

Polymer aerogels based on 2-Hydroxyethyl methacrylate

Petronela Horlescu^{1*}, Corneliu S. Stan¹, Marcel Popa^{1,2}, Margaux Descamd³ and Patrick Martin³

¹ Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Environmental Protection, Gh. Asachi Technical University, 73 D. Mangeron, 700050, Iasi, Romania

² The Academy of Romanian Scientists, Splaiul Independentei no. 54, sector 5, 050094 Bucharest, Romania

³ Université d'Artois, IUT Béthune, Département Chimie, CS20819, 62408 Béthune, France
* elahorlescu@tuiasi.ro

In this work highly porous polymer aerogels were prepared using 2-Hydroxyethyl methacrylate (HEMA and N,N'-methylene bisacrylamide. In the first step HEMA monomer and the crosslinker are dissolved in water followed by the addition of a certain photoinitiator. The preparation path require an intermediary stage for obtaining a polymer cryogel which undergoes at 260K in the presence of 320 nm UV radiation as excitation source for the photoinitiated polymerization. The resulted cryogel is allowed to warm up to room temperature and then is dipped in absolute ethanol. This solvent exchange operation is repeated for 3 times till the complete removal of water trapped in the porous gel. After ageing in ethanol, the alcogel was dried under supercritical regime by exchanging the ethanol with liquid carbon dioxide followed by supercritical evaporation.

The resulted polymer aerogel (Figure 1) has an interconnected pore structure with pore size in the hundreds nanometer range. Structural investigation was performed using FTIR while the morphology of the resulted polymer aerogel was investigated using SEM and BET analysis. Thermal behavior was evaluated through thermal analysis. The newly prepared polymer aerogel could be potentially interesting for applications ranging from controlled drug release matrix to high performance thermal insulating materials or water purification.



Figure 1: Prepared cylindrical shaped polymer aerogel

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