




Enabling Technologies for  
Organic Chemistry (ETOC)  
Symposium

February 24-25, 2022

 @AlexandraCSun

Vision-Guided, High-Throughput  
Liquid-Liquid Extraction Screening

*presented by*

Alexandra Sun

Enabling Technologies,  
Process R&D, Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, NJ, USA

# Data-Rich Experimentation (DRE) Group



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*Group lead,  
Technology enthusiast*



Alex Sun  
*HTE, Automation*



Melodie Christensen  
*HTE, Automation*



Daniel Holland-Moritz  
*HTE, Microfluidics*



Eugene Kwan  
*Data Science,  
Mechanistic Analysis*



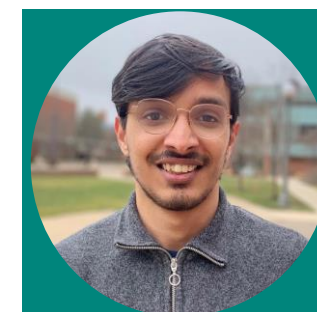
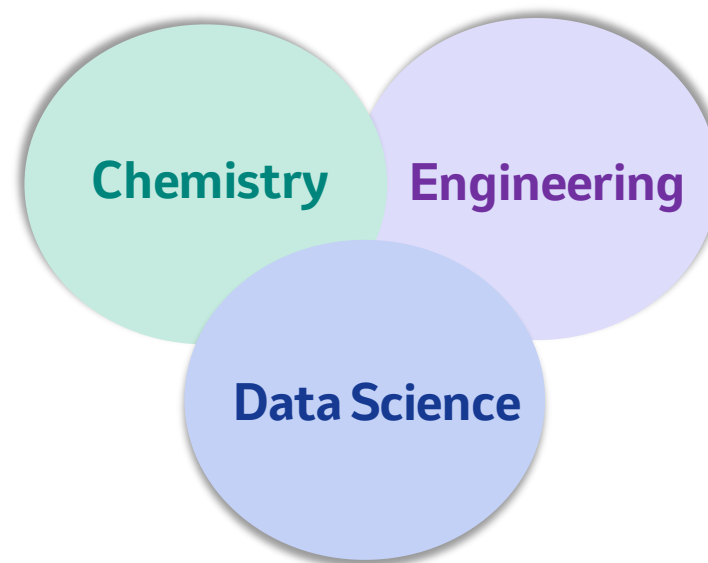
Harrison Rose  
*Process Modeling,  
Data Analysis*



Keith Mattern  
*Custom reaction  
system design and  
integration*



Kevin Stone  
*Process Modeling,  
Data Science*

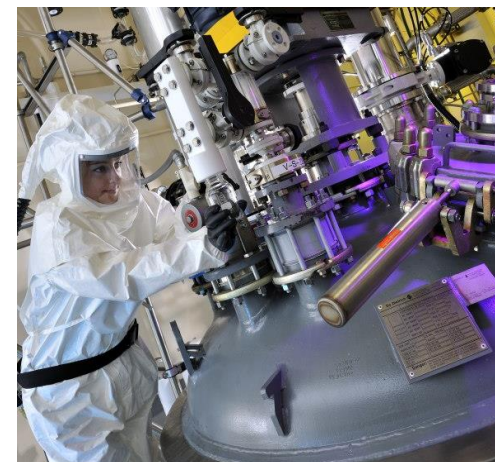
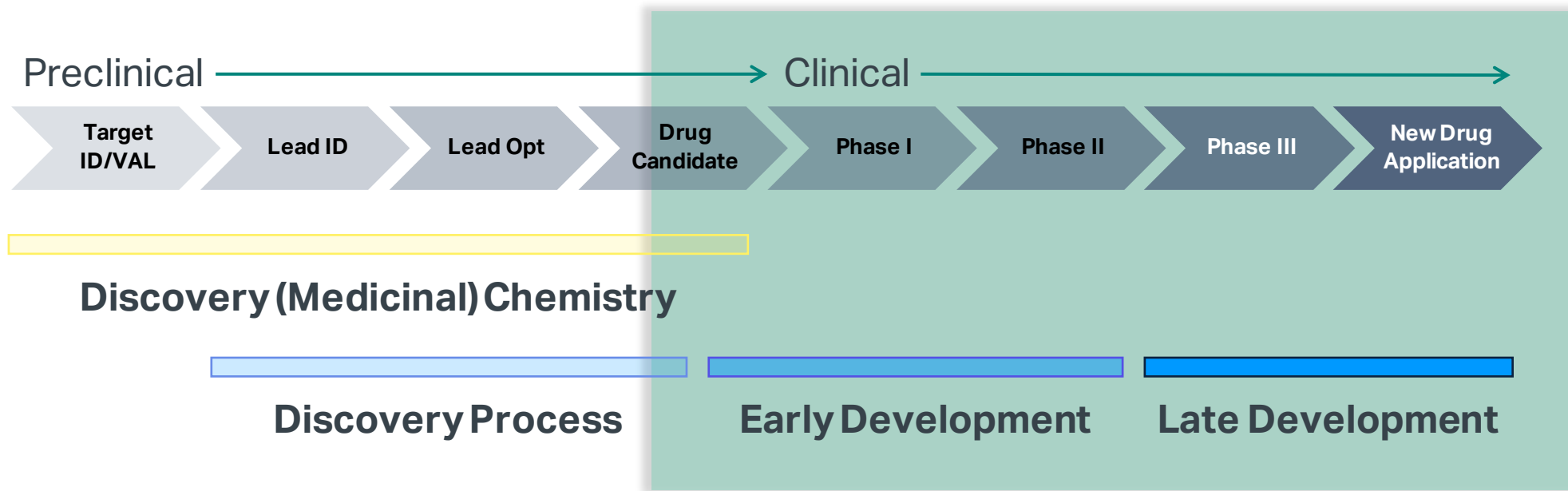


Ajit Vikram  
*Data Science, ML*



Ivan Skvortsov  
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Data Analytics*

# Leveraging DRE for small molecule process development



# Leveraging DRE for small molecule process development

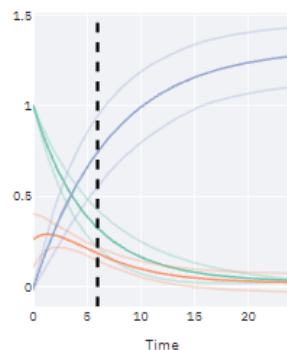
## Reaction



*High-Throughput  
Reaction Screening*



*Process Analytical  
Technologies*

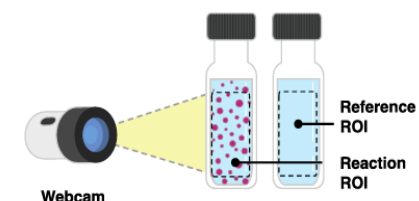


*Predictive Process  
Understanding*

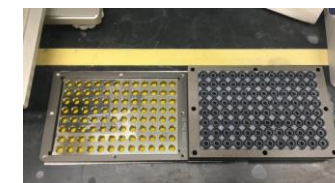
## Workup

?

## Crystallization



*Automated  
Solubility Screening*

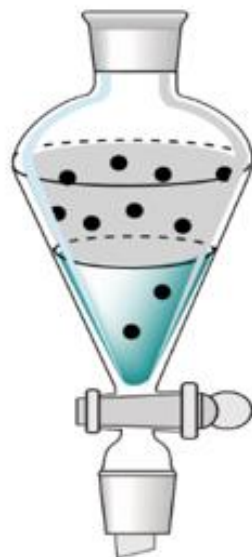


*High-Throughput  
Powder X-ray  
Diffraction*

***How can we use DRE to develop more robust and sustainable workup processes?***

# Liquid-liquid extraction (LLE) optimization

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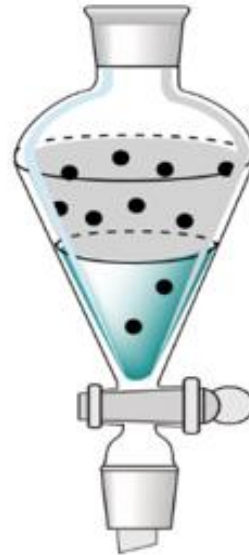
## Benefits of Liquid-Liquid Extractions:

1. Isolation of API from hydrophilic impurities
2. Robust to changes to reaction conditions
3. Scale-up is thermodynamically controlled and not equipment or scale-dependent

# Liquid-liquid extraction (LLE) optimization

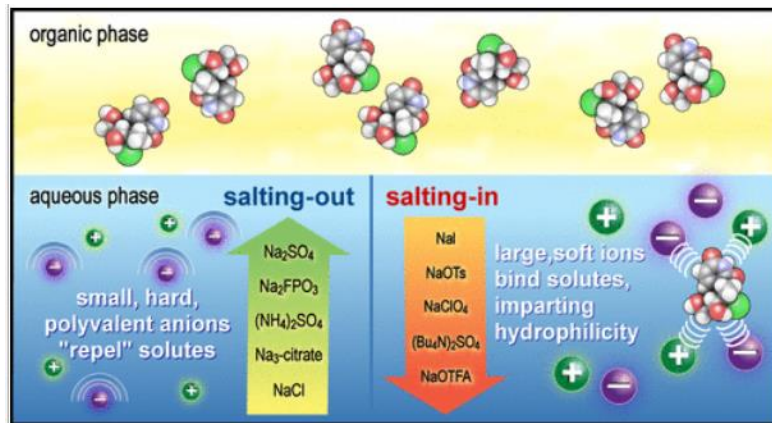
## Screening Parameters (Input)

- ✓ Organic Solvents
- ✓ Organic/Aqueous Phase Ratios
- ✓ Temperature, pH
- ✓ Salts and Additives



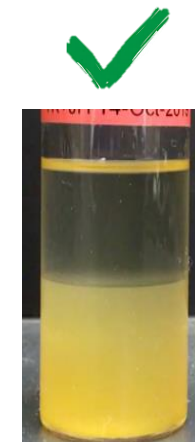
## Analysis Parameters (Output)

- ✓ Distribution coefficient
- ✓ **Interface quality**
- ✓ **Phase ratio**



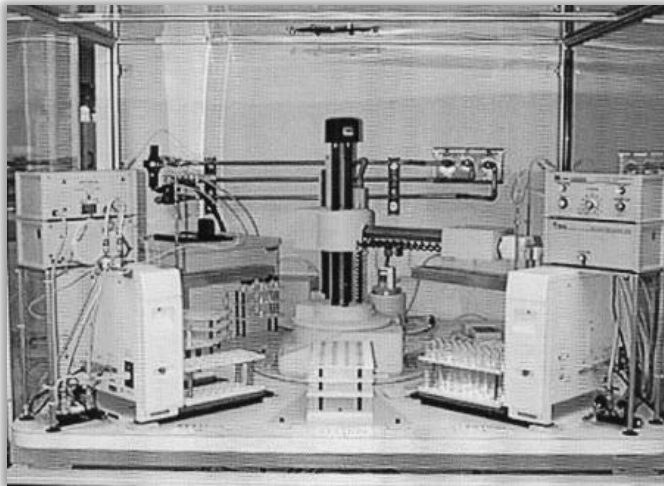
## Salting-out strategies informed by the Hofmeister series

*Org. Process Res. Dev.* **2017**, *21*, 1355-1370



# HTE platforms for LLE

## LLE Robot (Abbot, 2000)



*Interface detection using refractometer flow cell*

*80 samples per screen (15 mL)*

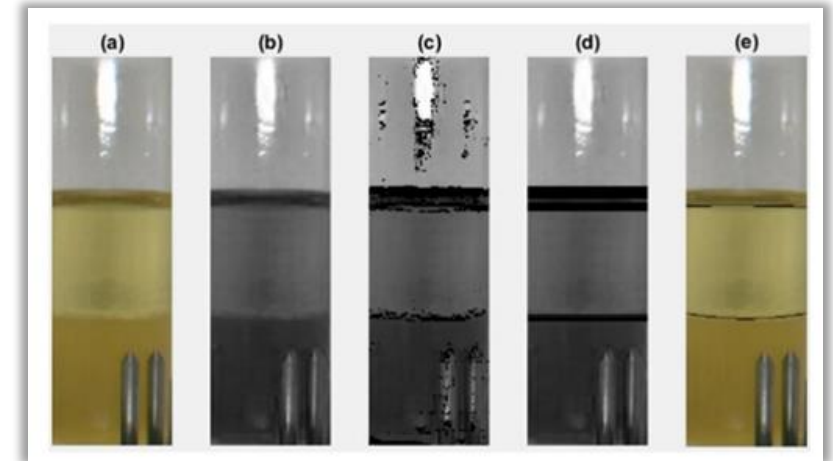
## High-Throughput LLE (BMS, 2016)



*Visual analysis performed manually using visualization plate*

*24 samples per screen (2-4 mL)*

## Automated LLE Screening (GSK, 2021)



*Image analysis algorithm enables automated visual analysis*

*24 samples per screen (2-4 mL)*

# How can we increase screening throughput?

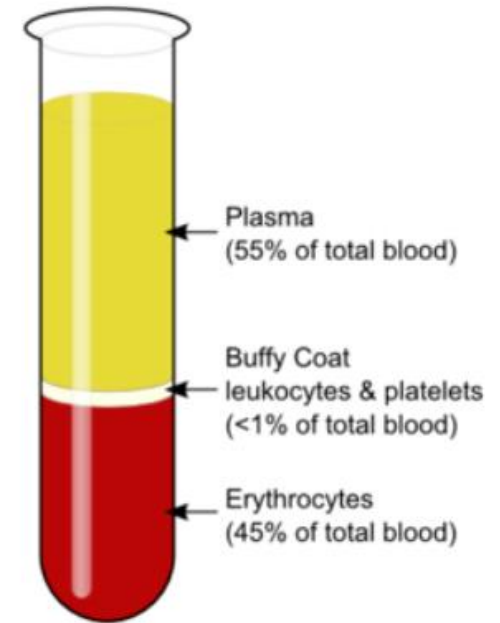
## **This work:** **Automated LLE Screening** **using the Tecan Platform**



*Automated image analysis using  
TubeEyeX camera*

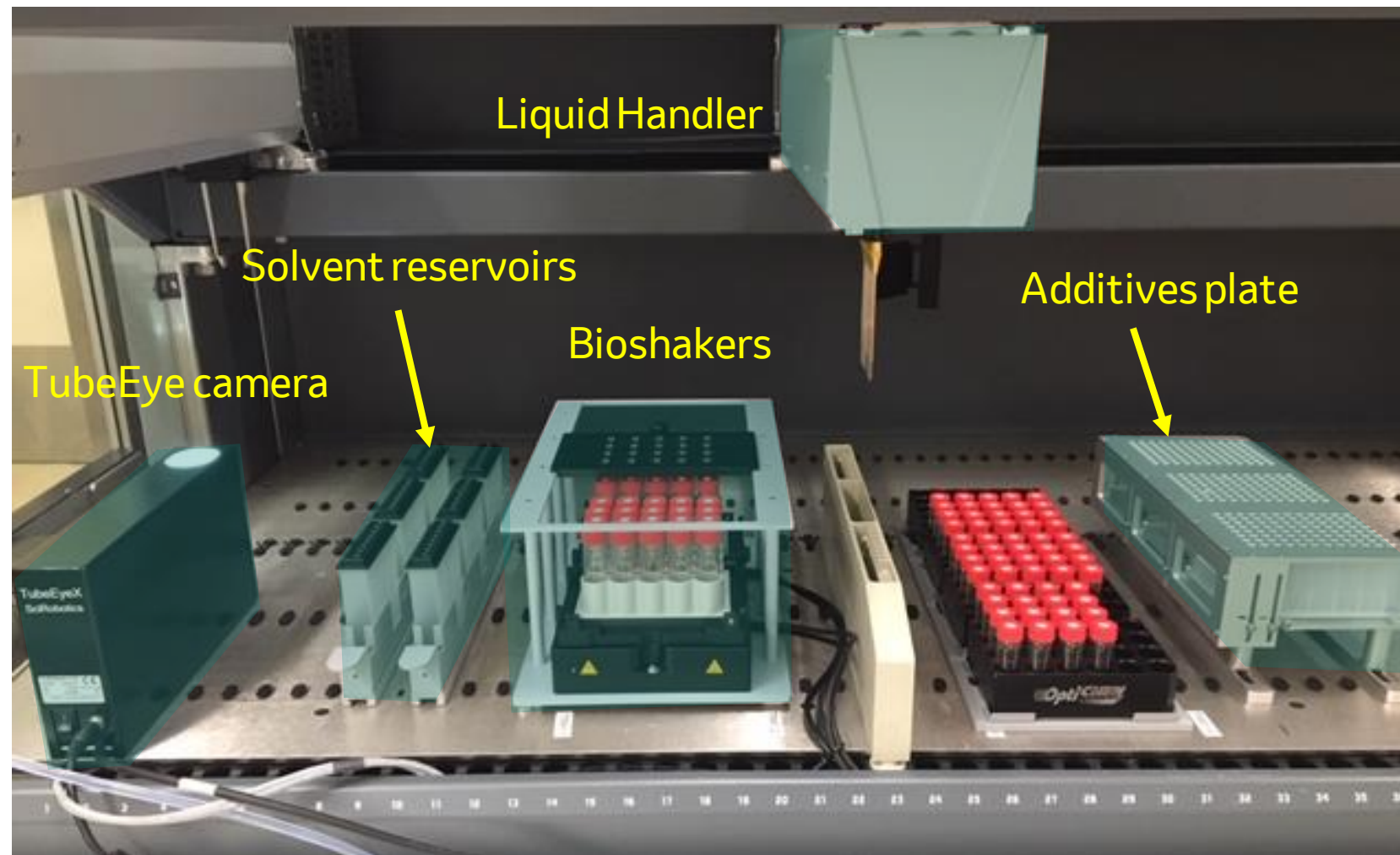
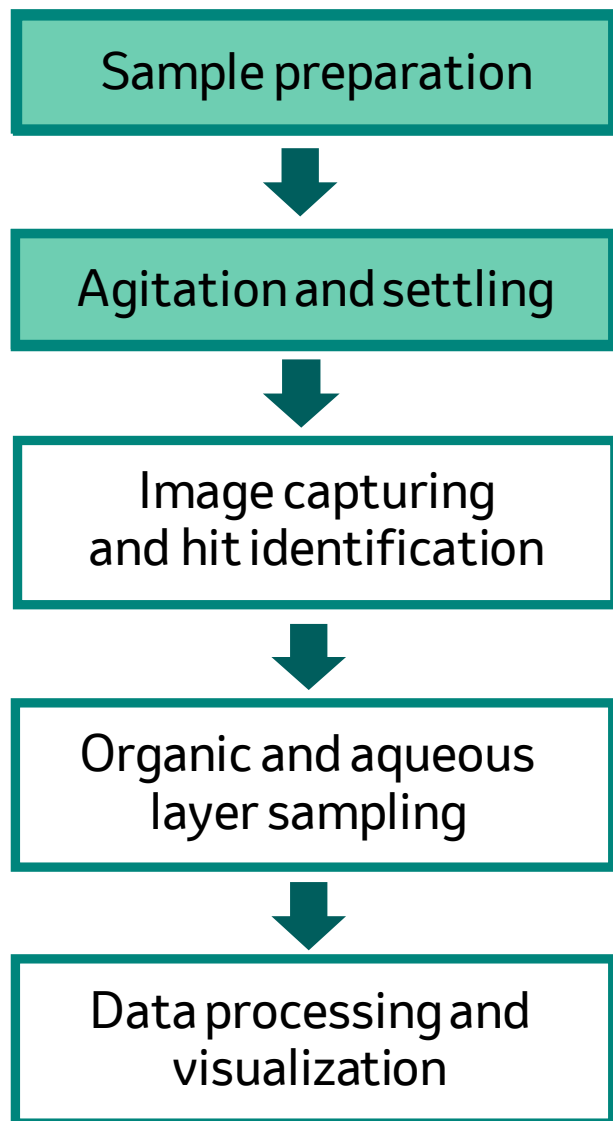
*96 samples per screen (0.5 – 1 mL)*

## **TubeEyeX camera:** ***Automated buffy coat extractions***



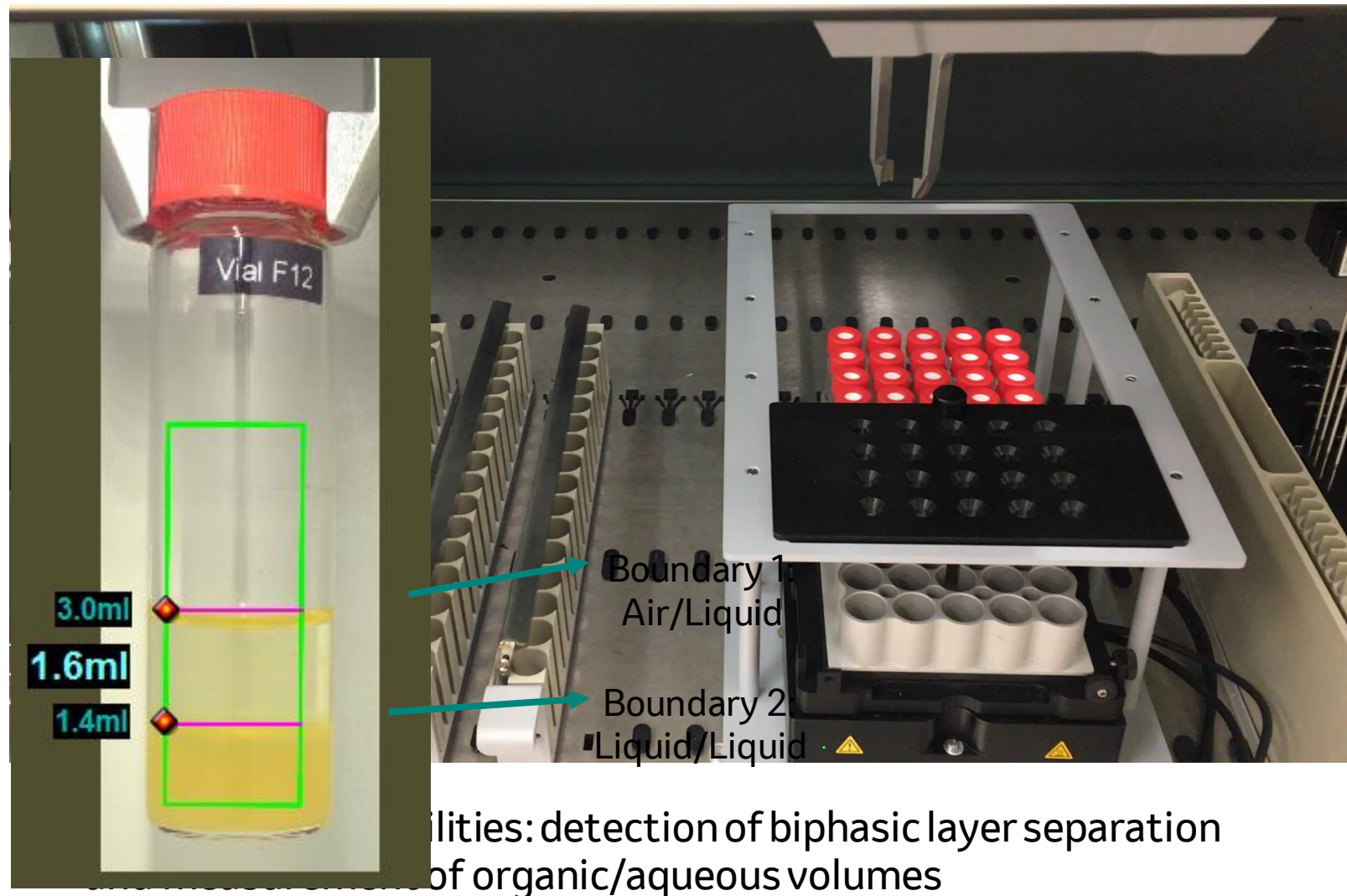
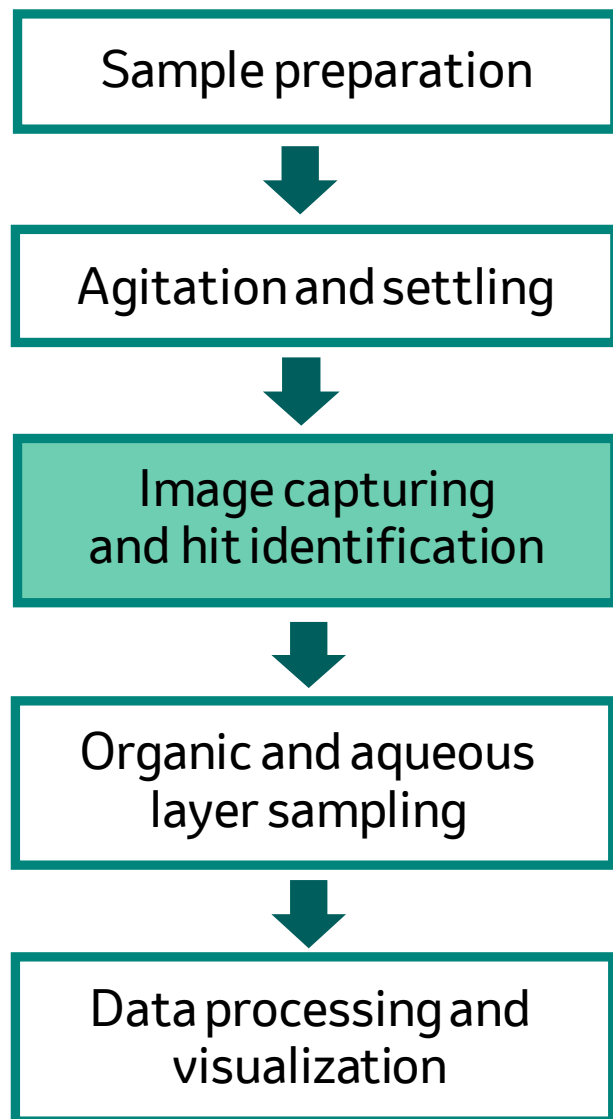


# Automated LLE screening workflow

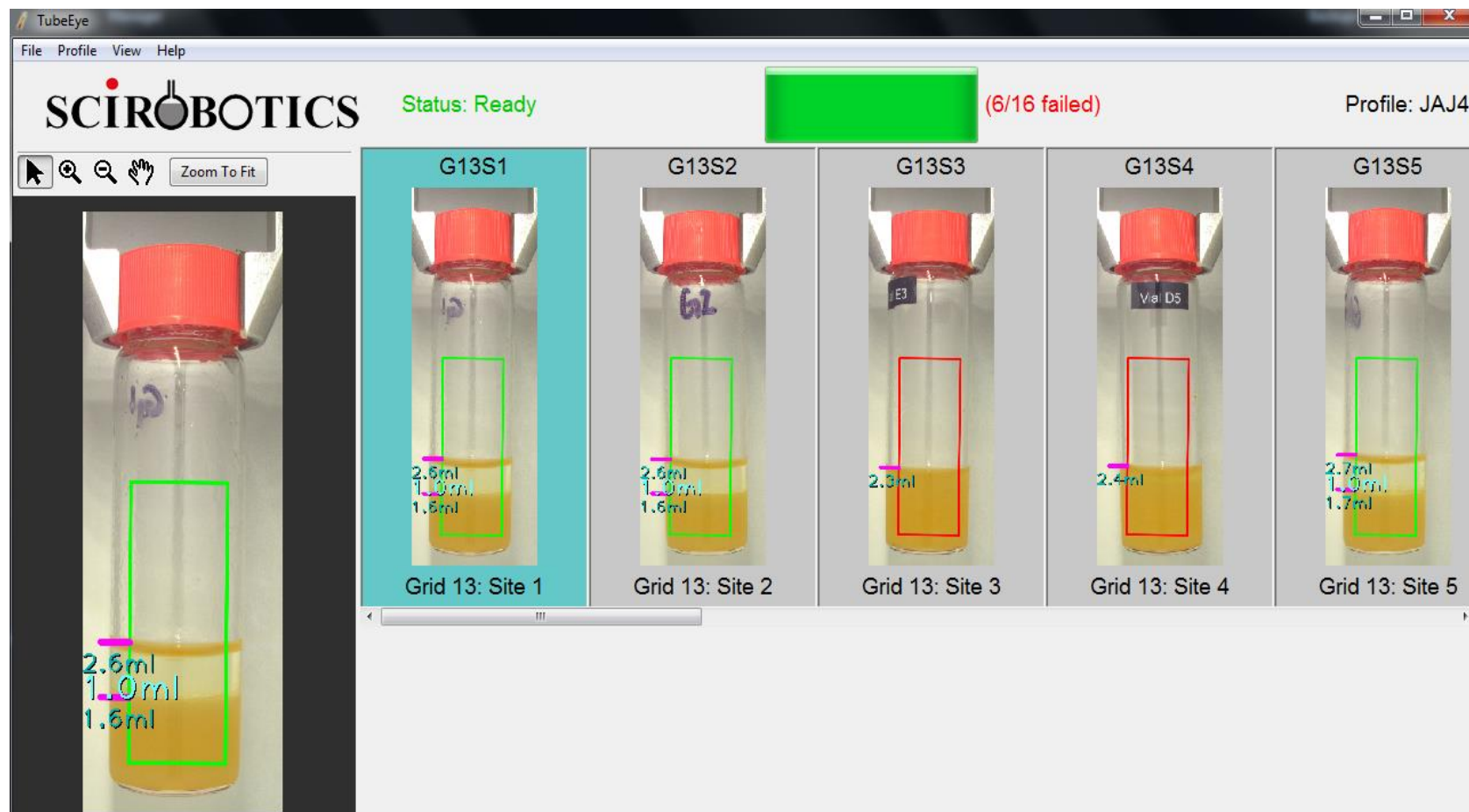
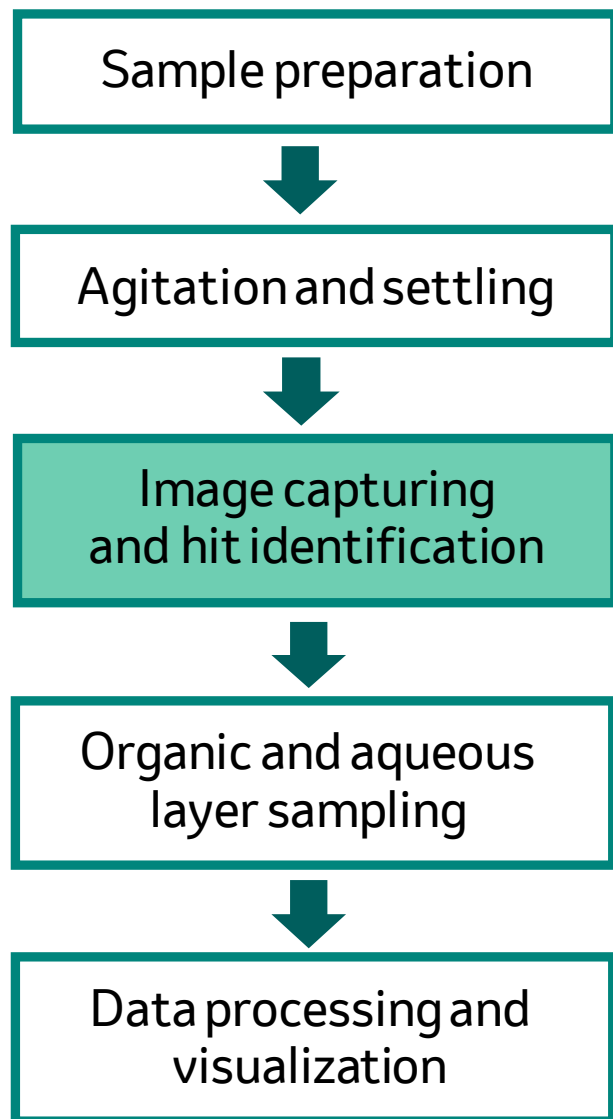


**Throughput: 96 samples per run, 4-5 h run time**

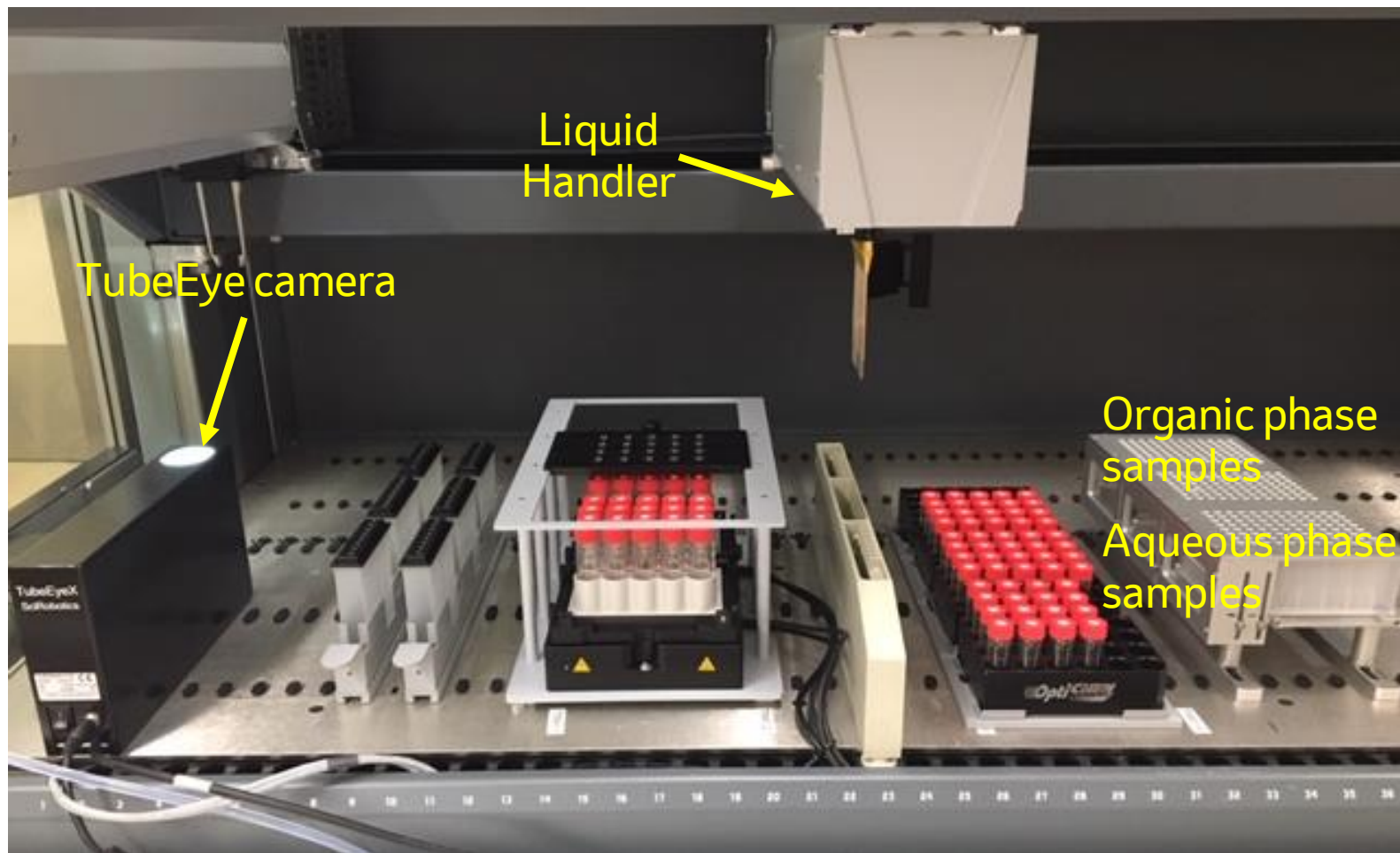
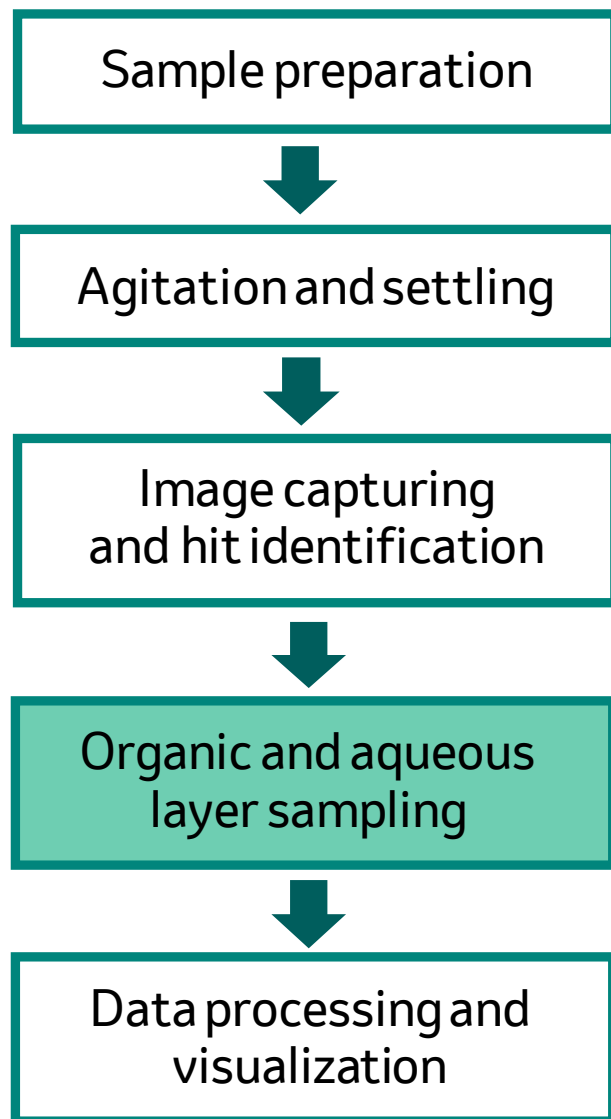
# LLE screening automation workflow



# LLE screening automation workflow



# LLE screening automation workflow



➤ Automated preparation of organic and aqueous phase LC samples

# LLC screening automation workflow – automated data analysis

Sample preparation



Agitation and settling



Image capturing and hit identification



Organic and aqueous layer sampling

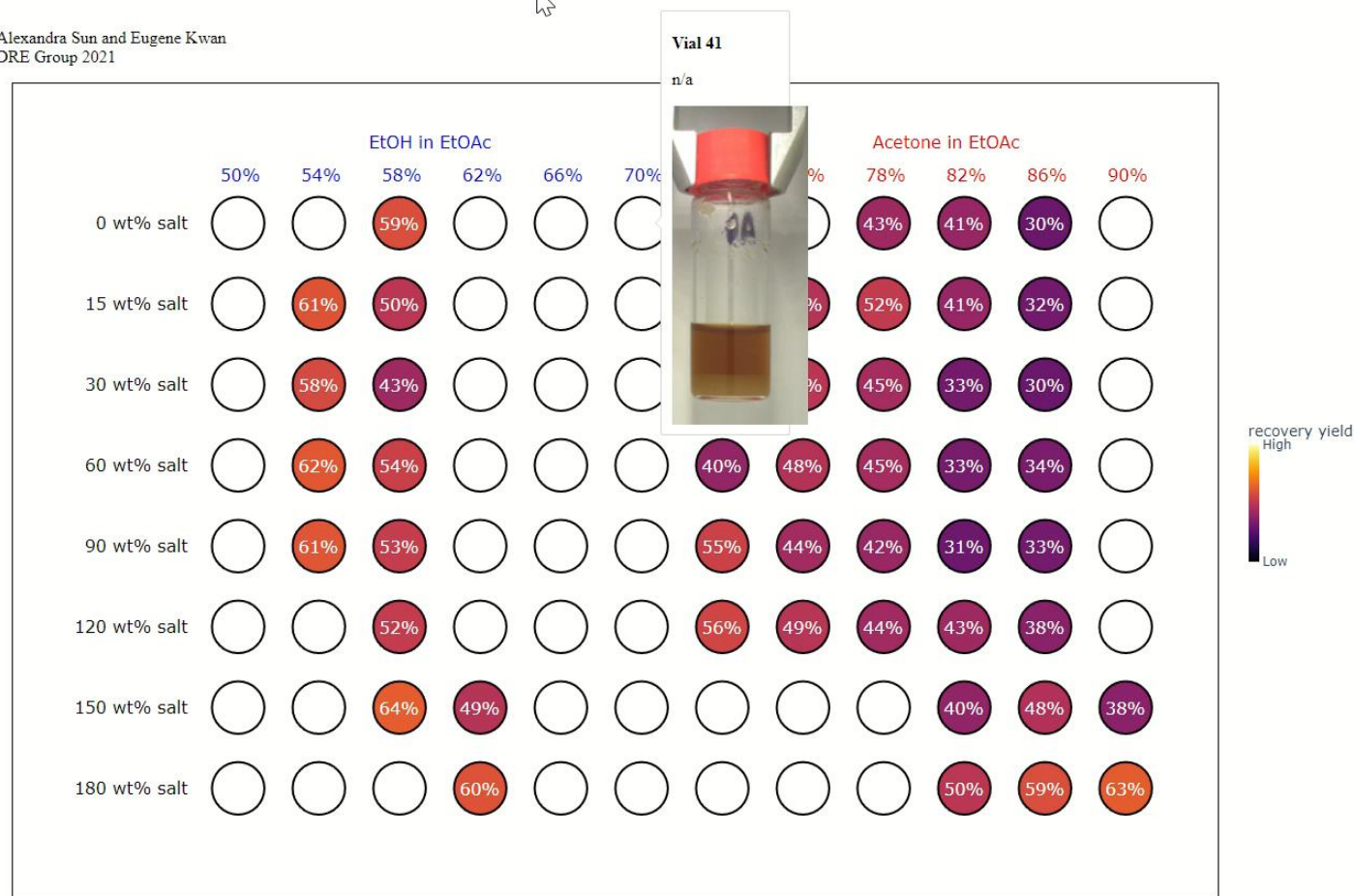


Data processing and visualization

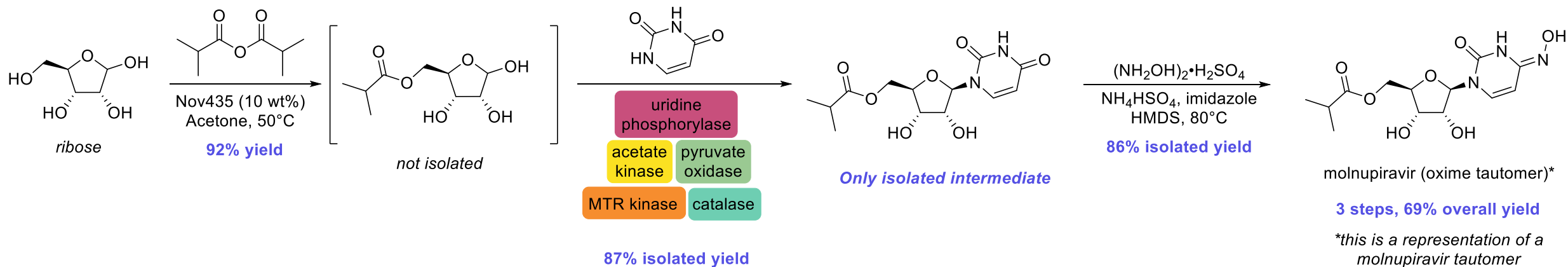


## Extraction Visualization

Alexandra Sun and Eugene Kwan  
DRE Group 2021



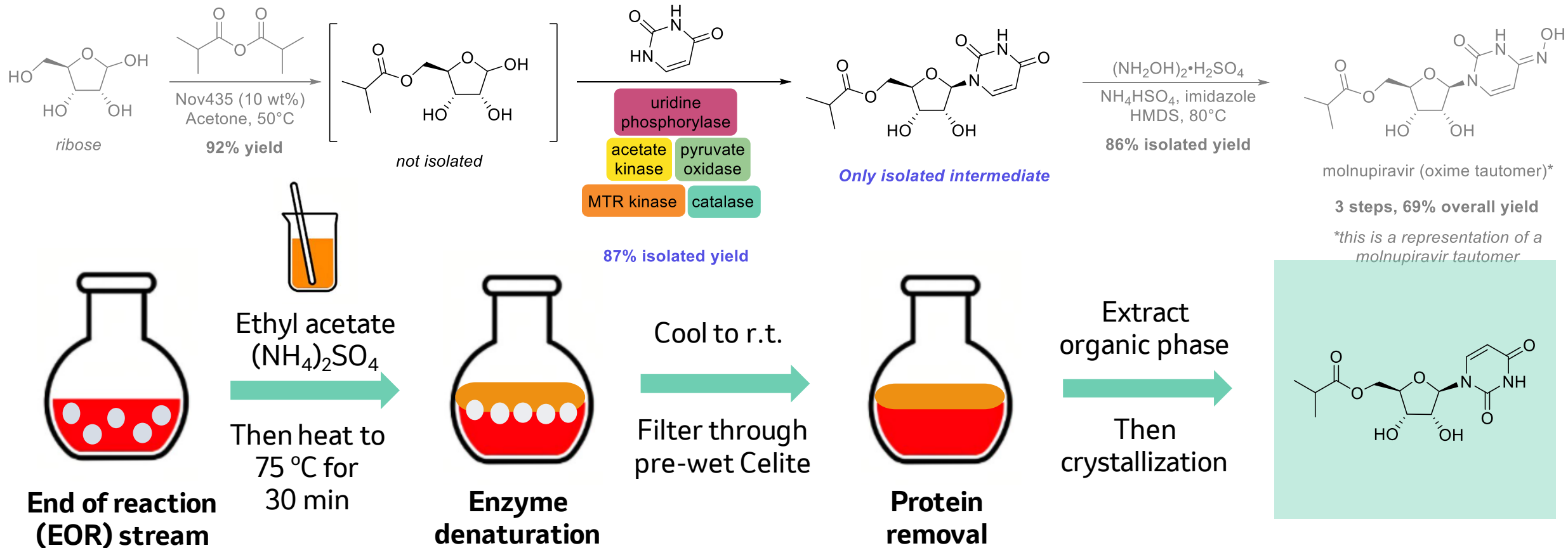
# Case Study: Biocatalytic synthesis of Molnupiravir



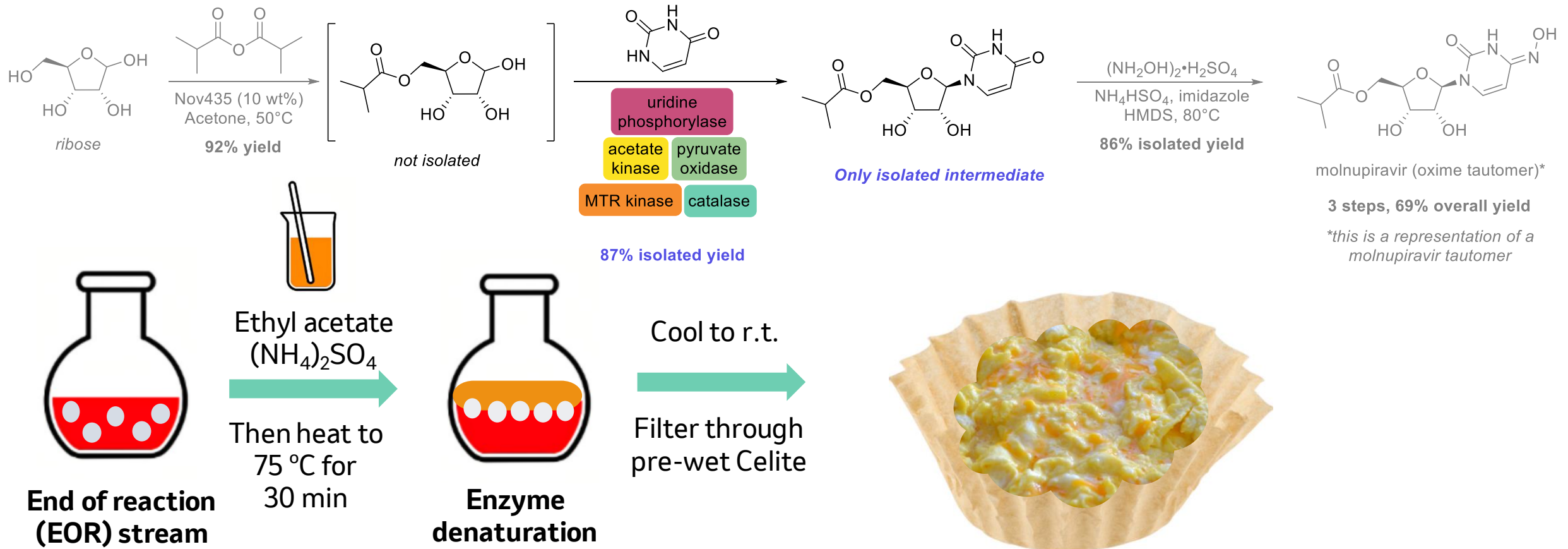
**Innovative chemistry enables a 3-step route to molnupiravir**

**Developed and piloted on 100 kg scale in 6 months**

# How do we remove enzyme at the end of a biocatalytic reaction?

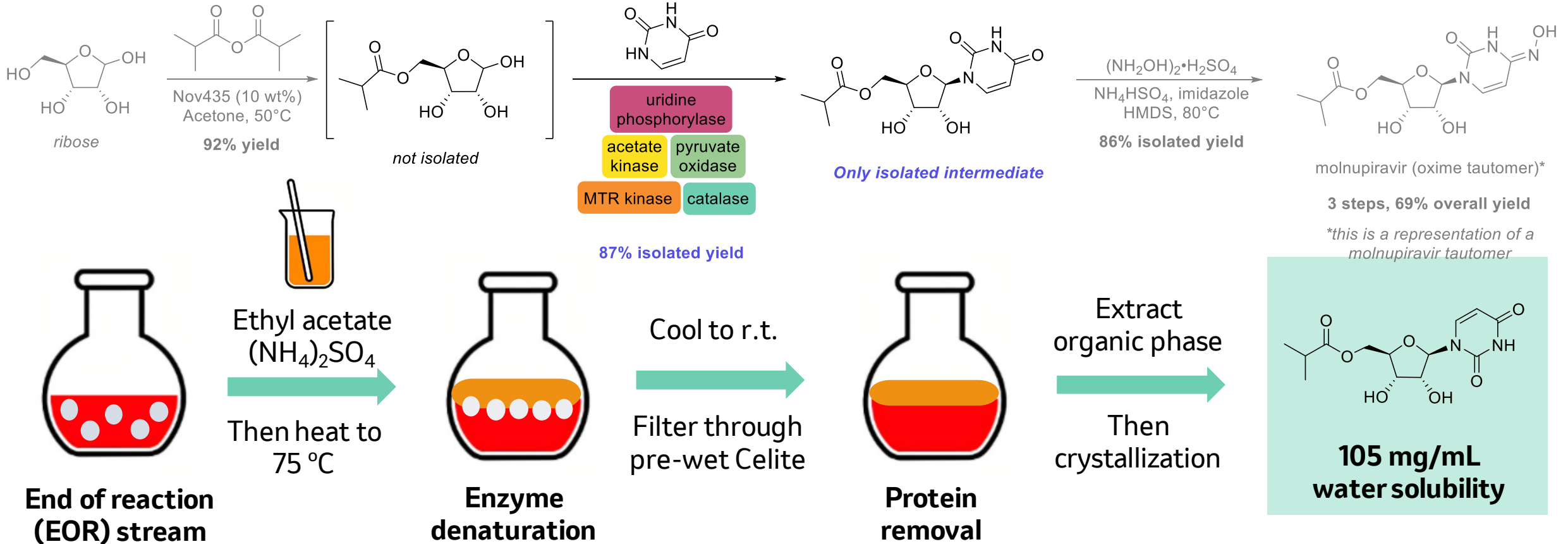


# How do we remove enzyme at the end of a biocatalytic reaction?



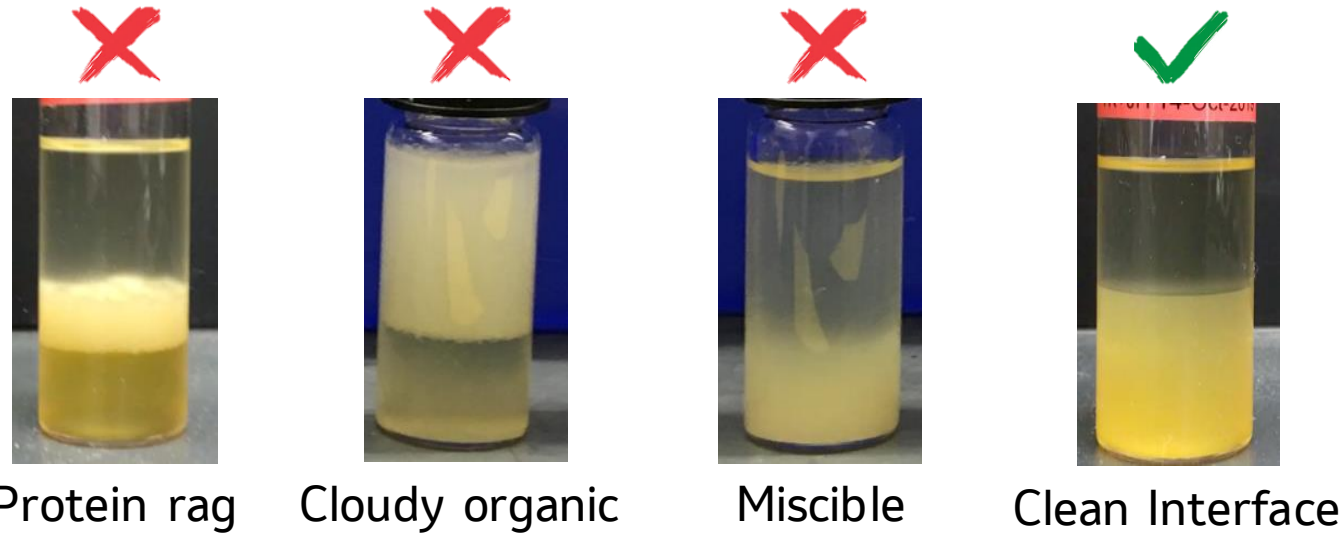


# How do we remove enzyme at the end of a biocatalytic reaction?



# Developing an LLE strategy for protein removal

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**Objective:** Identify direct extraction conditions for **enzyme removal** and **>80% recovery** of 5'-isobutyryl uridine **after a single extraction**

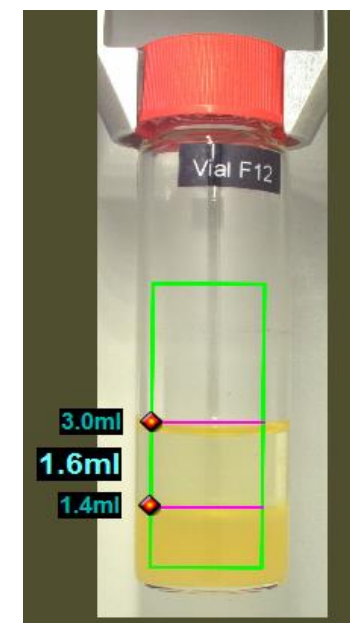


# LLE Screening strategy: Additive libraries

## Hampton Research Additive Plates

Additives classes screened:

- Inorganic salts
- Amino acids
- Dissociating agents
- Linkers
- Polymers
- Polyamines/chelating agents
- Carbohydrates
- Detergents
- Organic solvents
- And many more....



- Only **one PPG400 additive** yielded layer separation with 50% EtOAc/EtOH
- Extraction efficiency of ~60% required further optimization



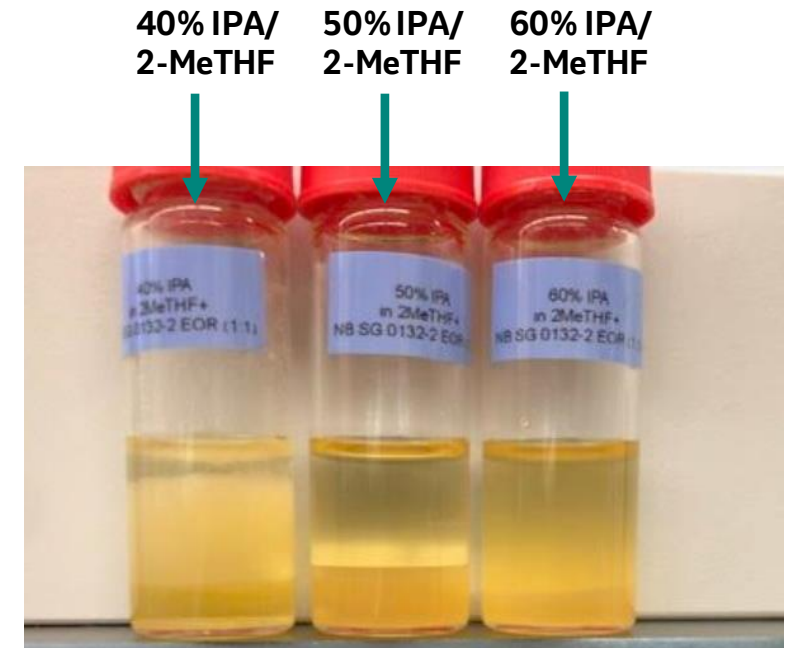
# LLE Screening strategy: Organic solvents

2-MeTHF/Alcohol co-solvent

0% alcohol

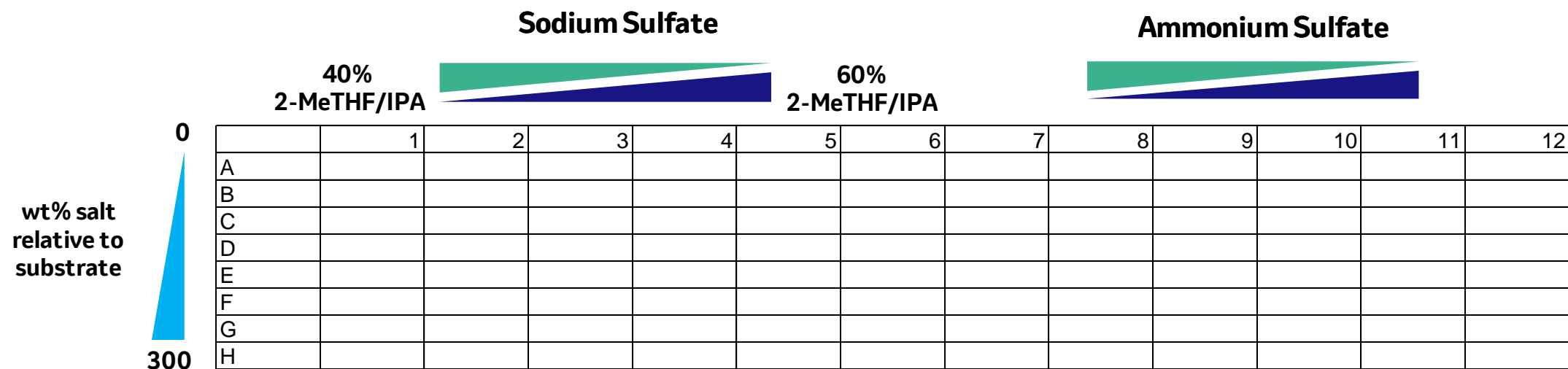
100% alcohol

t-amylOH										
iprOH					71%					
iBuOH										
nBuOH										



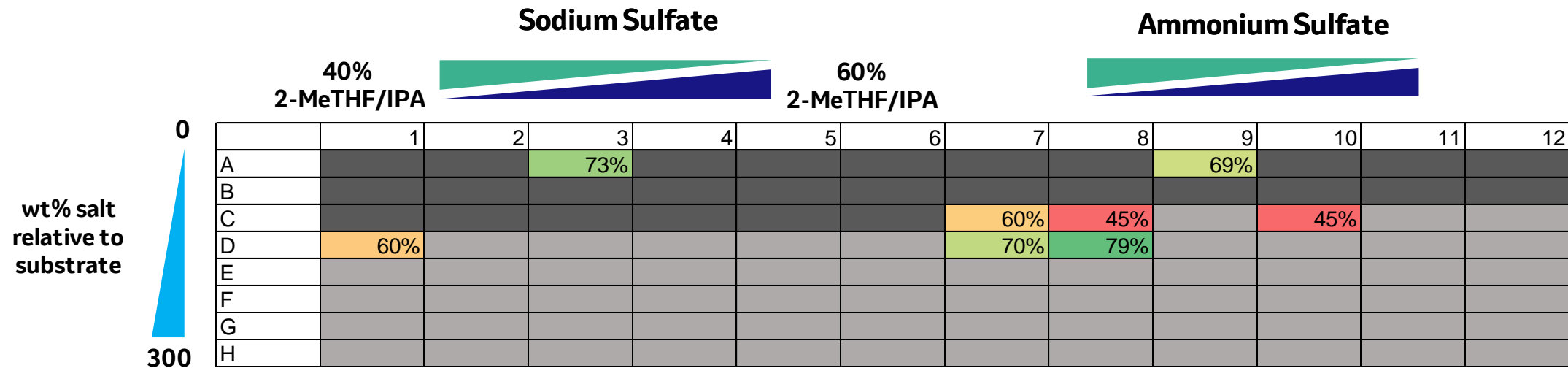
- Most co-solvents provided inseparable layers
- **Only 50% IPA/2-MeTHF** yielded a phase split with 71% recovery

# LLE Screening strategy: Inorganic salts

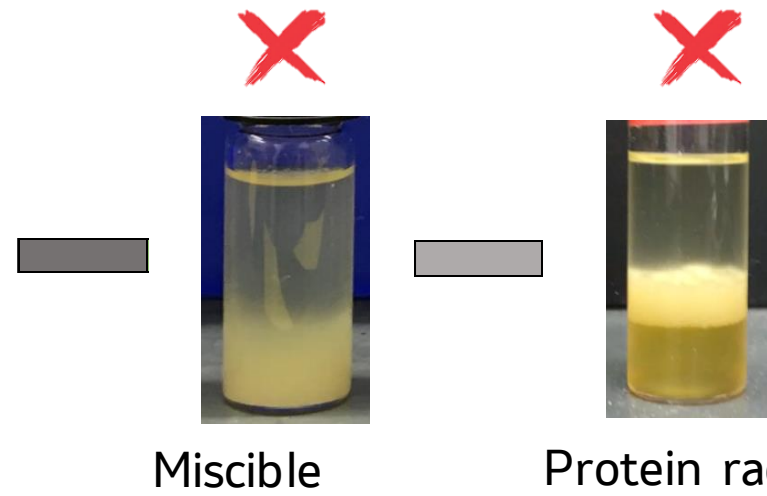


\*Acyl Uridine extraction yield expressed as % in Organic Layer.

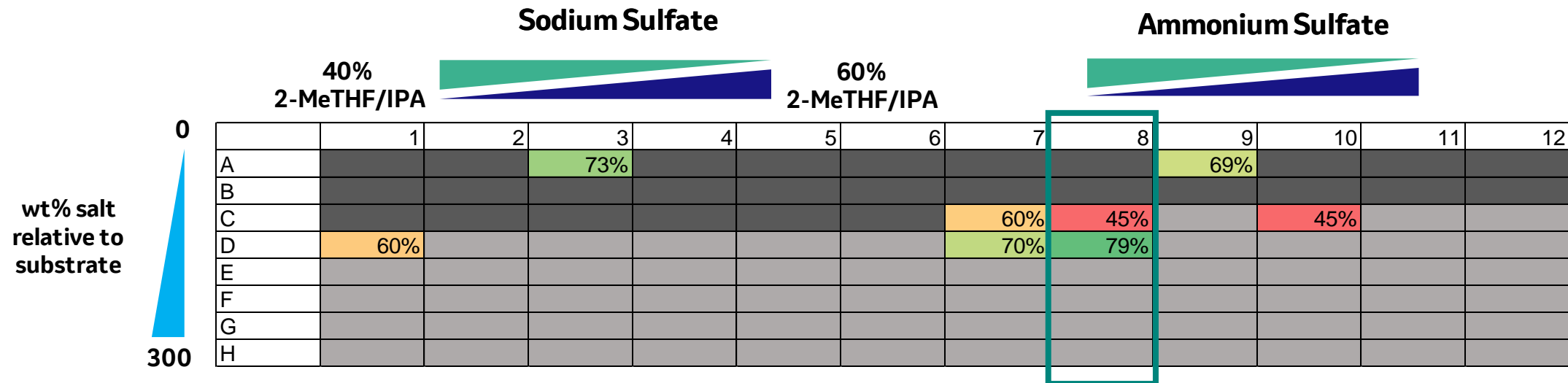
# LLE Screening strategy: Inorganic salts



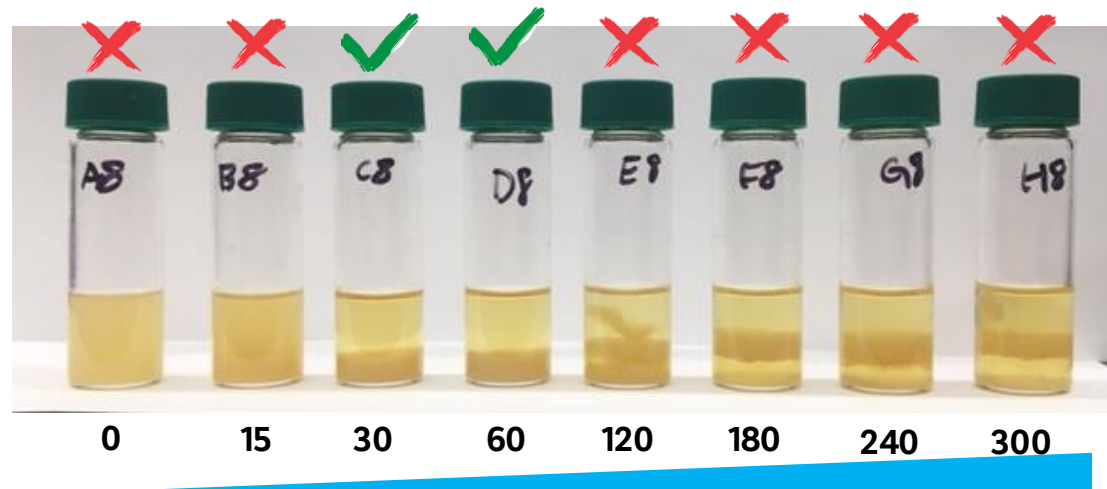
\*Acyl Uridine extraction yield expressed as % in Organic Layer.



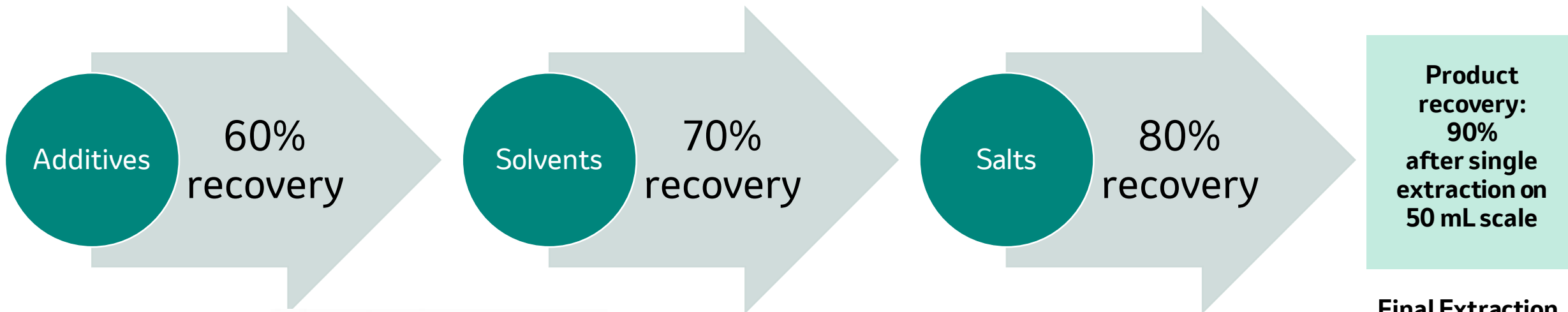
# LLS Screening strategy: Inorganic salts



\*Acyl Uridine extraction yield expressed as % in Organic Layer.



# HTE-Enabled LLE optimization



*Out of >700 conditions evaluated....  
100 samples gave a phase split  
6 samples gave a recovery yield >70%*

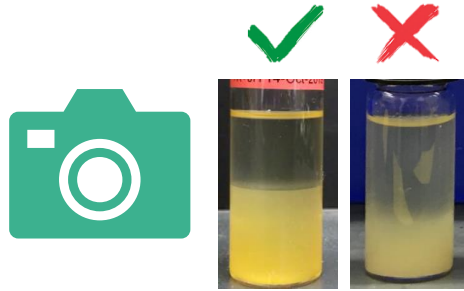
**Final Extraction Conditions:**  
44% 2-MeTHF/IPA,  
60 wt% ammonium sulfate



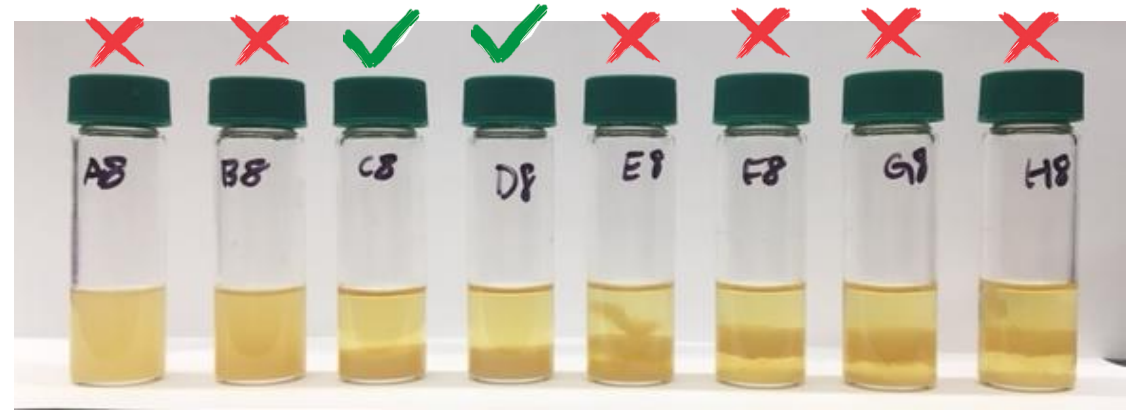
# Summary

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- Development of a vision-guided HTE LLE platform



- Successful pipeline application enables enzyme removal



- New technology can be implemented with sufficient pre-investment



- Cross-disciplinary collaboration enables innovation



# Acknowledgements

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## **Tecan Development**

Jon Jurica

Shane Grosser

Eugene Kwan

Melodie Christensen

Jacob Forstater

Amani Shaikh (Tecan)

## **Molnupiravir Project Team**

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Tetsuji Itoh

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