV analysis of 100ppm ZnO nanoparticles and of ZnS and Zn3(PO4)2 after mixing 0.1M Na2S and Na2HPO4 with 100ppm ZnO nanoparticles respectively](ZnS 0.1 M, ZnO 100 ppm, Zn3(PO4)2 0.1M)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>ZnO 100 ppm</th>
<th>ZnO + Na2S</th>
<th>ZnO + Na2HPO4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concentration (ppm)</td>
<td>&gt; 100</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDD (nm)</td>
<td>65-70 sediments</td>
<td>sediments</td>
<td>sediments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal efficiency (%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Fig. 5 TEM analysis of precipitated ZnS and Zn3(PO4)2](ZnS, Zn3(PO4)2)

We performed TEM analysis to investigate the shape of the precipitates. ZnS showed polymeric gel network which consisted of cohesion with small particles. On the other hand, Zn3(PO4)2 showed the shape of aggregated sol which huge particles grew (Fig. 5).

We also performed EDX analysis to investigate molecular composition. Combining ratio of ZnS was Zn : S = 1: 1.3 so that we could confirm Zn and S was almost combined by 1 : 1. And this is the same as [4].

In the case of Zn3(PO4)2, combining ratio of Zn and PO4 was Zn : PO4 = 1 : more. So we thought more PO4 coated surface of ZnO in the form of amorphous shape or formed HOPEITE like...
Zn₃(PO₄)·4H₂O [5] (Figs. 6 and 7).

Fig. 6 EDX analysis of precipitated ZnS and Zn₃(PO₄)₂ (a) ZnS, (b) Zn₃(PO₄)₂

Fig. 7 Expectation picture of reacting ZnO with Na₂S and Na₂HPO₄ from EDX analysis

C. Acute Toxicity Evaluation of as Precipitated ZnS and Zn₃(PO₄)₂

We performed acute toxicity evaluation using water flea (D. Magna) of as-precipitated ZnS and Zn₃(PO₄)₂ which was produced by precipitating ZnO to remove ZnO nanoparticles in water. 24hr and 48hr EC₅₀ of ZnO was 11.23 mg/L and 5 mg/L, respectively showing increase of toxicity according to exposure period. On the other hand, we could not obtain EC₅₀ of ZnS and Zn₃(PO₄)₂ in maximum 10 mg/L of each chemical which implies toxicity reduction (Table II).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>ZnO</th>
<th>Zn₃(PO₄)₂</th>
<th>ZnS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24hr EC₅₀, mg/L</td>
<td>11.23(8.68-13.79)*</td>
<td>&gt; 10</td>
<td>&gt; 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48hr EC₅₀, mg/L</td>
<td>5.02(4.09-5.94)</td>
<td>&gt; 10</td>
<td>&gt; 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. CONCLUSION

We performed ecotoxicity evaluation using Orvzias Latipes for investigating whether ZnO nanoparticles have risk in water. The result showed the occurrence of deformity in 5 mg/L ZnO.
nanoparticles and growth retardation in 10 mg/L ZnO nanoparticles. We precipitated ZnO nanoparticles using Na₂S or Na₂HPO₄ in the form of ZnS or Zn₃(PO₄)₂ respectively to remove them from water. The removal efficiency of ZnO nanoparticles in water was almost 100% on all of both methods. ZnS was precipitated by reacting Zn: S = 1 : 1. In the case of Na₂HPO₄, Zn was reacted with more PO₄ so that we thought more PO₄ coated surface of ZnO or formed HOPEITE like Zn₃(PO₄)•4H₂O. Any acute toxicity was not found with Synthesized ZnS and Zn₃(PO₄)₂ in toxicity evaluation using water flea (D. magna) so that we could confirm risk was reduced than ZnO.

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