METHOD FOR MANUFACTURING AN ELECTROCHEMICAL-BASED ANALYTICAL TEST STRIP WITH HYDROPHILICITY ENHANCED METAL ELECTRODES

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] This invention relates, in general, to analytical devices and, in particular, to electrochemical-based analytical test strips and associated methods.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0002] The determination (e.g., detection and/or concentration measurement) of an analyte in a fluid sample is of particular interest in the medical field. For example, it can be desirable to determine glucose, cholesterol, acetaminophen and/or HbA1c concentrations in a sample of a bodily fluid such as urine, blood or interstitial fluid. Such determinations can be achieved using analytical test strips, based on, for example, photometric or electrochemical techniques, along with an associated meter. For example, the OneTouch® Ultra® whole blood testing kit, available from LifeScan, Inc., Milpitas, USA, employs an electrochemical-based analytical test strip for the determination of blood glucose concentration in a whole blood sample.

[0003] Typical electrochemical-based analytical test strips employ a plurality of electrodes (e.g., a working electrode and a reference electrode) and an enzymatic reagent to facilitate an electrochemical reaction with an analyte of interest and, thereby, determine the concentration of the analyte. For example, an electrochemical-based analytical test strip for the determination of glucose concentration in a blood sample can employ an enzymatic reagent that includes the enzyme glucose oxidase and the mediator ferricyanide. Further details of conventional electrochemical-based analytical test strips are included in U.S. Patent No. 5,708,247, which is hereby incorporated in full by reference.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0004] A better understanding of the features and advantages of the present invention will be obtained by reference to the following detailed description that sets forth illustrative embodiments, in which the principles of the invention are utilized, and the accompanying drawings of which:

FIG. 1 is a simplified exploded perspective view of an electrochemical-based analytical test strip according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a simplified plan view of the patterned conductive layer of the electrochemical-based analytical test strip of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a simplified plan view of a portion of the electrically-insulating substrate, conductive layer and insulating layer of the electrochemical-based analytical test strip of FIG. 1;

FIGs. 4A and 4B are simplified depictions of a chemical sequence for treating a gold metal electrode surface and the resulting gold electrode surface with hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties thereon, respectively.

FIG. 5 is a bar chart depicting the water contact angle for a clean gold substrate surface, a clean polyester substrate surface, a clean gold substrate surface treated with MESNA and a clean polyester substrate surface treated with MESNA;

FIG. 6 is a bar chart depicting the water contact angle for a clean gold substrate surface, a clean gold substrate surface treated with MESNA and a clean gold substrate surface treated with MESNA after storage for two weeks;

FIG. 7 is an artist's rendition of a photographic image of a portion of a comparison electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold electrodes in the absence of hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties on the upper surface of the gold electrodes;

FIG. 8 is a chart of current response versus YSI determined glucose concentration for a comparison electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold metal electrodes in the absence of hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties on the upper surface of the gold electrodes;

FIG. 9 is an artist's rendition of a photographic image of a portion of an electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold metal electrodes according to an

exemplary embodiment of the present invention that includes hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties on the upper surface of gold metal electrodes;

FIG. 10 is a chart of current response versus YSI determined glucose concentration for an electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold metal electrodes according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention that includes hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties on the upper surface of the gold metal electrodes; and

FIG. 11 is a flow chart of a process for manufacturing a portion of an electrochemical-based analytical test strip according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0005] An embodiment of an electrochemical-based analytical test strip according to the present invention includes an electrically-insulating substrate and at least one metal electrode (e.g., a gold metal electrode) disposed on a surface of the electrically-insulating substrate. In addition, the metal electrode has an upper surface with hydrophilicity-enhancing chemical moieties thereon and an enzymatic reagent layer disposed on the upper surface. Details, characteristics and benefits of such an electrochemical-based analytical test strip are described with respect to the further embodiments discussed below.

[0006] FIG. 1 is a simplified exploded perspective view of an electrochemical-based analytical test strip 10 according to the present invention. Electrochemical-based analytical test strip 10 includes an electrically-insulating substrate 12, a patterned conductor layer 14, an insulation layer 16 (with electrode exposure window 17 extending therethrough), an enzymatic reagent layer 18, a patterned adhesive layer 20, a hydrophilic layer 22 and a top film 24. As will be described in more detail below with respect to FIGs. 2, 3, 4A and 4B, patterned conductor layer 14 includes three electrodes and at least a portion of each of these electrodes has an upper surface with hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties (depicted in FIG. 4B) thereon.

[0007] Electrically-insulating substrate 12 can be any suitable electrically-insulating substrate known to one skilled in the art including, for example, a nylon substrate, polycarbonate substrate, a polyimide substrate, a polyvinyl chloride substrate, a polyethylene substrate, a polypropylene substrate, a glycolated polyester (PETG) substrate, or a polyester substrate. The electrically-insulating substrate can have any suitable dimensions including, for example, a width dimension of about 5 mm, a length dimension of about 27 mm and a thickness dimension of about 0.5 mm.

[0008] Insulation layer 16 can be formed, for example, from a screen printable insulating ink. Such a screen printable insulating ink is commercially available from Ercon of Wareham, Massachusetts U.S.A. under the name "Insulayer." Patterned adhesive layer 20 can be formed, for example, from a screen-printable pressure sensitive adhesive commercially available from Apollo Adhesives, Tamworth, Staffordshire, UK.

[0009] Hydrophilic layer 22 can be, for example, a clear film with hydrophilic properties that promote wetting and filling of electrochemical-based analytical test strip 10 by a fluid sample (e.g., a whole blood sample). Such clear films are commercially available from, for example, 3M of Minneapolis, Minnesota U.S.A. Top film 24 can be, for example, a clear film overprinted by black decorative ink. A suitable clear film is commercially available from Tape Specialities, Tring, Hertfordshire, UK.

[00010] Enzymatic reagent layer 18 can include any suitable enzymatic reagents, with the selection of enzymatic reagents being dependent on the analyte to be determined. For example, if glucose is to be determined in a blood sample, enzymatic reagent layer 18 can include oxidase or glucose dehydrogenase along with other components necessary for functional operation. Further details regarding enzymatic reagent layers, and electrochemical-based analytical test strips in general, are in U.S. Patent No. 6,241,862, the contents of which are hereby fully incorporated by reference.

[00011] Electrochemical-based analytical test strip 10 can be manufactured, for example, by the sequential aligned formation of patterned conductor layer 14, insulation layer 16 (with electrode exposure window 17 extending therethrough), enzymatic reagent layer 18, patterned adhesive layer 20, hydrophilic layer 22 and top film 24 onto electrically-insulating substrate 12. Any suitable techniques known to one skilled in the art can be used to accomplish such sequential aligned formation, including, for example, screen printing, photolithography, photogravure, chemical vapour deposition and tape lamination techniques.

[00012] FIG. 2 is a simplified plan view of patterned conductive layer 14 of electrochemical-based analytical test strip 10. Patterned conductive layer 14 includes a counter electrode 26 (also referred to as a reference electrode), a first working electrode 28, a second working electrode 30 and a contact bar 32. Although electrochemical-based analytical test strip 10 is depicted as including three electrodes, embodiments of electrochemical-based analytical test strips according to the present invention can include any suitable number of electrodes.

[00013] Counter electrode 26, first working electrode 28 and second working electrode 30 can be formed of any suitable electrode metal including, for example, gold, palladium, platinum, indium and titanium-palladium alloys. The formation of such metal electrodes typically results in a metal electrode with a smooth, albeit hydrophobic, surface.

[00014] FIG. 3 is a simplified plan view of a portion of electrically-insulating substrate 12, patterned conductive layer 14 and insulating layer 16 (shaded with cross-hatching) of electrochemical-based analytical test strip 10. Electrode exposure window 17 of insulation layer 16 exposes a portion of counter electrode 26, a portion of first working electrode 28 and a portion of second working electrode 30, namely counter electrode exposed portion 26', first working electrode exposed portion 28' and second working electrode exposed portion 30'. During use, a fluid sample is communicated to electrode exposure window 17 and thereby operatively contacted with counter

electrode exposed portion 26', first working electrode exposed portion 28' and second working electrode exposed portion 30'.

[00015] Counter electrode exposed portion 26', first working electrode exposed portion 28' and second working electrode exposed portion 30' can have any suitable dimensions. For example, counter electrode exposed portion 26' can have a width dimension of about 0.72 mm and a length dimension of about 1.6 mm, while first working electrode exposed portion 28' and second working electrode exposed portion 30'can each have a width dimension of about 0.72 mm and a length dimension of about 0.8 mm.

[00016] Following formation of insulation layer 16, patterned conductive layer 14, and the disposition of hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties on the counter electrode exposed portion 26', the first working electrode exposed portion 28' and the second working electrode exposed portion 30', enzymatic reagent layer 18 is applied over counter electrode exposed portion 26', first working electrode exposed portion 28' and second working exposed portion 30'. Details regarding the use of such electrodes, electrode exposed portions and enzymatic reagent layers for the determination of the concentrations of analytes in a fluid sample, albeit without the hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties described in this disclosure, are in U.S. Patent No. 6,733,655, which is hereby fully incorporated by reference.

[00017] During use of electrochemical-based analytical test strip 10 to determine an analyte concentration in a fluid sample (e.g., blood glucose concentration in a whole blood sample), counter electrode 26, first working electrode 28 and second working electrode 30 are employed to monitor an electrochemical reaction induced current of interest. The magnitude of such a current can then be correlated with the amount of analyte present in the fluid sample under investigation.

[00018] The current measured by a working electrode is governed by the following simplified equation:

$$i = nFAJ \qquad \text{Eq. 1}$$

where:

i is a measured current;

n is a number of electrons generated during the reaction;

F is the Faraday constant;

A is an area of the electrode at which a reaction occurs (also referred to as the active surface area of the electrode);

and

J is the flux of a species of interest to the electrode.

[00019] Based on equation 1 above, a reliable and accurate determination (e.g., quantification) of an analyte concentration in a fluid sample requires knowledge of the area of the working electrode at which the reaction occurs. It has been determined that the sensing area of an electrode in an electrochemical-based analytical test strip is dependent on the uniformity and adherence of an enzymatic reagent layer to the electrode throughout manufacturing and during use. In addition, it has been determined that employing a metal electrode with hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties thereon improves the uniformity and adherence of enzymatic reagent layers and, thus, the reproducibility and accuracy of results obtained with electrochemical-based analytical test strips that employ such metal electrodes.

[00020] FIGs. 4A and 4B are simplified depictions of a chemical sequence for treating a gold metal electrode surface 40 and the resulting gold metal electrode surface with hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties 42 thereon, respectively. FIG. 4A depicts the manner in which gold metal surface 40 is exposed to a hydrophilicity-enhancing composition 44 to produce hydrophilicity-enhancing moietie 42 and liberate hydrogen.

[00021] The reaction that occurs between a gold metal electrode surface and the thiol (-SH) group of hydrophilicity-enhancing composition 44 is described by a general reaction sequence of the form:

$$\text{X-R-SH} + \text{Au} \rightarrow \text{X-R-S}^{-}\text{Au}^{+} + \tfrac{1}{2}\,\text{H}_2 \qquad \text{Seq. 1}$$

where:

X is either a polar side group, a positively charged side group, or negatively charged side group;

R is a carbon chain from, for example, C_1 to C_5;

SH is a thiol group;

Au represents atomic gold;

and

$X\text{-}R\text{-}S^{-}Au^{+}$ represents a gold metal electrode surface with a hydrophilicity-enhancing moiety thereon.

[00022] In sequence 1 above, R can be beneficially limited to the range of C_1 to C_5 to provide a hydrophilicity-enhancing composition that is soluble, yet avoids the formation of self-assembled monolayers on the gold metal electrode surface. Self-assembled monolayers of hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties need not necessarily be avoided, but their formation is difficult to control, often slow and can require an electrode surface that is "atomically" clean. The manufacturing of such self-assembled monolayers is, therefore, more difficult than the non-self-assembled disposition of hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties that occurs spontaneously by dip coating an electrode surface with a MENSA solution as described elsewhere in this disclosure.

[00023] Furthermore, the thiol group (also referred to as a "tail" group) enables a conjugation between the gold metal electrode surface and the hydrophilicity-enhancing composition to occur. In addition, the polar, positively charged or negatively charged side group "X" (also referred to as a "head" group) provides for a hydrophilic interaction with an enzymatic reagent layer, thereby improving the uniformity and adherence of the enzymatic reagent layer to the metal electrode upper surface. Examples of suitable head groups include, but are not limited to, the following groups: NH_2 (amine) group, COOH (carboxy) group, and SO_2OH (sulphonate) group.

[00024] As noted above, the length of the "R" group (also referred to as a "spacer chain") is a factor in determining whether or not the hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties are disposed on the electrode surface as a self-assembled monolayer.

[00025] Although FIGs. 4A and 4B and sequence 1 are illustrated for the circumstance of a gold metal electrode surface, once apprised of the present disclosure one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize that other metal electrode surfaces can also be beneficially treated to dispose hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties thereon.

[00026] Enzymatic reagents are formulated such that they readily mix with common fluid samples (such as a whole blood or other bodily fluid sample) and, therefore, typically consist of components that are readily soluble in aqueous solutions. It has been determined that such components have an affinity for hydrophilic or at least amphiphilic surfaces.

[00027] A variety of metal electrode surfaces are naturally hydrophobic. In other words, such metal electrode surfaces tend to repel water, aqueous solutions, and solutions with significant hydrophilic component content (such as enzymatic reagents). However, it has been determined that such metal electrode surfaces can be rendered more hydrophilic (i.e., be hydrophilically-enhanced) by treating the metal electrode surfaces with a hydrophilicity-enhancing composition that disposes hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties on the metal electrode surface.

[00028] Examples of hydrophilicity-enhancing compositions are compositions that contain 2-mercaptoethanesulphonic acid (MESNA), 3-mercaptopropanesulphonic acid, 2,3-dimercaptopropanesulphonic acid and its homologues, bis-(2-sulphoethyl)disulphide, bis-(3-sulphopropyl)disulphide and homologues; mercaptosuccinic acid, cysteine, cysteamine, and cystine. When such hydrophilicity-enhancing compositions include a compound with a sulphonate moiety (e.g., MESNA) or a compound with an amino moiety (e.g., cysteamine), the adhesion of a enzymatic reagent layer to the upper surface of a metal electrode is particularly enhanced.

[00029] FIG. 5 is a bar chart depicting the water contact angle for clean gold substrate surface (A), a clean polyester substrate surface (B), a clean gold substrate surface treated with MESNA (C) and a clean polyester substrate surface treated with MESNA

(D). FIG. 6 is a bar chart depicting the water contact angle for a clean gold substrate surface (A, as in FIG. 5), a clean gold substrate surface treated with MESNA (C, as in FIG. 5) and a clean gold substrate surface treated with MESNA after storage for two weeks (E). The MESNA treatment reflected in FIGs. 5 and 6 was a 5 minute exposure to a MESNA composition consisting of 4g/L of MESNA in water.

[00030] As depicted in FIG. 5, the treatment of a clean polyester substrate surface with MESNA did not significantly alter the hydrophilicity of the clean polyester substrate as evidenced by water contact angle. The difference in the measured water contact angles B and D was the within 5%. However, the data of FIG. 5 indicates that the treatment of a clean gold substrate surface with MESNA significantly alters (i.e., enhances) the hydrophilicity of the surface as evidenced by water contact angle. The clean gold substrate surface had a water contact angle of approximately 78 degrees, following treatment with MESNA, the water contact angle was approximately 52 degrees. It is postulated, without being bound, that such a reduction in water contact angle, and therefore increase in hydrophilicity, improves the uniformity and adhesion of enzymatic reagent layers to such treated gold surface. In other words, the treated gold substrate surface, which has hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties thereon, will exhibit improved uniformity and adherence with respect to enzymatic reagent layers. In addition, the data of FIG. 6 indicate that the reduction in water contact angle persists after two weeks of storage. Such persistence in enhanced hydrophilicity is beneficial with respect to easing manufacturing time constraints.

[00031] Table 1 below lists the water contact angle of gold substrate surfaces that had received various treatments. For treatments 1-15 of Table 1, cleaned gold substrates were exposed to MESNA solutions as indicated in the Table. Treatment 16 consisted of cleaning a gold substrate surface but no exposure to MESNA and treatment 17 involved no cleaning or exposure to MESNA. The data of Table 1 indicate that a significant reduction in water contact angle and, thus, enhancement in hydrophilicity and enzymatic reagent layer adhesion and uniformity, can be achieved with an exposure to MESNA for a time period as short as 1 minute. The data of Table 1, therefore, indicate that the manufacturing of metal electrodes with hydrophilicity-

enhancing moieties on their upper surfaces could be accomplished using continuous web-based processes (such as the processes described in WO 01/73109, which is hereby incorporated in full by reference) that have been modified to include a metal electrode upper surface treatment module.

Table 1

Treatment #	MESNA Concentration (g/L)	Time (min)	Average Water Contact Angle (degrees)
1	16	1	41
2	16	2	52
3	16	5	49
4	16	10	50
5	16	15	52
6	4	1	48
7	4	2	65
8	4	5	53
9	4	10	63
10	4	15	55
11	1	1	60
12	1	2	54
13	1	5	69
14	1	10	64
15	1	15	58
16	Cleaned	-	78
17	Not cleaned	-	79

[00032] Comparative Example

[00033] To demonstrate characteristics and benefits of electrochemical-based analytical test strips according to embodiments of the present invention, a comparison between an electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold electrodes in the absence of hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties (i.e., a comparison electrochemical-based analytical

test strip) and an electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold metal electrodes according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention was undertaken.

[00034] FIG. 7 is an artist's rendition of a photographic image of a portion 100 of an electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold electrodes in the absence of hydrophilicity enhancing moieties on the upper surface of the gold electrodes. FIG. 7 depicts portion 100 prior to the application of a blood sample thereto. Portion 100 includes an electrically-insulating substrate 102, an insulation layer 104, counter electrode exposed portion 106, first working electrode exposed portion 108, second working electrode exposed portion 110 and enzymatic reagent layer 112. The composition of enzymatic reagent layer 112 and the method by which it was applied are described in U.S. Patent No. 5,708,247, which is hereby fully incorporated by reference.

[00035] As is evident from FIG. 7, enzymatic reagent layer 112 exhibits significant non-uniformity over counter electrode exposed portion 106, first working electrode exposed portion 108, and second working electrode exposed portion 110, thus indicating a lack of adherence thereto. Such a lack of uniformity and/or adherence is postulated to be a contributor to unreliable and inaccurate electrochemical-based analytical test strip results. In addition, it has been determined that enzymatic reagent layers disposed on an electrode surface in the absence of hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties are easily damaged during physical manipulation that occurs in conventional test strip manufacturing processes and can separate from the electrode surface upon exposure to a fluid sample.

[00036] FIG. 8 is a chart of current response versus YSI determined glucose concentration for a comparison electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold metal electrodes in the absence of hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties on the upper surface of the gold electrodes (i.e., comparison electrochemical-based analytical test strips corresponding effectively to the depiction of FIG. 7). The best fit line and R^2 value for the data of FIG. 8 are indicated on the chart. The data and R^2 value of FIG.

8 are an indication of the repeatability and accuracy of measurements made with the comparison electrochemical-based analytical test strips with gold electrodes.

[00037] As noted above with respect to FIG. 7, enzymatic reagent layer 112 exhibited a lack of uniformity and adherence when employed with a gold metal electrode. It is postulated that such a lack of uniformity and adherence will lead to inaccuracies and lack of measurement repeatability as it adversely and unpredictably affects the sensing area of the working electrodes.

[00038] FIG. 9 is an artist's rendition of a photographic image of a portion 200 of an electrochemical-based analytical test strip hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties disposed on the upper surface of gold electrodes. FIG. 9 depicts portion 200 prior to the application of a blood sample thereto. Portion 200 includes an electrically-insulating substrate 202, an insulation layer 204, counter electrode exposed portion 206, first working electrode exposed portion 208, second working electrode exposed portion 210 and enzymatic reagent layer 212. The composition of enzymatic reagent layer 212 and the method by which it was applied are described in U.S. Patent No. 5,708,247, which is hereby fully incorporated by reference. FIG. 9 indicates that enzymatic reagent layer 212 is uniform and fully adhered to counter electrode exposed portion 206, first working electrode exposed portion 208, second working electrode exposed portion 210. In addition, it was determined that enzymatic reagent layers disposed on an electrode surface with hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties were robust to physical manipulation that occurs in conventional test strip manufacturing processes.

[00039] Hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties were disposed on counter electrode exposed portion 206, first working electrode exposed portion 208, second working electrode exposed portion 210 by submerging them in a 4g/L aqueous solution of MESNA for 2 minutes followed by a water rinse. This exposure occurred prior to the application of enzymatic reagent layer 212.

[00040] FIG. 10 is a chart of current response versus YSI determined glucose concentration for an electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold metal

electrodes that have hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties on their upper surface of the gold electrodes (i.e., electrochemical-based analytical test strips corresponding effectively to the depiction of FIG. 9). The best fit line and R^2 value for the data of FIG. 10 are indicated on the chart. The data and R^2 value of FIG. 10 are an indication of the repeatability and accuracy of measurements made with the electrochemical-based analytical test strip with gold electrodes.

[00041] A comparison of FIGs. 10 and 8 indicates that the repeatability and accuracy of electrochemical-based analytical test strips that employ a metal electrode with hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties on an upper surface of the metal electrode are superior to a comparison electrochemical-based analytical test strip with metal electrodes in the absence of such hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties. For example, the R^2 for the date of FIG. 10 is 0.9985, a significant improvement over the R^2 value of 0.774 for the data of FIG. 8.

[00042] FIG. 11 is a flow chart of a process 400 for manufacturing a portion of an electrochemical-based analytical test strip according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention. Process 400 includes forming at least one metal electrode (e.g., a gold metal, palladium metal or platinum metal electrode) on a surface of an electrically-insulating substrate with the at least one metal electrode having an upper surface, as set forth in step 410.

[00043] Subsequently, the upper surface of each of the at least one metal electrodes is treated with a hydrophilicity-enhancing composition to form a treated upper surface of the metal electrode with hydrophilicity-enhancing chemical moieties thereon, as set forth in step 420. The treatment can be accomplished using, for example, any suitable treatment technique including dip coating techniques, spray coating techniques, and inkjet coating techniques. Any suitable hydrophilicity-enhancing composition can be employed including those described above with respect to electrochemical-based analytical test strips according to the present invention.

[00044] The following two examples are illustrate, in a non-limiting manner, treatment technique sequences that can be employed in treatment step 420 of process 400:

Treatment Example 1

(a) clean upper surface of the metal electrode(s) by placing them in a 2% v/v aqueous solution of degreasant (e.g. Micro-90®) for 2 minutes at room temperature.

(b) Rinse the metal electrodes with water to remove excess degreasant.

(c) Dip the metal electrodes into a 4g/L aqueous solution of MESNA) for two minutes.

(d) Rinse the metal electrodes with water to remove excess aqueous solution.

(e) Dry the metal electrodes in a clean environment.

Treatment Example 2

(a) Place the metal electrodes into an ultrasonic bath with an aqueous solution containing 2% v/v degreasant (e.g. Micro-90®) and 4g/L MESNA).

(b) Sonicate the two minutes in an ultrasonic bath at a temperature of 50 °C.

(c) Rinse the metal electrodes with water to remove excess degreasant and MESNA.

(d) Dry the metal electrodes.

[00045] Thereafter, at step 430 of process 400, an enzymatic reagent layer is applied to the treated upper surface of the at least one metal electrode.

[00046] It should be understood that various alternatives to the embodiments of the invention described herein may be employed in practicing the invention. It is intended that the following claims define the scope of the invention and that structures and methods within the scope of these claims and their equivalents be covered thereby.

CLAIMS

1. A method for manufacturing a portion of an electrochemical-based test strip, the method comprising:

forming at least one metal electrode on a surface of an electrically-insulating substrate, the at least one metal electrode having an upper surface;

treating the upper surface of the at least one metal electrode with a hydrophilicity-enhancing composition to form a treated upper surface on the metal electrode with hydrophilicity-enhancing chemical moieties thereon; and

depositing an enzymatic reagent layer on the treated upper surface of the at least one metal electrode

characterised in that the hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties comprise a SO_2OH (sulphonate) group.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the forming step includes forming a metal electrode of at least one of gold, palladium, platinum, indium, titanium-palladium alloys and combinations thereof.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the forming step includes forming at least one gold metal electrode.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the treating step employs a chemical reaction of the form:

$$X\text{-}R\text{-}SH + Au \rightarrow X\text{-}R\text{-}S^{-}Au^{+} + \tfrac{1}{2} H_2$$

where:

X is a SO_2OH (sulphonate) group;

R is a carbon chain;

SH is a thiol group;

Au represents atomic gold; and

$X\text{-}R\text{-}S^{-}Au^{+}$ represents the gold metal electrode surface with a hydrophilicity-enhancing moiety thereon.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein R is a carbon chain in the range of C_1 to C_5.

6. The method of any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the treating step spontaneously forms hydrophilicity-enhancing chemical moieties on the metal electrode in a non-self-assembled monolayer manner.

7. The method of any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the depositing step includes depositing an enzymatic reagent layer that includes a glucose specific enzyme.

8. The method of any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the treating step employs a hydrophilicity-enhancing composition that includes MESNA (2-mercaptoethane sulphonic acid).

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the treating step involves dipping the at least one metal electrode in a hydrophilicity-enhancing composition that includes MESNA to spontaneously form a treated upper surface on the metal electrode with hydrophilicity-enhancing moieties thereon.

10. The method of any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the forming step employs a photolithographic technique.