1 Minimal information for studies of extracellular vesicles (MISEV2023): from basic to

2 advanced approaches.

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85

86 Abstract

87 Extracellular vesicles (EVs), through their complex cargo, can reflect the state of their cell of origin and change the functions and phenotypes of other cells. These features indicate strong biomarker and therapeutic potential and have 88 generated broad interest, as evidenced by the steady year-on-year increase in the numbers of scientific publications about 89 90 EVs. Important advances have been made in EV metrology and in understanding and applying EV biology. However, 91 hurdles remain to realizing the potential of EVs in domains ranging from basic biology to clinical applications due to 92 challenges in EV nomenclature, separation from non-vesicular extracellular particles, characterization, and functional studies. To address the challenges and opportunities in this rapidly evolving field, the International Society for 93 94 Extracellular Vesicles (ISEV) updates its "Minimal Information for Studies of Extracellular Vesicles," which was first 95 published in 2014 and then in 2018 as MISEV2014 and MISEV2018, respectively. The goal of the current document, 96 MISEV2023, is to provide researchers with an updated snapshot of available approaches and their advantages and 97 limitations for production, separation, and characterization of EVs from multiple sources, including cell culture, body 98 fluids, and solid tissues. In addition to presenting the latest state of the art in basic principles of EV research, this 99 document also covers advanced techniques and approaches that are currently expanding the boundaries of the field. 00 MISEV2023 also includes new sections on EV release and uptake and a brief discussion of in vivo approaches to study EVs. Compiling feedback from ISEV expert task forces and more than 1000 researchers, this document conveys the 01 current state of EV research to facilitate robust scientific discoveries and move the field forward even more rapidly. 02

03 Keywords

extracellular particles; extracellular vesicles, exosomes, ectosomes, microvesicles, minimal information requirements,
 MISEV, guidelines, standardization, microparticles, rigor, reproducibility

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186 1 An introduction to ISEV and MISEV

187 **1.1 Extracellular vesicles and MISEV**

Extracellular vesicles (EVs) serve diverse and important roles in most biological systems, arising in part from their 188 189 compositional complexity. EVs are lipid bilayer membrane-delimited, nano- to micro-sized particles that appear to be released by all cell types. The molecular and structural heterogeneity of EVs mean that many discoveries remain to be 190 made in fundamental biology and development of biomarker and therapeutic applications, yet this same complexity 191 192 also poses challenges at every stage of EV studies. From definition and categorization to separation, characterization, 193 engineering, and clinical applications, the "Minimum Information for Studies of Extracellular Vesicles" (MISEV) 194 aims to help all practitioners of EV research and application to follow best practices for each specific question and 195 indication.

Now in its third iteration, MISEV2023, as a field consensus document seeks to provide recommendations and 196 197 guidance on EV-related studies that encourage enhanced research design and reporting of experimental details, building on the criteria and guidelines set out in the previous two iterations. MISEV is produced by the International 198 Society for Extracellular Vesicles (ISEV) (https://www.isev.org). Founded in 2011 with the mission to enhance EV 199 research globally. ISEV is the leading professional society for scientists and clinicians involved in the study and use of 200 extracellular vesicles. ISEV engages a diverse group of researchers across the world through its annual meeting. 201 thematic workshops and other meetings (in-person and virtual), peer-reviewed journals, online learning platforms, and 202 partnerships with other societies. ISEV is thus uniquely positioned to shepherd the development and dissemination of 203 expert consensus on best-practice guidelines and scientific considerations. 204

MISEV2014 (Lotvall et al. 2014) was the first EV position paper produced by ISEV and designed to give robustness to EV analysis. MISEV2018 (Thery et al. 2018) gave a more in-depth and critical assessment of the approaches and methods used to move the field forward, much of which still holds today. MISEV2018 also includes suggested experimental approaches to address some of the remaining challenges and to provide robust EV characterization. The earlier MISEV recommendations remain largely or entirely valid, and MISEV2023 should be read in the context of the previous documents.

Like the iterations before it, MISEV2023 provides succinct recommendations and guidance for EV researchers, with refinement of points raised in MISEV2018 and addition of recommendations and guidance for newer areas of development. MISEV2023 broadly covers the nomenclature, pre-processing variables, separation, and characterization of EVs, as well as *in vitro* and *in vivo* analysis of EV release, uptake and functions.

In addition to previous MISEV guidelines (Lotvall et al. 2014; Thery et al. 2018), ISEV has prompted and 215 coordinated development and dissemination of expert consensus on best-practice guidelines and scientific 216 considerations including inter-society position papers (Welsh, Van Der Pol, Arkesteijn, et al. 2020), and focused 217 recommendations of topic-specific experts (Witwer et al. 2013; Hill et al. 2013; Lener et al. 2015; Mateescu et al. 218 2017; Russell et al. 2019; Erdbrügger et al. 2021; Verweij et al. 2021) (Table 1). More recently, the ISEV Rigor and 219 Standardization Subcommittee oversees appointment and activities of thematic task forces and special interest groups 220 on specific sources of EVs and other EV-related topics. ISEV also recommends adoption of other reporting and atlas 221 tools, such as the "Minimum Information for the Publication of Quantitative Real-Time PCR Experiments" (MIQE) 222 for real-time reverse transcriptase-quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) analyses (Bustin et al. 2009) and 223 EV-TRACK (Roux et al. 2020; EV-TRACK Consortium et al. 2017). Overall, the activities and recommendations of 224 ISEV share the aim of increasing rigor, reproducibility, and transparency in EV research. The goal of this MISEV 225 document is to help practitioners in all areas of EV research and application to implement or develop best practices for 226 each individual EV source, type, research question, or application. 227

228 **1.2 What MISEV IS and IS NOT**

Since MISEV2018 appeared, there has been much discussion of what the guidelines mean and how they should or should not be applied. Informed by that discussion, what MISEV IS, and IS NOT, is summarized below.

232	MISEV	IS:
233	1.	An introduction to EV research.
234	2.	A set of recommendations that are meant to increase rigor, reproducibility, and transparency during EV study
235		design, execution, and reporting.
236	3.	A tool to assist reviewers and editors, using their own expert knowledge, in assessing the strengths and
237		weaknesses of EV-related proposals, funding applications, abstracts, and manuscripts.
238	4.	A non-exhaustive set of examples of various useful EV techniques and platforms.
239		A rigor and standardization framework that supports innovative EV research and applications and parties
240		ranging from product developers to regulators.
241	6.	An indication of current, broad consensus in the EV field as well as some areas of uncertainty and growth.
242		Relevant to translational and clinical research and applications, including production and initial evaluation of
243	, .	therapeutic EVs.
244	8.	Applicable to all sorts of EV research and applications, not just those involving mammalian EVs. Although
245		examples provided in MISEV may be specific to mammalian EVs, the basic principles are most likely
246		applicable to all EV sources. These include informative nomenclature, definition of sources, description of
247		separation/concentration techniques, characterization of EVs, properly controlled functional studies, and
248		comprehensive reporting.
249		
250	By cont	rast, MISEV IS NOT:
251	1.	A one-size-fits-all blueprint, a comprehensive checklist of "dos and don'ts," or a substitute for careful expert
252		judgment. There is no technique or platform that is absolutely required or prohibited by MISEV. Similarly,
253		MISEV does not mandate use of any particular marker or markers, enriched or depleted. Chosen techniques
254		and targets should be fit for purpose, appropriate for the experimental system, contributing to overall MISEV
255		compliance, and properly reported. Importantly, no research group has access to all techniques and platforms.
256	2.	A barrier to innovation. When introducing a new technique or new application of EVs, it is possible that some
257		aspects of the approach do not fit perfectly into the existing MISEV framework, or more likely, into a
258		reviewer's interpretation of it. See above on absolute mandates and invoke the exceptions if you must. MISEV
259		should not stifle innovation, but rather inform how innovative or new techniques are presented and validated.
260	3.	A means to prevent publication or funding of a particular project. Just as MISEV should not stifle innovation,
261		it should not be used to prevent research from being shared with the community. For example, an "exosome"
262		or "ectosome" study that does not prove biogenesis can be presented instead as about EVs, or an "EV" report
263		without full characterization as a broader extracellular particle study. Proper controls might be needed to
264		prove the contribution of EVs to an effect, but if they cannot be done, it might suffice to acknowledge the
265		caveats.
266	4.	A comprehensive collection of citations, each of which entirely embodies the recommendations of MISEV.
267		The MISEV document is not a literature review or compendium. Only a small percentage of the EV literature
268		is cited here, and each citation is made for a specific purpose. Citation in MISEV does not imply endorsement
269		of a report, author team, journal, or publisher by ISEV, nor does it suggest primacy or perfection of the cited
270		study. Some cited studies may contain aspects that are inconsistent with MISEV recommendations. Also,
271		many excellent studies are not cited in this document.
272		
273	In summ	nary, the spirit of MISEV is embodied in just a handful of questions:
274	1.	What terms do you use, and what do they mean?
275	2.	From what/where did you obtain your EVs?
276	3.	How did you separate, concentrate, characterize, and store them?
277	4.	How confidently can you attribute a function or biomarker to EVs versus other components?
278	5.	Have you shared data and reported methods in sufficient detail to enable others to replicate or reproduce your
279		results?

280 **1.3 How to use MISEV2023**

MISEV2023 is intended to aid any and all EV researchers: from those just starting their EV journey to more established investigators who wish to understand the current state of the art and/or cutting-edge problems faced by the EV community. However, the result is a large document that may require some help to navigate.

Nomenclature (Section 2) is applicable to all EV studies. Clear and consistent language will help to ensure that results are understandable and comparable.

For those who are newer to EV research, we consider **Sections 3, 4** and **5** to be vital, covering minimum considerations for sample collection/processing, EV separation methods, and EV characterization, respectively. **Sections 6-9** provide further technique-specific guidance for EV characterization, approaches to modulate EV release and uptake, EV functional studies, and the EV analysis *in vivo*. These sections provide the reader with up-to-date information to support informed decisions, but, for the most part, do not give specific recommendations.

The information and guidelines presented in MISEV2023 thus promote rigor, reproducibility, and transparency in EV science, with the goal to ensure that conclusions are supported by the experiments performed and the information reported.

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Consensus: 89.3% (891) of MISEV2023 survey respondents agreed "completely," and 10.7% (107) agreed
"mostly" with Section 1: An introduction to ISEV and MISEV. No respondents disagreed ("mostly" or
"completely"), and no respondents stated that they had no opinion and/or expertise.

298 **2 Nomenclature**

299 **2.1 EV definition and EV subtypes**

300 Definition: The term "extracellular vesicles" (EVs) refers to particles that are released from cells, are delimited 301 by a lipid bilayer, and cannot replicate on their own (i.e., do not contain a functional nucleus). The current 302 definition of EV is retained from MISEV2018, except that the 2018 use of the word "naturally" (as in "naturally 303 released") has been removed to avoid unintended exclusion of engineered EVs or EVs produced under various cell 304 culture conditions. In general, ISEV recommends use of the generic term "EV" and operational extensions of this term 305 instead of inconsistently defined and sometimes misleading terms such as "exosomes" and "ectosomes" that are 306 associated with biogenesis pathways that are difficult to establish.

Regarding "operational terms" that can be added as a prefix to "EV" (Table 2), their use continues to be 307 encouraged with caution if one or more EV subtypes are separated on the basis of characteristics such as size, density, 308 molecular composition, or cellular origin. We urge careful and clear definition of these operational terms. For 309 example, terms such as "small" and "large" have been commonly used to denote EV populations over the last few 310 years, usually after presumed size-based populations of EVs have been separated with methods such as filtration or 311 differential ultracentrifugation (differential UC, dUC). However, although "small" might generally refer to EVs <200 312 313 nm in diameter, there is no strict consensus on upper and lower size cut-offs, and it has also become clear that many separation methods, such as dUC, yield EV populations with overlapping size profiles. Thus, while such terminology 314 may still be used, researchers should be aware of its limitations and strive to define terms as clearly as possible. 315

As mentioned above, terms related to presumed biogenesis pathways should be used only with caution and 316 317 strong evidence. The term "exosome" refers to EVs from internal compartments of the cell that are released via the 318 multivesicular body (MVB), while the term "ectosome" (a.k.a., microvesicle, microparticle) refers to EVs from the cell surface. Numerous specialized terms have also been used to denote EVs that arise during specific cellular 319 processes such as cell migration ("migrasomes") or programmed cell death ("apoptotic bodies"). In some cases, 320 biogenesis or release of specific EV subtypes may be inhibited or stimulated by pharmacological or genetic 321 intervention (see also 7.1). Unfortunately, most EV separation techniques do not enrich for EVs produced by different 322 mechanisms, and definitive characterization of biogenesis-based subtypes is also difficult, with no universal molecular 323 markers of ectosomes, exosomes, or other EV subtypes. Therefore, ISEV discourages the use of biogenesis-based 324 terms unless such an EV population is specifically separated and characterized. Of note, "sEV" (for small EV) and 325

326 "exosome" are not synonymous: small EV populations include both small ectosomes and exosomes. For the reasons

above, most of the existing "exosome" and "ectosome/microvesicle" literature refers to a broad population of EVs,

and not to EVs that are released via specific biogenesis pathways. Some EV-like particles may not fully meet the

definition of EVs as given above. For example, if a cell is extruded, the resulting particles have not been strictly

330 "released" from the cell.

331 2.2 EV mimetics

332 A term such as "EV mimetics" (EVMs) can be used to denote EV-like particles that are produced through direct disruption of cells, by *de novo* synthesis from molecular components, or by fusion of native EVs with, e.g., liposomes. 333 Whatever nomenclature is used for such particles, it will ideally indicate the general production process, differentiate 334 the particles from native EVs, and not claim resemblance to EVs from a specific biogenesis pathway. That is, avoid 335 336 "exosome-like vesicles" and similar terms that incorrectly imply specific biogenesis-related properties. Some examples of possible terms, but without strict endorsement, are artificial cell-derived vesicles (ACDVs) for vesicles 337 338 from extruded cells and synthetic vesicles (SVs) for EV mimetics that are synthesized de novo from molecular components or made as hybrid entities, e.g., fusions between liposomes and native EVs (Table 2). 339

2.3 How to approach non-vesicular extracellular particles (NVEPs)

There is a growing awareness of a wide diversity of non-vesicular extracellular particles that often co-separate with 341 342 EVs, and the ISEV community specifically requested guidance in the run-up to MISEV2023 on how to handle and name these particles. Since ISEV is a society of EV experts, we cannot presume to establish a nomenclature for other 343 types of extracellular particles, such as lipoprotein particles (LPPs), ribonucleoprotein particles (RNPs), viruses, or 344 various newly proposed particle types like exomeres and supermeres. Nevertheless, how EVs relate to other 345 particles-and how they can be separated from them and characterized along with them in complex mixtures-is of 346 great relevance to the EV field. Therefore, MISEV2023 provides the following nomenclature proposals while 347 recognising that other terms may be required for increased clarity (Figure 1, Table 2). 348

349 Extracellular particles (EPs) is the preferred overarching term for cell-derived multimolecular assemblies in 350 the nanometer to micron size range, including both EVs and non-vesicular entities:

Non-vesicular extracellular particles (NVEPs) are all non-EV particles made from cell-derived components 351 of one or more molecular classes (e.g., proteins, nucleic acids); lipids, if present, do not form a delimiting bilayer 352 membrane. NVEPs and EVs may have overlapping physicochemical properties, and NVEPs may greatly outnumber 353 354 EVs in biological matrices. As a result, most EP separation methods result in NVEP/EV co-isolation. Similarly, many 355 EP characterization methods do not identify EVs specifically. NVEPs that are smaller than EVs may not be detected by some EV characterization methods, thus their quantity in an EP preparation may remain unknown. Therefore, when 356 357 EVs and NVEPs cannot be fully distinguished from each other, the term "EP" may be appropriate, or the use of "EV preparation" or "EV-containing preparation." 358

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360 **Table 2** is a quick-reference card of recommended nomenclature.

362 **Recommendations:**

- **'Extracellular vesicles'** is the term for particles that are delimited by a lipid bilayer and cannot replicate on their own (vesicular component of extracellular particles).
- Operational terms are encouraged, but with caution, as these can be influenced by separation methods.
- Biogenesis terms are discouraged unless subcellular origin can be demonstrated for the specific EV source and condition. With few exceptions, a broad population of EVs is studied, not ectosomes or exosomes specifically.
 - **'Extracellular particles'** is the overarching term for cell-derived multimolecular assemblies in the nanometer to micron size range, including both vesicular and non-vesicular entities.
- **'Non-vesicular extracellular particles'** is an accurate term for cell-derived multimolecular assemblies that are non-vesicular in nature (i.e., the non-vesicular fraction of extracellular particles).
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Consensus: 79.5% (793) of MISEV2023 survey respondents agreed "completely," and 19.9% (199) agreed "mostly" with Section 2: Nomenclature. 0.4% (4) "mostly" disagreed, and 0.2% (2) stated that they had no opinion

375 and/or expertise. No respondents disagreed "completely."

376 3 Collection and pre-processing: pre-analytical variables through to

377 storage

378 An array of factors in sample collection, pre-processing (i.e., before specific EV separation/concentration steps), and 379 storage of EV-containing sources and their derivatives may affect EVs quantitatively and qualitatively. Some considerations related to these factors are common between many EV source materials, such as how to maximize (and 380 381 measure) the quality of starting material; reporting all relevant donor characteristics for biofluid/solid tissue samples; measures of the quantity and quality of the source material as the baseline for the data collected during EV 382 characterization; and standardizing and reporting pre-processing variables. In contrast, other recommendations may be 383 384 specific to the starting source, such as approaches to remove source-specific contaminants/co-isolates and to confirm their removal. 385

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387 **3.1 Common recommendations**

- Describe the source of EV-containing materials. For materials from human and non-human animal donors,
 report relevant donor characteristics, including but not limited to age, biological sex, substance exposures
 (medications, substance use), and disease.
 - Report the quantity (e.g., sample volume, mass) and quality of source material.
 - Provide all methodologic details of sample collection.
 - Consider how pre-separation storage may influence the EVs that are eventually separated. Where relevant, avoid repeated freeze-thaw cycles or assess effects of freeze-thaw.
- Report all storage parameters pre- and post-EV separation (including use of preservatives or cryoprotectants,
 temperature, time, freezing procedure, storage vessel, number of freeze-thaw cycles, and thawing method).
- Remove cells from all EV source materials as early as possible in pre-processing. Cell disruption can form
 particles resembling native EVs, and post-collection cellular processes like activation and death can alter EV
 composition and function.
- Assess and report the degree of depletion of cells and source-specific, common EV co-isolates during pre processing and, later, after EV separation/concentration.
 - Implement quality control measures throughout the sample collection, pre-processing, and EV separation.
 - If samples must be pooled to obtain sufficient EVs for study, report the number of individual samples in a pool, the donor demographics contributing to the pool, the quantity (e.g., volume) of each individual sample, and final quantity. Where possible, follow up with individual samples.
- In studies that seek to determine if EVs or EV cargo can serve as biomarkers of a disease or condition, also test
 whether non-enriched materials, e.g., NVEPs or whole biofluid, may have similar associations.
- For those EV sources for which ISEV has a Task Force (isev.org/taskforces), we recommend that researchers
 keep themselves updated and informed on outputs of that Task Force. See also the next sections with some
 specific recommendations.
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412 **3.2 Cell culture-conditioned medium**

All types of cells cultured *in vitro* release EVs and other factors into their culture medium, thus creating cell cultureconditioned medium [CCM; (Shekari et al. 2023)]. This includes eukaryotic cells from multi- and unicellular

415 organisms and prokaryotic cells including gram-positive and -negative bacteria and *Mycobacteria*. Most

416 recommendations in this section apply to CCM from all cell types; additional and more specific details on bacterial

EVs are provided in Section 3.3.

Cell culture parameters for both eukarvotic and prokarvotic cells include the producing cells (e.g., name, 418 viability, passage number, and seeding and harvest density); medium components (e.g., basal medium, complex 419 additives such as serum, nutrients, micronutrients, antibiotics/mycotics, and any other additives): culture conditions, 420 421 including 2D/3D/suspension culture, temperature, pH, gas concentrations, and any physical stimuli; duration of conditioning: harvesting approaches: and any detected contaminations or infections. Cell culture conditions directly 422 and indirectly affect EV yield, composition, and function. Culture media components can contain EVs or may be 423 taken up by cells and repackaged into EVs (Palviainen et al. 2019; Lehrich, Liang, and Fiandaca 2021), Complex 424 supplements such as blood serum [e.g., fetal bovine/calf serum (FBS/FCS)] and platelet lysate (PL) are often used in 425 mammalian cell culture, but they are rich in EVs, NVEPs, and various, often undefined entities, including DNA 426 fragments and micronutrients (Lehrich, Liang, and Fiandaca 2021; Arigony et al. 2013). Depleting EVs from these 427 supplements can be difficult to accomplish and verify (Lehrich et al. 2018; Erdbrügger et al. 2021), and depletion of 428 complex supplements, e.g., by ultracentrifugation, may depend on degree of dilution. Commercial "EV-free" products 429 should also not be assumed to be devoid of EVs without verification. Use of both EV-depleted medium and "defined" 430 431 (serum/PL-free) media may alter cell physiology and EV production (Lehrich, Liang, and Fiandaca 2021). Since 432 viable and dying cells may release different subtypes of EVs (Crescitelli et al. 2013; Shlomovitz et al. 2021), and since 433 EVs produced by only a few percent of dying cells may outnumber EVs generated by healthy cells, the proportion of 434 live and dving cells in a culture affects proportions of EV subtypes and EV quantity. Unwanted microbial 435 contamination (common: *Mycoplasma*), should be checked and reported. These microbes affect many characteristics of producing cells (Zhang, Wear, and Lo 2000); they or their constituents may be repackaged into EVs of the host 436 culture (Yang et al. 2012); and some may also release their own EVs (Gaurivaud et al. 2018). 437

439 **Recommendations**:

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- CCM recommendations made in MISEV2018 (Thery et al. 2018) are still relevant. These include, but are not limited to, reporting medium composition and preparation; characteristics of producing cells including identity, seeding and harvest density, and viability at harvest; culture conditions including vessel/system, surface coating (if any), temperature, and gas concentrations; physical or chemical stimulants/treatments, if any; frequency, intervals, and method of CCM harvest; and any CCM storage before EV separation. If cells are from a primary source, rather than an established cell line, report harvesting and pre-culturing conditions such as enzymatic digestion.
 - If serum, PL, or other complex additives are used, report the source and the percent of the total medium. If EV depletion of such additives is done, report method and degree of depletion (including dilution, which may be necessary prior to depletion methods involving centrifugation) using the same methods used to characterize released EVs. Vendors of EV-depleted supplements are also encouraged to report method and degree of EV depletion.
- 452 Non-conditioned medium controls should be processed and characterized to assess the contribution of the
 453 medium itself to putative EV measurements.

454 **3.3 Bacteria**

The diversity of bacteria, bacterial EVs, and source material characteristics makes it difficult to issue universal recommendations on sample type, pre-processing, separation, collection, and characterization. Bacterial EVs arise from outer and inner membranes of gram-negative bacteria and cytoplasmic membranes of gram-positive bacteria through blebbing and lytic biogenesis pathways (Toyofuku et al. 2023). Different species, strains (Bitto, Cheng, et al. 2021; Bitto, Zavan, et al. 2021; McMillan and Kuehn 2023; Zavan et al. 2023), and growth conditions (Keenan and Allardyce 2000; Hong et al. 2019) affect EV heterogeneity on multiple levels, including function (Turner et al. 2018). Bacterial EVs can be harvested from mono- or polymicrobial culture *in vitro*, *in vivo/ex vivo* sources such as body fluids or feces, and environmental samples ranging from soil to seawater. Despite this diversity, some recommendations are possible.

For most bacterial species, studies of the influence of culture conditions on the yield and composition of bacterial EVs are in their infancy, but most considerations for culture-derived eukaryotic EVs also apply to bacterial EVs (Bose et al. 2020; Brown et al. 2015). These include effects of media composition, oxygenation/aeration, and culture format (for bacteria: standing, shaking, roller bottle, bioreactor, planktonic cell, or biofilm), and growth phase (Kuehn and Kesty 2005; Zavan et al. 2019; Bitto, Cheng, et al. 2021; Mehanny et al. 2022; Bitto, Zavan, et al. 2021). Thus, culture details should be reported.

Following sample collection, as for eukaryotic EVs, all methodologic details of separation/concentration 470 should be reported. Non-specific methods like precipitation and ultracentrifugation may co-isolate and/or aggregate 471 unwanted non-EV materials. For bacteria, these may include pili, flagellae, phage, and protein, lipoprotein, and 472 nucleoprotein complexes. Filtration and chromatography methods are gentler alternatives (Liangsupree, Multia, and 473 Riekkola 2021; Bitto and Kaparakis-Liaskos 2022). In density gradient ultracentrifugation, densities of EV-rich 474 475 fractions should be determined for each bacterium and growth condition, with clear reporting of fractions (Dauros Singorenko et al. 2017; Bitto and Kaparakis-Liaskos 2022). Consider that different separation methods may enrich or 476 477 deplete subtypes of bacterial EVs.

478 Detailed characterization of bacterial EV preparations beyond core measurements of size distribution and 479 macromolecular content is limited by the availability of validated, commercially available affinity reagents to bacterial markers for only a limited number of species. In many cases, markers of co-isolating materials (see above) require 480 further definition. Lipopolysaccharide [LPS, gram-negative bacteria, (Tulkens et al. 2020)], lipotechoic acid [LTA, 481 gram-positive bacteria, (Champagne-Jorgensen et al. 2021)] and mycobacterial lipids (Prados-Rosales et al. 2011) are 482 universal markers for these broad classes of bacterial EVs. LPS and LTA have the advantage of commercially 483 available antibodies. However, LPS can be present in NVEPs including LPS micelles and complexes with LPS 484 binding protein that may be present in *in vivo* samples (Page, Kell, and Pretorius 2022), so appropriate controls should 485 be included. Finally, for functional assays, normalization methods for bacterial EV input should be accurately 486 reported, e.g., different protein assay types can return different values (Bitto, Zavan, et al. 2021). 487

489 **Recommendations:**

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- In addition to other culture parameters, report bacterial growth phase at harvest.
- Limit storage prior to EV separation/concentration, especially if samples are left unfiltered.
- When obtaining bacterial EVs from *in vivo* and environmental sources, consider that host EVs or EVs from non-target species are likely present.
- LPS and LTA are broad markers of gram-negative and -positive bacteria, respectively, with wellcharacterized, commercially-available affinity reagents. In many species, specific markers of EVs and non-EV materials remain unavailable.
- Non-vesicular co-isolates of bacterial EVs may include pili, flagellae, phage, and protein, lipoprotein, and nucleoprotein complexes.

499 **3.4 Blood**

500 Blood is the most studied biofluid in EV research, and most studies involve human blood. Previous MISEV

501 guidelines, ISEV position papers and other publications (Thery et al. 2018; Witwer et al. 2013; Coumans et al. 2017;

502 Clayton et al. 2019) highlighted the importance of standardization and reporting of (i) donor variables, e.g., age,

503 biological sex, circadian rhythm, diet, exercise level, and medication, and (ii) pre-analytical processing variables such

as blood collection, preparation, handling, storage, anticoagulants, centrifugation protocols, and handling time

505 (Palviainen et al. 2020; Dhondt et al. 2023; Lacroix et al. 2012; Buntsma et al. 2022; Dhondt et al. 2020; Gyorgy et al.

- 506 2014; López-Guerrero et al. 2023), which remain valid. Here, we focus on the complexity of blood, which contains
- cells, lipoproteins, proteins, and other factors that may be retained in EV preparations and confound downstream
- analysis. The degree to which blood samples are processed and EVs are separated from common co-isolates depends

on the study aim and the downstream analysis. The MIBlood-EV was developed by the ISEV Blood Task Force to
enable scientists to report the traceability of blood-derived samples used for EV studies (Lucien et al. 2023). The
MIBlood-EV is divided into categories of: a) general study information, b) blood collection, processing, storage, c)

512 qualitative and quantitative evaluation of hemolysis, platelets and liproproteins, three major confounding factors in 513 blood EV research.

514 Blood cells account for about 45% of the blood volume, so removal of cells before any cell-disruptive processing such as freeze/thawing (which forms EV-like cell fragments) and avoidance of cell activation (and thus 515 release of EVs post-collection) is particularly important. Red blood cells are dense and thus relatively easy to separate 516 from EVs by low-speed centrifugation. However, red blood cells may lyse ("haemolysis") during blood collection and 517 processing, releasing internal contents such as haemoglobin, which turns the plasma or serum a reddish instead of 518 yellow colour. Most other blood cells can also be efficiently removed by centrifugation. In contrast, 1-3 µm platelets 519 are derived from megakaryocytes, highly abundant in blood, and overlap in size range and/or density with EVs. The 520 presence of even a few platelets may affect downstream EV analysis, and activated platelets will release large 521 522 numbers of EVs. Although various centrifugation protocols are used to deplete platelets from plasma and serum (Karimi et al. 2022; Bracht et al. 2023), these protocols incompletely separate platelets from EVs, and extent of 523 524 platelet depletion is typically unreported. Additional depletion of residual platelets from plasma and serum can be 525 achieved by filtration (Bracht et al. 2023; Bettin et al. 2022).

526 Lipoproteins are another main confounding class of NVEPs, including high-density, low-density, intermediate-density, and very low-density lipoproteins (HDL, LDL, IDL, VLDL) as well as larger chylomicrons. 527 They overlap in size (all but HDL), density (HDL), and/or molecular composition with blood EVs, and some 528 lipoprotein subtypes outnumber blood EVs by orders of magnitude (Johnsen et al. 2019; Simonsen 2017). Because 529 neither density- nor size-based separation can separate all lipoproteins from EVs, a combination of methods that 530 exploit different physical and biochemical properties (here reported in Chapter 4) is recommended when more pure 531 EV populations are required (Karimi et al. 2018; Vergauwen et al. 2021; Van Deun et al. 2020; Ter-Ovanesyan et al. 532 2023; Zhang, Borg, et al. 2020). 533

Blood also contains high concentrations of free, "soluble" proteins such as serum albumin, immunoglobulins and fibrinogen, as well as protein and ribonucleoprotein (RNP) aggregates, that may co-isolate with EVs and affect downstream analysis. These proteins are generally smaller and denser than EVs, allowing separation from EVs by size exclusion chromatography, density gradient centrifugation, or combinations thereof.

538 Of note, the surface of EVs, especially in complex environments such as blood, is covered with a 539 biomolecular corona of various molecules and particles [(Palviainen et al. 2020; Tóth et al. 2021; Yerneni et al. 2022; 540 Wolf et al. 2022) and see also **Section 4.7**]. Hence, some blood proteins and lipoproteins, previously defined as 541 contaminants of the EV preparation, may be truly associated with EVs and remain even after the EVs have been 542 rigorously but gently separated from blood.

544 **Recommendations**:

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- Effects of donor characteristics on blood and EV properties are better studied for blood than for many other
 EV sources and are thus especially important to consider and report. For example, large lipoprotein particles
 such as chylomicrons have elevated concentrations after dietary intake, so to minimize their influence, collect
 blood from overnight-fasted donors.
 - When blood is collected by venipuncture, use the largest feasible needle gauge to minimize platelet activation and hemolysis. To minimize bacterial and skin cell contamination and to avoid tissue factor-mediated platelet activation, it may also be a good practice to discard a small volume of the blood draw (e.g., for human blood draws, the first 2-3 mL).
- Select blood collection tubes/anticoagulants that are compatible with downstream analyses.
- Following collection, minimize platelet activation and EV release by avoiding excessive agitation and low temperatures and processing to plasma or serum as quickly as possible.

- Use a plasma or serum preparation protocol that efficiently removes platelets but not EVs. If centrifugation is
 used, draw supernatant from the top down with a pipette, leaving a specified amount of plasma or serum on
 top of the pellet to avoid disturbing the pellet and releasing platelets.
- Major contaminants/co-isolates of blood EVs are platelets, lipoproteins, haemolysis products, and a host of
 soluble/aggregated proteins including RNPs. Determine and report relative enrichment of EVs over whichever
 of these materials is important in a given study.
- Complete the MIBlood-EV reporting tool and attach it as supplementary material for any manuscript with research using blood specimens. The completed document should also be added to the MIBlood-EV shared folder (details at: https://www.isev.org/rigor-standardization)

565 **3.5** Urine

Urine is the second most-analyzed biofluid after blood and can be obtained non-invasively, serially, and in large 566 quantities. Urinary EV (uEVs) and their contents are promising biomarkers and bio-regulators in health and disease of 567 the kidney, the urogenital tract, and possibly other organs and systems (Erdbrügger et al. 2021; Ramirez-Garrastacho 568 et al. 2022; Burger et al. 2014; Carreras-Planella et al. 2021; Morikawa et al. 2019). Challenges in uEV studies arise 569 from the diverse cellular origin of uEVs and the dynamic composition of urine, which varies by fluid intake, time of 570 collection, diet, exercise, age, biological sex, medication, and health and disease status. Please refer to previous, 571 specific recommendations of the Urine Task Force of ISEV for all stages of uEV research: a position paper 572 (Erdbrügger et al. 2021) and a "Quick Reference Card" (van Royen et al. 2023). 573

Here, we focus on considerations specific for urine as an EV source. For urine collection and storage, many 574 575 biobanked urine samples have not been processed to remove cells prior to storage, so uEV-specific biobanks or new 576 collections may be needed. For any urine sample, urine proteins are the most common co-isolates/contaminants of uEV preparations (Dhondt et al. 2020). Protein abundance in urine spans five orders of magnitude. Amongst the 577 highest-abundance urinary proteins (Tamm-Horsfall protein (THP), albumin, and 20 other serum-filtered proteins) 578 579 THP can not only co-isolate with uEVs, reducing uEV purity, but also polymerize into lattice-like networks that trap uEVs, reducing uEV yield. THP can be depolymerized and reduced by changing urine ionic strength or pH or by 580 treating with reducing reagents (Liu, Cauvi, et al. 2018; Pisitkun, Shen, and Knepper 2004; Correll et al. 2022). 581 Removal of THP may be needed for downstream characterization procedures such as mass spectrometry, but it is less 582 necessary for other approaches (e.g., single-EV analysis by immunolabelling). 583

uEV studies in particular require careful normalization approaches because of the magnitude of inter- and 584 intra-individual variation in urine concentrations (i.e., of solutes in the urine; specific gravity), resulting from changes 585 in the external environment, water and salt homeostasis, and circadian patterns. Because uEV levels may vary with 586 urine concentration, normalization between samples is necessary to counterbalance data variance. Unfortunately, there 587 is no consensus method or marker(s) accounting for excretion rate and uEV processing that can be used for the robust 588 normalization of uEV quantity and/or content. Currently, normalization for excretion rate is done based on absolute 589 (total protein, uEV number, uEV biomarker) or relative (time collection, relative to urinary creatinine, osmolality) 590 measures. In studies of organ-specific uEVs, organ-specific markers can be used; e.g., prostate-specific antigen (PSA) 591 concentrations can account for the proportion of prostate fluid in urine. 592

594 **Recommendations:**

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- Follow previously published ISEV recommendations (Erdbrügger et al. 2021; van Royen et al. 2023).
- Perform uEV research using cell-free urine and cell-free urine biobanks.
- Where appropriate, report methodology and outcome of uEV co-isolate/ contaminant depletion (THP, albumin, and other serum-filtered proteins).
 - For normalization, collect data both on uEVs and non-EV urine parameters (e.g., creatinine, PSA, or others as applicable) to estimate absolute or relative excretion rates.
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602 **3.6 Cerebrospinal fluid**

603 Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) bathes the central nervous system (CNS) and contains biomarkers of CNS health and disease (Hühmer et al. 2006; Jack et al. 2018; Gaetani et al. 2019; Rao, Benito, and Fischer 2013). Several CSF-604 605 specific factors must be considered in CSF EV studies. CSF is produced in the brain ventricles and circulates through 606 the brain and spinal cord in a continuous flow (Czarniak et al. 2023). This flow establishes a rostro-caudal gradient, 607 with lower levels of some brain proteins (e.g., S-100ß, total or phosphorylated Tau), but higher levels of others (e.g., neurofilament, amyloid-640 or 642) in the lumbar region relative to the brain (Jingami et al. 2019; Rostgaard et al. 608 609 2023). Hence, collection site (e.g., lumbar/spinal canal vs. brain) and volume may affect CSF composition (Cameron et al. 2019; Teunissen et al. 2009). Common confounders of CSF studies include residual cells and blood 610 contamination, since protein concentrations in blood are 200–400 times greater than in CSF (You et al. 2005). Useful 611 measurements of contaminants include cell counts (e.g., CSF samples that contain >500 ervthrocytes/uL might be 612 excluded (Teunissen et al. 2009) and protein assays for hemoglobin, catalase, peroxiredoxin, carbonic anhydrase I, 613 apolipoprotein B-100, IgM, apolipoprotein B-100, fibrinogen, or haptoglobin (Aasebø et al. 2014; You et al. 2005). 614 Human donor characteristics reported to affect CSF biomarkers (Lewczuk et al. 2006; Klener et al. 2014; Mattsson et 615 al. 2011) include sex (Li et al. 2017), ethnicity (Howell et al. 2017), disease-relevant genotypes (Li et al. 2017), 616 medications (Riekse et al. 2006; Wong 2007), and substance use (Liu et al. 2020; Wang et al. 2021). Age (Zhang et al. 617 2005; Shah et al. 2011; Wong et al. 2000) may be particularly important for cohort design and normalization 618 considerations, since human CSF protein concentrations are high in neonates, decline through childhood, and increase 619 from adolescence through adulthood (Zhang et al. 2005; Shah et al. 2011; Howell et al. 2017). For biomarkers that 620 cycle with circadian rhythm, the time of day for collection is important (Lucey et al. 2017). However, these effects of 621 pre-analytical variables may or may not affect EVs. 622

CSF EV studies are also challenged by very low concentration of EVs in CSF and the precious nature of CSF 623 samples. Since CSF collection is relatively invasive, total CSF volume is limited for most patients, and sampling is 624 usually done only for specific disease indications, the total number of samples and their volumes are small. For 625 example, most established human CSF biorepositories are able to share 1.0 mL or less of each sample. As a result, 626 high-vield separation approaches and high-sensitivity characterization assays are especially needed for CSF EV 627 studies (Krušić Alić et al. 2022; Sandau et al. 2020; Ter-Ovanesyan et al. 2021). Pooling samples from multiple 628 donors may be an option to optimize new protocols or to perform omics characterization, with or without follow-up 629 with higher-sensitivity specific molecular assays for individual samples. 630

632 **Recommendations:**

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- Report anatomic collection site and volume of CSF drawn because of possible influence of the rostral-caudal CSF gradient.
- Measure levels of specific co-isolates/contaminants, such as blood cells and blood proteins, and establish exclusion criteria where appropriate, e.g., >500 erythrocytes/µL from biomarker studies.
 - High-yield separations and high-sensitivity characterization methods are especially important for studying CSF EVs, and sample pooling may be needed.

639 **3.7 Saliva**

Healthy adult humans produce 500-1500 mL saliva per day, varying with pathological and physiological conditions 640 (Chiappin et al. 2007). Saliva is non-invasively accessed, making it an attractive source of biomarkers, EV-associated 641 or not, especially for oral and periodontal conditions (Ogawa et al. 2008; Nonaka and Wong 2022). In saliva EV 642 studies, common co-isolates include salivary components such as eukaryotic cells and subcellular structures, proteins 643 such as enzymes and antibodies, electrolytes, food debris, bacterial cells, and bacterial EVs (Ogawa et al. 2008; 644 Chiappin et al. 2007; Kaczor-Urbanowicz et al. 2019; Aps and Martens 2005; Han, Bartold, et al. 2021; Ngamchuea et 645 al. 2017). The overall composition of saliva depends on the relative activity and contributions of the three major pairs 646 647 of salivary glands-parotid, submandibular and sublingual-as well as 300-750 minor salivary glands (Aps and

648 Martens 2005; Khurshid et al. 2016), which may secrete different amounts of salivary enzymes and mucins.

649 Parameters to report in saliva studies are whether whole saliva or saliva from one type of gland only is 650 collected; the method of saliva collection (Khurshid et al. 2016; Beale et al. 2016; Navazesh 1993); salivation 651 stimulus, if any (Gomar-Vercher et al. 2018). Recency of food and drink intake may have outsized effects on saliva 652 quantity and quality and should be standardized if possible or assessed at collection. From studies of whole saliva, age

- 653 (Xu, Laguna, and Sarkar 2019), biological sex (Li-Hui et al. 2016), smoking (Rad et al. 2010), stress (Keremi et al.
- 654 2017), exercise (Ligtenberg et al. 2016), oral hygiene, medical conditions and medications, and mental health status
- (Aps and Martens 2005; Bhattarai, Kim, and Chae 2018) may be associated with differences in one or more of
 viscosity, pH, concentrations of different proteins, and saliva flow rate. However, it is not known if these factors affect
- or are associated with the concentration and composition of saliva EVs, so additional studies are needed.

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659 **Recommendations**:

- Report the source of saliva clearly (whole or from a specific gland), the method used for collection, and any stimulus used.
 - Standardize allowed food and drink intake prior to collection or, at minimum, assess these factors at collection.

664 **3.8 Synovial fluid**

Synovial fluid (SF) is a viscous fluid within the spaces of joints. SF EVs have potential as biomarkers and therapeutic 665 666 agents for joint disorders (Boere et al. 2019) since SF is in direct contact with affected tissues (Michael et al. 2019). The viscosity of SF is due to large amounts of protein and the glycosaminoglycan hyaluronic acid (HA). This viscosity 667 poses several hurdles to reproducible SF EV studies, for example, making it challenging to pellet cells/debris prior to 668 freezing and hampering EV recovery. Indeed, most reported samples have been frozen and thawed before EV 669 separation and characterization, with inconsistent pre-freezing removal of cells and debris (Gao et al. 2020; Rüwald et 670 al. 2020). Hyaluronidase treatment of SF is required for accurate detection of inflammatory cells and soluble 671 672 mediators (Boere et al. 2019). Most research groups use hyaluronidase to decrease SF viscosity before EV separation, 673 but others do not (Mustonen et al. 2021). Size exclusion chromatography (SEC) may outperform UC in removal of proteins such as albumin, fibronectin, and apolipoprotein A-I (Foers et al. 2018). Donor characteristics that may 674 675 associate with differences in SF variables and possibly EVs include biological sex (Kolhe et al. 2020) and disease identity and stage (Schioppo et al. 2021; Foers et al. 2020). 676

678 **Recommendations:**

• Consider the use of hyaluronidase to reduce viscosity and obtain homogenized synovial fluid before EV separation and characterization.

681 **3.9 Milk**

Milk is a rich and complex source of nutritional and immunological components, which include cells, milk fat 682 globules (MFGs), casein micelles, soluble molecules, and EVs (Ballard and Morrow 2013). EVs separated from milk 683 684 of at least 16 different species have thus far been reported, chiefly human and bovine. To allow separation of relatively 685 pure EVs, milk components that share EV characteristics such as density and size [MFGs and cellular debris (Busatto et al. 2019)] should be removed, e.g., by centrifugation), and milk should be kept at body temperature for short-term 686 storage (Zonneveld et al. 2014). Casein micelles, which overlap in size with EVs, are the biggest challenge, especially 687 for milk of ruminant species. Casein micelles can be precipitated by pelleting after acidifying milk to pH 4.6 688 (Mukhopadhya et al. 2021; Rahman et al. 2019; Somiya, Yoshioka, and Ochiya 2018; Santoro et al. 2023), aggregated 689 by enzymatic treatment (Gao et al. 2019), or dissociated by sequestering calcium with EDTA (Gao et al. 2019) or 690 sodium citrate (Benmoussa et al. 2020). Currently, there is no preferred method, but acidification and EDTA are used 691 most often. Following pre-processing, cleared milk supernatant can be stored (see above) until EV separation. 692 Methods such as UC, dgUC, and SEC may be combined for higher purity, since single-step approaches will yield a 693 694 low purity. Colloidal properties and acceptable storage times until processing may be different for raw, homogenized,

695 pasteurized, ultra-high temperature-treated, and dried/powdered milk (Mukhopadhya, Santoro, and O'Driscoll 2021).

696 Furthermore, the effects of storage length and temperatures have yet to be comprehensively determined.

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698 **Recommendations**:

- Keep milk at body temperature for short-term storage prior to storage or EV separation.
- Common EV co-isolates include cells/components, milk fat globules, and casein micelles. These should be removed (and/or, in the case of micelles, disrupted), and their presence tracked through the EV separation process.

703 **3.10 Solid tissue**

Cell-EV interactions in solid tissues may primarily involve EVs that are released near the site of action. It is thus important to study EVs in tissue. However, greatly complicating the study of tissue EVs is the interrelated diversity of tissue harvesting and storage methods, cellular and extracellular matrix composition, and physical properties. Despite these challenges, two basic approaches to tissue EV studies have been developed and applied mostly to brain or tumor tissues.

Tissues can be used for EV studies by keeping tissues/cells "alive" in culture after harvesting or by harvesting 709 EVs directly from tissue before or after storage. Some tissues can be cultured ex vivo over several days and culture 710 medium harvested for EV separation (Jeurissen et al. 2017; Jingushi et al. 2018; Lunavat et al. 2017). EV preparations 711 may include tissue EVs present in the original tissue, EVs released during culture (perhaps with different properties 712 from the native EVs), and products of cell death in culture like apoptotic bodies (Carrel and Burrows 1911). Keeping 713 tissue under conditions as close to their *in situ* environment as possible may be very important, such as maintaining 714 715 tissue hydrated prior to culturing and avoiding high oxygen concentrations, although limited evidence has been gathered for the influence of these factors on collected EVs. Alternatively, tissue is processed immediately after 716 717 resection (Crescitelli, Lasser, and Lotvall 2021; Perez-Gonzalez et al. 2012; Gallart-Palau, Serra, and Sze 2016; 718 Huang et al. 2020; Jang et al. 2019; Crescitelli et al. 2020; Steenbeek et al. 2018; Cianciaruso et al. 2019; Jeppesen et 719 al. 2019) or after prior storage, usually freezing (Perez-Gonzalez et al. 2012; Vella et al. 2017; Huang et al. 2020; Yelamanchili et al. 2015; Hurwitz et al. 2018; Hurwitz, Olcese, and Meckes 2019). A preliminary study found no 720 major differences in EV composition in fresh versus frozen tissues (Shen et al. 2023). Tissues are typically divided 721 into small pieces [using tissue homogenizers (Gallart-Palau, Serra, and Sze 2016; Hurwitz et al. 2018; Hurwitz, 722 Olcese, and Meckes 2019; Yelamanchili et al. 2015), vortexing (Banigan et al. 2013), or slicing (Vella et al. 2017; 723 Huang et al. 2020; Polanco et al. 2016; Jeppesen et al. 2019)], followed by enzymatic treatment to disrupt the 724 extracellular matrix (ECM) (Jingushi et al. 2018). These methods result in different degrees of cell damage, potentially 725 introducing EV-like artifacts. 726

728 **Recommendations:**

- For *ex vivo* culturing approaches, keep the tissue as close as possible to its "native" conditions, including maintaining hydration and nutrition. Consider also the influence of cell death processes on the EV preparation.
- For separating EVs directly from tissue (without *ex vivo* culturing), establish or follow best practices for the
 specific tissue in harvesting (e.g., perfusion or not of an animal model to minimize effects of blood); storage
 (does freezing affect outcome?); physical and enzymatic tissue separation (if done); and influence of specific
 EV separation/concentration methods.
- Tissue EV characterization should focus in particular on tracing the presence of cellular components that may
 be expected to be depleted in EVs, since cells and cellular artifacts may be the key contaminants of tissue EV
 preparations.
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739 **3.11 Other sources**

Not all sources of EVs are covered above; only those for which ISEV recently had or currently has a Task Force. ISEV
 members are welcome to propose formation of new task forces where no ISEV task force yet exists. These, in turn, may
 help to inform best practice.

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744 **3.12 Pre-separation and post-separation storage**

Storage conditions of both pre-separation sources and post-separation EVs may also affect EV yields, contents, functionality, and the ratio of single particles and aggregates. For most EV sources, pre-processing is advisable prior to pre-separation storage to remove potentially interfering entities such as cells. However, stringent pre-processing is not always possible. Details of whatever steps are performed should be reported, and an explanation given if preprocessing cannot be done. Acceptable storage prior to EV separation varies by source. Storage conditions, including any additives [for example, bactericidal agents (Lucas et al. 2021)], should be fully reported and the influence on EV quantity and quality investigated if not already known.

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Following separation of EVs, EVs should be studied in as native a form as possible. However, for most studies, stored 753 EVs are used. Here, several considerations apply. All storage vessels and their materials should be reported, as EVs 754 can be lost by attaching to surfaces (Evtushenko et al. 2020). Separated EVs may be stable without freezing for some 755 time, but this may vary by EV composition and source and of course information on storage of EVs from some 756 matrices is more comprehensive to date compared to information on EVs from other matrices. Long-term storage is 757 typically at -80 °C, although other temperatures have been examined. For example, saliva EVs were reportedly stable 758 759 at 4°C for up to 20 months, retaining membrane integrity and protein content (Kumeda et al. 2017). Urinary EVs have reportedly been stored at -20 °C for up to four years (Barreiro et al. 2021). Lyophilization of EVs is also possible 760 (Trenkenschuh et al. 2022). There is conflicting evidence on the effects of freeze-thaw cycles on EV properties. A 761 study of saliva EVs found minimal effects of freeze-thawing on membrane integrity (defined as dipeptidyl peptidase 762 IV activity) (Kumeda et al. 2017). However, studies of various sources of EVs have reported particle concentration 763 and other changes with freeze-thawing (Gelibter et al. 2022; Görgens et al. 2022). Cryoprotectants may reduce effects 764 of freeze-thaw (Lőrincz Á et al. 2014; Le Saux et al. 2020); for example, supplementing phosphate buffered saline 765 (PBS) with human albumin and trehalose (PBS-HAT) reportedly improved short- and long-term stability for EVs 766 stored at -80 °C and through several freeze-thaw cycles (Görgens et al. 2022). Since optimal storage conditions may 767 vary by EV composition and source, the freezing method (e.g., snap-freezing in liquid nitrogen, gradual freezing), 768 suspension buffer (including cryoprotectants and other additives), temperature, duration of storage until use, thawing 769 method (speed, temperature), and number of freeze-thaw cycles should be reported. Freeze-thaw cycles should be 770 minimized, for example by a careful aliquoting strategy, and samples with different numbers of freeze cycles may not 771 772 be directly comparable.

Consensus: 70.4% (703) of MISEV2023 survey respondents agreed "completely," and 28.5% (284) agreed "mostly" with Section 3: Collection and pre-processing: pre-analytical variables through to storage. 0.1% (1) "mostly" disagreed, and 1.0% (10) stated that they had no opinion and/or expertise. No respondents disagreed "completely."

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779 4 EV separation and concentration

EVs are typically characterized and used after one or more separation or concentration procedures. Trends in these
approaches have been previously assessed by ISEV (Royo et al. 2020; Gardiner et al. 2016). Separation/concentration
can be performed according to the EV biophysical characteristics of size, density, charge, and surface composition
(specific surface molecules). Other terms that are sometimes used for these procedures include "enrichment,"
"purification," and "isolation." The material captured after separation/concentration is an "EV-containing preparation"

or "EV preparation" that may require storage prior to analysis or use. Any separation method should be chosen based
on the known properties of the specific EV sources and the desired EV yield and specificity. When separating
complex biofluids, quantification of yield and specificity for total EVs will likely be estimates, since particle number
quantification is not always EV-specific and/or typically relies on surrogates of EV abundance such as spike-in
populations or measurement of detectable subpopulations. Figure 2 shows the position of some commonly used
methods for EV preparation on a yield (recovery) versus specificity grid. This section provides information and
suggestions on some of these methods. More detailed information can be found in the literature (Hendrix et al. 2023).

EVs can sometimes be studied or used directly and immediately in the source matrix. In biomarker studies, for example, there may be no need to separate or concentrate EVs from a biological matrix if sufficient specificity and sensitivity are reached with the unfractionated sample. In some cases, EVs can also be analyzed specifically and directly in a biological fluid (Duijvesz et al. 2015; Woud et al. 2022). However, to show exclusive EV association of a proposed biomarker or function, separation may be required in the first instance, and further guidance on this is provided here.

798 **4.1 EV concentration**

Concentration in EV studies is the act of increasing the particle number:sample volume ratio. Concentration may be needed in various settings. Large volumes of source materials like CCM, urine, milk may require concentration before EVs can be separated from other EPs. For example, chromatography columns may have a maximum loading volume, while some separation methods may be more efficient if material is first concentrated (e.g., some immunoisolation procedures). Concentration methods may, but do not necessarily, also achieve some degree of separation of particle types.

Concentration can be done by several approaches. Polymer-based methods of precipitation reduce the
availability of biomolecules to solvent, "crowding out" water molecules. This allows suspended/dissolved materials
including EPs to be pelleted by low-speed centrifugation. Some commercial kits that are described as "exosome
isolation" kits in fact rely on such polymer precipitation and do not strictly "isolate" EVs, much less subtypes of EVs.
Precipitation methods may not achieve any appreciable separation of EPs (Lobb et al. 2015; Paolini et al. 2016;
Gámez-Valero et al. 2016; Karttunen et al. 2019).

In filtration, a suspension passes through a filter by, e.g., gravity, centrifugation, or vacuum: water and 811 molecules smaller than the molecular weight cut-off of the filter pass through, while EPs larger than the cut-off are 812 recovered in the concentrated fluid compartment of the filter. A variety of filter cut-offs are available, including 3, 10, 813 814 100, and 1000 kDa, allowing filtration to achieve some degree of size separation, not just concentration. A cut-off of 100 kDa retains EVs while removing many proteins, while a cut-off of 1000 kDa may allow passage of some smaller 815 816 EVs. However, another consideration is recovery, since different filters/tubes may allow different levels of EV "sticking" and thus recovery (Vergauwen et al. 2017). Please note that filtration may also be performed to retain 817 818 microbes ("sterilization") or large EVs/EPs in the pre-filter compartment; although care should be taken to avoid 819 extrusion. Tangential flow filtration (TFF, also called cross-flow filtration) is a filter-based concentration method in which liquid and molecules smaller than the pores pass through the filter perpendicularly to the flow applied to the 820 EV-containing fluid. This allows continuous flow and repeated passages of the fluid unless and until the filter is 821 clogged, and thus allows processing of large volumes of fluid. As for other filtration methods, size-based separation 822 can be achieved based on the molecular weight cut-off of the filter. TFF has been successfully and reproducibly used 823 824 for large-scale EV production, e.g., for therapeutic applications (Busatto et al. 2018; Lamparski et al. 2002). Finally, concentration can also be obtained by (ultra)centrifugation, for which parameters are described in the next section. 825

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- 827 Summary: Concentration
 - Can be done by polymer-based precipitation, filtration including tangential flow filtration, and (ultra)centrifugation.
 - Leads to EV-containing preparations containing variable amounts of NVEPs and proteins, depending on the exact method and variables such as filter cut-off (size or molecular weight).

832 **Reporting recommendations:** for concentration, report the following:

- nature of the material used for concentration;
 - initial and final volumes of biofluid;
 - time of processing (incubation with polymer, centrifugation through filters or directly);
 - flow rate (for TFF);

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- size or molecular weight cut-off (for filtration/concentration);
- temperature during concentration.

839 **4.2 Differential (ultra)centrifugation**

The principle of differential ultracentrifugation (dUC) is to apply increasing relative centrifugal forces (RCF = g-840 force) to the EV-containing fluid, from which intact donor cells or tissues have first been eliminated by one or more 841 842 low speed centrifugations. The aim is to pellet sequentially EPs of decreasing sedimentation coefficients. Since the sedimentation velocity of a sphere is proportional to its diameter squared and to the density contrast between the 843 844 particle and the medium (Stokes' law equation), the largest and/or densest EPs tend to be pelleted in the first (medium speed/short time) steps, while the smallest and/or least dense are recovered predominantly after higher speed/longer 845 centrifugation. However, in practice, perfect EV separations are not achieved by this method, and pellets from 846 different centrifugation speed have overlapping properties and variable biochemical and physical parameters. 847

Whatever the centrifugation steps used, as detailed in MISEV2018, report speed in rpm and rotor type (to 848 allow calculation of adjusted k-factor), time of centrifugation (to allow calculation of the sedimentation coefficient of 849 the pelleted particles), and temperature. Instrument acceleration and deceleration settings should also be reported. In 850 typical dUC workflows reported in the literature, a maximal force of around 10,000 to 20,000 x g is applied for 851 between 10 and 90 minutes to enrich putatively larger/denser EVs, while a maximal force of around 100,000 to 852 200,000 x g is applied for 45 to 150 minutes to pellet putatively smaller/lighter EVs. These figures can be used to 853 calculate the sedimentation coefficient (S) of the particles recovered by these different protocols: S = adjusted K factor 854 of the rotor / Time of centrifugation. Theoretically, particles with S coefficients in the range of 15-150 are recovered 855 by the "larger EV" centrifugation conditions, and those in the range of 2 to 5 by the "smaller EV" conditions. Particles 856 with smaller S can be recovered by extending the speed and time of centrifugation, at the cost of increasing 857 NVEP/free protein co-isolation. Depending on the centrifugation parameters, the resulting pellets may be enriched for 858 859 large/dense or for small/light EVs, but complete separation of these populations is not achieved. Yield of smaller EVs may also be low, especially when suspended in protein-rich fluids such as blood products and complex culture 860 medium components, and this problem may not be resolved by simply increasing centrifugation time or speed (Zhang, 861 Borg, et al. 2020; Driedonks, Nijen Twilhaar, and Nolte-'t Hoen 2019). Examples of dUC protocols (with or without 862 density gradient, see next section) and downstream comparison of EVs include (Kowal et al. 2016; Martin-Jaular et al. 863 2021; Jeppesen et al. 2019; Lischnig et al. 2022). 864

The majority of published studies have focused on smaller EVs and thus discard and/or do not analyze the pellet(s) obtained with lower-speed centrifugation. To allow comparison between studies and to avoid pelleting larger particles and potentially introducing artefacts, however, it is recommended to perform these first centrifugations. The strong g-force of high-speed UC has also been shown to induce aggregation of EVs (Linares et al. 2015), but this may not be observed for all sources of EVs. When analyzing a new source of EVs, retain the intermediate centrifugation pellets and analyze them side-by-side at least once with the final, highest-speed pellet to determine whether the molecules or activity of interest are specifically enriched in small EVs or are also present in other subtypes.

873 Summary: dUC

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- Enriches for EV subtypes that are separated according to their sedimentation coefficient, proportional to their diameter and density.
- Co-isolates NVEPs that have the same sedimentation coefficient as EVs, especially after high-speed and
 lengthy ultracentrifugation.
 - May induce aggregation of EVs.

- 879 **Reporting recommendations:** for differential (ultra)centrifugation, report the following:
 - speed, rotor type, and time of centrifugation, to allow calculation of the adjusted k-factor (to apply to other rotors) and the sedimentation coefficient of the pelleted EPs;
 - tube type and sample volume in the tube;
 - temperature during centrifugation;
 - acceleration and deceleration (brake) settings.

885 **4.3 Density gradient/cushion**

Density gradients or cushions can be used to separate certain NVEPs and proteins from EVs based on the 886 characteristic densities of different classes of EPs (Raposo et al. 1996). Gradients are prepared of lavers consisting of 887 different ratios of a selected dense medium (like sucrose, iodixanol, or iohexol) and aqueous buffers, with density 888 decreasing from bottom to top of the gradient, whereas cushions consist of a homogeneous layer of dense material 889 below an aqueous column. EV-containing materials can be loaded beneath a gradient ("bottom-up") or onto the top of 890 a gradient or cushion ("top-down") and then ultracentrifuged. In the bottom-up approach, the EV-containing 891 preparation is mixed with high-density medium, loaded at the bottom of a centrifuge tube, and overlayed with layers 892 893 of decreasing density; the preparation may also be underlaid under a prepared gradient. As ultracentrifugation 894 proceeds, particles that are less dense than the surrounding medium float upwards. With sufficient time, particles will 895 ultimately reach a density fraction corresponding to their buoyant density. Since smaller EVs travel at a relatively slower rate than larger EVs, especially in viscous media, the bottom-up approach in velocity sucrose density gradient 896 897 UC can also be used to separate EVs according to size (Aalberts et al. 2012). In top-down settings, the EV-containing preparation in a low-density medium is loaded onto the top of a gradient or cushion: for gradients, particles travel into 898 the gradient at a rate corresponding to their density and size until their equilibrium buoyant density is reached; for 899 cushions, particles that reach the cushion remain at the interface if less dense than the cushion material but continue 900 into and through the cushion if they are denser. The cushion approach is thus easier to implement but separates EPs by 901 a threshold of density. Importantly, for gradients, lengthy ultracentrifugation may be needed for optimal separation 902 [e.g., longer than 48 hrs: (Palma et al. 2012; Aalberts et al. 2012)], but shorter spins may suffice for some applications 903 [e.g., 1-2 hrs in (Kowal et al. 2016), 16 hrs in (Aalberts et al. 2012; Liao et al. 2019)]. 904

Following separation by gradient, fractions must be collected carefully to avoid disrupting the gradient. It is good practice to confirm density of final fractions, e.g., by weighing given volumes or measuring refractive index. Before performing most downstream assays, the density medium must be removed. This can be done, e.g., by diluting the fractions with buffer and ultracentrifuging, or by using SEC. Recovery after density gradient and fraction washing is relatively low.

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911 Summary: density gradients and cushions

- Can be implemented in different settings (top-down, bottom-up) depending on the aim, i.e., to separate EVs
 from proteins, or from NVEPs, or to separate EV subtypes.
 - Leads to low recovery of high-purity material (based on density).

915 **Reporting recommendations.** For density gradients and cushions, report the following:

- density material, buffer composition, and exact method of gradient/cushion preparation;
- volume and concentration of material loaded, as well as method of loading onto or at the bottom of the column;
- exhaustive description of centrifugation parameters (same as for dUC);
- details of collection procedure, final densities of fractions (where relevant), and washing.

921 **4.4 Size exclusion chromatography**

Size exclusion chromatography (SEC) separates nanoparticles including EVs based on size (Boing et al. 2014; Karimi
et al. 2018). In SEC, a sample is placed onto the top of a column loaded with a matrix that contains passages with

defined pore size. Driven by gravity or by pressure from a pump, larger particles pass through the matrix quickly,

without entering the pores, and can be collected as early fractions, while smaller particles (smaller than the matrix
pore size) are retained longer and elute predominantly in later fractions. Certain SEC matrices allow separation of EVsized particles (EVs, viruses, larger lipoprotein particles) from small NVEPs and free proteins.

Variables that affect the degree of separation by SEC include the matrix composition and pore size, column 928 packing method, the ratio of column length to diameter (or volume), flow rate (gravity versus defined pressure), and 929 applied sample concentration and volume. Size exclusion columns can be home-made or purchased. Commercial 930 columns are often packed under strictly controlled conditions and may allow more reproducible results than home-931 made columns. Abundance and purity of EVs and other NVEPs in collected fractions must be established through 932 careful characterization, as for all other methods. SEC dilutes the sample, increasing volume compared with the input 933 material, so concentration of a sample before or after SEC may thus be needed. SEC size separation can be combined 934 with affinity methods by modifying the matrix. The related method of bind-elute chromatography combines size-based 935 separation with selection by charge or molecular affinity and permits a single elution (with retention of unwanted 936 materials) that may be amenable to high-throughput separations, e.g., in multi-well plates. In some cases, SEC 937 938 matrices can be reused after thorough cleaning.

940 Summary: SEC

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- SEC is an easily accessible technique for size-based separation of particles.
- Columns can be packed with a variety of matrices and at different scales, depending on desired capacity and resolution of separation.

944 **Reporting recommendations.** For SEC, report the following:

- type of matrix and pore size; height and diameter (or volume) of matrix-containing column;
- method of column packing (or source of commercially-available columns);
- source, volume, and particle concentration of pre-SEC sample, including any prior separation/concentration
 steps;
 - buffer composition;
 - specify gravity flow or pressure. If pressure, indicate pump system and pressure parameters;
 - void volume and numbers and volume of fractions collected;
 - any post-SEC concentration methods;
 - if columns are re-used, method of column regeneration and number of times the column has been used.

954 4.5 Fluid flow-based separation

Fluid flow-based techniques separate EVs and other particles based on one or more particle properties, but without relying on a "matrix" or stationary phase. The two main categories of flow-based techniques currently used in EV studies are field-flow fractionation [FFF, (Giddings, Yang, and Myers 1976)] and free-flow electrophoresis [(FFE), (Preußer et al. 2022)]. These techniques can be applied to highly heterogeneous input materials, and the absence of a solid phase allows high particle recovery. They are also among the gentlest of separation methods and may thus be used to study molecules that are loosely associated with EVs.

The most prevalent FFF approach in EV studies is asymmetric flow FFF [AF4, (Sitar et al. 2015)], in which 961 particles in a sample are transported by fluid flow with a parabolic pattern through a long, thin channel, while a field 962 perpendicular to the direction of transport tends to concentrate particles against the bottom of the channel. Smaller 963 particles, diffusing more rapidly, are more likely to enter the higher-velocity flow regions in the middle of the channel, 964 and particles are thus separated by hydrodynamic size. Some degree of purification may also be achieved by a channel 965 bottom consisting of a molecular weight cut-off filter. Although AF4 can precisely separate particle populations with 966 small differences in size (Hood et al. 2014; Zhang et al. 2018), it is not specific to EVs in its standard configuration. 967 AF4 is also not a preparative technique. In contrast, FFE combines flow with electrophoresis, adding separation by, 968 e.g., isoelectric point (Preußer et al. 2022). Introducing separation buffers with different pH or other characteristics 969

- across the separation channel allows high-resolution separation of different EV and other EP populations. FFE can be
- 971 done at various scales.

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973 Summary:

- Fluid flow-based separations such as AF4 can achieve size-based separations with high resolution.
- Lacking a solid phase and with limited applied forces, flow is gentler than most EV separation techniques.
- Size-based separation can be combined with separation by other principles by applying different types of fields.
- Preparative scales can be reached with flow techniques such as free-flow electrophoresis.

979 **Reporting recommendations.** For flow-based separations, report the following:

- all instrumentation, including pumps and collection devices;
- composition of all buffers and their filtration. Especially in FFE: how properties of the buffers were confirmed;
 - all field characteristics such as flow rates and pressures, pH gradients, electric field;
 - dimensions and composition of separation chambers, including any molecular weight cutoff plates;
 - all relevant details of fraction collection.

987 **4.6 Charge and molecular recognition-based separations**

The common principle of all affinity methods is to capture EVs based on their surface charge or molecular 988 989 composition. Ion-exchange chromatography takes advantage of a the very simple affinity of particles/surfaces of opposite charge: EVs and/or NVEPs have affinity for a matrix based on negative (anion-exchange) or positive (cation-990 exchange) surface charge (Saari et al. 2023). In contrast, the term "affinity separation" as commonly used in molecular 991 biology refers to methods that harness the specific recognition of one macromolecular complex for another. In this 992 context, affinity probes include heparin and various lectins [which bind glycans, (Balaj et al. 2015)]; specific full-993 length proteins with affinity for a particular lipid or protein (e.g., Tim4 for phosphatidylserine, (Nakai et al. 2016); 994 peptides that bind specific EV surface proteins (Liu et al. 2019; Pham et al. 2021; Suwatthanarak et al. 2021; Joy et al. 995 2018; Gao et al. 2018; Gobbo et al. 2016; Bai et al. 2014) or the membrane more generally (Gori et al. 2020; Ishida et 996 al. 2020; Yang et al. 2022), including curvature-sensing peptides that select for EVs in certain size ranges (Saludes et 997 al. 2012); aptamers [short single-stranded DNA or RNA molecules that are developed to bind specific targets (Zhang, 998 Yue, et al. 2019)]. Antibodies that are raised to recognize specific EV surface molecules are the most commonly used 999 affinity reagents, and their most-used targets are the tetraspanins (Kowal et al. 2016; Mathieu et al. 2021). 000

001 In molecular recognition-based affinity approaches, the EV-containing fluid (which may have first been concentrated according to Section 4.1) is introduced to affinity probes before or after the latter are bound to a matrix, 002 003 such as a membrane or beads. Beads, in turn, can be placed in a column or tube to facilitate binding and washing. 004 Molecular target-displaying materials are bound by affinity probes to the matrix ("pull-down"), while unbound 005 material flows away ("flow-through"). Non-specifically bound materials may be removed by one or more washes. If EVs are the intended target, detergent should not be present in the dilution and washing buffers unless at very small 006 007 concentrations (0.001% or less) to minimize non-specific binding to the capturing matrix or between EVs. To evaluate the efficiency and specificity of recovery of the targeted EVs, it is recommended, at least during protocol 008 009 development, to compare side-by-side the flow-through and the pull-down by biochemical analyses, measuring the affinity motif and a few EV markers (see Section 5). 010

Bound EVs can be dissociated from the matrix and recovered by a variety of techniques, ranging from changing the properties of the buffer, to adding an excess of target molecules (e.g., sugars or lipids), to eliminating factors required for efficient binding (e.g., using EDTA to chelate calcium). However, some affinity reagents may bind tightly to their EV target and require removal by, e.g., proteases. In some cases, the EV-binding molecule and/or the matrix may be recovered together with the EVs. This may not be an issue if downstream analyses are not affected by these materials (e.g., nucleic acid analysis of EVs contaminated with a protein-based affinity probe), but it may be in other cases, (e.g., in functional uses, since the EV surface is modified by an EV-binding molecule). Antibodies are particularly difficult to separate from EVs. Low pH treatment classically used to separate antibodies and antigens will
 likely affect the structure of EVs, and protease treatments may also digest proteins on the surface of the EVs.

In any molecular affinity approach, it is important to understand the degree to which the target molecule is 020 associated with EVs versus NVEPs, or with one EV subtype versus others, and to assess the specificity of the capture 021 reagent. For example, the use of CD9 or CD63 affinity capture for urinary EVs (uEVs) excludes uEVs from cells of 022 the proximal nephron (Limbutara, Chou, and Knepper 2020; Blijdorp et al. 2021). In another example, the literature 023 on L1CAM affinity (a putative neuronal EV marker) has developed substantially since MISEV2018. Although 024 L1CAM has been investigated as a membrane-associated antigen to separate putative neuronal EVs from peripheral 025 blood samples, it has more recently been described as being in a cleaved, mostly soluble form in certain EV sources 026 (Norman et al. 2021). It is also found on EVs from a variety of sources, not just neurons, and a widely-used anti-027 L1CAM antibody might also recognize other targets (Norman et al. 2021; Gomes and Witwer 2022). 028

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030 Summary: charge and molecular recognition affinity-based methods

- Separate components of EV preparations according to surface charge or exposure of a specific molecular determinant.
- Will co-isolate all EV subtypes or NVEPs which expose a given charge or molecular determinant: specificity
 and recovery depend on the specificity versus universality of exposure of the chosen molecular determinant.
 - Antibody-based affinity separation leads to co-isolation of the determinant-exposing EPs with the antibody and/or isolation beads.
 - Efficiency and selectivity must be quantified when establishing the protocol by quantifying material recovered in pull-down versus flow-through.
- 039 **Reporting recommendations:** for affinity-based separation, report the following:
 - molecule used as affinity probe (nature, source);
 - matrix (beads, gel, column);
 - incubation times;
 - buffer and number of washes;
 - elution process (such as elution buffer composition, time).
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046 **4.7 General considerations and caution on kit-based approaches**

Due to overlapping biophysical characteristics of EPs (Karimi et al. 2018; Geeurickx et al. 2019) and the abundance of 047 many NVEPs in various EV sources, complementary separation techniques are increasingly applied sequentially 048 (Stam et al. 2021; Benedikter et al. 2017; Zhang, Borg, et al. 2020) (arrows in Figure 2), which allows increased 049 specificity. Examples of methods used to separate EVs from protein aggregates and other NVEPs include size 050 exclusion chromatography, density gradient ultracentrifugation (Jeppesen et al. 2019), asymmetric flow field-flow 051 052 fractionation (AF4) (Zhang et al. 2018) and ultra-high-speed ultracentrifugation (Zhang, Higginbotham, et al. 2019; 053 Zhang et al. 2021). However, some of these studies suggest that several proteins previously proposed to be sEV markers are equally, if not more, abundant in NVEPs, thus calling for re-evaluation of the achieved EV selectivity. 054 Conversely, a growing realization since MISEV2018 is that some molecules that co-isolate with EVs, including 055 proteins, nucleic acids, sugars, and lipids, could be viewed not as 'contaminants', but rather as a part of a dynamic EV 056 'corona' (Tóth et al. 2021; Palviainen et al. 2020; Buzas 2022). Molecules and even biological nanoparticles such as 057 lipoproteins (Sódar et al. 2016; Busatto et al. 2022) may adsorb to the EV surface where they may serve as biomarkers 058 or contribute to EV function (Radeghieri et al. 2022; Musicò et al. 2023). The EV corona may be removed in part or in 059 full by separation processes including dUC and SEC (Wolf et al. 2022; Singh et al. 2020). Ongoing studies of the EV 060 corona may change how we view contaminants and the perceived need for highly pure EVs; this point is also relevant 061 for the next MISEV section, on EV characterization. 062

063 Only methods using readily (i.e., commercially) available devices and instruments are described in this 064 section. However, new developments of separation methods, including those involving equipment built in individual

laboratories, are occurring constantly and are strongly encouraged by ISEV. When establishing a new 065 separation/concentration workflow, a good practice is to assess the extent of EV separation/concentration with 066 methods discussed in Sections 5 and 6 and with careful and complete book-keeping. Comparing the results with those 067 of another already established method is also recommended. For example, EV marker proteins can be tracked and 068 related to total isolated protein to determine fold enrichment over total protein reported and account for EV marker 069 losses (Geeurickx et al. 2019; Zhang, Borg, et al. 2020). Results will indicate recovery and degree of enrichment and 070 will also show whether the separated EV population is representative of the original population or has been selectively 071 obtained. 072

Finally, some cautionary notes on commercial kits. Numerous kits are advertised as obtaining specific types of 073 EVs (usually "exosomes") or EVs from specific types of sources. These kits may or may not achieve EV separation or 074 concentration based on a variety of principles, including polymer precipitation, membrane affinity, antibody capture, 075 and filtration. These kits may be helpful under certain circumstances, but EV researchers should be aware of several 076 major caveats. Kits that do not disclose details of the principles of EV separation/concentration may produce results 077 that are difficult to interpret, not least because they may introduce unknown contaminants (e.g., polyethylene glycol 078 for some polymer precipitation kits). Extra work may be needed to compare these methods with results from other 079 080 techniques and to place the results on the recovery/specificity grid (Figure 2) for better interpretation. Precipitation-081 based kits in particular will concentrate all EPs in a mixture, even many free proteins, resulting in a highly impure 082 preparation, especially from complex, NVEP-rich sources such as blood plasma and serum. Use of such kits is strongly discouraged unless for volume reduction alone (Lobb et al. 2015; Paolini et al. 2016; Gámez-Valero et al. 083 2016; Karttunen et al. 2019). In contrast, affinity-based methods may isolate only subtypes of EVs, and the specificity 084 of the affinity reagents may be difficult to assess if the exact reagents are not disclosed. Generally, kits that disclose 085 contents and principles should be preferred over kits that make unsubstantiated claims (e.g., "exosome" isolation) and 086 do not provide details. 087

089 Recommendations

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- If separation/concentration is not done, indicate why. Otherwise, justify why each separation/concentration method was selected in terms of yield and specificity.
- Provide sufficient methodologic detail to allow replication of each separation and concentration step. •
- Report any measurements that are used to assess the separation/concentration process(es). Where applicable 093 and feasible, and especially when establishing a new workflow, check EVs before and after each step. For 094 095 example, track EV marker protein levels relative to total protein to estimate fold enrichment and yield for each 096 step.
 - For affinity-based EV separation approaches, establish molecular specificity of reagents and EV/EV subtypespecificity of all targeted markers.

099 Consensus: 74.4% (743) of MISEV2023 survey respondents agreed "completely," and 24.8% (248) agreed 100 "mostly" with Section 4: EV separation and concentration. 0.1% (1) "mostly" disagreed, and 0.6% (6) stated that 101 they had no opinion and/or expertise. No respondents disagreed "completely." 102

5 EV characterization 103

EV characterization is needed for estimation of EV quantity, to establish the presence of EVs, and to assess the 104 contributions of non-EV components to an EV preparation. Characterization is challenged by small particle size, 105 heterogeneity of EV size and molecular heterogeneity, a lack of universal EV identification methods, and the non-EV-106 specificity of many measurement techniques. As a result, no single measurement or method is able to satisfy all EV 107 characterization requirements, and use of orthogonal methods (those that do not have the same measurement 108 109 limitations) is recommended.

If making claims about an EV preparation, the extent to which a sample will need to be characterised to justify 110 111 the claims may depend upon the source of the material (see Section 4). This may mean additional characterization

steps are needed with different samples and may also mean that additional reporting information is required to allow the influence of other preanalytical variables on EVs to be assessed.

Overall EV composition (contribution to total mass of proteins, lipids, nucleic acids, and other biomolecules) varies by EV source. While measurement of these individual molecular classes can be used to estimate EV abundance, these values do not necessarily perfectly correlate with EV concentration, nor is there universality across source materials; thus, they should not be used as a sole measure of EV concentration.

Just as no single molecular class measurement can quantify all EVs, there are also no universal molecular 118 markers of EVs or EV subtypes. Markers must be chosen based on source- and type-specific evidence. Currently, no 119 generic marker is known to identify all EVs irrespective of source. Although several proteins have been proposed as 120 putative markers of EV biogenesis pathways (e.g., Annexin A1 (Jeppesen et al. 2019), SLC3A2, and BSG (Mathieu et 121 al. 2019) for purported ectosomes, and Lamp1 (Mathieu et al. 2021) for purported exosomes, the universality of these 122 markers is not yet clear or accepted. Note that affinity-based protocols involving the tetraspanins CD9, CD63, and 123 CD81 are not specific for exosomes as an EV subtype; using antibodies to each of these tetraspanins enriches EV 124 125 populations that do not completely overlap in molecular composition (Mathieu et al. 2021; Kowal et al. 2016). 126 Additionally, not all EVs display these tetraspanins, therefore tetraspanin enrichment does not capture all EVs.

Orthogonal methods measurements of the same parameter are unlikely to have the same biases; e.g., the derivation of diameter from optical vs. non-optical methods. Characterization of EV samples using orthogonal methods is critical to provide evidence that co-isolates are not responsible for biomarker or functional findings. Due to many EV characterization methods being either not EV specific or unable to detect all EVs, transparent reporting of methods and results is needed for reproducibility of EV data. A framework for reporting EV data has been previously

developed and updated in the form of EV-TRACK (EV-TRACK Consortium et al. 2017; Roux et al. 2020).

Standardization of EV characterization has been supported by ISEV workshops, the ISEV Rigor and Standardization
Task Forces, and ISEV position papers (Nieuwland et al. 2020; Clayton et al. 2018; Welsh, Van Der Pol, Arkesteijn,
et al. 2020).

In the following sections different approaches to EV characterization are discussed, with each section providing recommendations if that characterization approach is taken. Overall recommendations for characterization, regardless of the method, are summarised below.

140 **Recommendations**

- Each EV preparation should be defined by quantitative measures of the source of EVs (e.g., number of secreting cells, volume of biofluid, mass of tissue).
- Approximations of the abundance of EVs should be made (particle number, protein, and/or lipid content).
- EV preparations should be tested for the presence of components associated with EV subtypes or EVs generically, depending on desired specificity one wishes to achieve.
- Establish the degree to which non-vesicular, co-isolated components are present.
- Provide an indication of the instrument/method limit of detection (LOD) when EVs are characterized with quantitative metrics.
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150 **5.1 Quantification of particle number concentration**

EV number can be used along with volume measurement to define the number concentration (in particles/mL), a
metric that is widely reported and used for assay input standardization, assay output measurements, and *in vivo* dosing.
However, it is often unreliable, since many techniques lack specificity for EVs and sensitivity for all EVs.

154The ISEV Rigor and Standardization EV Reference Material Task Force recently outlined the considerations155in measurement techniques, along with the challenges faced by the field in moving towards traceable measurements,

156 for the development and reporting of well-characterized EV reference materials (Welsh, van der Pol, Bettin, et al.

157 2020). A key highlight of this work is the need to report assay LOD, allowing others to validate findings irrespective

158 of the sensitivity limit. Note that reported EV concentration in blood plasma spans six orders of magnitude depending

- on the measurement method (Johnsen et al. 2019). Greater confidence in EV concentration measurements may be 159 achieved by using orthogonal methods, each with defined LODs, e.g., detecting light scattering intensity. fluorescence 160 intensity, and physical size, since orthogonal methods do not share the same measurement limitations (Arab et al. 161 2021; Silva et al. 2021). For example, for resistive pulse sensing (RPS) techniques that are calibrated with size-162 standards, a LOD can be reported in diameter. The lower LOD for RPS will most likely be due to sensitivity 163 limitations, while the upper LOD will be influenced by the pore size. For optical techniques such as flow cytometry, 164 the LOD may be reported in diameter, derived from light-scattering optical models, or molecules of equivalent soluble 165 fluorophore (MESF), derived from fluorescence intensities. These approaches result in concordant data across 166 instruments and sensitivities (Welsh, Van Der Pol, Arkesteijn, et al. 2020; van der Pol, Sturk, et al. 2018; Welsh, 167 Jones, and Tang 2020). Currently, there is no method to derive a traceable LOD for nanoparticle tracking analysis 168 (NTA), DLS, or imaging flow cytometry, due to the number of variables involved in particle detectability. Techniques 169 that output concentration measurements without any phenotypic characterization, such as the use of membrane dyes, 170 can lead to overestimation of EV concentration due to dye self-aggregation and an inability to differentiate between 171 EVs and other co-isolates (Takov, Yellon, and Davidson 2017). A membrane dye lacking these problems could lead to 172 underestimation unless it universally stained all EVs, irrespective of composition and derivation, and such a dve has 173 174 not yet been reported. Further instrument and assay-specific recommendations can be found in Section 6.
- For techniques that cannot differentiate EVs from other potential co-isolates or suspension contaminates, it is recommended that concentration be reported as 'particle or EP concentration' and not 'EV concentration', regardless of upstream separation steps.

179 **Recommendations**

- Report the LOD of each assay, or state that it is not quantifiable or known.
- Where possible, report data from dilution series to demonstrate that concentration derivations were in the linear region of system measurement.
- Where possible, use orthogonal methods to determine particle number.
- Unless methods are highly specific for EVs, the output of these measures should be described as pertaining to "particles" or "EPs."
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187 **5.2 Quantification of particle size**

Measurements of EV size (in nm radius or diameter) rely on assumptions, such as of sphericity or mobility, and output 188 can be influenced by upstream variables (Tian et al. 2020). Common high-throughput methods assume that EVs are 189 spherical. These include flow cytometry, NTA, RPS, multi-angle light scattering, and dynamic light scattering (DLS). 190 While 'size' and 'diameter' are often used interchangeably between measurement methodologies, the way in which 191 192 they are derived can also result in consistent differences in measurement techniques. For example, techniques relying 193 on the mobility of particles, such as NTA or DLS, measure hydrodynamic diameter, resulting in an overestimation of 194 size compared with an imaging method such as cryo-EM (Skliar et al. 2018; Chernyshev et al. 2015). Few if any 195 methods are able to measure EV size accurately throughout the entire possible EV diameter range, from tens of nanometers to microns. For example, while high-resolution imaging by cryo-EM is one of the most accurate methods 196 (Yuana et al. 2013), it is relatively low-throughput, and many larger EVs that tend to be orders of magnitude less 197 abundant may not be quantified. The ability to quantify low contrast EVs below 100 nm may also be a limiting factor. 198

As more researchers use dedicated single-particle techniques with increased sensitivity, it is becoming increasingly clear that many EV preparations display an asymmetric right-skewed distribution, e.g., a log-normal distribution, with the majority of EVs <100 nm in diameter (Dong et al. 2020; Lennon et al. 2019; Tian et al. 2020; Bachurski et al. 2019; Tian et al. 2018; van der Pol, Coumans, Grootemaat, et al. 2014). Most single-particle analysis techniques cannot resolve the full population of EVs, so the detected EV diameter distribution should be shared, not just a summary metric such as mean, mode, or median size, which can be easily skewed depending on the LOD and the asymmetric size distribution (Welsh, van der Pol, Bettin, et al. 2020). Be aware that the modal size statistic, as

- 206 measured, e.g., by NTA for low refractive index particles, may better approximate the instrument LOD than the true
- 207 modal diameter of the EV population (Bachurski et al. 2019). Techniques using software with proprietary algorithms
- to determine particle diameter may also result in variation between software versions or software platforms (van der
 Pol, Coumans, Grootemaat, et al. 2014); software and version should therefore be reported. Techniques deriving size
- for refractive index assumptions may result in variation due to differing compositions and cargo. Derivation of size
- from fluorescent probes, such as membrane intercalating dyes, may result in variation due to different dye
- 212 intercalation based on different membrane lipid compositions. For techniques that cannot differentiate EVs from co-
- 213 isolates/contaminants, it is recommended that diameter be reported as 'particle' or 'EP' diameter and not 'EV
- 214 diameter', regardless of upstream separation steps.
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216 **Recommendations**

- Where possible, make orthogonal measurements to increase confidence in size distribution.
- EV diameter distribution of a population should be shared, not just mean, mode, or median.
- Consider the LOD of the method chosen and how this may influence the data.
- Report instrument settings, software platforms and versions, and possible influence of measurement reagents, especially intercalating dye.
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223 5.3 Quantification of total protein

Total protein (in µg, or µg mL-1 for concentration) in an EV preparation can be approximated by colorimetric assays, fluorometric assays, global protein stain on SDS-PAGE, or absorbance readings, each with differing sensitivities and accuracies (Vergauwen et al. 2017). As a bulk analysis technique, total protein quantification often overestimates EV concentration due to co-isolated protein, especially for less specific methods of EV separation or complex biofluids. Conversely, highly purified, low-yield EV preparations may challenge assay sensitivity. Since measured protein concentration may vary depending upon whether intact or disrupted EVs are measured, details of physical disruption and the nature and concentration of any detergent should be indicated.

Protein concentration as a surrogate of EV concentration should be used with caution and is generally not recommended, as enrichment of some proteins per EV may occur with different cellular phenotypes or stimulations. Since protein:particle ratios also depend on the LODs lower concentration limit of detection or lower size limit of detection of each assay/instrument, it is recommended to provide absolute protein and particle concentrations separately if ratios are reported.

237 **Recommendations**

- Report output by "particles" or "EPs" unless evidence of upstream processing is highly specific for EVs.
- Report the lower concentration limit of detection of each assay to facilitate interpretation.
- For ratios, report the original constituent measurements, not just the ratio.
- Protein concentration should be within the linear range of the reference curve, which should also be reported.
- Report whether intact or disrupted preparations are used.

243 5.4 Quantification of total lipids

Total lipid quantification of EV samples can be achieved by colorimetric assays (Visnovitz et al. 2019), fluorescence of membrane intercalating dyes, total reflection Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), or chromatography (Mihaly et al. 2017). However, intercalating dye methods and FTIR may be insufficiently sensitive for small amounts of EVs, and some methods require highly specialized equipment. It remains unknown whether these techniques detect all EVs independent of lipid composition. Total lipid measurements may overestimate EVs due to co-isolated NVEPs such as lipoproteins.

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251 **Recommendations**

- Consider the LOD of your assay.
- Consider how co-isolated NVEPs may influence your measurement.

254 **5.5 Quantification of total RNA**

RNA is a frequently studied EV-associated molecule (see Section 6.5), so basic characterization of EV preparations 255 may include total RNA quantification as a quality control component or for normalization in profiling and functional 256 257 studies. Ouantification of total EV RNA can be done by capillary electrophoresis and other methods. However, using 258 total RNA as a surrogate for EV concentration or purity is difficult to recommend due to vastly more abundant extra-EV RNA in many EV sources. Some methods of RNA quantification do not distinguish between RNA and DNA. 259 Isolation kits have also been demonstrated to influence downstream results (Eldh et al. 2012). An early ISEV RNA 260 position paper recommended the use of sensitive techniques such as Agilent Bioanalyzer pico chip or Quant-iT 261 RiboGreen RNA Assay for EV RNA quantification over less sensitive methods such as NanoDrop (Hill et al. 2013). 262 However, several nucleic acids dves, such as RiboGreen, are not specific for RNA over DNA. Additionally, small 263 RNAs require specialized Bioanalyzer kits. Other sensitive methods include the Oubit microRNA Assay kit, which 264 has sensitivity for small RNAs. Pre-treatment with RNase-free DNase may be useful for accurate RNA quantification 265 since many techniques are sensitive to DNA contamination. However, DNase treatment may not completely remove 266 all DNA contamination (Verwilt et al. 2020). 267

269 **Recommendations**

- Consider the ability of your assay to discriminate between RNA and DNA, and the limits of detection of your chosen method.
- Report any enzymatic pre-treatments of the sample, e.g., with DNase.

273 5.6 Characterization of EV morphology

EV morphology is currently best assessed for smaller EVs using high-resolution imaging techniques such as: scanning 274 electron microscopy (SEM) (Cavallaro, Hååg, et al. 2021), transmission electron microscopy (TEM) (Théry et al. 275 2006), cryo-EM (Stoner et al. 2016; Wu, Deng, and Klinke 2015; Arraud et al. 2014); and scanning-probe microscopy 276 (SPM), including atomic force microscopy (AFM) (Sharma et al. 2011). EVs that are much larger than the light 277 diffraction limit (\gtrsim 200 nm diameter) might be assessed by conventional light microscopy. These techniques are not 278 necessarily interchangeable or capable of attaining comparable image quality. For example, desiccated conditions may 279 cause EVs to form an artefactual cup shape, not seen under hydrated conditions. Imaging techniques may allow 280 assessment of EV purity, at least at the particle level, if they can visualize co-isolated NVEPs equally well. Imaging 281 282 techniques are often limited by low throughput and the potential for bias based on field-of-view selection (Rikkert et 283 al. 2019).

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285 **Recommendations**

Irrespective of imaging technique, report all experimental details. These include the instrument, software
 version, acquisition and analysis settings, sample preparation processes, how the imaged areas were selected,
 and controls and calibration information where relevant. Further details can be found in Section 6.4.1 and
 6.4.4.

290 **5.7** Characterization of EVs by protein composition

Because of the heterogeneity of EVs, MISEV2023, like MISEV2018, cannot recommend molecular markers of specific EV subtypes. MISEV2023 recommends the five-component framework introduced in MISEV2018 for reporting claims about the protein content of EVs (Table 3). Categories 1 and 2 assess the presence of EVs features. Category 3 assesses purity from common contaminants. Categories 4 and 5 provide additional information on possible intracellular origins of EVs (4) or co-isolates (5). Ideally, enrichment or depletion of markers in EV preparations versus unfractionated source material should be shown. To avoid perceived restrictions on which EV proteins should

be analyzed, MISEV2023 gives only a few nominative examples (**Table 3**). Other putative marker proteins can be

assigned to one of the categories using databases such as Uniprot (<u>https://www.uniprot.org/</u>), where the section

299 "Subcellular location" indicates subcellular compartments or extracellular location, and "features" indicates

300 topological and transmembrane domains. Although these categories apply to EVs regardless of analysis method, some

301 of these markers may not be technically usable in some single-EV analysis techniques, which may require other

controls. A variety of methods exist to determine the presence of protein markers. The sensitivity, specificity, and
 reliability of these methods can vary. Current assay- and instrument-specific reporting considerations are outlined in

- **Section 6**.
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306 **Recommendation**

Utilize the five-component framework (Table 3) for reporting claims about EV protein content.

308 5.8 Non-protein markers of EVs

Non-protein markers, such as phosphatidylserine, glycans, or specific nucleic acids, are seldom EV-specific but in 309 some cases may add support for the presence of a lipid bilayer or cytosolic components. Co-localization with protein 310 311 markers may also provide stronger evidence for the presence of EVs, for example a membrane-intercalating dye and a tetraspanin-positive event, especially for single-particle measurements. Non-protein markers may be detected directly 312 with techniques such as lipid mass spectrometry or Raman spectroscopy (Section 6.7), or indirectly using fluorescent 313 probes such as membrane labels or intraluminal dyes. Recommendations for the reporting of EV labelling with non-314 protein markers is outlined in Section 6.6. The non-EV-specificity of most non-protein component markers urges 315 caution. Membrane dyes may complex with any lipids, including those of NVEPs; dyes that are activated by 316 intraluminal enzymes such as esterases may not be present in all EV preparations or subtypes; nucleic acid dyes have 317 been used for EVs, but recommendations on controls and specificity are still needed (Liu et al. 2022). 318

320 **Recommendations**:

• If non-protein markers are used, consider using protein colocalization.

322 **5.9 Localization of EV-associated components**

EV-associated components such as proteins, nucleic acids, and glycans, may be luminal, in the membrane, or external to the EV. Knowledge of topology may be important for understanding the biology. For example, must an EV fuse with a recipient cell to deliver a luminal cargo, or can the EV simply present a surface-associated molecule to a receptor? The location of putative active components should therefore be determined by performing mild digestions, permeabilizations, or affinity reagent accessibility by adopting or adapting previously published methods (Sharma et al. 2010; Mateescu et al. 2017; McKenzie et al. 2016; Lai et al. 2015; Cvjetkovic et al. 2016; Sung and Weaver 2017; Osteikoetxea et al. 2015; Bonsergent and Lavieu 2019).

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331 **Recommendations:**

- Consider how topology can be determined in method design.
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Consensus: 72.3% (722) of MISEV2023 survey respondents agreed "completely," and 27.0% (269) agreed "mostly" with Section 5: EV characterization. 0.3% (3) "mostly" disagreed, and 0.4% (4) stated that they had no opinion and/or expertise. No respondents disagreed "completely."

6 Technique-specific reporting considerations for EV characterization

As utilization and expertise has expanded across a broad range of EV detection assays and instrumentation, the

identification of pertinent reporting criteria has also grown to ensure reliable and reproducible interpretation of data. A

- 340 collated list of minimal assay and instrument-specific reporting considerations are detailed here. These are generally 341 applicable irrespective of experiment design. The techniques listed in the following section are not exhaustive, and
- many detection technologies are under development or being actively researched. The techniques listed are, however,

all commercially available, with existing literature from multiple researchers. These recommendations are not
 exhaustive, and further criteria are likely required due to subjective experimental parameters.

345 6.1 Flow cytometry-based methods

346 6.1.1 Bead-based flow cytometry

347 Bead-based flow cytometry has been used widely to interrogate EV surface proteins. Large beads capture particles 348 regardless of their surface composition (e.g., surfactant-free aldehyde/sulphate beads) (Théry et al. 2006), or antibody-349 conjugated beads capture particles exposing the corresponding antigen. Commercially available EV multiplex kits allow interrogation of 30 or more surface antigens (Wiklander et al. 2018; Koliha et al. 2016). After capture, bead-350 351 associated particles are labelled with a fluorescently conjugated affinity reagent (or mixture of several) for detection. Differences in staining intensity are semi-quantitative only, since signal derives from multiple particles captured by 352 individual beads. A difference in signal intensity might thus mean different particle concentration, epitope density, 353 diameter distribution, or relative abundances of EV subsets. 354

When reporting bead-based approaches, controls should include isotypes as detection antibodies, or isotype-355 conjugated capture beads, and capture beads with detection antibody alone (for antibody-coated capture beads). 356 Multiple EV input concentrations may be used to demonstrate titration of signal and rule out non-specific binding 357 (Wiklander et al. 2018; Welsh et al. 2022). Stained beads as a percentage is not a valid statistic; reporting normalized 358 bead median fluorescence intensities is recommended (Welsh et al. 2022). Reporting data and median fluorescent 359 intensity statistics in molecules of equivalent soluble fluorophore (MESF) (as with single EV flow cytometry) from 360 singlet gated beads is recommended to allow standardization of data across instrument platforms and settings. If 361 preparing beads in-house, reagents, and conjugation chemistry should be reported, while for commercial capture bead 362 reagents, catalogue and lot numbers should be reported. Other reporting parameters include: total bead number, the 363 sample-bead incubation time, post-bead incubation wash methodology, detection reagent staining time, and post-364 365 staining wash methodology.

367 **Recommendations:**

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- Controls should include isotypes as detection antibodies, or isotype-conjugated capture beads, and capture beads with detection antibody alone (for antibody-coated capture beads).
 - Multiple input EV concentrations should be used to demonstrate titration of signal.
 - If making beads, reagents, and conjugation chemistry should be reported. For commercial capture beads reagent catalogue and lot numbers should be reported.
 - Report normalized bead median fluorescence intensities.
 - Report data and median fluorescent intensity statistics in molecules of equivalent soluble fluorophore (MESF) (as with single EV flow cytometry) from singlet gated beads.
 - Report full and detailed methodology.

377 6.1.2 Single-EV flow cytometry

Flow cytometry is an optical technique that has demonstrated detection of vesicles down to ~40 nm in specialized 378 379 cases (Zhu et al. 2014) and ~100 nm using many modern conventional cytometers by light scatter and fluorescence 380 (Stoner et al. 2016; Sandau et al. 2020; Welsh, Killingsworth, et al. 2021; Morales-Kastresana et al. 2019). Through calibration of data, flow cytometry has been demonstrated to be capable of characterizing particle diameter (Stoner et 381 al. 2016; van der Pol, de Rond, et al. 2018; Welsh, Horak, et al. 2020; Tian et al. 2020), epitope abundance (Gorgens 382 383 et al. 2019; Welsh, Jones, and Tang 2020), epitope density (Welsh, Jones, and Tang 2020), effective refractive index (van der Pol, de Rond, et al. 2018; Pleet et al. 2023), and number concentration within standardized size ranges (van 384 385 der Pol, Sturk, et al. 2018). In 2023, a tri-society working group (EV Flow Cytometry Working Group) initiative involving the International Society for Extracellular Vesicles, International Society for Advancement of Cytometry, 386 387 International Society for Thrombosis & Haemostasis, published a single-EV flow cytometry compendium to comprehensively address the considerations for developing a single-EV flow cytometry assay (Welsh et al. 2023). 388

Calibration of fluorescent and light scatter parameters is critical for interpretation and replication of single-EV flow cytometry results. If particle concentrations are reported using single-EV flow cytometry, define the upper and lower LOD to allow replication and interpretation of data using orthogonal techniques. Currently, imaging cytometers use a dynamic triggering method that makes determination of the lower LOD difficult to define and therefore standardize.

In 2020, a comprehensive experiment and reporting framework was developed (MIFlowCyt-EV) and published 394 as a position paper by the EV Flow Cytometry Working Group (van der Pol, Welsh, and Nieuwland 2022; Welsh, 395 Tang, et al. 2021; Welsh, Van Der Pol, Arkesteijn, et al. 2020). The MIFlowCyt-EV reporting framework is split into 396 categories of: preanalytical variables and experimental design, sample preparation, assay controls, instrument 397 calibration & data acquisition, EV characterization, FC data reporting, and FC data sharing. This reporting framework 398 and learning resources for implementing the MIFlowCyt-EV framework can be found on the EV Flow Cytometry 399 Working Group website (www.evflowcytometry.org). Complete the MIFlowCyt-EV spreadsheet and attach it as 400 supplementary material for any manuscript with single-EV flow cytometry. The MIFlowCyt-EV framework is 401 applicable to all flow cytometers, including conventional, spectral, imaging, and single-photon-detecting cytometers. 402

404 **Recommendations**

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- Refer to the ISEV-ISAC-ISTH MIFlowCyt-EV framework Position Paper and utilize the reporting framework as supplementary material for any manuscript utilizing single-EV flow cytometry.
- Ensure correct calibration of volume and fluorescent and light scatter parameters.
- Define upper and lower limits of detection to allow others to validate your work.

409 6.2 Genetic protein tagging

EV proteins can be genetically labelled by introducing a genetic construct from which a tag, such as GFP, is ultimately 410 co-translated with a protein or protein domain of interest (Mittelbrunn et al. 2011; Joshi et al. 2020; Heusermann et al. 411 2016; Corso et al. 2019). The tagged protein may be chosen based on its status as a general EV or EV subtype marker 412 (Section 5.7), and numerous markers have been labelled (Dooley et al. 2021; Corso et al. 2019). Tagged proteins have 413 been used to interrogate EV/subtype release and uptake pathways (Mathieu et al. 2019; Mathieu et al. 2021) and to 414 enable overall biodistribution and pharmacokinetics studies. Importantly, the tag itself or alterations in expression of 415 the tagged protein may affect EV biogenesis (Fan et al. 2020), loading, release, or function, so unlabelled EVs are 416 recommended as a control to assess these possibilities. The fusion protein may also affect subcellular localization or 417 cellular functions. Localization of the chimeric vs wildtype protein should be confirmed. Certain tags (e.g., GFP) may 418 be subject to quenching in acidic compartments (Corrigan et al. 2014). Construct maps should be provided and, where 419 possible, plasmids deposited in Addgene (www.addgene.org) or other repositories. 420

421 422 **Recommendations**

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- Carefully consider the selection of the tagged protein and its suitability as an EV or EV subtype marker.
- Assess the subcellular localization and function of the chimeric vs wildtype protein in the cell and the EV by
 comparing engineered and wildtype cells and labelled/unlabelled EVs.
 - Report construct maps and deposit plasmids with a repository.

427 6.3 Mass spectrometry proteomics

Mass spectrometry (MS) measures mass-to-charge ratio of molecules and, in EV studies, is commonly used to 428 429 detect and characterizes EV-associated proteins in both discovery and targeted applications (Pocsfalvi, Stanly, Vilasi, et al. 2016; Sodar et al. 2017; Aebersold and Mann 2003; Hoshino et al. 2020). Targeted analyses are typically 430 431 performed on a triple quadrupole (QQQ) liquid chromatography (LC)-MS platform, while untargeted proteomics is 432 commonly performed using Time-of-Flight (ToF) or Orbitrap MS platforms (Liebler and Zimmerman 2013). Targeted and untargeted proteomic approaches have nuances in terms of applications, advantages, and limitations in sample 433 processing, data acquisition, and analysis (Granvogl, Ploscher, and Eichacker 2007; Klont et al. 2018). Untargeted 434 435 proteomic studies are used to identify all detectable ions within the sample, whether from EV-related proteins or

contaminant matrix proteins. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the sample protein 436 composition and is ideal for applications such as biomarker discovery (Nakayasu et al. 2021). For characterization of 437 MISEV EV purity (Category 1, 2) and matrix contamination (Category 3) markers (Section 5.7), targeted peptide 438 analysis may be more suitable, demonstrating the presence or absence of each analyte above a pre-specified detection 439 threshold. It can also quantify absolute protein abundance. Multiplexing, e.g., as in LC-MS workflows, can provide 440 441 high sensitivity for limited sample volumes, such as for samples from clinical trials (Newman, Useckaite, and Rowland 2022). Targeted proteomics may be more suitable to quantify changes in protein abundances, such as in a 442 disease or therapeutic intervention (Rodrigues et al. 2021; Pocsfalvi, Stanly, Fiume, and Vékey 2016). Inclusion of 443 stable isotope labelled (SIL) peptide standards enables absolute quantification of the corresponding endogenous 444 analyte when used in combination with 'light' peptide calibrators prepared in a matched matrix (Liebler and 445 Zimmerman 2013). 446

Instrument settings, including collision energy, gas flow and temperature, and capillary voltage, are platform 447 and analyte-specific and, as such, should be optimized and then kept constant for the duration of a project. MS 448 instruments are sensitive to contamination by ion-pairing reagents, buffer salts, and detergents, reducing sensitivity 449 and assay performance. As such, EV peptide samples for targeted LC-MS analysis should be prepared in low-salt 450 buffer / MS-compatible solvent matrix and an appropriate concentration of SIL peptide standard. Positive controls 451 452 containing proteins of interest and negative controls, such as EVs from alternative species or cell lysates not 453 expressing a protein of interest, should be included in targeted analyses (Abbatiello et al. 2013; Bereman 2015; Nakavasu et al. 2021). Report the sequences of target peptides and the strategy for peptide selection. The linearity of 454 response and limits of detection and quantification should be defined using synthetic light and heavy-labelled peptides 455 spiked into an appropriate matrix. Report normalization, e.g., by total protein, volume of starting material, or particle 456 count from which proteins were digested and injected for MS analysis. When reporting results from either targeted or 457 untargeted proteomic studies, follow the Minimal Information About a Proteomic Experiment (MIAPE) guidelines for 458 harmonization of methodology and rigor/reproducibility (Kreimer et al. 2015; Gandham et al. 2020; Taylor et al. 459 2007). All sample preparation techniques should be reported with reproducible experimental descriptions for each 460 step. All data software and versions used should be reported to understand how data were processed. Filters, scores, 461 and confidence levels for both identifications and quantitation should also be reported, as well as the method used for 462 quantitation if relevant (Martinez-Bartolome et al. 2013). Data and metadata should be uploaded to a data repository to 463 ensure that data generation and reporting remain rigorous and potentially reproducible for EV experiments. 464

466 **Recommendations**

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- Optimize instrument settings and keep them constant for the duration of a project.
- In targeted LC-MS protein analyses, include both positive controls (containing proteins of interest) and negative controls, such as EVs from alternative species or cell lysates not expressing a protein of interest.
- Spike SIL peptide standards into the EV matrix to assess matrix effects and to demonstrate the concordance of retention times and quantifier-to-qualifier ion transition ratios between standards and endogenous analytes.
 - For targeted MRM analyses, monitor at least one quantifier and one (preferably two) qualifier ion transitions.
- Define linearity of response and limits of detection and quantification using synthetic light and heavy-labelled
 peptides spiked into an appropriate matrix.
 - Report sequences of target peptides and the strategy for peptide selection, as well as the isotopic purity and source of synthetic peptides.
- Sample preparation techniques, including the normalisation approach used, should be reported with detailed
 experimental descriptions for each step in the workflow.
- Follow the reporting recommendations of the Minimal Information About a Proteomic Experiment (MIAPE).
- Upload data and metadata to a data repository.

481 6.4 Microscopy-based methods

482 6.4.1 Atomic force microscopy

Atomic Force Microscopy (AFM) provides label- and stain-free imaging of individual EVs and co-isolated 483 nanoparticles (Sharma, LeClaire, and Gimzewski 2018; Bordanaba-Florit et al. 2021; Obeid et al. 2019). AFM 484 485 imaging requires analytes to be deposited on a solid surface (substrate). Measurements can then be performed after either drving the sample or keeping it submerged in liquid, such as saline or cell culture media. AFM morphometry 486 can be used to obtain EV size distribution and ultrastructural details and to check for the presence and relative 487 amounts of contaminants (Paolini et al. 2016; Parisse et al. 2017; Cavallaro, Pevere, et al. 2021; Paolini et al. 2020). In 488 addition, AFM is one of the very few techniques capable of measuring single-vesicle nanomechanical properties 489 (Gautron et al. 2021; Piontek, Lira, and Roos 2021), which were found to correlate with EV identity and function 490 (Whitehead et al. 2015; Vorselen et al. 2018; Sorkin et al. 2018; LeClaire et al. 2021; Bortot et al. 2021; Ye et al. 491 2021; Romanò et al. 2022). The unique mechanical fingerprint of EVs can also be used to discriminate them from 492 NVEPs of similar size and shape (Ridolfi et al. 2020). 493

Minimal reporting requirements for the AFM imaging of EV samples comprise detailed information on the 494 495 preliminary sample deposition procedure, substrate type and pre-treatment, immobilization method, sample concentration, and deposition times, plus details on any rinsing and/or drying steps. AFM imaging mode, acquisition 496 497 conditions, and probe information including expected tip curvature radius and spring constant should also be provided. If quantitative morphometry is performed, the heuristics employed to select the measured objects, as well as the 498 499 procedure to extract morphological descriptors from them, should be described. Reporting the height of the detected particles, e.g., greater than or less than the thickness of two lipid bilayers (~8 nm) may help distinguish between 500 deformed EVs and non-EVs/collapsed EVs. In addition, EV mechanical studies should describe the assumed contact 501 mechanic model (Calò et al. 2014; Vorselen et al. 2017; Ridolfi et al. 2021), and, ideally, provide enough data for the 502 503 reader to be able to test alternative models.

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Recommendations

- Report preliminary sample deposition procedure, substrate type and pre-treatment, immobilization method, sample concentration, and deposition times, plus details on any rinsing and/or drying steps.
- Provide AFM imaging mode, acquisition conditions, and probe information, including expected tip curvature radius and spring constant.
- If quantitative morphometry is performed, describe the heuristics used to select the measured objects, as well as the procedure to extract morphological descriptors.
- EV mechanical studies should describe the assumed contact mechanic model (Calò et al. 2014; Vorselen et al. 2017; Ridolfi et al. 2021), and, ideally, provide enough data for the reader to be able to test alternative models.

514 6.4.2 Diffraction-limited fluorescence microscopy

Applications of fluorescence microscopy techniques can range from live cell imaging to single-molecule localization. 515 516 These approaches, including Total Internal Reflection Microscopy (TIRF-M), confocal microscopy, and more recently, light-sheet microscopy, have been used to evaluate cell-EV interactions such as EV release and uptake (Feng 517 518 et al. 2010; Christianson et al. 2013; Mittelbrunn et al. 2011; Joshi et al. 2020; Heusermann et al. 2016; Elgamal et al. 2020; Lai et al. 2015), as well as the composition of single EVs (Han, Kang, et al. 2021; Corso et al. 2019). As a 519 520 general consideration, since TIRF microscopy is limited to imaging the surface at the glass interface and has high signal-to-noise ratio that facilitates single molecule detection, it may be the most suitable system for analysing EV 521 content (Han, Kang, et al. 2021). Confocal and light-sheet microscopes, especially the most recent models, are capable 522 of single-molecule detection for calibration (Willy et al. 2021) and dynamic studies, but are more suitable for live cell 523 imaging experiments (Mittelbrunn et al. 2011; Elgamal et al. 2020). These methods and potential drawbacks have 524 been extensively reviewed (Colombo, Norton, and Cocucci 2021; Chuo, Chien, and Lai 2018; Gallego-Perez et al. 525

526 2016; Panagopoulou et al. 2020).

In microscopy experiments, report the type of microscope, magnification, laser power and exposure time 527 because fluorescently labelled samples have a limited number of labelled molecules. Each labelled sample can provide 528 only a finite number of photons before photobleaching, so each experiment must be optimized to maximize the 529 amount of information obtained from a limited "photon budget" (Li et al. 2015). Consequently, the sample is exposed 530 for a short time using minimal excitation to perform live-cell experiments (Coffman and Wu 2014; Heddleston et al. 531 2021) or at higher excitation power and longer camera exposure for single-molecule detection (Elgamal et al. 2020). 532 While calibration of the system is mandatory for quantitative microscopy experiments (Willy et al. 2021; Montero 533 Llopis et al. 2021), we recommend where possible to extend it to any microscopy approach to obtain unbiased 534 evaluation of sensitivity of the instrument. Calibration to a single fluorescent dye or labelled protein molecules is a 535 well-established approach that permits one to infer the total number of proteins or RNAs present on or in EVs 536 (Higginbotham et al. 2011; de Voogt, Tanenbaum, and Vader 2021) and ensure that even molecules retained in few 537 copies in EV can be detected. The software used to detect EVs should be reported including the specific parameters 538 used to threshold the object intensities. Code developed for these purposes should be deposited and made accessible to 539 the community. Available algorithms (Elgamal et al. 2020; Jaqaman et al. 2008; Aguet et al. 2013) take advantage of 540 the small size of EVs, which are in general diffraction-limited objects. These assume the same shape as the point 541 542 spread function (PSF) of the imaging system and can be approximated to a Gaussian function in confocal, TIRF, and 543 light-sheet microscopy.

545 **Recommendations**

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- Report the type of microscope, magnification, laser power, and exposure time.
- Calibration of the system is mandatory for quantitative microscopy experiments, but is also recommended for any microscopy approach to obtain unbiased evaluation of the sensitivity of the instrument.
- The software used to detect EVs should be reported, including the specific parameters used to recognize the objects and, if applicable, threshold the object intensities. Any code written for these procedures should be made publicly available.

552 6.4.3 Dynamic light scattering

DLS, also known as photon correlation spectroscopy (PCS) and quasi-elastic light scattering (QELS), is a technique 553 capable of determining the hydrodynamic diameter of sufficiently monodisperse particles in dilute aqueous 554 dispersions (Berne and Pecora 1976; Hackley and Clogston 2011; Stetefeld, McKenna, and Patel 2016; "Particle size 555 analysis — Dynamic light scattering (DLS)" 2017). DLS can be performed as a cuvette analysis or as an inline 556 analysis when connected to a fluidic pump, such as high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC). The 557 hydrodynamic diameter is defined as the diameter of a solid sphere that would exhibit the same diffusion coefficient 558 as the measured particle of interest. DLS measures the autocorrelation function of the intensity of laser light scattered 559 by multiple particles in solution. The autocorrelation function carries information about the diffusion coefficient of the 560 particles, which is related to the hydrodynamic diameter via the Stokes-Einstein theory of Brownian motion. 561

Various algorithms can be used to derive the diffusion coefficient from the measured autocorrelation function. 562 The most common method, the cumulant analysis, assumes a monodisperse size distribution, which EV samples do 563 564 not have. Other approaches, such as the CONTIN algorithm, attempt to handle the drawbacks of the cumulant analysis (Provencher 1982), but for polydisperse size distributions of EV samples (van der Pol, Coumans, Grootemaat, et al. 565 566 2014), derivation of the diffusion coefficient distribution from the autocorrelation function becomes an ill-posed 567 mathematical problem. This implies that DLS should not be used to determine quantitative properties, such as the average hydrodynamic diameter, of EV samples, unless DLS is applied to a monodisperse size fraction of EVs, such 568 as an EV sample fractionated by flow field-flow fractionation using an inline analysis. On the other hand, DLS can be 569 used to qualitatively confirm the presence of submicrometer particles and possible aggregates that may be present in 570 EV samples (Palmieri et al. 2014). In either case, please follow the recommendations on nomenclature and reporting 571 of DLS measurements from the international standard ISO 22412:2017 ("Particle size analysis - Dynamic light 572 scattering (DLS)" 2017). 573

575 Recommendations

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- DLS should not be used to determine quantitative properties, such as the average hydrodynamic diameter, of EV samples, unless applied to a monodisperse size fraction of EVs.
 - DLS can be used to qualitatively confirm the presence of submicrometer particles and possible aggregates that may be present in EV samples.
- Follow the recommendations on nomenclature and reporting of DLS measurements from the international standard ISO 22412:2017 ("Particle size analysis Dynamic light scattering (DLS)" 2017).

582 6.4.4 Electron microscopy

583 Electron microscopy (EM) variants are among the few techniques capable of detecting EVs irrespective of size. The throughput of EM, however, means that larger EVs are statistically underestimated as compared with smaller EVs 584 (van der Pol. Welsh, and Nieuwland 2022). While EV characterization by SEM (Wu, Deng, and Klinke 2015; 585 Cavallaro, Hååg, et al. 2021), TEM (van der Pol, Coumans, Grootemaat, et al. 2014), and cryo-EM (de Vrij et al. 586 2013; Linares et al. 2015; Hoog and Lotvall 2015) are all high-resolution methods, they are not necessarily 587 interchangeable or capable of providing images of comparable quality. For example, crvo-EM clearly shows the lipid 588 bilayer, better maintains EV morphology than the dehydrating conditions used to fix samples for TEM, and may be 589 more quantitative, as all particles in a given volume can be imaged, not just those that adhere to a surface (the grid). 590 TEM should be performed with a protocol adapted to EVs, which includes contrasting and embedding in a mixture of 591 uranyl compounds and methylcellulose to maintain the lipid bilayer morphology (Théry et al. 2006). SEM shows the 592 593 surface aspect of EVs of any size, but images obtained at the highest magnification required to visualize the smallest 594 EVs may be more difficult to analyze.

595 There have been limited standardization studies across EM methods to determine minimal reporting 596 requirements. For TEM, three major parameters should be reported: fixation, adsorption, and negative staining 597 methods (Rikkert et al. 2019). Fixation includes: the fixative used, its concentration, and incubation time. Adsorption 598 includes the grid material, mesh size, film type, coating, incubation time, and wash details. Negative staining details 599 should include substance, concentration, and incubation time. Both low- and high-magnification images should be 500 shared, along with selection criteria.

602 **Recommendations**

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- TEM should be performed with a protocol adapted to EVs, which includes contrasting and embedding in a mixture of uranyl compounds and methylcellulose to maintain the bilayer morphology.
- Three major criteria should be reported for any electron microscopy technique used: fixation, adsorption, and negative staining methods.
- High- and low-magnification images should be supplied for both high-resolution EV images and an assessment of the broader quality of the sample.

609 6.4.5 Nanoparticle tracking analysis

NTA, also known as single particle tracking, is a widely utilized optical technique in the EV field to estimate particle 610 size and concentration. The use of NTA to determine effective refractive index and epitope existence has also been 611 demonstrated (Gardiner et al. 2014; van der Pol, Coumans, Sturk, et al. 2014). NTA derives hydrodynamic diameter 612 by measuring a particle's diffusion coefficient, usually implementing an algorithm that reduces variation in diameter 613 distribution. It should be noted that the FTLA algorithm used on some platforms was developed to better represent 614 monodisperse mixtures, of which EVs are not, and can result in artefactual multi-modal distribution (Walker 2012; 615 616 van der Pol, Coumans, Grootemaat, et al. 2014). Currently, there is no method of determining or reporting a set LOD for NTA. Several standardization studies have been conducted comparing results between users and instruments (Hole 617 et al. 2013; Bachurski et al. 2019; Vestad et al. 2017). The use of NTA to measure the diameter distributions and 618 619 concentration of complex biofluids should be interpreted with caution due to counting of co-isolates such as lipoproteins and large protein complexes, and EVs larger than a few hundred nanometers in diameter are difficult to 620

quantify. Detection of particles with NTA can be done using light scattering, relying on refractive index and diameter,

622 or fluorescence. Fluorescence NTA depends on removal of unbound label, photobleaching resistance of the dye, and 623 the presence of detectable levels of dye per particle.

For NTA reporting, include instrument model, camera type, camera settings, laser wavelength, laser power, 624 625 software version, analysis settings, and particles per frame. As outlined in Section 5.2. NTA diameter distributions are preferred over a single diameter statistic, since NTA statistics are easily skewed by the LOD. If known, the algorithm 626 used to produce diameter distributions should be reported due to potential for differing results depending on the 627 algorithm used (Kestens et al. 2017; Walker 2012). A buffer-only control is recommended in the case of light scatter 628 or fluorescence detection modes. For fluorescent NTA, report the number of total particles in light scatter mode along 629 with the number of labelled particles in fluorescence mode, along with label removal method and a buffer/reagent 630 control to assess labelling artefacts. Report sample injection fluidics and settings if used. 631

633 **Recommendations**

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- Instrument model, camera type, camera settings, laser wavelength, laser power, software version, analysis settings, and particles per frame should be reported.
- Report NTA diameter distributions rather than a single diameter statistic.
 - If known, report the algorithm used to produce diameter distributions.
 - A buffer-only control is recommended for both light scatter and fluorescence detection modes.
- When using fluorescent NTA, it is recommended to report the number of total particles in light scatter mode,
 the number of labelled particles in fluorescence mode, along with label removal method, Use a buffer only/reagent control to assess labelling artefacts.
- Report injection fluidics and settings if used.

644 6.4.6 Single-particle interferometric reflectance imaging sensing

Combined interferometric imaging/fluorescence imaging (Daaboul et al. 2016; Dogrammatzis et al. 2021; Crescitelli, 645 646 Lasser, and Lotvall 2021; Bachurski et al. 2019) involves particle capture by affinity agents (e.g., antibodies, peptides, aptamers) onto a multiplexed array of micron-sized spots. In interference reflectance imaging sensor (IRIS) mode, 647 interference patterns from scattered light are used to derive the size and number of captured particles (Young et al. 648 2018). Converting interference to nominal size depends on refractive index (RI), which can vary across EV 649 populations (de Rond, Coumans, et al. 2018). Current SP-IRIS platforms assume a constant RI (~1.45), which may 650 result in variation across orthogonal measurements and may undersize EVs with lower RI. It is thus recommended that 651 software version and estimated refractive index parameter be reported. 652

In fluorescence mode, captured particles labelled with fluorescent probes are detected in one or more color 653 channels. Some aspects of this mode require careful consideration of calibrations and control experiments to obtain 654 rigorous results. For particles smaller than the diffraction limit, e.g., <~250 nm in diameter for visible light, validate 655 the detected events to confirm that single particles were detected, e.g., with a dilution series to ensure that 656 fluorescence intensity per particle does not scale with solution concentration. To confirm that fluorescence is 657 658 associated specifically with EVs, vesicle-disrupting surfactant treatments can be used; however, consider that surfactants can also disrupt lipoprotein particles (Botha, Handberg, and Simonsen 2022). For fluorophore detection, 659 reporting recommendations are indicated below. 660

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662 **Recommendations**

- Report details of affinity reagent(s) printed onto the chip.
- Report software version and estimated refractive index parameter.
- For particles smaller than the diffraction limit, detection of single events should be validated.
- To confirm that fluorescence is associated specifically with EVs, surfactants can be used to disrupt vesicles
 (although they may also disrupt certain NVEPs).
- For fluorophore detection, report affinity reagent (e.g., antibody clone), conjugated fluorophore type,
 incubation concentration, light-source wavelength, bandpass filter cut-offs, analysis software version, and

- 670 fluorescence cut-offs along with the method of choosing these cut-offs. Negative controls such as nonspecific 671 IgG capture spots or chips incubated with EV-depleted materials are recommended for choosing these cut-
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673 6.4.7 Super-resolution microscopy

offs.

To resolve fluorescence emitters events that are closer together than the diffraction limit of light, fluorescent super-674 resolution microscopy methods modulate the light to ensure that neighbouring molecules do not emit simultaneously. 675 A resolution 10-fold below the diffraction limit can be achieved using two main approaches: 1) stimulated emission 676 depletion (STED) (Hell and Wichmann 1994; Klar and Hell 1999), which spatially regulates activation of an ensemble 677 of fluorophores using a synchronized two-laser system with a phase plate; and 2) single molecule localization 678 microscopy (SMLM) techniques, such as (d)STORM (Rust, Bates, and Zhuang 2006; Wombacher et al. 2010) and 679 (f)PALM (Betzig et al. 2006; Hess, Giriraian, and Mason 2006), which temporally regulate stochastic activation of 680 single fluorophores. The nanometer scale resolution of STED and SMLM is well suited for detecting and 681 characterizing individual EVs and their components, including EV membranes (Nizamudeen et al. 2018; Zong et al. 682 683 2018; Sharma et al. 2020), proteins (Mondal et al. 2019; Chen et al. 2016; Zong et al. 2018; Lennon et al. 2019; Sanada et al. 2017: Wang et al. 2018: Avalos-Padilla et al. 2021: Maire et al. 2021), DNA fragments (Maire et al. 684 2021), and miRNAs (Chen et al. 2018; Oleksiuk et al. 2015). Using quantitative analysis, these methods have been 685 further used to define EV size (Mondal et al. 2019; Zong et al. 2018; Nizamudeen et al. 2018; Lennon et al. 2019; 686 Sharma et al. 2020) and to quantify protein content (Lennon et al. 2019) and number of localizations of miRNA 687 (Oleksiuk et al. 2015) and DNA fragments in EVs (Maire et al. 2021). Additionally, STED and SMLM have been 688 used to image cellular uptake (Chen et al. 2016; Chen et al. 2018; Polanco et al. 2018; Pfeiler et al. 2019; Toda et al. 689 2020) and release of EVs (Ambrose et al. 2020) or EV clusters (Valcz et al. 2019). 690

Super-resolution microscopy methods comprise tailored approaches for sample preparation, sample imaging, 691 and data analysis. To prepare samples for SMLM and STED imaging, EV membranes or cargo molecules are labelled 692 with reagents that contain appropriate photo-controllable fluorophores. Four typical strategies for labelling EVs are 693 affinity labelling, genetic labelling, covalent labelling, and uptake of lipophilic molecules/lipid analogues. Reported 694 details of labelling should include type of labelling, appropriate reagent controls and/or references, reagent 695 concentration, incubation times/buffers, and method for removal of excess fluorescent reagents). If applicable (e.g., 696 for isolated EVs), reporting should include coverslip modifications/coatings, the protocol for incubation of EVs on 697 coverslips, fixation protocol, and controls for affinity separation (e.g., isotype or non-fouling surface). Reported 698 imaging parameters should include the major microscope components: laser lines, camera, filters, objectives, and 699 other relevant optical path components. Descriptions of protocols should include detailed imaging parameters such as 700 laser powers, relevant microscope configuration, and imaging conditions (including buffer for SMLM). Reports on 701 702 multicolour imaging should detail the alignment between channels and any applied correction for chromatic aberration 703 (Hebisch et al. 2017; Churchman and Spudich 2012).

704 In STED, the resulting images consist of intensity maps, and analysis typically relies on approaches established in confocal microscopy (Gould, Hess, and Bewersdorf 2012); relevant processing/analysis parameters 705 should be reported. SMLM images are reconstructed from the determined coordinates (i.e., localizations) of single 706 molecules, and EV analysis typically employs segmentation and/or clustering algorithms (Khater, Nabi, and 707 708 Hamarneh 2020). To quantify detected molecular densities and molecular organization with SMLM, it is important to define the photophysical properties of fluorescent reporters (e.g., average number of localizations per molecule, 709 maximal dark time) (Khater, Nabi, and Hamarneh 2020). Thus, SMLM reporting should include details on image 710 processing parameters, photophysical characterization of relevant fluorescent reporters, and data analysis 711 parameters/algorithms. Newly developed analysis methods should be evaluated (e.g., using simulations or another 712 validated approach), and custom written codes should be made publicly available. 713

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715 **Recommendations**

• Reporting details of the EV labelling protocol.

- Where applicable, report coverslip modifications/coatings, the protocol for incubation of EVs on coverslips,
 fixation protocol, and controls for affinity separation.
- Report the major microscope components and imaging protocol parameters such as laser power, relevant
 microscope configuration, and imaging conditions.
- Reports on multicolor imaging should detail the alignment between channels and any applied correction for
 chromatic aberration.
- SMLM reporting should also include details of image processing parameters, photophysical characterization
 of relevant fluorescent reporters, and data analysis parameters/algorithms.
- Newly developed analysis methods should be evaluated, and custom written codes should be made publicly available.

727 6.5 Nucleic acid characterization

728 Nucleic acids (NAs) are among the most commonly assayed EV constituents because of perceived biomarker potential and functional roles. RNA has been studied much more frequently than DNA, although there are more recent 729 reports on EV DNA in intercellular communication (Clancy et al. 2022; Sansone et al. 2017) and as disease 730 biomarkers (Vagner et al. 2018; Möhrmann et al. 2018; García-Silva et al. 2019; Cambier et al. 2021; Qu et al. 2019) 731 including in microbial infections (Kameli et al. 2021; Bitto et al. 2017). Some early EV studies reported DNA inside 732 the EV lumen (Cai et al. 2013; Kahlert et al. 2014; Lee et al. 2014; Thakur et al. 2014), whereas some recent studies 733 have suggested mostly EV surface-association of DNA (Lázaro-Ibáñez et al. 2019; Maire et al. 2021; Liu et al. 2022; 734 Saari et al. 2020; Bitto et al. 2017). These seemingly contradictory findings might be due to the lack of standardized 735 methods for protecting EV surface DNA from digestion during EV separation and characterization (Lázaro-Ibáñez et 736 al. 2019). Whether the major type of EV DNA is ssDNA or dsDNA is also still debated (Lázaro-Ibáñez et al. 2019; 737 Liu et al. 2022; Thakur et al. 2014; Balai et al. 2011). 738

Challenges for RNA studies including input quantities, normalization, and sensitivity are also relevant for EV DNA research. Most characterization of EV RNAs involves one or more of: detection, identification, quantification, localization (inside or outside the EV) and enrichment (packaging). Low-input RNA sequencing (RNA-Seq) and quantitative PCR (qPCR) are commonly used to identify specific sequences in EV preparations. ISEV has previously provided guidance on aspects of EV RNA studies ranging from sample collection to bioinformatic analysis (Hill et al. 2013; Witwer et al. 2013; Soekmadji et al. 2018), as has the US NIH Extracellular RNA Communication Consortium (ERCC) (Ainsztein et al. 2015; Das et al. 2019).

746 Regardless of RNA characterization method, biases may be introduced by RNA purification and pre-assay preparations. Some RNA purification methods isolate mostly longer RNAs (>200 nt), while others are biased by 747 748 design to concentrate short RNAs. For RNA-Seq, library preparation methods may select for RNAs or inserts within a particular size range. Reverse transcription protocols may also select for specific RNAs such as polyA-tailed 749 transcripts. Tiled probe-based imaging of longer RNAs becomes less sensitive for shorter/degraded transcripts. 750 Adapter ligation-based small RNA library preparation methods optimized for miRNAs will also enrich other RNAs 751 containing 5'-phosphates and 3'-OH, while RNAs bearing different end-chemistries will be underrepresented. Highly 752 structured RNAs such as full-length tRNAs are not efficiently reverse-transcribed unless using thermostable enzymes. 753 Accurate interpretation and reporting of results thus depend on understanding and reporting techniques with enough 754 detail to assess biases. 755

Due to its ability to detect and measure small amounts of nucleic acids, reverse transcription real-time 756 quantitative PCR (qPCR) is widely used in the EV field. We recommend that qPCR experiments follow the Minimum 757 Information for Publication of Quantitative Real-Time PCR Experiments (MIOE) guidelines (Bustin et al. 2009) 758 where possible, and the ISEV EV RNA checklist in the 2017 ISEV position paper (Mateescu et al. 2017). When 759 sharing qPCR results, raw cycle of quantitation (Cq) values should be reported in addition to normalized or processed 760 data for readers to assess abundance of the target RNA and reliability of the assay. Although Cq values depend on 761 many variables and may not by themselves be informative, they tend to correlate with abundance, especially in liquid 762 samples, and where the input sample volume can be reported. Possibly, not all MIQE principles broadly apply to 763

extracellular samples. For example, when samples contain only minute amounts of carrier-specific RNA, having 764

identical input RNA levels in every sample might not always be possible. Some prefer to normalize by sample input 765

volume, given the liquid nature of extracellular samples. Normalization strategy can greatly impact interpretation of 766

the results and should be reported. Digital PCR, including droplet digital PCR (ddPCR), provides absolute 767

quantification and has been shown to improve reproducibility and accuracy of EV RNA detection compared with 768

769 conventional qPCR (Wang et al. 2019). Absolute quantification may also circumvent issues with normalization.

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771 **Recommendations**

- 772 • For qPCR-based analysis, report sequences of reverse transcription adapters or primers as well as primers and probes (where relevant) for amplification steps; experimental design with biological and technical replicates; exact cycling conditions; and data inclusion and exclusion criteria. 774
 - For RNA-Seq, report all details of nucleic acid fragmentation, reverse transcription, adapters and adapter attachment (ligation or ligation-free), amplification and multiplexing, as well as clean-up or size selection.
 - For sequencing data analysis, report pre-processing, read mapping, overlapping annotations and database • quality, quantification, and normalization/differential expression analysis.

6.6 Protein- and non-protein labelling of EVs 779

Most EV labelling reagents include fluorescence moieties, but other modes of detection are available and 780 should share similar controls. Due the small size and thus limited cargo capacity of EVs, the detection of protein and 781 non-protein markers is difficult and can easily be confounded by unbound reagents from the labelling process or co-782 783 isolates from the separation method. The degree to which unbound label requires removal increases with the 784 sensitivity of the techniques. For techniques that can detect <10 molecules of a reagent, e.g., super-resolution 785 microscopy, SP-IRIS, and single EV flow cytometry, the presence of unbound dye may easily lead to false positive 786 events.

787 Lipid dyes are routinely used to bind to/insert into the EV membrane (Feng et al. 2010; Lundy, Klinker, and Fox 2015; Stoner et al. 2016; de Rond, van der Pol, et al. 2018; Sandau et al. 2020). Lipid-specificity does not 788 guarantee EV-specificity, since NVEPs such as lipoproteins may be co-isolated and stained, and some reagents may 789 also label proteins. Supplementation with an EV protein marker is therefore recommended. Lipid labels may also self-790 aggregate (de Rond, van der Pol, et al. 2018; Pužar Dominkuš et al. 2018) and vary in affinity for EVs with different 791 membrane composition. 792

793 Protein-reactive dyes that label the EV surface (Lim et al. 2021; Roberts-Dalton et al. 2017; Tian et al. 2010) 794 may also label free protein and protein-containing NVEPs. If the EV separation method does not completely remove non-EV components, this possibility should be recognized and/or assessed. As above, a lipid marker might be used to 795 796 complement protein labelling. When protein artefacts are a possibility, a low-concentration detergent can be used to assess the lability of the EV membrane and reduction of associated signal (Gyorgy et al. 2011). 797

For antibodies, manufacturer-matched isotype controls, used at the same concentration as the specific 798 antibody, are one way to support specificity. Negative EV controls, e.g., from cells that do not express the antibody 799 epitope, are also useful controls. 800

801 In assays where purification is required after staining, procedural controls should be used to demonstrate 802 before/after consistency of the EV population, that the purification procedure did not introduce artefacts, and that the 803 dye was removed. For example:

804 1. Analyze a buffer with reagent control before and after label depletion method (e.g., SEC) to assess 805 free/aggregated label removal.

806 2. Analyze unstained EVs before and after the label depletion method to demonstrate that it does not change 807 or selectively enrich the EV population.

808 3. Analyze the reagent-stained sample after label removal and compare with unstained results (above) to 809 assess possible dye-induced changes. Staining may noticeably increase the diameter or density of small EVs in 810 particular.

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812 **Recommendations**

- Use a buffer/label-only control to identify false-positive artefacts arising from unbound label. However, labelonly artefacts are not the only potential labelling artefacts.
- For antibodies, manufacturer-matched isotype controls may be used at the same concentration as the specific antibody to evaluate binding specificity. Negative EV controls (lacking the antibody epitope) may also be used.
- Be aware that EV protein labelling methods may also label free proteins and protein-containing NVEPs, and that lipid dyes may label lipid-containing NVEPs. Ensure that the EV separation method is appropriate for the downstream analysis. If the EV separation method does not completely remove non-EV components, this possibility should be recognized and/or assessed.
 - To identify the contribution of non-EV labelling artefacts, consider using protein and lipid labelling concurrently.
- In assays where purification is required after staining, procedural controls should be used to demonstrate
 before/after consistency of the EV population, that the purification procedure did not introduce artefacts, and
 that excess dye was removed.

827 6.7 Raman spectroscopy

Raman spectroscopy (RS) is a label-free analytical optical technique capable of qualitatively and quantitatively 828 resolving the chemical composition of a small volume of a sample based on inelastically scattered photons originating 829 from the sample upon irradiation with a narrow-linewidth laser (Smith and Dent 2005). A Raman spectrum is 830 essentially a chemical fingerprint of the interrogated small volume of the sample within the focus of the laser beam. 831 RS enables chemical specific, non-destructive probing, minimal to no sample pre-processing, and it is relatively inert 832 to aqueous content of the measured sample (Smith and Dent 2005). A strategy to overcome the weak signals of RS is 833 the use of surface-enhanced Raman scattering (SERS), which is a nano plasmonic-assisted amplification derivative of 834 RS (Jones et al. 2019; Langer et al. 2020). This method uses metal nanostructures to boost Raman scattering by many 835 orders of magnitude. Both spontaneous and surface-enhanced Raman methods have demonstrated utility for basic 836 research and translational EV analyses (Smith et al. 2015; Gualerzi et al. 2017; Kwizera et al. 2018; Ma et al. 2018; 837 Lee et al. 2018; Carlomagno et al. 2021; Gualerzi et al. 2019; Rojalin et al. 2020; Park et al. 2017; Enciso-Martinez et 838 839 al. 2020).

840 Inter- and intra-device variability in Raman spectra can arise for several reasons, including laser variations and non-uniform response of each of the optical elements, including the detector, to different light energies (known as 841 spectral response). Raman systems should therefore be carefully calibrated (Raj et al. 2020). Modern commercial 842 Raman systems have automatic calibration routines, but older and lab-built systems do not, thus adding to the issue of 843 reproducibility. Several aspects of the measurement should be reported, including laser wavelength and power, 844 calibration routines, make/model of major optical components, numerical aperture and magnification of the objective 845 (if applicable), probe type and specifications (typically for non-microscope setups and measurements), and physical 846 size of the laser spot. Spectra acquisition parameters should also be mentioned, e.g., total number of spectra collected 847 on each sample or sampled spot, signal collection time per one spectrum (also called as integration or acquisition 848 time), and for scanning, the dimensions of the scanned area/volume (e.g., 100×100 area, step size of 400 nm, total 849 scanned area 40 μ m × 40 μ m). Lastly, it is recommended to report all pertinent parameters of sample preparation. As 850 EV samples are typically suspended in aqueous solutions with different concentrations of dissolved compounds, and 851 thus osmotic pressures, there is a need to consider and report the EV formulation and whether the EVs were measured 852 in suspension or dry. For example, EVs can be measured in suspension using SERS nanoprobes or dried onto a quartz 853 glass slide for RS spectra acquisition (Cameron et al. 2018). It is unclear if there is an advantage to wet vs dry 854 855 measurements (Butler et al. 2016), so both approaches are considered feasible provided that the EV sample 856 preparation steps are detailed.

Along with instrument and sample considerations, data analysis and statistical procedures can impact the endpoints and conclusions of RS studies. All data analysis software and versions should be reported. If custom-made program suites and algorithms are employed, it is recommended that the code be deposited in an online data repository for transparency and re-usability. After acquisition (and before downstream analyses), spectra that are meant to be compared with each other should be postprocessed using identical data manipulation parameters. For example, if baseline correction and/or background subtraction is implemented, all related parameters should be kept constant for all spectra. All downstream spectral analyses and further statistical testing (e.g., multivariate analysis, machine

864 learning, statistical hypothesis testing) should be reported in full and with data openly available.

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866 **Recommendations**

- Report all instrument and measurement parameters.
- Report sample preparation/application parameters including buffer composition and wet/dry measurement.
- Report data analysis software and versions. Deposit any code for custom-made program suites and algorithms in an online data repository for transparency and re-usability.
- Report downstream spectral analyses and further statistical testing.

872 6.8 Resistive pulse sensing

Resistive pulse sensing (RPS) is a non-optical technique utilizing the Coulter principle to determine the concentration 873 and diameter of particles (Hogg and Coulter 1967), along with zeta potential on some platforms. Current 874 implementations of RPS include pre-calibrated fixed pores in a microfluidic cartridge format and uncalibrated 875 stretchable pores, both with detection limits down to ~50 nm in diameter and the capability to measure particles up to 876 several microns. The use of RPS to measure the diameter distributions and concentration of EVs in complex biofluids 877 should be interpreted with caution, since co-isolates, such as lipoproteins and large protein complexes, are also 878 counted and cannot be differentiated from EVs. RPS measurements do, however, have very high concordance with 879 TEM data (van der Pol, Coumans, Grootemaat, et al. 2014). 880

When reporting RPS data it is recommended that instrument model, pore size, calibration bead diameter and 881 source, and software version be reported. For stretchable pores, the applied voltage, applied stretch, and procedure to 882 optimize settings should be shared (Coumans et al. 2014). For microfluidic RPS, appropriate dilution buffer to lower 883 the surface tension of water should be considered and reported (Cimorelli et al. 2021). As outlined in Section 5.2, it is 884 preferable to report RPS diameter distributions rather than a single diameter statistic for EV data, due to RPS statistics 885 being easily skewed by the LOD. The inclusion of buffer-only controls to identify background, along with detergent-886 lysed samples run at the same concentration to determine label events is also recommended (Osteikoetxea et al. 2015). 887 Due to RPS techniques being easily clogged by larger particles, pre-analytical steps such as centrifugation or filtration 888 889 may be used to remove larger particles. Since these approaches may alter the EV population being analyzed and affect 890 comparison with orthogonal methods, any preanalytical procedures should be clearly stated.

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892 **Recommendations**

- Report any preanalytical procedures applied prior to RPS.
- For microfluidic RPS, appropriate dilution buffer should be considered and reported.
- Include buffer-only controls and detergent-lysed samples run at the same concentration as the untreated sample.
 - Report all instrument and software details.
- Report RPS diameter distributions rather than a single diameter statistic.

899 6.9 Western blotting

900 Western blotting is a commonly used method to detect proteins in EV-containing preparations. Proteins are first 901 separated by gel electrophoresis, then transferred to a membrane and probed with affinity reagents, usually antibodies.

902 Input is often normalized by some aspect of the EV preparation (total protein, particle count) or some aspect of the EV

- 903 source (biofluid volume, cultured cell number): the former allows comparison of amounts of EV cargo between 904 similar groups of EVs, while the latter might also assess overall differences in EV production/uptake balance in the 905 source system. For cell culture EVs, cell lysates, either in specified protein amount or in cell-equivalent amounts, 906 should be loaded onto the same gel to assess enrichment/depletion in EVs versus producing cells. This comparison, 907 however, can be easily performed only for analysis of EVs from cell culture-conditioned medium, since for other 908 sources of EVs (e.g., biological samples), the source cells cannot be easily identified or recovered.
- Where possible, known antigen-positive and -negative control samples should be included beside the experimental samples. Controls for assessing the purity of the sample preparation should also be included if claiming the protein is present on or in EVs; see **Section 5.7**. Antibody information (specificity, clone, source, labelling concentration, incubation time), sample denaturing conditions, presence, and nature of reducing agent, transfer methodology, membrane type, buffers, and imaging equipment and parameters should all be reported. For transparency, it is recommended that uncropped images of Western blots (including controls and a molecular weight
- 915 ladder) be provided at a minimum as supplementary information.
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917 **Recommendations**

- Provide details of protein enrichment and quantification.
- Where possible, include antigen-positive and -negative controls
- If claiming EV-association of a protein, include measures of the purity of the EV preparation.
- Report all details of input normalization, gel electrophoresis, transfer methodology, probing, and
 imaging/analysis. These include but are not limited to antibody information, sample denaturing and reducing
 conditions, transfer methodology, membrane type, buffers, and imaging equipment and parameters.
 - Provide uncropped images of all Western blots (e.g., as supplementary information if published in a journal).
- Consensus: 70.6% (705) of MISEV2023 survey respondents agreed "completely," and 27.5% (274) agreed
 "mostly" with Section 6: Technique-specific reporting considerations for EV characterization. 0.4% (4) "mostly"
 disagreed, and 1.5% (15) stated that they had no opinion and/or expertise. No respondents disagreed "completely."

929 7 EV release and uptake

930 **7.1 Approaches to modulate EV release**

EV release can be visualized by a range of methods, including those employing fluorescent tags and dyes (Sections 931 6.2, 6.6), which permit real-time imaging [reviewed in (Verweij et al. 2021)]. MISEV2018 discussed inhibition of EV 932 933 release with a range of genetic manipulations and drugs, e.g., RAB27A/B knockdown (Ostrowski et al. 2010), neutral sphingomyelinase inhibition (Trajkovic et al. 2008), and ARRDC1 inhibition (Mackenzie et al. 2016; Wang and Lu 934 2017). More recent genetic and pharmacological manipulations are reviewed elsewhere (Dixson et al. 2023; Catalano 935 and O'Driscoll 2020; Zhang, Lu, et al. 2020). Some cellular manipulations can also stimulate EV release (Taher et al. 936 2019). While these treatments are often claimed to be specific for EVs of particular biogenesis pathways, they may 937 affect EV formation and membrane trafficking more generally. It is thus difficult to exclude an impact on other EVs 938 and/or non-EV cellular processes (Mathieu et al. 2019; Izumi 2021; Xiang et al. 2021; Puca et al. 2013). MISEV2018 939 940 highlighted the importance of identifying biogenesis machinery that is confined to particular EV subtypes, and this 941 remains a priority, with very few specific additional regulators identified. Using complementary methods to attenuate 942 and/or enhance the production of specific EV subtypes can add strength to data suggesting their association with specific functions. The resulting EVs and control preparations should be analyzed using the physical and molecular 943 944 methods described in Sections 5 and 6, with particular attention to normalization methods (e.g., based on the number/protein mass of secreting cells, or EV number, etc.), identification of unchanged as well as altered markers, 945 where possible, for specificity, and the use of multiple cell types to test whether the mechanism is generic or cell type-946 specific. 947

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949 **Recommendations**

- For genetic and pharmacological manipulations used to inhibit or stimulate EV secretion, report potential
 effects on other secretory or cell biological processes. For example, confirm that there is no change in cell
 viability, proliferation, and secretion of non-EV-associated factors.
- Where possible, assess whether inhibiting a specific EV production pathway leads to a change in other EV
 release mechanisms by assessing EV-specific cargoes or activities.
- Identification of unchanged markers and the use of appropriate normalization methods are important for
 rigorous comparative analysis of EV preparations.

957 **7.2 EV interaction with cells**

EVs can interact with target cells at different levels: binding, internalization, and fusion/content delivery. EVs contact 958 the surface of cells, which might be referred to as "EV binding." In contrast, "EV uptake" encompasses several 959 outcomes. It can mean fusion of the EV with the cell membrane and release of contents into the cytoplasm. It can also 960 mean internalization into the endocytic and/or other intracellular compartments of the cell, with or without EV-cellular 961 membrane fusion. EV-mediated effects on the recipient cell might thus be occasioned by EV binding to receptors at 962 the cell surface or internally and/or by release of contents into the cell at the surface or internally. The relative 963 964 importance of these different interactions remains unclear, even though most reports of EV function have assumed content delivery. However, EV uptake may occur only at a low rate (Bonsergent et al. 2021; Somiya and Kuroda 965 966 2021a, 2021b) in some target cells, necessitating a high ratio of EVs to target cells to visualize this process 967 (Jurgielewicz, Yao, and Stice 2020; Ragni et al. 2019).

How can these different modes of action be interrogated? Some fluorescence microscopy methods can 968 identify subcellular fluorescent events associated with cells, while flow cytometry mostly detects EV "capture" 969 without discriminating between binding and uptake. For all methods, the long-lived nature of EV labelling substances 970 may not accurately reflect the presence of EVs in target cells, lipophilic dyes might change EV properties (Section 971 6.6), and detection of downstream receptor-mediated cell signaling induced by EVs does not discriminate between 972 different modes of action. While covalently bound dyes cannot be exchanged between EVs and cell membranes 973 without fusion, lipophilic dyes can be exchanged without actual EV transfer, resulting in false positive signals 974 (Simonsen 2019). New approaches for assaying cargo delivery (including endosomal escape) have been developed 975 since MISEV2018, e.g., anti-GFP fluobodies (Joshi et al. 2020), proteolytic cargo cleavage (Perrin et al. 2021), split-976 977 luciferase reporters (Somiya and Kuroda 2021a), CRISPR-Cas9 reporters (de Jong et al. 2020), Cre reporters (Borghesan et al. 2019), trans-activator delivery (Somiya and Kuroda 2021b), and knockout of a cargo gene in 978 recipient cells (Taha et al. 2020). By labelling specific EV subtypes, blocking their biogenesis, and assaying cargo 979 delivery, it may be possible to determine how EV-target cell interaction mechanisms vary between different EV 980 subtypes and EV donor-acceptor combinations. Going forward, inhibition of specific EV ligand-receptor interactions 981 may establish discrete phenotypic effects: e.g., by genetic approaches or addition of blocking antibodies or inhibitory 982 compounds. Blockade of specific intracellular trafficking pathways will suggest which are critical for EV function. 983

985 **Recommendations**

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- Assess the suitability of the labelling/reporting system in terms of the impact on normal cellular processes, the stability of the EV-cell association, and longevity within an intracellular environment.
- Report EV:recipient cell ratios and the physiological relevance of the delivered dose.
- Report incubation conditions, exposure time, cell densities, and configuration, e.g., 2D/3D.
- Evaluate binding, uptake, and content transfer to identify critical mechanistic elements driving the cellular response(s).

Consensus: 69.6% (695) of MISEV2023 survey respondents agreed "completely," and 24.3% (243) agreed
"mostly" with Section 7: EV release and uptake. 0.2% (2) "mostly" disagreed, and 5.8% (58) stated that they had
no opinion and/or expertise. No respondents disagreed "completely."

996 8 Functional studies

997 MISEV2018 recommendations on functional studies of EVs continue to hold for MISEV2023. Because of the great 998 diversity of functional studies *in vivo* and *in vitro*, we provide only general recommendations. First, physiologically 999 informed dose-response and time-course studies are encouraged. Second, carefully selected EV negative controls are needed to assess the contribution of "background" EV activity (such as EVs present in culture medium components) 2000 and/or non-specific activity of EVs other than those of interest. For cell culture-derived EVs, this might mean 2001 unconditioned medium that has been processed in the same way as conditioned medium (i.e., to separate any EVs that 2002 may be present in culture medium components). For EVs from a specific cell type, EVs from another cell type might 2003 serve as an appropriate control. For engineered EVs, consider EVs from unmanipulated cells or cells engineered with 2004 an irrelevant component (cell engineering) or EVs that have not been modified (post-production engineering). For 2005 patient disease studies, use EVs sourced from healthy, matched, or untreated donors. Third, controls consisting of non-2006 EV-containing, EV-depleted, or enzymatically treated EV separation fractions can help to identify if a function is 2007 specific to EVs or associated with co-isolating materials. Possibly complicating this analysis, evidence has emerged 2008 since MISEV2018 for a functional role of certain loosely tethered coronal elements, as discussed in Sections 3.4 and 2009 4.7, and EV co-isolates may indeed contribute along with EVs, additively or synergistically, to effects. Finally, the 010 influence of EV separation/concentration, storage, and formulation factors on EV activity should be studied, with the 011 goal of maximizing activity. Importantly, it is not expected that all conceivable controls will be studied simultaneously 2012 in any given system. Instead, potency assays (Gimona et al. 2021; Nguyen et al. 2020) can be used (or developed) to 2013 2014 identify the most informative controls for pre-clinical and clinical studies.

016 **Recommendations**

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- Perform dose-response and time-course studies to assess specificity, kinetics, and saturability.
- Report and justify the method(s) used to normalize input.
- Evaluate negative EV controls where possible to rule out effects of "background" EVs (e.g., from culture medium) and to evaluate the specific effects of EVs from a certain source or of specific EV elements.
- Evaluate appropriate non-EV (e.g., NVEP, soluble protein) negative controls to understand the EV-association 0022 of specific activities.
 - Assess the effects of pre-analysis factors, especially storage and formulation, on EV activity.

Consensus: 71.1% (710) of MISEV2023 survey respondents agreed "completely," and 25.1% (250) agreed "mostly" with Section 8: Functional studies. 0.3% (3) "mostly" disagreed, and 0.1% (1) "completely" disagreed. 3.4% (34) stated that they had no opinion and/or expertise.

028 9 EV analysis in vivo

In vivo EV studies can provide mechanistic insights into EV release, biodistribution, pharmacokinetics, and function 029 (Verweij et al. 2021) and may be performed in a wide variety of species, including but not limited to model organisms 2030 that recapitulate aspects of human health and disease. In genetically tractable organisms, progress may be facilitated 031 by EV tags and cellular reporter systems (Section 6.2). The relative ease of genetic manipulation of invertebrate and 032 vertebrate model organisms allows hypothesis testing and specific EV labeling approaches (Gross et al. 2012; Beckett 033 et al. 2013; Budnik, Ruiz-Cañada, and Wendler 2016; Fan et al. 2020; Verweij et al. 2019), including for EV subtype-2034 specific mechanisms (Beer et al. 2018; Fan et al. 2020). Table 4 presents non-exhaustive examples of in vivo models 035 for EV studies, each of which has specific strengths and limitations. For example, enlarged endosomal compartments 036 in secondary cells of the fruit fly Drosophila melanogaster allow visualization of intraluminal vesicle biogenesis 037 (Corrigan et al. 2014; Fan et al. 2020), while larval motor neurons express multiple EV cargoes with known 038 physiological roles, such that EV regulatory mechanisms can be tested through functional assays (Walsh et al. 2021; 039 2040 Korkut et al. 2013; Koles et al. 2012). The transparent nematode Caenorhabditis elegans has also provided insights 041 into the cellular, developmental, and behavioral roles of EVs in addition to EV biogenesis (Wehman et al. 2011; Wang et al. 2014; Beer and Wehman 2017). EV separation and concentration are challenging for small invertebrates but have been reported from nematode worms (Russell et al. 2020; Nikonorova et al. 2022) and fruit flies, (Thomas et al. 2018; Tsai et al. 2019). By virtue of its transparency, the zebrafish embryo can be used for real-time biodistribution and uptake studies (Verweij et al. 2019; Hyenne et al. 2019). In contrast, larger mammalian models may be needed to recapitulate some aspects of human physiology and disease processes. A key strength of *in vivo* models is the opportunity to assess the release of physiological levels of EVs and their interaction with target cells.

Some *in vivo* studies examine endogenous EVs, usually using fluorescent (Hegvesi et al. 2022; Neckles et al. 2048 2019: Nørgård et al. 2022; Estrada et al. 2022) or bioluminescent tags (Luo et al. 2020; Gupta et al. 2020; Rufino-.049 Ramos et al. 2022). Pre-clinical studies with syngeneic models and human cancer cell line xenograft models have 2050 allowed tumor and other EVs to be specifically labelled and traced (Pucci et al. 2016; Liu et al. 2016; Driedonks et al. 051 2022: Hvenne et al. 2019: Wiklander et al. 2015). Functions have been assigned to these EVs, such as roles in 052 metastasis, by pharmacologically or genetically manipulating putative EV biogenesis regulators (Peinado et al. 2012; 053 Costa-Silva et al. 2015: Wen et al. 2016): however, see caveats on blocking biogenesis that are discussed in Section 054 7.1 and on the relationship between uptake and function discussed in Section 7.2. Attempts to assess cytoplasmic 2055 delivery of EV cargo have involved, e.g., EV-loaded mRNA for the DNA recombinase Cre and its detection in target 056 reporter cells (Zomer et al. 2015). Parabiosis, whereby the circulations of two animals are joined, permits labelled EVs 2057 2058 from one mouse to be visualized in the other (Zhang et al. 2022; Liu, Kou, et al. 2018).

Other in vivo studies introduce exogenous EVs into an organism. These EV may be unlabelled when a disease 059 or physiologic outcome is targeted and imaging is not done. For studies with imaging, EVs are often fluorescently or 2060 bioluminescently labelled (Long et al. 2017; Alexander et al. 2015; Rovo et al. 2019; Kang et al. 2021; García-Silva et 2061 al. 2021). Exogenous EVs have also been labelled, e.g., with species-specific RNAs (Ciullo et al. 2022) and by 062 substances compatible with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). X-ray computed tomography (CT) imaging, magnetic 2063 particle imaging (MPI), single-photon emission computed tomography (SPECT), or positron emission tomography 2064 (PET) (Arifin, Witwer, and Bulte 2022; Skotland et al. 2022). There are several caveats to the exogenous approach. 2065 Specific labels may affect biodistribution patterns and detectability thresholds (Lázaro-Ibáñez et al. 2021), 066 necessitating standardization (Herrmann, Wood, and Fuhrmann 2021). Exogenous EVs may also differ from 2067 endogenous EVs in route and timing of administration (bolus/continuous), dose, non-EV components of the 2068 administered preparation, and of course composition, and physiologic relevance should be carefully pondered (see 069 also Section 8) (Ridder et al. 2014). 2070

For detection and tracking endogenous and exogenous EVs, several additional technical considerations apply. *In vivo* EV tracking and *ex vivo* detection will be limited by technique-specific sensitivity and spatial resolution, e.g., a fluorescent signal may represent a single EV, clustered EVs, or non-EV labelled substances. Caveats associated with genetic labels such as the common CD63-GFP approaches are discussed in **Section 6.2** and elsewhere (Verweij et al. 2021). They include the potential disruption of protein, EV, or cellular biology through fusion protein (over)expression; possible quenching in acidic compartments; labelling of only specific EV subtypes; labelling of different EV subtypes by a specific marker in different cell types and species; and possible separation of the tag from

its host protein. A knock-in strategy, by which a fluorescently tagged fusion construct (e.g., CD63-GFP) replaces the respective EV gene in its endogenous locus, or the use of multiple EV markers, provide possible solutions to some of these problems.

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Recommendations (*Note: These recommendations are broad, as this section of MISEV2023 is meant to raise* awareness of the diversity of in vivo studies and not to make prescriptive guidelines. Innovative new approaches should thrive in diverse organisms to move the field forward.)

- Report all details of labelling and detection/imaging technologies to allow replication studies.
- For exogenous EV administration, report all parameters of administration, including anatomical site, timing (bolus/continuous), and dose.
- Consider and control for the possible effects of EV labelling on EV biodistribution, pharmacokinetics, and function.

- Consider that pharmacologic or genetic manipulations meant to block EV production *in vivo* may have offtarget consequences.
 - Consider the possibility of different behavior of endogenous and exogenous EVs.

Consensus: 65.5% (654) of MISEV2023 survey respondents agreed "completely," and 21.6% (216) agreed "mostly" with Section 9: EV analysis in vivo. 0.1% (1) "mostly" disagreed, and 12.7% (127) stated that they had no opinion and/or expertise. No respondents disagreed "completely."

10 Conclusions

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Consensus building was achieved for MISEV2023 through a lengthy process. Suggestions for the new MISEV were 098 099 gathered from the ISEV community and MISEV2018 authorship through a 2020 survey that received >750 responses (Witwer et al. 2021). A five-member MISEV2023 organizing committee was then formed during the strategic 2100 planning session of the ISEV Board of Directors in November 2020, consisting of Deborah Goberdhan, Lorraine 2101 O'Driscoll, Clotilde Théry, Joshua Welsh, and Kenneth Witwer. An initial MISEV2023 draft went through rounds of 2102 2103 review and revision by members of the ISEV board and other individuals, including task force members, who were invited by the organizing team because of their subject expertise relevant to specific sections. An exhaustive 2104 MISEV2023 survey was circulated to ~5700 EV researchers, and 1025 responses were received. Refinements were 2105 made to the manuscript by the organizing committee and invited co-authors based on these responses. The manuscript 2106 was then submitted to the Journal of Extracellular Vesicles. The journal selected more than 30 individual experts to 2107 review the manuscript, and reviews were shared with the organizing committee along with editorial suggestions. The 2108 manuscript was then revised by the organizing committee and subject experts, and the ISEV Board of Directors was 2109 consulted on matters of timing and logistics. At the request of the ISEV Board, the revised manuscript was sent via 2110 survey to all who were involved in developing the guidelines and who had indicated willingness to accept co-2111 authorship. The results of this authorship survey were used to gauge consensus on each section and to determine the 2112 final author lists before resubmission to the journal. The consensus statements at the end of Sections 1 through 9 2113 reflect the complete answers of 998 unique MISEV2023 authorship confirmation survey respondents. There were 2114 2115 1039 responses in total, including several duplicates, one triplicate, three declines, and several incomplete responses. Note that several confirmed authors did not complete the survey for reasons that were deemed valid, including 2116 2117 technical issues. MISEV2023 has compiled recommendations for EV research, from basic to advanced, state-of-the-art 2118

MISEV2023 has compiled recommendations for EV research, from basic to advanced, state-of-the-art technologies and methodologies. As such, it can serve both as a handbook for those new to EV research and also as an inspiration for more advanced science in the field. In generating this document, an overarching goal has been to reach a high degree of agreement from a large group of scientists within the EV community. As with any consensus document, not every co-author necessarily agrees with every section or every recommendation. We also recognize that new methods will appear, while some advanced techniques may become easier to use: the field is dynamic, not static. Nevertheless, we propose that MISEV2023 describes the current best practice in the field and represents the current consensus position of the extracellular vesicle community.

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122 **14 Figures**

Figure 1: Hierarchy of EP nomenclature.

Extracellular particles include vesicular and non-vesicular particles. This figure presents several distinctions that can

be made between classes of EPs, as well as examples of possible nomenclature. EP: extracellular particle; EV:
extracellular vesicle; SV: synthetic vesicle; ACDV: artificial cell-derived vesicle; NVEP: non-vesicular extracellular

- particle. See also Section 2 and Table 2.
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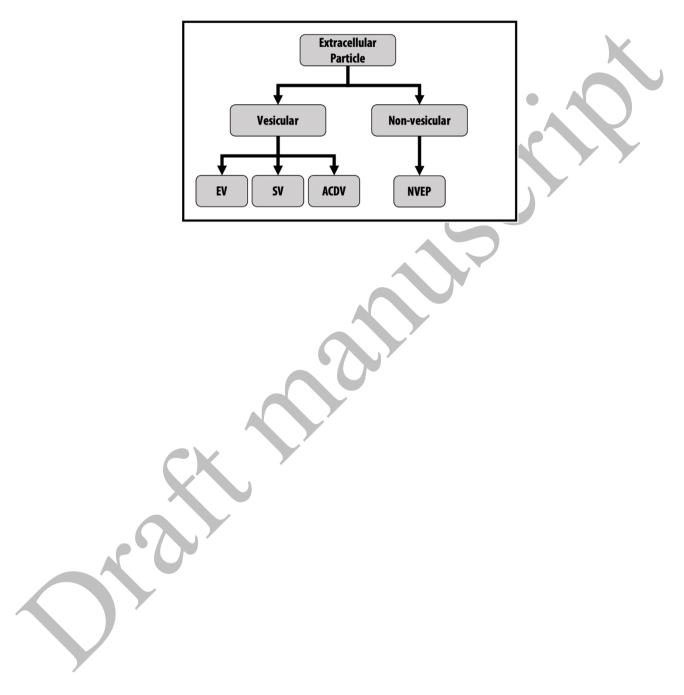
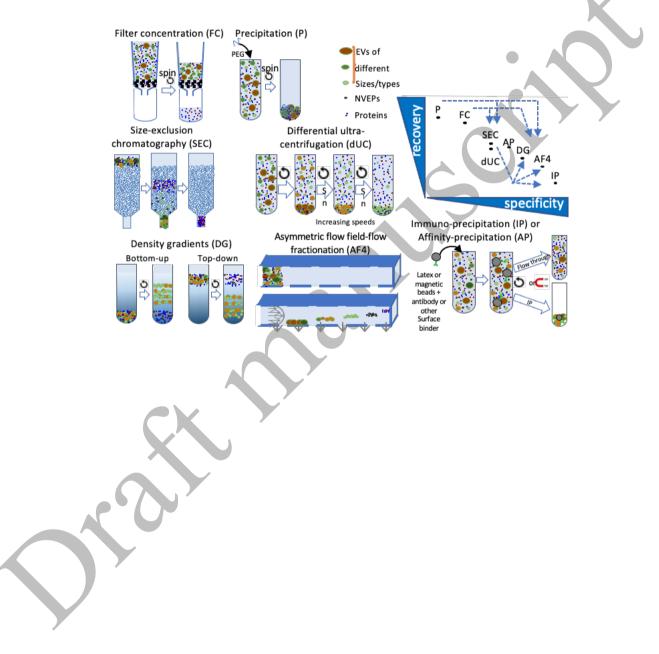


Figure 2: Position of some EV separation and concentration methods on a recovery (yield) versus specificity grid.

Dashed blue arrows indicate combinations of methods resulting in increased specificity. Specificity can be of different types: Size exclusion chromatography (SEC) separates EVs by size from many (but not all) NVEPs, but all EV types

are recovered together, while differential ultracentrifugation (dUC) separates EV subtypes based on their size/weight,

- but also co-isolates NVEPs at high speeds. Note that many "exosome purification" kits use precipitation (P), thus do
- not isolate pure exosomes or even EVs but a mixture of EPs, while some use affinity precipitation (AP), which may be
- more specific to EVs but not exosomes. Those who develop new methods should consider positioning their EV
- outcomes on such a graph.



15 Tables

Table 1: Journal of Extracellular Vesicles: ISEV position papers and statements

Title Year	Ref	
Standardization of sample collection,		
isolation and analysis methods in 2013	(Witwer et al. 2013)	
extracellular vesicle research		
ISEV position paper: extracellular		
vesicle RNA analysis and 2013	(Hill et al. 2013)	
bioinformatics		
Minimal experimental requirements	•	
for definition of extracellular vesicles		
and their functions: a position 2014	(Lotvall et al. 2014)	
statement from the International		Y Y
Society for Extracellular Vesicles		
Applying extracellular vesicles-based		
therapeutics in clinical trials – an 2015	(Lener et al. 2015)	
ISEV position paper		
Obstacles and opportunities in the		
functional analysis of extracellular 2017	(Mateescu et al. 2017)	
vesicle RNA – an ISEV position		
paper		
Minimal information for studies of		
extracellular vesicles 2018		
(MISEV2018): a position statement 2018	(Thery et al. 2018)	
of the International Society for	(110) 0 0 0 000	
Extracellular Vesicles and update of		
the MISEV2014 guidelines		
Biological membranes in EV		
biogenesis, stability, uptake, and		
cargo transfer: an ISEV position 2019	(Russell et al. 2019)	
paper arising from the ISEV		
membranes and EVs workshop		
MIFlowCyt-EV: a framework for		
standardized reporting of 2020	(Welsh, Van Der Pol, Arkesteijn, et al. 2020)	
extracellular vesicle flow cytometry	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
experiments		
Urinary extracellular vesicles: A		
position paper by the Urine Task 2021	(Erdbrügger et al. 2021)	
Force of the International Society for		
Extracellular Vesicles		

Table 2: Quick-reference card on EV nomenclature and related terms

Term	Definition	Usage
Extracellular	Particles that are released from cells, are delimited by a lipid	Recommended
vesicles (EVs)	bilayer, and cannot replicate on their own.	Recommended
Non-vesicular	Multimolecular assemblies that are released from cells and do	Recommended
extracellular	not have a lipid bilayer (non-vesicular extracellular particle	
particles (NVEPs)	fraction).	
Extracellular	Umbrella term for all particles outside the cell, including EVs	Recommended
particles (EPs)	and NVEPs.	
EV mimetic	EV-like particles that are produced through direct artificial	Recommended
	manipulation. This term is preferred over "exosome-like	
	vesicles" and similar terms that imply specific biogenesis-	
	related properties.	
Artificial cell-	EV mimetics that are produced in the laboratory under	Recommended
derived vesicles	conditions of induced cell disruption, such as extrusion.	
(ACDVs)	······	
Synthetic vesicles	EV mimetics that are synthesized de novo from molecular	Recommended
(SVs)	components or made as hybrid entities, e.g., fusions between	
()	liposomes and native EVs.	
Small EVs	Based on the diameter of the separated particles, small EVs	Recommended, but caution
(operational term)	are often described as <200 nm in diameter. However,	required
	measured diameter is related to the specific characterization	
	method.	
Large EVs	Based on the diameter of the separated particles, large EVs are	Recommended, but caution
(operational term)	often described as >200 nm in diameter. However, measured	required
	diameter is related to the specific characterization method.	
Other 'operational	Physical characteristics: e.g., diameter: small extracellular	Recommended, but caution
terms'	vesicles (sEVs), large EVs (lEVs), density: low, medium, high	required
	(defined ranges). Biochemical composition: e.g., contains a	-
	specific (macro)molecule, such as a protein. Cellular origin	
	and/or conditions under which EVs were generated: terms that	
	highlight specific aspects of biogenesis such as molecular	
	mechanisms, energy-dependence (or lack thereof), and	
	functional state of the parent cell related to stress or death.	
Exosome	Biogenesis-related term indicating origin from the endosomal	Discouraged unless
	system. Unless subcellular origin can be demonstrated, it is	subcellular origin can be
	likely that a broad population of EVs is being studied, not	demonstrated
	exosomes specifically. Exosomes represent a subtype of small	
	EVs: the diameter of intraluminal vesicles of endosomes is	
	generally smaller than 200 nm.	
Ectosome	Biogenesis-related term indicating origin from the plasma	Discouraged unless
	membrane. Unless subcellular origin can be demonstrated it is	subcellular origin can be
	likely that a broad population of EVs is being studied, not	demonstrated
	ectosomes specifically. Ectosomes can have a wide range of	
	sizes, including sizes similar to those of exosomes.	
Microvesicle	Biogenesis-related term indicating origin from the plasma	Discouraged
	membrane. However, historically, the term has often been	

	used to designate large EVs or all EVs, whatever their subcellular origin. This term can therefore lead to confusion.	
Exosome-like vesicles	As 'exosome' is a biogenesis-related term indicating origin from the endosomal system, this and similar terms are	Discouraged
	discouraged for synthesized EV mimetics.	

54 Table 3: Protein content-based EV characterization.

55 At least one protein of categories 1, 2 and 3 should be analyzed as EV hallmarks and to assess the presence of NVEPs in an EV preparation. Analysis of proteins of category 4 is

optional, as they may be present in some subtypes of EVs, or under certain conditions, with no general rule. Proteins of category 5 may bind to EVs after their release and may be

part of the recently described EV "corona". *Please note that this table provides a limited number of examples only* for proteins commonly found in mammalian cell-derived

EVs. Other proteins that fall into the given categories may be equally valid, particularly for analysis of EVs from prokaryotic (bacteria) or non-mammalian eukaryotic sources

- 59 (including parasites and plants). For most proteins of interest, their subcellular location in intracellular compartments (for categories 1 and 4), or their transmembrane or lipid-
- anchored nature (for categories 1 and 2), is provided in the Uniprot database (www.uniprot.org). XX = human gene names. XX^* or XX^{**} used for families of multiple proteins, for

Category

61 example for integrins: *ITGA** indicates any integrin alpha chain.

	Caleş	gor y	C ·	
1- Transmembrane (or GPI-anchored) proteins associated with plasma membrane and/or endosomes	2- Cytosolic proteins in EVs	3- Major components of non-EV co-isolated structures (NVEPs)	4- Transmembrane, lipid-bound and soluble proteins associated with intracellular compartments other than PM/endosomes	5- Secreted proteins recovered with EVs
All EVs Non-exhaustive examples, categorized a, b, c: by decreasing strength of membrane association.	All EVs	All EVs as purity control	Subtypes of EVs and/or pathologic/atypical state, and/or novel separation method	Corona or functional component of EVs
1a: multi-pass transmembrane proteins. Tetraspanins (CD9, CD63, CD81, CD82); other multi-pass membrane proteins (CD47; heterotrimeric G proteins GNA*, TSAP6)	2a: with lipid or membrane protein-binding ability. ESCRT-I/II/III (TSG101, CHMP*) and accessory proteins: ALIX (PDCD6IP), VPS4A/B; ARRDC1; Flotillins (FLOT1/2); caveolins (CAV*); syntenin (SDCBP)	3a: lipoproteins. Produced mostly by liver, abundant in plasma, serum. Apolipoproteins	4a: nucleus. Histones (HIST1H**); Lamin A/C (LMNA/C)	5a: blood-derived corona proteins. Partially overlapping with 3a/3b: apolipoproteins, complement, fibrinogen
1b: single-pass transmembrane proteins. Major Histocompatibility Class I or II, Integrins (ITGA*/ITGB*), transferrin receptor (TFR2); LAMP1/2; heparan sulphate proteoglycans including syndecans (SDC*); EMMPRIN (BSG); ADAM10	2b: promiscuous incorporation into EVs (and possibly NVEPs). Heat shock proteins HSC70 (HSPA8), and HSP84 (HSP90AB1) note that both are abundant also in NVEPs; cytoskeleton: actin (ACT*), tubulin (TUB*); enzymes (GAPDH)	3b: protein and protein/nucleic acid aggregates . Immunoglobulins (blood); Tamm-Horsfall protein (Uromodulin/UMOD; urine); albumin. YWAH* (14-3-3*) and AGO* (can be present	4b: mitochondria. VDAC, cytochrome C (CYC1); TOMM20	5b: cytokines and growth factors. e.g., TGFB1/2; IFNG, VEGFA, FGF1/2, PDGF*, EGF, interleukins (IL*)

	in EVs but generally more abundant in NVEPs).
1c: GPI- or lipid-anchored proteins. Glypicans (GPC1), 5'nucleotidase CD73 (NT5E), complement-binding protein CD59	3c: exomere or supermere-enriched components.4c: secretory pathway. Endoplasmic reticulum, Golgi apparatus: calnexin (CANX); Grp945c: adhesion and extracellular matrix proteins.HSP90AA/B, TGFBI, HSPA13, LDHA/B(HSP90B1); BIP (HSPA5), GM130 (GOLGA2)Fibronectin (FN1), Collagens (COL**), MFGE8; galectin3-bindi protein (LGALS3BP), CD5L; fetuin-A (AHSG)4d: others.4d: others.
	Autophagosomes, cytoskeleton LC3 (MAP1LC3A), Actinin1/4 (ACTN1/4)

63 **Table 4: Studying EV biology** *in vivo*.

A non-exhaustive list of cellular models from different organisms, with particular emphasis on those that are widely used in genetic studies. Nomenclature: genetic tractability and genetic similarity to humans are rated from: weak ("+") to strong ("++++"). Please note that citations are examples only.

<i>In vivo</i> models	EV-releasing cells or other EV source	Other specific strengths	Genetic tractability	Genetic similarity to humans
Budding yeast Saccharomyces cerevisiae	Unicellular yeast (Oliveira et al. 2010; Zhao et al. 2019)	Whole organism analysis <i>in vivo</i>	++++	+
Green alga Chlamydomonas reinhardtii	Flagellated unicellular algae (Wood et al. 2013)	Cilia biology	+++++	+
Flowering plant Arabadopsis thaliana	Leaf cells (Baldrich et al. 2019; He et al. 2021)	Plant immunity	++++	+
Nematode Caenorhabditis elegans	Embryonic cells (Wehman et al. 2011; Beer et al. 2018)	EV release mechanisms; whole organism analysis <i>in vivo</i>	++++	++
	Larval epithelial cells (Liégeois et al. 2006; Hyenne et al. 2015) Ciliated sensory neurons (Nikonorova et al. 2022; Wang et al. 2015; Clupper et al. 2022;	EV release mechanisms; whole organism analysis <i>in vivo</i> Cilia biology; whole organism analysis <i>in vivo</i> ; reproductive functions	-	
Fly Drosophila melanogaster	Razzauti and Laurent 2021) Larval wing imaginal disc (Beckett et al. 2013; Matusek et al. 2014; Gradilla et al. 2014; Gross et al. 2012)	Wnt/Hedgehøg morphogen signaling	++++	++
	Larval motor neuron axon terminals (Koles et al. 2012; Korkut et al. 2013; Walsh et al. 2021) Larval hemocytes (Tassetto, Kunitomi, and Andino 2017)	Synaptic function Adaptive immune system	-	
	Adult male secondary cells (Fan et al. 2020; Corrigan et al. 2014; Marie et al. 2023)	Large MVBs: exosome subtype biogenesis; reproductive functions		
	Adult muscle cells (Jewett et al. 2021)	Neurodegeneration	-	
Zebrafish Dario rerio	Embryonic yolk syncytial layer (Verweij et al. 2019)	Transparent embryos: EV imaging in bloodstream; target cell biodistribution; metabolic functions	+++	+++
	Adult osteoblasts (Kobayashi-Sun et al. 2020)	Fracture healing	-	
	Larval and adult cardiomyocytes (Scott et al. 2021)	Cardiovascular disease	-	
	Tumor cell lines (Hyenne et al. 2019)	Melanoma	-	
Chicken Gallus gallus domesticus	Chorioallantoic membrane (CAM) cells (Sung et al. 2015)	High-resolution live imaging of cell migration	+	+++

Mus musculus	2020)	Cell type-specific EVs in	
	2020)	plasma	
	Red blood cells; heart (Valkov et	Ischaemic heart	
	al. 2021)		
	Mouse tumor cells	Pre-clinical metastasis	
		(syngeneic grafts) (Ge et al.	
		2021; Ghoroghi et al. 2021)	
	Human tumor xenografts (Peinado	Metastasis	
	et al. 2012; Costa-Silva et al. 2015;		
	Hoshino et al. 2015; Zomer et al.		
	2016; Zomer et al. 2015)		
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73 **16 Disclosure statement:**

74 Pierre Arsène is CEO of Mursla Ltd and Chair of Exosla LtdAntonella Bongiovanni has filed the patent (PCT/EP2020/086622) related to microalgal-derived extracellular vesicles and is co-founder and CEO of the spin-off 75 76 company EVEBiofactory srl: Paul C Boutros sits on the scientific advisory boards of Sage Bionetworks, Intersect Diagnostics Inc and BioSymetrics Inc: Xandra O Breakefield is Scientific Advisor for Evox and MGB-Cannon: Edit I 77 Buzas is a member of the Scientific Advisory Boards of Sphere Gene Therapeutics Inc (Boston, MA, USA) and 78 79 ReNeuron (UK); David RF Carter is an Evox Therapeutics Ltd, employee and stock option holder; Anna Cifuentes-Rius was employed by Exopharm Ltd when the survey was conducted ACR is a shareholder of Exopharm Ltd; Rossella 80 Crescitelli has developed multiple EV-associated patents for putative clinical utilisation and they own equity in Exocure 81 Sweden AB: Andrew Devitt is Chief Technical Officer, co-founder, and director of EVolution Therapeutics: Erez Eitan 82 works and has equity in NeuroDex, a company that develops EV-based diagnostics; Samir EL Andaloussi is co-founder 83 of Evox Therapeutics; Ludwig Ermann Lundberg is an employee of BioGaia; Susanne Gabrielsson has a patent on B cell 84 derived EVs in immune therapy and is part of the Scientific Advisory Board of Anjarium Biosciences; Ernesto Gargiulo 85 is a medical writer at Novo Nordisk A/S; Bernd Giebel is a member of the Scientific Advisory Boards of Mursla Ltd, 86 ReNeuron, and PLBioscience and is the founding director of Exosla Ltd; André Görgens is a consultant for and has equity 87 interest in Evox Therapeutics (Oxford, UK) and is an inventor on several patent applications and patents related to EV 88 isolation, modification, and analytics: Ahmed GE Ibrahim owns stock in Capricor Therapeutics: Marzena Kurzawa-89 Akanbi Kurzawa-Akanbi is an academic founder and Chief Scientific Officer at ESP Diagnostics Limited ; Quentin 90 Lubart is an employee of Abbelight (Cachan, France), which constructs and sells super-resolution microscopes to 91 characterize EVs: Fabrice Lucien receives consulting fees from Mursla Bio and Early is Good; Elisa Lázaro-Ibáñez is 92 93 employed by AstraZeneca R&D; Jan Lötvall is co-founder of two companies aiming to develop EV-based therapeutics, 94 Exocure Sweden AB and Nexo Therapeutics AB, has been or is a scientific consultant for NanoSight. Clara Biotech and 95 ExoCoBio, and was Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Extracellular Vesicles during the development and publication of 96 MISEV2023; Eduardo Marbán has founder's equity in Capricor Therapeutics Inc; Maurizio Muraca is a consultant for 97 EXO Biologics (Liège, Belgium); Irina Nazarenko is a scientific adviser of CapCO Bio GmbH; D Michiel Pegtel has research funding from Takeda, Amgen, Abbvie, and Gilead, is an advisor of Y2Y BV, and has equity in Y2Y BV; Janusz 98 Rak is inventor on a patent on oncogene-carrying EVs that is licensed to NXPharmaGene; Gregory E Rice is Chief 99 Scientific Officer, Inovig Ltd; Andrew Rowland is a recipient of investigator-initiated research funding outside of the 00 scope of this publication from AstraZeneca, Boehringer Ingelheim, and Pfizer and is a recipient of speakers fees from 01 Boehringer Ingelheim and Genentech: Susmita Sahoo performs research funded by Evox Therapeutics: Randy Schekman 02 is a member of the Scientific Advisory Boards of companies involved in the analysis and diagnostic/therapeutic 03 application of various forms of synthetic or native extracellular vesicles in diagnostics: Sail (formerly Senda) 04 Biomedicines, Invaio Sciences, Mercy BioAnalytics, and Esperovax; Raymond M Schiffelers is CSO of Excytex by; 05 Johan Skog is an employee of Bio-Techne and an inventor on patents for exosome isolation and analysis; Vera A Tang is 06 a consultant for Beckman Coulter on small particle flow cytometry; Clotilde Théry is an inventor on a submitted patent on 07 therapeutic use of EVs; Edwin van der Pol is cofounder and shareholder of Exometry, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; 08 Joshua A Welsh is an inventor on patents and patent applications related to EV analysis; Oscar PB Wiklander has stock 09 options with Evox Therapeutics; Kenneth W Witwer is or has been an advisory board member of ShiftBio, Exopharm, 10 NeuroDex, NovaDip, and ReNeuron; holds NeuroDex options; privately consults as Kenneth Witwer Consulting; and 11 conducts research under a sponsored research agreement with Ionis Pharmaceuticals. 12 13

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