

CONTAINER SYSTEM FOR RELEASABLY STORING A SUBSTANCE

RELATED APPLICATION

This is a new application filed under Section 26(11) of the Singapore Patents Act claiming the earlier filing date of Singapore Application No. 200804351-5
5 filed on 11 December 2006.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The field of the invention generally relates to a container system for releasably storing a substance.

BACKGROUND

10 It is often desirable to store a substance, such as a liquid, solid, gas, mixtures thereof, or the like, in a container prior to mixing the contents of the container with another material. For example, it may be desirable to package and store a compound, or compounds, in a container for shipping and/or safe storage and handling, prior to combining the compound(s) with another material. It may be desirable to package and
15 store a toxic compound in a container, prior to combining such a toxic compound with a detoxifying material. As well, it is often desirable to keep a concentrated active ingredient separate from a diluent until immediately prior to use.

Moreover, it may be desirable to store and/or ship diagnostic and/or nucleic acid preserving compositions prior to combining such a substance with a biological
20 sample.

Additionally, it may be desirable to keep a substance isolated from a donor until the donor's biological sample has been collected. This will help to prevent the donor from accidentally ingesting or spilling the substance.

It may also be desirable to inactivate pathogens/infectious particles in a
25 biological sample by combining it with a stored substance prior to storage and/or shipping and/or handling of the sample.

It may also be desirable to store and/or ship diagnostic and/or nucleic acid preserving compositions after combining such a substance with a biological sample.

There are a variety of containers for holding substances separately in such a manner that a user may open a closure to combine the substances. Typically these
5 containers are double compartment systems in which substances are stored separately and substances are combined by removal of the container closures by a user.

International PCT application WO 2003/104251 describes a container for collecting a biological sample from a subject, and subsequently mixing the collected sample with a composition intended to stabilize, preserve, or facilitate the recovery of
10 components of the sample. This container has a first region for collecting a biological sample, a second region containing a composition for preserving a nucleic acid, and a barrier between the first region and the second region, which when in a closed position, maintains the sample and composition separate. The exemplified barrier of WO 2003/104251 is a pivoting partition. Attachment of a lid to the container forces the
15 barrier to pivot from its original closed position spanning the container and thereby separating the first region and the second region, to an open position in which both regions are exposed to each other and contact between the composition contained in one region space and the biological sample contained in the other region is allowed. A drawback of this container is that it includes multiple parts (e.g., lid, vial, disk, rod, rod
20 holder), which increases the cost of manufacture of the container. Additionally, because the disk is held in place by friction fit, there must be a high degree of precision for the manufacture of the components of the container.

There remains a need for an improved container system for releasably and reliably storing a substance.

25 This background information is provided for the purpose of making known information believed by the applicant to be of possible relevance to the present invention. No admission is necessarily intended, nor should be construed, that any of the preceding information constitutes prior art against the present invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention generally relates to a container system for releasably storing a substance.

5 In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, there is provided a container system for releasably storing a substance, comprising: a) a vial comprising a first open end for receiving a sample, a second end comprising a sample storage chamber and a piercing member; and b) a lid configured to removably engage said vial, said lid comprising a reservoir for holding the substance, and a pierceable membrane sealing the substance within said reservoir, wherein, when said system is closed by
10 removable engagement of said vial with said lid, said vial and said lid are movable to a piercing position in which the piercing member disrupts the pierceable membrane to allow fluid communication between said reservoir and said chamber, wherein the chamber is sealed against leakage to the outside of the container system in the piercing position.

15 In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a container system for releasably storing a substance, comprising: a) a vial comprising a chamber for retaining a sample b) a lid comprising a reservoir for holding the substance, and a pierceable membrane sealing the substance within said reservoir; and
20 c) a funnel comprising a first open end for receiving said sample, a piercing member and a channel extending from said first open end to a second open end and being in fluid communication with said chamber, said funnel being removably attachable to said lid at said first open end and releasably or permanently attached to said vial at said second end, wherein, when said system is closed by removable attachment of said lid to said funnel, said system is movable to a piercing position in which the piercing member
25 disrupts the pierceable membrane to allow fluid communication between said reservoir and said chamber, via said channel, wherein the chamber is sealed against leakage to the outside of the container system in the piercing position.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of combining a substance with a biological sample, comprising: (a) providing a

container system as described herein; (b) providing the sample to the chamber in the vial; and (c) closing said container system by removable attachment of the lid to the vial or funnel; and (d) piercing the membrane to release said substance into said chamber by moving the system to said piercing position.

- 5 In accordance with another aspect of the present invention there is provided a kit for releasably storing a substance comprising: a) a container system as described herein; and b) instructions for the use thereof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

- 10 Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of a container system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, showing the lid and vial attached;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the interior of the lid of the container system depicted in Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the interior of the vial of the container system depicted in Figure 1;

- 15 Figure 4 is a perspective view of a container system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 is a top view of the container system depicted in Figure 4;

Figure 6 is a side view of the container system depicted in Figure 4;

Figure 7 is a side view of the container system depicted in Figure 4;

- 20 Figure 8 is a bottom view of the container system depicted in Figure 4;

Figure 9 is a cross-sectional view of the container system of Figure 4 taken along line A-A in Figure 5;

Figure 10 is a top perspective view of the container system depicted in Figure 4 showing the lid and vial separated;

Figure 11 is a bottom perspective view of the container system depicted in Figure 4 showing the lid and vial separated;

Figure 12 is a side perspective view a container system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

5 Figure 13 is a top view of the container system depicted in Figure 12;

Figure 14 is a bottom view of the container system depicted in Figure 12;

Figure 15 is a side view of the container system depicted in Figure 12;

Figure 16 is a cross-sectional view of the container system of Figure 12 taken along line B-B in Figure 15;

10 Figure 17 is a side perspective view of the container system depicted in Figure 12;

Figure 18 is a top perspective view of the container system depicted in Figure 12, showing the lid and funnel separated;

Figure 19 is a bottom side perspective view of the container system depicted in Figure 12, showing the lid and funnel separated;

15 Figure 20 is a side view of the vial and cap of the container system depicted in Figure 9;

Figure 21 is a side view of the container system depicted in Figure 12, showing the lid, funnel, and vial separated;

20 Figure 22 is a side perspective view a container system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 23 is a top perspective view of the vial portion of the container system depicted in Figure 22, showing the vial; and

Figure 24 is a cross-sectional view of the lid of the container system depicted in Figure 22.

The numbers in bold face type serve to identify the component parts that are described and referred to in relation to the drawings depicting various embodiments of the present invention. It should be noted that in describing various embodiments of the present invention, the same reference numerals have been used to identify the same or similar elements. Moreover, for the sake of simplicity, parts have been omitted from some figures of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

As will be discussed in more detail below, the present invention provides a container system for releasably storing a substance.

The container system of the present invention has fewer parts and, thus, is less expensive and/or easier to manufacture, than previous containers. Additionally, the manufacturing tolerances can be less precise for the container system of the present invention, as compared to previous containers having separable compartments. Again, this reduces manufacturing cost, and makes accidental disruption of a sealed substance less likely. Additionally, in one example of the present invention, the container system includes a removable vial which is suitable for subsequent processing of samples and/or for use in robotic systems.

The container system of the present invention comprises a vial and a lid. Optionally, the container system additionally comprises a funnel that is permanently or removably attached to the vial and that sealingly engages the lid. The lid is configured to store a substance, and subsequently release the substance from the lid when the lid is sealingly attached to the vial, or the funnel. In use, the substance stored within the lid is released into the vial when the lid is attached to the vial or the funnel, if present.

In accordance with a specific embodiment of the present invention, the lid is suitable to store a substance to stabilize, preserve or facilitate the recovery of nucleic acid from a biological sample. In accordance with a related embodiment, the vial, or the combination of the funnel and vial is suitable for the collection of a biological sample from a subject.

Referring to the Figures 1-11 and 22-24, container system **300** comprises lid **100** and vial **1**.

LID

Lid **100** releasably stores a substance. Lid **100** is generally cylindrically shaped
5 with at least one open end. Lid **100** can be a variety of shapes, as determined by the
needs or preferences of the user and/or the intended application of use. The interior of
lid **100** includes wall **104** that is positioned within lid **100** and defines reservoir **102** for
holding a substance such as a liquid, solid, semi-solid, gas, mixtures thereof and the
like. Wall **104** defines all or a portion of the perimeter of reservoir **102**. Wall **104**
10 includes sealing surface **106** which is for sealingly attaching pierceable membrane **160**

Pierceable membrane **160** (depicted in Figure 19) acts as a physical barrier to
releasably store a substance within reservoir **102**, when attached to sealing surface **106**.
Pierceable membrane **160** is made from material that is inert to the substance to be
stored within the reservoir. Pierceable membrane **160** permits little or no diffusion of
15 the substance through pierceable membrane **160** over time. Pierceable membrane **160**
is made from a material that is suitable for the intended processing, storage and/or
transportation conditions. In a specific embodiment, pierceable membrane **160** is heat
and cold resistant such that it remains intact and pierceable at temperatures ranging
from about -80°C to about +70°C. In a specific embodiment, pierceable membrane
20 **160** can be attached tightly enough to sealing surface **106** such that pierceable
membrane **160** will not be disrupted by vacuum pressures. Pierceable membrane **160**
can be made from a variety of materials including polypropylene. Desirably,
pierceable membrane **160** is made from the same material as wall **104**. The thickness
of pierceable membrane **160** can vary according to application of use, and preference
25 of the user. Desirably, pierceable membrane **160** has a thickness of about two
thousandths of an inch. However, the specific thickness of the membrane will be
determined by factors such as, nature of the substance, nature of the sample, overall
dimensions of the container system and chemical composition of the membrane.

A variety of methods of attaching pierceable membrane **160** to sealing surface **106** can be used, and is dependent on the material used to make lid **100**, the substance stored within reservoir **102**, and/or the characteristics of membrane **160**. Such methods of attachment include use of adhesive(s), heat-sealing treatment, fasteners, or any
5 combination thereof, and the like. Desirably, heat-sealing is used to attach pierceable membrane **160** to sealing surface **106**. As will be clear to the skilled worker, the type of pierceable membrane, the physical and/or chemical properties of the pierceable membrane will be dependent upon, in part, the composition to be stored. Desirably pierceable membrane **160** is inert with respect to the intended use, stored substance and
10 sample of the container system.

In the specific embodiments depicted in the Figures, lid **100** comprises internal helical threads **108** on the inner surface of outer wall **110**, which are adapted to engage external helical threads **18** on the outer surface of wall **12** on vial **1**. As would be appreciated by a skilled worker, alternative means for releasable attachment of lid **100**
15 to vial **1** can be used in the container system of the present invention, provided that lid **100** and vial **1** are movable to a piercing position, as discussed in greater detail below.

Lid **100** and reservoir **102** can be sized to accommodate a range of volumes of a substance. In the specific embodiment in which the substance is a nucleic acid preservative for use with a saliva sample, reservoir **102** accommodates about 1 ml to
20 about 4 ml of a substance. The choice of material used to manufacture lid **100** is dependent upon a number of factors including manufacturing constraints, chemical suitability, and the like. In the specific embodiment in which the substance is a nucleic acid preservative for use with a saliva sample, lid **100** is made from plastics such as polypropylene, medium-density polyethylene (MDPE), high-density polyethylene
25 (HDPE), polyethylene and the like. Desirably, lid **100** is polypropylene. The materials of lid **100** may be opaque, transparent or translucent, depending on the desired application. For example, an opaque material can be used to store a light sensitive composition(s). A transparent or translucent material is desirable if a visual (e.g., colour) indicator is present in the stored substance. Lid **100** and reservoir **102** can be
30 manufactured to include gradations to demarcate the quantity of the substance stored

within reservoir **102**. The outer surface of lid **100** can also include a labelling area for a user to identify the contents of the lid. The outer surface of lid **100** may also include a region to affix or emboss a logo and/or other markings.

5 In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, wall **104** has a generally cylindrical shape sized to fit within the interior of lid **100**. It will be clear that the shape and size of well **104** is dependent upon the intended use of the container system. Lid **100** may be constructed from a single piece of material that includes wall **104**, or wall **104** may be removably attached to lid **100**. Desirably, lid **100** is formed from a single piece of material.

10 **VIAL**

In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, vial **1** is generally cylindrically shaped with at least one open end. Vial **1** can be a variety of shapes, as determined by the needs or preferences of the user and/or application of use. The interior of vial **1** comprises chamber **2** for receiving a sample such as a liquid, solid,
15 semi-solid, mixtures thereof and the like. Desirably, chamber **2** is configured to receive a biological sample, for example a sputum sample, such as saliva.

Vial **1** comprises a first open end for receiving said sample, and a second end comprising chamber **2**. In one example, said second end is a second closed end. In another example, said second end is a second open end.

20 In one example, the width of the first open end of vial **1** is approximately equivalent to the width of the second end.

In another example, the first open end of vial **1** is generally wider than the second end vial **1**. In this example, the generally wider first open end facilitates sample collection by, for example, acting similar to a funnel.

25 In accordance with one embodiment, and as shown in Figure 22-24, container system **300** comprises a funnel fixedly attached to, or integral with, vial **1**. In the case in which the funnel is fixedly attached to, or integral with vial **1**, it can also be

characterised as a vial having a wide mouth opening for receiving a sample. The wide mouth or funnel characteristics can make it easier for a subject to provide a sample.

Vial 1 and chamber 2 can be sized to accommodate a range of volumes of a sample. In the specific embodiment in which the substance is a nucleic acid preservative for use with a saliva sample, chamber 2 accommodates about 1 ml to about 4 ml of a sample. In another specific embodiment, chamber 2 accommodates about 1 ml to about 16 ml of a sample.

Vial 1 comprises at least one piercing member 6. In the specific embodiment depicted in Figures 1-11 piercing member 6 extends from a base surface of chamber 2. In one example, piercing member 6 extends approximately perpendicular from the base. In another example, piercing member 6 is angled inwardly or outwardly toward the open end of vial 1. Alternatively, piercing member 6 extends from an interior surface of said vial. In one example, piercing member 6 extends from an interior surface of said vial and is angled inwardly or outwardly toward the open end of vial 1.

In one example, there is one piercing member 6 within chamber 2. In an alternative example, there is a plurality of piercing members 6, for example, two piercing members, three piercing members or more than three piercing members. In one example the piercing members are arranged in a generally semicircular fashion. In a specific example, in the case of three piercing members, the piercing members are arranged in a generally semicircular fashion, as depicted in Figure 9, 10 and 23.

Piercing member 6 can be approximately trapezoidal in shape and includes first cutting edge 33 having pointed end 30 at one corner of the trapezoid and a second end at a second corner of the trapezoid where cutting edge 32 intersects side wall 34. Optionally, side wall 34 also includes cutting edge 33, which extends from cutting edge 32.

Container system 300 further includes a means for sealing attachment of lid 1 to vial 100. Such sealing means act to ensure that the contents of vial 1 remain sealed with chamber 2 when lid 100 is attached to vial 1.

In one example, lid **100** and vial **1** are movable between an open position and a piercing position. In a specific example, lid **100** is initially attached to vial **1** by threadingly engaging internal and external threads **108** and **18** with a twisting motion. Initially, lid **100** and vial **1** are threadingly connected, but piercing member **6** does not
5 disrupt pierceable membrane **160** and end portion **30** of wall **12** engages sealing wall **120**. For example, as depicted in Figure 9, sealing wall **120** extends downwardly and outwardly from the interior of lid **100**. This type of sealing mechanism is similar to a wipe seal that would be well known to the skilled worker. Thus, initially, chamber **2** is maintained out of fluid communication with reservoir **102** by pierceable membrane
10 **160**.

In an alternate example, lid **100** and vial **1** are movable between a first position and a piercing position. In a specific example, lid **100** is initially attached to vial **1** by threadingly engaging internal and external threads **108** and **18** with a twisting motion and thereby moved to the first position. In moving lid **100** and vial **1** to the first
15 position, lid **100** and vial **1** are threadingly connected, but piercing member **6** does not disrupt pierceable membrane **160**. In the first position, end portion **30** of wall **12** sealingly engages sealing wall **120**. For example, as depicted in Figure 9, sealing wall **120** extends downwardly and outwardly from the interior of lid **100**. This type of sealing mechanism is similar to a wipe seal that would be well known to the skilled
20 worker. Thus, in the first position, chamber **2** is sealed against leakage to the outside of the container system by sealing engagement of wall **12** with sealing wall **120** and maintained out of fluid communication with reservoir **102** by pierceable membrane **160**.

A worker skilled in the art will recognize that there are known alternative
25 sealing structures that can be incorporated into the present system for ensuring that chamber **2** is sealed against leakage to the outside of the container system. Such alternatives are considered to be within the scope of the present invention.

Continued twisting moves lid **100** and vial **1** from the open position, or the first position, to the piercing position, in which movement of lid **100** and vial **1** together

results in disruption of pierceable membrane **160** by piercing member **6**, and the release of the substance within reservoir **102** into chamber **2**.

In operation, in moving to the piercing position, pointed end **31** of piercing member **6** is brought into contact with pierceable membrane **160** and pierces pierceable
5 membrane **160**. Continued twisting moves cutting edge **32** through pierceable membrane **160**, disrupting pierceable membrane **160**, and thereby producing an opening in the sealing membrane to enable the substance to enter chamber **2**. It will be clear that if more than one piercing member is present, less twisting of lid **100** and vial **1** is required to generate an opening. When three piercing members are present, a
10 suitable opening is obtainable in about one quarter of a turn. Desirably, pierceable membrane **160** is not completely removed from sealing surface **106**. Thus, in the piercing position, piercing member **6** disrupts pierceable membrane **160** to allow fluid communication between reservoir **102** and chamber **2**.

The distance between piercing member **6** and wall **104** will vary according to
15 the needs and preferences of the user. The distance between piercing member **6** and wall **104** can vary from being generally flush with one another, to being generally separated from one another.

It will be clear to the skilled worker that length, rigidity and the like, of piercing member **6** is selected such that it is sufficient to disrupt pierceable membrane **160** when
20 lid **100** and vial **1** are in the piercing position, and not disrupt the pierceable membrane **160** when lid **100** and vial **1** are in the open or first position.

The choice of the material of vial **1** will be dependent upon a number of factors including manufacturing constraints, chemical suitability, and the like. Additionally, the construction material of lid **1** may be same or different as that used to make
25 reservoir **6**. In the specific embodiment in which the substance is a nucleic acid preservative for use with a saliva sample, vial **1** is made from plastics such as polypropylene, medium-density polyethylene (MDPE), high-density polyethylene (HDPE), polyethylene and the like. Desirably, vial **1** is HDPE.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, the container system comprises a lid, a funnel and a vial.

Referring to the Figures 12-21, container system **600** comprises lid **100** and funnel **400** and vial **500**.

5 **LID**

Lid **100** releasably stores a substance, as described above.

FUNNEL

Funnel **400** includes a first open end for receiving a sample, a second open end for removable or fixed attachment to vial **500**. In one embodiment, funnel **400** is
10 integral with vial **500**. The interior of funnel **400** comprises interior channel **422** extending therethrough for maintaining the first open end and the second open end in fluid communication and for receiving a sample such as a liquid, solid, semi-solid, mixtures thereof and the like. Funnel **400** can be a variety of shapes, as determined by the needs or preferences of the user and/or application of use. Desirably, interior
15 channel **422** is configured to receive a biological sample. For example, the biological sample is a sputum sample, such as saliva. Interior channel **422** can be sized to accommodate a range of volumes of sample.

In the specific embodiments depicted in the Figures, lid **100** comprises internal helical threads **108** on the inner surface of outer wall **110**, which are adapted to engage
20 external helical threads **418** on the outer surface of wall **412** on funnel **400**. As would be appreciated by a skilled worker, alternative means for releasable attachment of lid **100** to funnel **400** can be used in the container system of the present invention, provided that lid **100** and funnel **400** are movable to the piercing position, as discussed in greater detail above.

25 Funnel **400** comprises at least one piercing member **6**. In accordance with the embodiment depicted in Figures 12-21, piercing member **6** extends from an interior surface (interior side wall **420**) of funnel **400**. In one example, piercing member **6** is

angled inwardly or outwardly toward pierceable membrane **160**. Other arrangements of piercing member **6** can be used, as would be readily appreciated by the skilled worker.

In one example, there is one piercing member **6** within interior channel **422**. In
5 an alternative example there is a plurality of piercing members, for example, two piercing members, three piercing members or more than three piercing members. In the case of three piercing members, desirably the piercing members are arranged in a generally semicircular fashion, as shown in Figure 18.

As above, piercing member **6** can be approximately trapezoidal in shape and
10 includes first cutting edge **33** having pointed end **30** at one corner of the trapezoid and a second end at a second corner of the trapezoid where cutting edge **32** intersects side wall **34**. Optionally, side wall **34** also includes cutting edge **33**, which extends from cutting edge **32**.

Container system **600** further includes a means for sealing attachment of lid **1** to
15 funnel **400**. Such sealing means act to ensure that the contents of vial **1** remain sealed with chamber **2** when funnel **400** and vial **500** are attached to vial **1**.

Optionally, funnel **400** includes outwardly extending ribs **402** that can be used by a user to twist funnel **400** and lid **100**, and/or funnel **400** and vial **500**.

The choice of the material of funnel **400** will be dependent upon a number of
20 factors including manufacturing constraints, chemical suitability, and the like. Additionally, the construction material of funnel **400** may be the same or different as that used to make lid **100** and collection vial **500**. In the specific embodiment in which the substance is a nucleic acid preservative for use with a saliva sample, funnel **400** is made from plastics such as polypropylene, high-density polyethylene (HDPE),
25 polyethylene, medium-density polyethylene (MDPE), or any combination thereof, and the like. Desirably, vial **1** is HDPE.

In a specific example, lid **100** is polypropylene, vial **500** is polypropylene and funnel **400** is HDPE.

VIAL

Vial **500** (or collection vial **500**) is generally cylindrically shaped with an open end for removable or fixed attachment to the second end of funnel **400**, and chamber **530** for receiving a sample. Vial **500** can be a variety of shapes, as determined by the needs or preferences of the user and/or application of use, and can be specifically manufactured for use in the container system of the present invention or can be a commercially available vial. As noted above, and in one embodiment, funnel **400** is integral with vial **500**. When the container system is used for laboratory purposes, desirably, vial **500** is sized to fit within a standard test tube rack such as that typically used in biological sample processing. In one example, vial **500** conforms with industry-standard dimensions for blood collection tubes (e.g., 13 mm x 75 mm). Desirably vial **500** is suitable for use with robotic DNA purification systems (e.g., the Beckman BioMek™ FX). Desirably, vial **500** is commercially available from Simport Plastics Limited (e.g., the T501 tubes).

The open end of vial **500** is also configured for securing attachment with a standard cap **520**, as shown in Figure 21. Cap **520** can be secured by a threaded screw, snap-fit, and the like.

Vial **500** optionally includes surface **502** that is suitable for labelling and/or for providing friction for gripping by a user.

Vial **500** may be removably attached to funnel **400** using a variety of locking mechanisms. In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, the locking mechanism is a helical threaded screw. Alternatively, the locking mechanism is a snap-fit. Alternatively, vial **500** is fixedly attached to, or integral with, funnel **400**.

In one example, lid **100** and funnel **400** are movable between an open position and a piercing position, as discussed supra with lid **100** and vial **1**. In a specific example, lid **100** is initially attached to funnel **400** by threadingly engaging internal and external threads **108** and **18** with a twisting motion. Initially, lid **100** and funnel **400** are threadingly connected, but piercing member **6** does not disrupt pierceable

membrane **160**, and end portion **30** of wall **12** engages sealing wall **120**. As depicted in Figures 9 and 16, sealing wall **120** extends downwardly and outwardly from the inner surface of lid **100**. This type of sealing mechanism is similar to a wipe seal, that would be well known to the skilled worker. Thus, initially, interior channel **422** is maintained
5 out of fluid communication with said reservoir **102** by pierceable membrane **6**.

In an alternate example, lid **100** and funnel **400** are movable between a first position and a piercing position, as discussed supra with lid **100** and vial **1**. Lid **100** is initially attached to funnel **400** by threadingly engaging internal and external threads **108** and **18** with a twisting motion. In moving lid **100** and funnel **400** to the first
10 position, lid **100** and funnel **400** are threadingly connected, but piercing member **6** does not disrupt pierceable membrane **160**. In the first position, end portion **30** of wall **12** sealingly engages sealing wall **120**. As depicted in Figures 9 and 16, sealing wall **120** extends downwardly and outwardly from the inner surface of lid **100**. This type of sealing mechanism is similar to a wipe seal, that would be well know to the skilled
15 worker. Thus, in the first position, interior channel **422** is sealed against leakage to the outside of the container system and maintained out of fluid communication with said reservoir **102** by pierceable membrane **6**.

Continued twisting moves lid **100** and funnel **400** from either the open position or the first position, to the piercing position, in which moving lid **100** and vial **1**
20 together results in disruption of pierceable membrane **160** by piercing member **6**, and the release of the substance within reservoir **102** into chamber **2** and vial **500**.

In operation, in moving to the piercing position, pointed end **30** is brought into contact with pierceable membrane **160** and subsequently pierces pierceable membrane **160**. Continued twisting moves cutting edge **32** through pierceable membrane **160**,
25 thereby disrupting pierceable membrane **160** and producing an opening in pierceable membrane **160** to permit the substance to enter interior channel **422**. If more than one piercing member is present, less twisting of lid **100** and vial **1** is required to generate an opening. When three piercing members are present, a suitable opening is obtainable in about one quarter of a turn. Thus, in the piercing position, piercing member **6** disrupts

pierceable membrane **160** to allow fluid communication between reservoir **102** and interior channel **422**.

The distance between piercing member **6** and wall **104** will vary according to the needs and preferences of the user. The distance between piercing member **6** and
5 wall **104** can vary from being generally flush with one another, to being generally separated from one another.

It will be clear to the skilled worker that length, rigidity and the like, of piercing member **6** is selected such that it sufficient to disrupt pierceable membrane **160** when lid **100** and vial **1** are in the piercing position, and not disrupt the pierceable membrane
10 **160** when lid **100** and vial **1** are in the open or first position.

METHODS

According to one embodiment of the present invention, the container system of the present application is suitable for releasably storing a composition intended to stabilize, preserve, or facilitate the recovery of nucleic acid from a biological sample.
15 A biological sample can include bodily fluids and/or tissues.

Desirably, vial **1** and/or funnel **400** are sized for collecting a biological sample from a subject. Non-limiting examples of biological samples include skin, hair, fecal matter, bodily fluids, tissue, cells and the like.

The term “bodily fluid”, as used herein, refers to a naturally occurring fluid
20 from a human or an animal, such as saliva, sputum, serum, plasma, blood, pharyngeal, nasal/nasal pharyngeal and sinus secretions, urine, mucus, gastric juices, pancreatic juices, feces, semen, products of lactation or menstruation, tears, or lymph.

The term “bodily tissue” or “tissue”, as used herein, refers to an aggregate of cells usually of a particular kind together with their intercellular substance that form
25 one of the structural materials of a plant or an animal and that in animals include connective tissue, epithelium, muscle tissue, and nerve tissue, and the like.

The term “nucleic acid”, as used herein, refers to a chain of nucleotides, including deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) or ribonucleic acid (RNA), typically found in chromosomes, chromatin, mitochondria, ribosomes, cytoplasm, nucleus, microorganisms or viruses.

5 The term “ribonucleic acid” or “RNA”, as used herein, refers to a wide range of RNA species, including, but not limited to high molecular RNA, large and small ribosomal RNAs, messenger RNA, pre-messenger RNA, small regulatory RNAs, RNA viruses (single and double-stranded, positive stranded or negative stranded) and the like. The RNA may be from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to human,
10 non-human, viral, bacterial, fungal, protozoan, parasitic, single-celled, multi-cellular, in vitro, in vivo, natural, and/or synthetic sources.

 Optionally the bodily fluid is saliva. The term "saliva", as used herein, refers to the secretion, or combination of secretions, from any of the salivary glands, including the parotid, submaxillary, and sublingual glands, optionally mixed with the secretions
15 from the numerous small labial, buccal, and palatal glands that line the mouth.

 The term “subject”, as used herein, refers to an animal or human. Desirably, the subject is a mammal that can produce saliva for the purposes of nucleic acid stabilization and/or detection. Most desirably, the subject is human.

 In use, a substance, such as a composition intended to stabilize, preserve, or
20 facilitate the recovery of nucleic acid from a biological sample is sealed within reservoir **102** with a pierceable membrane. Suitable compositions include those described in International PCT application WO 2003/104251; International PCT application PCT/CA2006/000380; United States Application Serial Nos. 60/828,563; or 60/866,985, all of the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their
25 entirety. Desirably the composition is Oragene™ DNA-preserving solution. Other suitable compositions would be well known to the skilled worker.

In use, in one example, a sample of saliva from a subject is placed within chamber **2** of vial **1**. Alternatively, vial **500** is attached to funnel **400**, and a sample of saliva is placed within chamber **2** of funnel **400**.

To collect saliva from a subject, in one example, the subject is instructed to wait
5 for a period of 30 – 60 minutes before last eating. If possible, the subject will brush his
teeth (without using toothpaste). If possible, the subject will rinse his/her mouth with
50 ml of water. The subject will be requested to wait for 5-10 minutes to allow the
mouth to clear of water. For subjects able to spit, they will be instructed to spit saliva
into the special collection vial until the level of saliva reaches the 1 or 2 ml mark.
10 Waiting after last eating and rinsing the mouth is desirable but not essential. Collection
of saliva may take several minutes. If the subject finds that he/she is unable to deliver
sufficient saliva, he/she will be given a few grains of table sugar to chew, and told not
to be concerned if some of the sugar is spit into the vial. For subjects unable to spit
(e.g., infants, young children, individuals with limitations/disabilities), an implement
15 (e.g., swab, transfer pipette) may be used for sample collection. Similarly, a subject
may be provided a liquid (e.g., mouthwash, water, saline) to gargle his/her mouth and
throat or saline to flush his/her nasal cavity. Samples collected with said liquid would
be delivered into the collection vial.

A substance, such as a composition to stabilize, preserve, and/or facilitate the
20 recovery of nucleic acid and saliva is stored within reservoir **102** of lid **100**.

Lid **100** is then attached to vial **1**, moved to the piercing position, and the
substance combines with the saliva in chamber **2**.

Alternatively, lid **100** is attached to funnel **400**, moved to the piercing position,
and the substance combines with the saliva in interior **530**.

25 The combination of the composition to stabilize, preserve, or facilitate the
recovery of nucleic acid and saliva may then be used in standard nucleic acid testing
reactions, for example for detection or quantitation. Alternatively, the combination
may be stored within container system **300** or **600** and subsequently used, for example,

for detection of nucleic acid contained within the saliva. Alternatively, funnel **400** is removed from vial **500**, and cap **520** is attached to the open end of vial **500**. In this example, the combination may be stored within vial **500** and subsequently used, for example, for detection of nucleic acid contained within the saliva.

5 In one aspect of the present invention container system **300** and container system **600** are sized for shipping. In one example, vial **1** and lid **100** of container system **300** are sized for shipping when securely attached. In one example lid **1**, funnel **400** and collection vial **500** of container system **600**, are sized for shipping when lid **1**, funnel **400** and collection vial **500** are securely attached. In another example, vial **1**
10 and lid **100** of container system **300** are sized for shipping when vial **1** and lid **100** are separate. In another example, lid **1**, funnel **400** and collection vial **500** of container system **600**, are sized for shipping when lid **1**, funnel **400** and collection vial **500** are separate. It will be appreciated that a variety methods of shipping are contemplated. Non-limiting examples of shipping include shipping by hand, land, air, boat, animal,
15 and the like, or combinations thereof. Desirably, container system **300** or container system **600** fit within a standard mail envelope. In one example, container system **300** or container system **600** fit within an envelope sized to fit within a standard European mail slot. In a specific example, the standard European mail slot has a width of about 3 cm. Alternatively, container system **300** or container system **600** fit within an envelope
20 sized to fit within a standard Canadian and/or United States of America mail slot.

Another aspect of the present invention provides a method of manufacture of a device for releasably storing a substance. The method of manufacture comprises providing container system in accordance with the present invention.

25 Another aspect of the present invention provides a method of combining a substance with a biological sample. This method comprises providing a container system in accordance with the present invention, wherein the container system includes the substance, and providing the biological sample.

Another aspect of the present invention provides a method of preserving nucleic acid in a biological sample. This method comprises providing a container system in

accordance with the present invention, wherein the container system includes a substance for preserving nucleic acid in a biological sample.

Another aspect of the present invention provides a method of archiving a biological sample for prolonged periods of time. Desirably archiving is at room
5 temperature. This method comprises providing a container system in accordance with the present invention and providing a substance for archiving the biological sample. In one example, prolonged storage is at room temperature for more than about one week, about two weeks, about three weeks, about one month, more than about one month, about one year.

10 **KIT**

Another aspect of the present invention provides a kit for collection of a sample and mixing the sample with a substance. The kit includes a container system in accordance with the present invention and instructions for the use thereof, optionally with a substance stored within the lid of the container system.

15 All publications, patents and patent applications mentioned in this Specification are indicative of the level of skill of those skilled in the art to which this invention pertains and are herein incorporated by reference to the same extent as if each individual publication, patent, or patent applications was specifically and individually indicated to be incorporated by reference.

20 The invention being thus described, it will be obvious that the same may be varied in many ways. Such variations are not to be regarded as a departure from the spirit and scope of the invention, and all such modifications as would be obvious to one skilled in the art are intended to be included within the scope of the following claims.

THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:

1. A container system for releasably storing a substance, comprising:
 - a) a vial comprising a first open end for receiving a sample, a second end comprising a sample storage chamber and a piercing member; and
 - b) a lid configured to removably engage said vial, said lid comprising a reservoir for holding the substance, and a pierceable membrane sealing the substance within said reservoir,
- wherein, when said system is closed by removable engagement of said vial with said lid, said vial and said lid are movable to a piercing position in which the piercing member disrupts the pierceable membrane to allow fluid communication between said reservoir and said chamber, wherein the chamber is sealed against leakage to the outside of the container system in the piercing position.
2. The container system according to claim 1 wherein said lid comprises a wall defining all or a portion of the perimeter of said reservoir, said wall having a sealing surface for sealingly attaching said pierceable membrane.
3. The container system accordingly to any one of claims 1 or 2, wherein said reservoir is configured to retain about 1 ml to about 4 ml of said substance.
4. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 3, wherein said pierceable membrane is inert.
5. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 4, wherein said pierceable membrane remains intact and pierceable at temperatures of from about -80°C to about 70°C.
6. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 5, wherein said pierceable membrane is sealingly attached to said sealing surface by an adhesive, a heat-sealing treatment, a fastener, or any combinations thereof.

7. The container system according to claim 1, wherein the width of said first end is approximately equivalent to the width of said second end.
8. The container system according to claim 1, wherein said first end is generally wider than said second end.
- 5 9. The container system according to any one of claims 1 – 8, wherein said chamber is configured to receive about 1 ml to about 16 ml of said sample.
- 10 10. The container system according to claim 9, wherein said chamber is configured to receive about 1 ml to about 4 ml of said sample.
11. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 10, wherein the said
10 piercing member extends from a base surface of said chamber.
12. The container system according to claim 11, wherein said piercing member extends approximately perpendicularly from said base.
13. The container system according to claim 11, wherein said piercing member is angled inwardly or outwardly toward said first open end of said vial.
- 15 14. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 13, wherein said
piercing member comprises a side wall, a first cutting edge extending from a first
pointed corner to a second corner that defines the intersection between said cutting edge
and said side wall.
- 20 15. The container system according to claim 14, wherein said side wall further
includes a second cutting edge.
16. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 15, wherein said vial comprises a plurality of piercing members.
17. The container system according to claim 16, wherein said vial comprises three piercing members.
- 25 18. The container system according to claim 16, wherein said vial comprises two
piercing members.

19. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 18, wherein said system comprises sealing means for sealing said chamber against leakage to the outside of said container system following movement of said container system to said piercing position.
20. The container system according to claim 19, wherein said sealing means
5 comprises a sealing wall about the interior circumference of said lid that sealingly engages a surface of said vial when the system is said piercing position.
21. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 20, wherein said vial and said lid are sized for shipping in both an unattached state and an attached state.
22. A container system for releasably storing a substance, comprising:
- 10 a) a vial comprising a chamber for retaining a sample
- b) a lid comprising a reservoir for holding the substance, and a pierceable membrane sealing the substance within said reservoir; and
- c) a funnel comprising a first open end for receiving said sample, a piercing member and a channel extending from said first open end to a second open end and
15 being in fluid communication with said chamber, said funnel being removably attachable to said lid at said first open end and releasably or permanently attached to said vial at said second end,
- wherein, when said system is closed by removable attachment of said lid to said funnel, said system is movable to a piercing position in which the piercing member disrupts the
20 pierceable membrane to allow fluid communication between said reservoir and said chamber, via said channel, wherein the chamber is sealed against leakage to the outside of the container system in the piercing position.
23. The container system according to claim 22 wherein said lid comprises a wall defining all or a portion of the perimeter of said reservoir and including a sealing surface
25 for sealingly attaching said pierceable membrane
24. The container system accordingly to any one of claims 22 or 23, wherein said reservoir is configured to retain about 1 ml to about 4 ml of said substance.

25. The container system according to any one of claims 22 - 24, wherein said pierceable membrane is inert.
26. The container system according to any one of claims 22 - 25, wherein said pierceable membrane maintains intact and pierceable at temperatures of from about -
5 80°C to about 70°C.
27. The container system according to any one of claims 22 - 26, wherein said pierceable membrane is sealingly attached to said sealing surface by an adhesive, a heat-sealing treatment, a fastener, or any combinations thereof.
28. The container system according to any one of claims 22 - 27, wherein said
10 piercing member extends from an interior surface of said funnel.
29. The container system according to claim 28, wherein said piercing member is angled inwardly or outwardly toward said first open end of said funnel.
30. The container system according to any one of claims 22 - 29, wherein said
15 piercing member comprises a side wall, a first cutting edge extending from a first pointed corner to a second corner that defines the intersection between said cutting edge and said side wall.
31. The container system according to claim 30, wherein said side wall includes a second cutting edge.
32. The container system according to any one of claims 22 - 31, wherein said funnel
20 comprises a plurality of piercing members.
33. The container system according to claim 32, wherein said funnel comprises three piercing members.
34. The container system according to claim 33, wherein said funnel comprises two piercing members.

35. The container system according to any one of claims 11 - 34, wherein said system comprises sealing means for sealing said chamber against leakage to the outside of said container system.
36. The container system according to claim 35, wherein said sealing means
5 comprises a sealing wall about the interior circumference of said lid that sealingly engages a surface of said funnel when the system is in the piercing position.
37. The container system according to any one of claims 22 - 36, wherein said vial is releasably attached to said funnel and sized for attachment to a cap when released from said funnel.
- 10 38. The container system according to any one of claims 22 - 37, wherein said vial is configured for use in standard laboratory equipment.
39. The container system according to claim 38, wherein said vial has dimensions that conforms with industry-standard dimensions for a blood collection tube.
40. The container system according to claim 38 or 39, wherein said vial is a T501
15 tube.
41. The container system according to any one of claims 22 - 40, wherein said chamber is sized to hold about 1 ml to about 16 ml.
42. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 41, wherein said substance is a composition for the stabilization and recovery of a nucleic acid from a
20 biological sample.
43. The container system according to claim 42, wherein said nucleic acid is DNA or RNA.
44. The container system according to any one of claims 1 - 43, additionally comprising a solid or semi-solid material within said vial and maintained separate from
25 the substance in the reservoir of said lid until said pierceable membrane is disrupted.

45. A method of combining a substance with a biological sample, comprising:
- (a) providing a container system according to any one of claims 1 – 21;
 - (b) providing the sample to the chamber in the vial; and
 - (c) closing said container system by removably attaching said lid to said vial; and
 - 5 (d) piercing said membrane to release said substance into said chamber by moving said lid and said vial to said piercing position.
46. A method of combining a substance with a biological sample, comprising:
- (a) providing a container system according to any one of claims 22 – 41;
 - (b) providing the sample to the chamber in the vial through said funnel; and
 - 10 (c) closing said container system by removably attaching said lid to said first open end of said funnel; and
 - (d) piercing said membrane to release said substance into said chamber by moving said system to said piercing position.
47. The method according to claim 45 or 46, wherein the substance is a nucleic acid
15 preserving substance.
48. The method according to any one of claim 45 – 47, wherein the sample is a biological sample.
49. The method according to any one of claim 45 – 48, for archiving the sample.
50. A kit for sample collection and storage, comprising:
- 20 a) a container system according to any one of claims 1 to 44; and
 - b) instructions for the use thereof.