



OPEN Rapid inactivation of bacteria by MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ nanohybrid structures driven by visible light

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Photocatalytic water disinfection is a cutting-edge strategy for effectively sterilizing water in a cost-effective and environmentally friendly manner. A 2D/2D MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ heterojunction photocatalyst was specifically designed to improve performance by enhancing the charge separation and reducing the photogenerated carrier recombination rate. When exposed to visible light, electron and hole pairs generated on the surface of the heterojunction interacted with O₂ and H₂O in the environment; this facilitated the production of exogenous reactive oxygen species (ROS) that effectively eliminated the bacteria. With this optimized structure, *E. coli* and *S. aureus* were completely inactivated in 20 and 30 min, respectively, under white LED irradiation.

Keywords MoS₂, g-C₃N₄, Heterostructure, Bacterial inactivation, Photocatalysis

In recent decades, water pollution has become increasingly severe globally, and pathogenic microorganisms (fungi, bacteria, viruses, etc.) in water can cause waterborne infectious diseases, which seriously jeopardize people's health¹. Traditional methods of water pollution treatment, such as ultraviolet irradiation, chemical disinfection (e.g. chlorine (Cl₂), ozone (O₃), and chloramines (H₂NCl)), and membrane filtration, have certain limitations². Problems such as high energy consumption, high production costs, long preparation times, and secondary pollution are common, limiting their large-scale application. Therefore, a new water purification method that is low cost, efficient and environmentally friendly needs to be developed. Photocatalytic technology is widely utilized because of its advantages, such as low energy consumption, high stability, high efficiency, absence of secondary waste generation, and environmental friendliness³. It is considered a novel method that can supplement traditional water purification strategies. Photocatalytic technology interacts with ambient H₂O and O₂ to produce exogenous reactive oxygen species (ROS), including singlet oxygen (¹O₂), hydroxyl radicals (·OH), and superoxide radicals (·O₂⁻); these species can disrupt the proteins and lipids on the bacterial membrane, leading to bacterial inactivation⁴. Furthermore, ·OH and ·O₂⁻ can destroy the pathogenic microorganisms by attacking the cell membranes through advanced oxidative processes; this causes leakage of the intracellular substances or DNA destruction, thereby resulting in disinfection and sterilization⁵. To date, a variety of semiconductor materials have been developed for photocatalytic water purification and include TiO₂⁶, g-C₃N₄⁷, and ZnO⁸. However, the photocatalysts used in the aforementioned work suffer from low photocatalytic stability⁹, low spectral utilization efficiency^{10,11}, and low bactericidal efficiency¹². Therefore, designing a photocatalyst with high catalytic stability, high solar energy utilization, and high bactericidal efficiency is crucial.

As a two-dimensional metal-free semiconductor with a unique structure, g-C₃N₄ has become popular for research because of its low cost, nontoxicity, simple preparation and strong photoreduction ability¹³. However, the inherent narrow spectral response and high recombination rate of the photogenerated carriers severely limit the photocatalytic performance of g-C₃N₄. To address this issue, researchers have made significant efforts and discovered that coupling g-C₃N₄ with suitable bandgap semiconductors to construct heterostructures can broaden the visible light absorption range of g-C₃N₄-based composites and effectively accelerate the interfacial charge separation, thus increasing photocatalytic efficiency¹⁴. Examples include TiO₂/g-C₃N₄¹⁵, Bi₂MoO₆/g-C₃N₄¹⁶ and BiFeO₃/g-C₃N₄¹⁷. These heterostructures exhibit improved photocatalytic performance compared with that of pure g-C₃N₄. Among various heterojunction configurations, 2D/2D nanostructures with large interfacial contact areas are preferred¹⁸. Further exploration of high-performance, easy-to-prepare g-C₃N₄-

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based semiconducting heterojunction materials for photocatalytic sterilization applications is needed to achieve more efficient sterilization outcomes.

Two-dimensional molybdenum disulfide (MoS_2) is considered a potential high-performance metal-free cocatalyst with the following unique properties: (i) good biocompatibility¹⁹; (ii) tuneable energy band gap ranges from 1.2 to 1.9 eV, which increases as the thickness decreases²⁰; (iii) high specific surface area, which is favourable for surface modification and drug loading²¹; and (iv) broad spectral absorption range, which enable the absorption of different bands of light to facilitate diverse applications²². The excellent physicochemical properties of 2D molybdenum disulfide (MoS_2) nanosheets include their high surface area, good electrical conductivity, and good surface retention, and thus, these nanosheets could be used as biocides. Molybdenum sulfide (MoS_2) is a 2D nanomaterial that has potential for biomedical applications in terms of antimicrobial activity²³. The suitability of MoS_2 nanosheets can be attributed to their high surface area, good electrical conductivity and unique properties. In addition, since MoS_2 nanosheets can induce physical damage and lead to bacterial inactivation, they are potential antimicrobial agents against Gram-negative bacterial infections²⁴. These unique properties are promising for photocatalytic applications. MoS_2 and $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ have similar layered structures and are more likely to form close associations; this not only reduces the lattice mismatch but also creates a new electric field-modulated electronic energy-band structure at the interface of MoS_2 and $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ to enhance charge transfer²⁵. Thus, MoS_2 was selected as another semiconductor structure.

In this study, we synthesized an $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ photocatalyst with enhanced sterilization activity using a simple hydrothermal method. We constructed a tightly integrated layered composite structure that significantly improved the photoreduction potential, facilitating interfacial charge separation and electron transfer from $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ to MoS_2 and thereby promoting the overall photocatalytic reaction. The high specific surface area provided numerous reactive sites, and the shorter diffusion pathways improved the electron mobility, leading to faster photocarrier separation and transfer. Consequently, the photocatalytic performance of $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ heterojunction was markedly enhanced, and complete inactivation of *E. coli* and *S. aureus* was attained within 20 min and 30 min, respectively, under irradiation with a white LED lamp.

Experimental section

Synthesis of MoS_2

First, 0.124 g $(\text{NH}_4)_6\text{Mo}_7\text{O}_{24} \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and 0.22 g H_2NCSNH_2 were dissolved in 20 mL pure water. The solution was added to a Teflon-lined autoclave and allowed to react at 180 °C for 24 h. The samples were repeatedly rinsed with ethanol and deionized water before drying at 60 °C for 6 h. Cooling to room temperature, the samples were placed in an EP tube and set aside.

Synthesis of $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$

First, 10 g of melamine was calcined in a muffle furnace at 550 °C for 2 h in air at a heating rate of 5 °C min⁻¹. The samples were kept at 550 °C for an additional 2 h. The resulting yellow powder, bulk C_3N_4 , was ground into a faint-yellow powder and stored for later use. The obtained $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ was dispersed in 20 mL of secondary water and subjected to ultrasonication for 3 h.

Synthesis of $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ heterostructure composites

$\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ layered heterojunctions were synthesized via a simple hydrothermal method. First, 20 mL of secondary water was added to 0.075 g of C_3N_4 , and the mixture was ultrasonicated for 1 h. The resulting solution was added to a reactor, and the above-mentioned medicines used to synthesize MoS_2 were simultaneously placed into the reactor at 180 °C for 24 h to obtain $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ heterojunctions (mass ratio = 3:2), as depicted in Fig. 1.

Characterization

The DX2700 was operated at 40 kV and 30 mA. The pure MoS_2 , pure $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$, and $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{MoS}_2$ photocatalysts were analysed using X-ray diffraction with Cu K α radiation ($\lambda = 1.5418 \text{ \AA}$) to characterize the crystalline nature of the materials. The morphology of the samples was examined using an FEI Magellan 400 scanning electron microscope and a JEOL JEM-2100 F and Tecnai G2 F20 America FEI transmission electron microscope. Raman spectra were measured with a Thermo Scientific DXR2 using an excitation wavelength of 532 nm. The structures of the photocatalysts were analysed using the Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) method via the 3 H-2000PS2 static volume technique. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) using Thermo ESCALAB 250XI Thermo America detection. Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) detection using Nicolet is50. High Sensitivity Zeta Potential and Particle Size Analyser 90PluSPALS Detects Zeta Potential and Particle Size.

Photocatalytic bacterial inactivation experiments

Gram-negative *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and Gram-positive *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*) were used to evaluate the photocatalytic antimicrobial activity of the prepared $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ heterojunctions. First, 20 mg of the material was added to 20 mL of ultrapure water to prepare a 1 mg/mL suspension; this suspension was then subjected to high-pressure sterilization for future use. The bacterial cells were added to the suspension to achieve a final cell density of approximately 1.0×10^7 colony-forming units (CFUs) per mL. The suspension was then exposed to a white LED light source (100 W, 50 mW/cm²) for irradiation. Prior to irradiation, the suspension was stirred in the dark for 30 min to fully mix the material with the bacterial solution. The circulating water was cooled to maintain room temperature (20 °C) during the reaction. During the irradiation process, samples were collected at different times. Specifically, 100 μL of the reaction solution was taken from the reactor, serially diluted five times with ultrapure water, and inoculated onto nutrient agar plates. The Petri dishes were then placed in a constant-temperature incubator at 37 °C for 24 h for colony counting. After 24 h, the colonies were counted, and the average number of colonies was calculated from three replicates. Fluorescence images of the

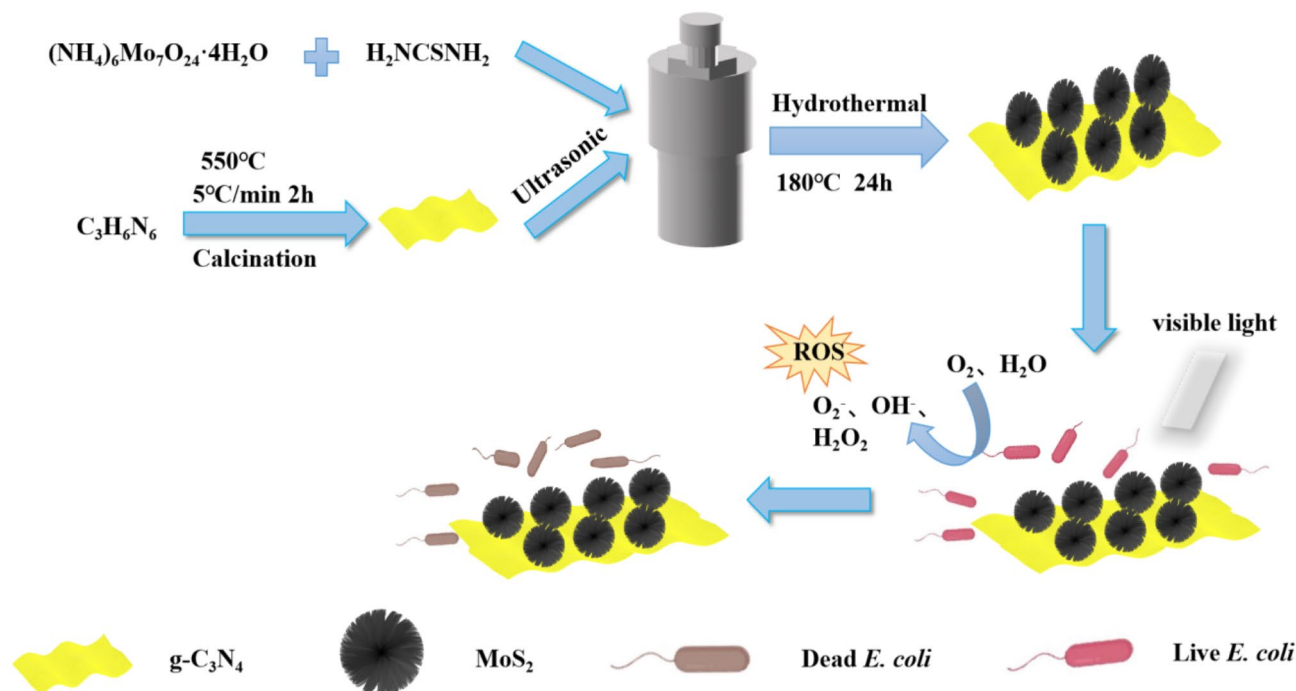


Fig. 1. Synthesis and antimicrobial effects of the $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4/\text{MoS}_2$.

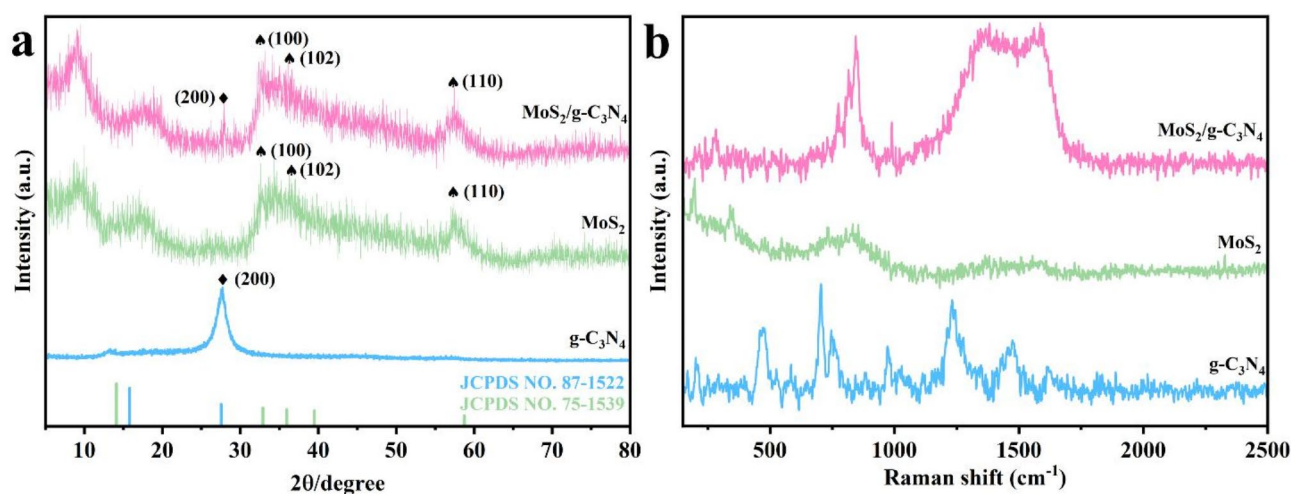


Fig. 2. (a) XRD diffraction patterns and (b) Raman spectra of various samples.

bacterial cells were acquired using a confocal laser scanning microscope (Leica SPE) with Syto 9 and propidium iodide as fluorescent dyes. An appropriate amount of the ROS scavenger was added to the 5 mL mixed system of material and bacterial suspension, the mixture was reacted for the same amount of time under light, and the changes in the number of colonies were observed to investigate which specific ROS scavenger acts as an antimicrobial agent.

Results and discussion

Characterization of $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$

The X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns of the prepared samples are shown in Fig. 2a. The diffraction peak of $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ at 27.4° corresponds to the (200) crystal plane (JCPDS NO. 87-1522)²⁶. The diffraction peaks of MoS_2 at 32.9° and 57.7° correspond to the (100) and (110) crystal planes, respectively (JCPDS NO. 75-1539)²⁷. Moreover, in the $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ heterojunction material, the coexisting (200) crystal planes of $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ and the (100) and

(110) crystal planes of MoS_2 are clearly observed. These results confirm that the heterojunction material was successfully synthesized and that the structure of each component remained stable during the preparation and composite processes, providing a basis for heterojunction formation.

The Raman spectra of the different samples are shown in Fig. 2b. Pure $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ exhibits two Raman peaks at 1352 cm^{-1} and 1596 cm^{-1} ; these correspond to the characteristic D and G peaks, respectively, of the $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ graphitic material²⁸. Pure MoS_2 displays two peaks at 380.3 cm^{-1} and 407.8 cm^{-1} ; these peaks are attributed to the in-plane (E_{2g}^1) and out-of-plane (A_{1g}) vibrational modes, respectively²⁹. The $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ composite also shows distinct D and G peaks along with two MoS_2 bands; these results indicate that the structures of all components within the composite remain intact. These results further confirm the successful synthesis of the composite sample and are consistent with the XRD results. FTIR spectra (Fig. S1) similarly indicate the successful synthesis of $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ composites. Peaks of 749 cm^{-1} from MoS_2 and 2986 cm^{-1} from $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ can be observed on the composite.

Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM) images of each prepared sample are shown in Fig. 3. Figure 3a shows an SEM image of the prepared pure MoS_2 ; here, the image reveals a microspherical shape that is fluffy, porous, and free of agglomeration. The TEM image of MoS_2 is shown in Fig. S4. Figure 3b presents an SEM image of pure $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$, and a lamellar stacking structure is clearly observed. The SEM image of the composite sample $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ is shown in Fig. 3c; here, the layers of lamellar $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ are attached to the surface of the spherical MoS_2 . Figure 3d shows a TEM image of pure MoS_2 , in which the spherical three-dimensional MoS_2 appears as a black shaded portion due to its resistance to electron penetration. Figure 3e shows a TEM image of pure $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$; here, the image reveals distinct multilayered lamellar stacking, and this result is consistent with the SEM results. Figure 3f shows the TEM image of the composite sample $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$; in this image, the multilayer lamellar $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ is anchored around the spherical MoS_2 , and this confirms the successful synthesis of the composite material and the formation of a heterogeneous structure.

The nitrogen adsorption/desorption isothermal curves of each prepared material are shown in Fig. 4a. The isotherms of the three materials exhibit inflection points in the low-pressure region. In the high-pressure region, the adsorption and desorption curves do not overlap, displaying evident hysteresis loops, indicative of a clear Type IV curve. The specific surface areas of MoS_2 , $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ and $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ are 166.36 , 43.69 and $107.96\text{ m}^2/\text{g}$, respectively. The pore size distributions of the three samples shown in Fig. 4b reveal that the pore sizes of all three materials are in the range of $2\text{--}50\text{ nm}$; these results indicate a standard mesoporous structure and are consistent with the H1 hysteresis loop observed in the adsorption/desorption isotherms. The pore size distributions of MoS_2 , $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$, and $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ are 11.26 , 16.55 , and 12.63 nm , respectively. The composites combine the large specific surface area of MoS_2 with the large pore size of $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ to provide extensive reactive sites for the catalytic reactions.

X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) results confirm the successful synthesis of $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ composites (Fig. S3). The characteristic peaks of Mo 3d, C 1s, N 1s and S 2p orbitals observed in the composites proved the effective combination of the two components. The XPS spectra in the Mo 3d region, two different peaks were observed at the BE of 228.5 and 231.8 eV . In the XPS spectra of the S 2p region, two distinct main peaks are observed at BE of 161.6 and 162.7 eV . Notably, the binding energy shifts of Mo 3d at 231.8 eV and 228.5 eV indicate that the electronic structure of MoS_2 changes significantly when interacting with $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$, which suggests

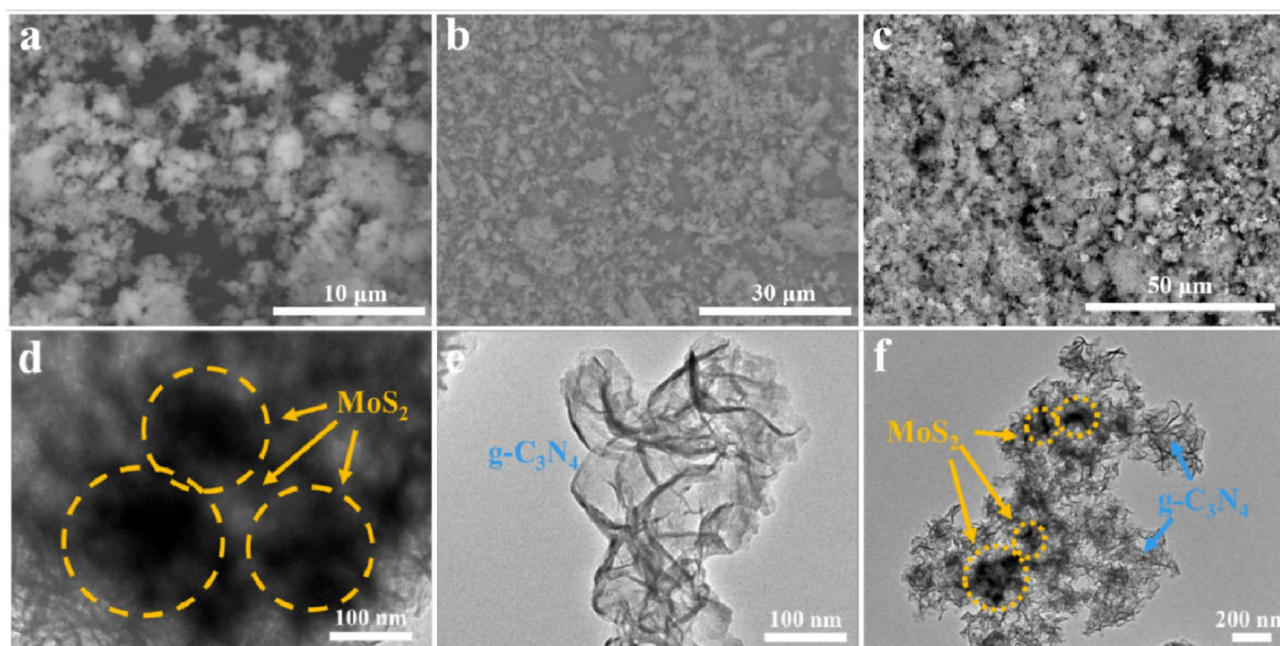


Fig. 3. SEM images of pure MoS_2 (a), $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ (b), $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ (c) and TEM images of MoS_2 (d), $\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ (e), $\text{MoS}_2/\text{g-C}_3\text{N}_4$ (f).

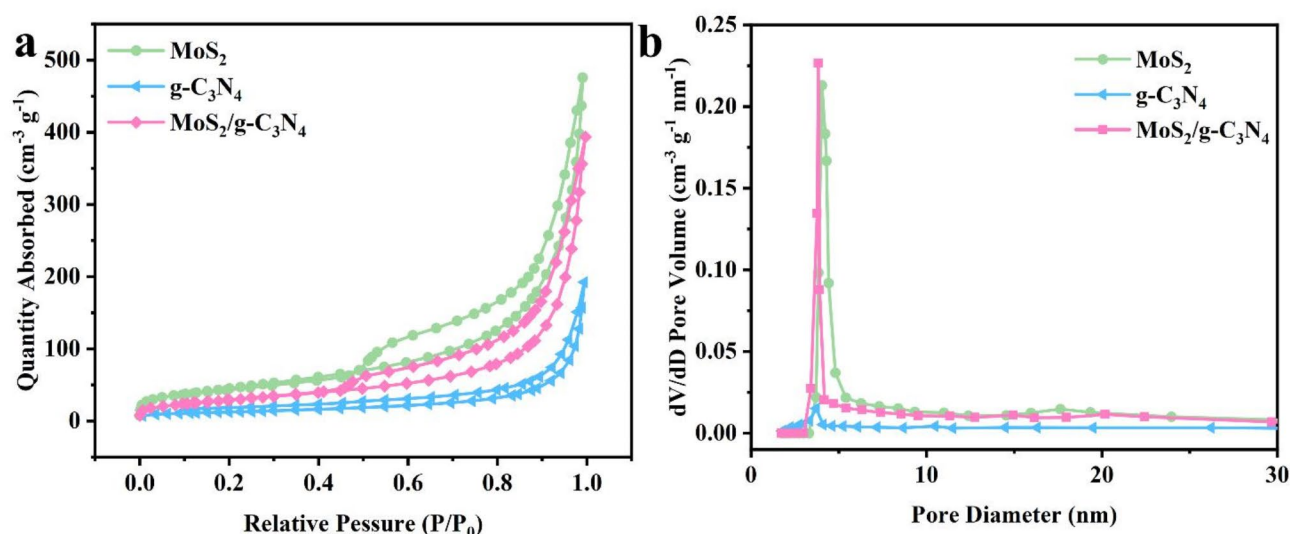


Fig. 4. (a) Nitrogen adsorption and desorption isotherms of MoS₂, g-C₃N₄ and MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ and (b) pore size distributions.

that there is a strong chemical bond between the two materials³⁰. The spectrum of the C 1s region of the pure g-C₃N₄, MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ sample exhibit two major peaks at BEs of 284.5 eV (attributed to reference C atoms) and 285.9 eV (attributed to C sp²-hybridized atoms of the terminal C(N)₃ structure in tri-s-triazine aromatic units)³¹. The high-resolution XPS spectrum of the pristine g-C₃N₄ N1s region shows two peaks located at BEs of 398.7 eV and 400.8 eV, which can be indexed to the nitrogen atoms in C=N-C and -NH₂ bonds, respectively³².

The results presented in Fig. S6 highlight important insights into the physicochemical properties of MoS₂ and g-C₃N₄, as well as their composite MoS₂/g-C₃N₄. Zeta potential measurements (Fig. S6a) indicate that MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ composites present a distinctive waveforms, suggesting the existence of synergistic interactions between the components, which may enhance their electrochemical properties. In the corresponding hydrodynamic diameter analysis (Fig. S6b), the average diameter of MoS₂ (1087.58 nm) is significantly larger than that of the composite (429.93 nm) and g-C₃N₄ (583.37 nm). The narrower distribution observed in the composites indicates improved dispersion, which contributes to better contact with the bacterial fluid in practical applications.

Photocatalytic antibacterial properties of MoS₂/g-C₃N₄

Firstly, the look antimicrobial function of the composites with different ratios was done by pre-experiment as shown in Fig. S2, the results showed that MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ (3:1) has more toxicity than MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ (3:2) under dark condition for 30 min. Therefore, MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ (3:2) was chosen for the subsequent experiments. The photocatalytic bacterial inactivation activity of the synthesized MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ heterostructures was evaluated using *E. coli* and *S. aureus*. Notably, almost no bacterial inactivation was observed in the dark (dark control) or under light irradiation without photocatalysts (light control) for either *E. coli* or *S. aureus*. The bare C₃N₄ exhibited negligible bactericidal efficiency under white LED light irradiation. Impressively, the addition of MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ or MoS₂, both of which have broader visible light absorption, significantly enhanced photocatalytic antibacterial activity, especially the MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ heterostructure. As shown in Fig. 5a-b, in the spread plate assays, no visible colonies were observed in the MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ group after 30 min of irradiation under LED light. The improved photocatalytic performance compared with that of the pure MoS₂ group indicates that the formation of heterogeneous structures promotes photocatalysis. Moreover, the antibacterial rate towards *E. coli* (Fig. 6a) was slightly greater than that towards *S. aureus* (Fig. 6b) because of the differences in cell wall structure.

The durability of a photocatalyst across multiple antimicrobial cycles is crucial for practical water disinfection. As shown in Fig. 6c, *E. coli* was completely inactivated within three antimicrobial cycles, each lasting 30 min. Although the antimicrobial resistance slightly decreased in the fourth and fifth cycles, it remained significant. These results highlight the high stability and robustness of MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ in the photocatalytic inactivation of bacteria.

To determine the primary reactive species for photocatalytic bacterial inactivation, the scavenger used by Zhang et al. was selected³³. Various scavengers have been introduced into the system: Cr(VI) for electrons (e⁻), isopropanol for hydroxyl radicals (·OH), sodium oxalate for holes (h⁺), 4-hydroxy-2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidinyloxy (TEMPO) for superoxide radicals (·O₂⁻), and catalase for hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂)^{34,35}. As shown in Fig. 6d, the addition of Cr(VI) to capture e⁻ significantly reduced the photocatalytic antibacterial activity, and no antibacterial activity was observed; these results indicated that the enhancement was primarily due to the improved separation efficiency of photogenerated e⁻-h⁺. The slight decrease in antibacterial activity upon the addition of isopropanol indicated that ·OH played a minor role. The pronounced inhibition of bacterial inactivation observed with the addition of sodium oxalate, TEMPO, and catalase indicated that h⁺, ·O₂⁻, and H₂O₂ were crucial species for photocatalytic antibacterial activity, particularly active H₂O₂.

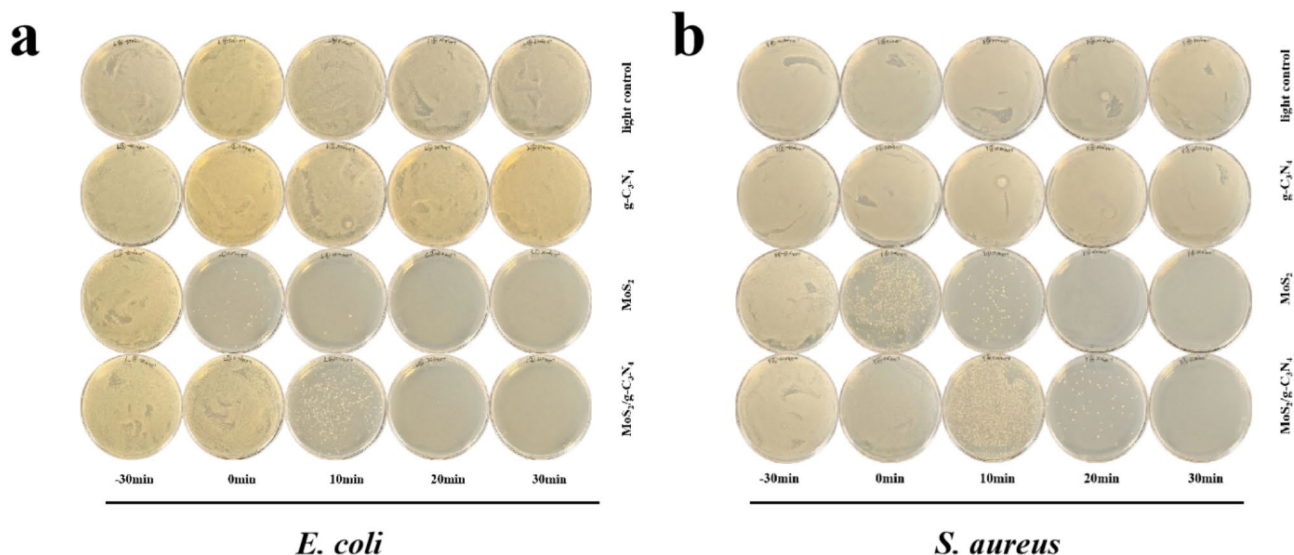


Fig. 5. Photocatalytic performance of MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ against *E. coli* (a) and *S. aureus* (b).

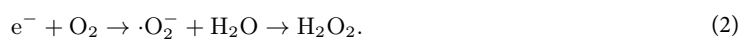
As shown in Fig. 7, the red and green fluorescence in the stained cell images indicate dead and live *S. aureus*, respectively. Without visible light irradiation, the bacteria clearly exhibited green fluorescence with minimal red fluorescence, indicating that many bacteria survived. Upon visible light irradiation, the images displayed red fluorescence, indicating the death of all the *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria. Thus, this heterogeneous structure has a photocatalytic sterilization effect.

As shown in Fig. S5, the composite MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ has good biocompatibility, which was achieved by haemolysis experiments, and the haemolysis rates of pure MoS₂, g-C₃N₄ and MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ were all under 3%, which demonstrated its biosafety.

Photocatalytic activity enhancement mechanism of MoS₂/g-C₃N₄

Figure 8 shows the mechanism underlying the enhanced photocatalytic performance of the synthesized MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ heterostructures. As shown in the left panel of Fig. 8a, the work functions (WFs) of MoS₂ and g-C₃N₄ are calculated from the Ultraviolet Photoelectron Spectroscopy (UPS) data and are 2.74 eV and 5.15 eV, respectively. The work function of MoS₂ is much lower, and MoS₂ acts as an electron transfer channel to attain efficient charge transfer. The right figure shows the Fermi edge of the sample; here, the valence band top of the sample can be derived, the valence band (VB) of the sample can be derived by the conversion of the vacuum energy level, and the valence bands of MoS₂ and g-C₃N₄ are 1.85 eV and 3.07 eV, respectively. The Mott Schottky curve of the sample is shown in Fig. 8b; thus, MoS₂ is an n-type semiconductor, the tangent slope of the M-S curve is positive, and the flat band potential E_{FB} is -0.36 eV, and its conduction band E_{CB} is approximately -0.36 eV - (0.1–0.3 eV). Additionally, g-C₃N₄ has a negative M-S curve tangent slope and is a p-type heterojunction, and the flat-band potential E_{FB} is 0.22 eV; this value indicates that the conduction band of g-C₃N₄ is approximately 0.22 eV + (0.1–0.3 eV). Figure 8c shows that the band gap of g-C₃N₄ (E_g) of g-C₃N₄ is 2.62 eV, and its conduction band is 0.45 eV from Eq. (1); these results are consistent with the deduction from the Mott Schottky results. Since MoS₂ is a black material, its UV-vis diffuse reflection is difficult to attain; thus, the approximate position of the conduction band of MoS₂ is derived from the M-S curve to further explore its photocatalytic performance. Under white LED light irradiation, MoS₂ generates photogenerated electron-hole pairs, where electrons are excited from the valence band to the conduction band, and holes remain in the valence band. The electrons migrate from MoS₂ to g-C₃N₄, whereas the holes move from g-C₃N₄ to MoS₂; thus, carrier recombination is prevented, and the photocatalytic activity is significantly enhanced. During the photocatalytic antimicrobial process, $\cdot O_2^-$ radicals and H₂O₂, produced by the reaction of electrons with O₂ and H₂O, play crucial roles in the sterilization process³⁶, as shown in Eq. (2).

$$E_{VB} = E_{CB} + E_g. \quad (1)$$



Conclusion

In summary, the MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ heterostructure synthesized via a simple hydrothermal method exhibits enhanced photocatalytic performance and effectively eliminated *E. coli* and *S. aureus* within 20 min under irradiation with a white LED lamp. This significant increase in photocatalytic activity is attributed to the ability of the nanoheterostructure to reduce the recombination of the photogenerated electron-hole pairs and enhance the carrier transport; thus, the production of reactive oxygen species (h^+ , $\cdot O_2^-$, and H₂O₂) was enhanced. This work

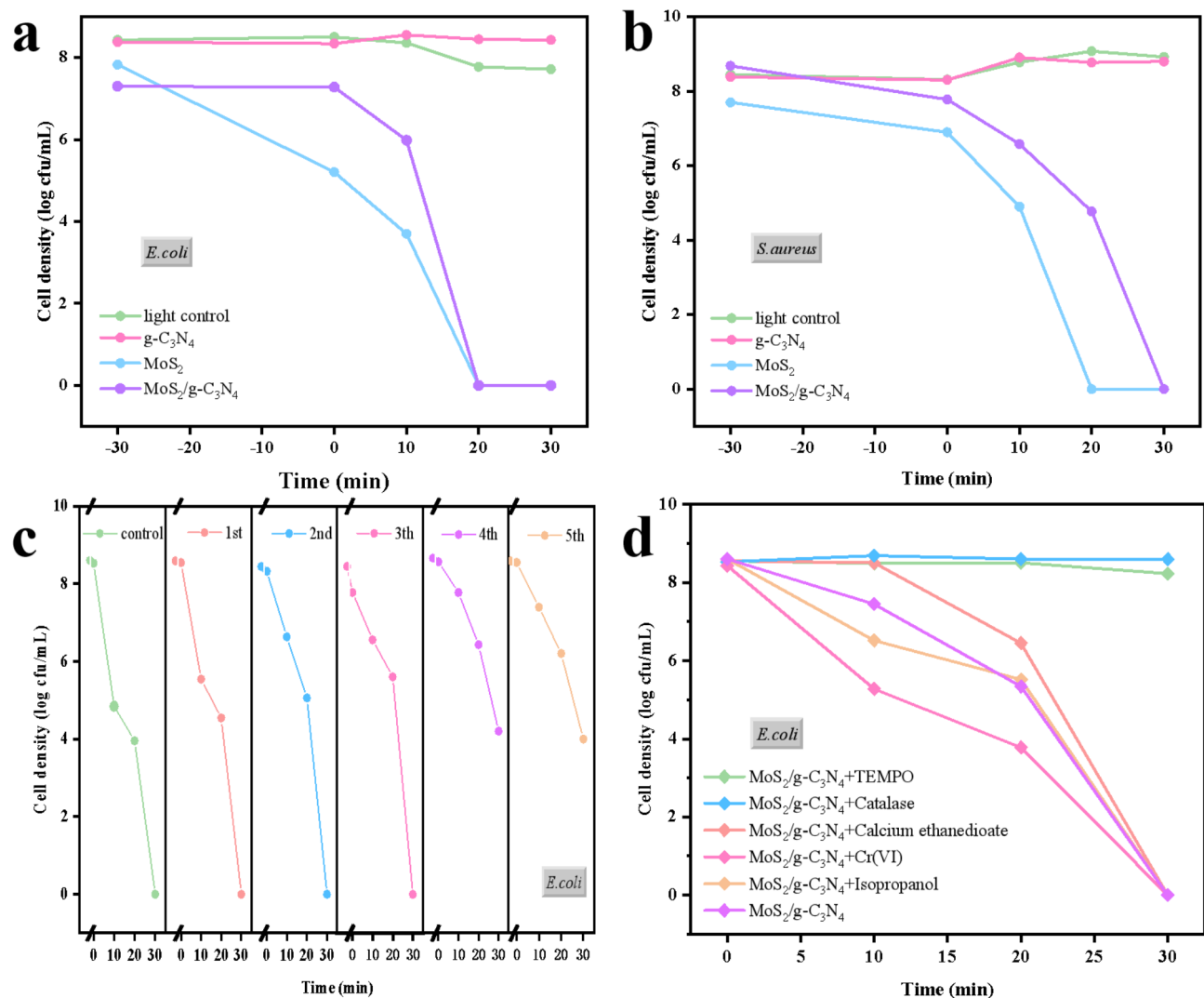


Fig. 6. Photocatalytic antibacterial activity of MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ heterostructure under white LED light irradiation and control experiments. The inactivation performances against *E. coli* (a) and *S. aureus* (b) and the corresponding spread plate results of *E. coli* and *S. aureus*, respectively. (c) Recycling experiments of photocatalytic inactivation of *E. coli* over MoS₂/g-C₃N₄. (d) Photocatalytic antibacterial activity of MoS₂/g-C₃N₄ in the presence of different scavengers under white LED irradiation.

introduces a novel photocatalyst for LED photocatalytic water purification, thereby expanding the applications of photocatalytic antibacterial technologies.

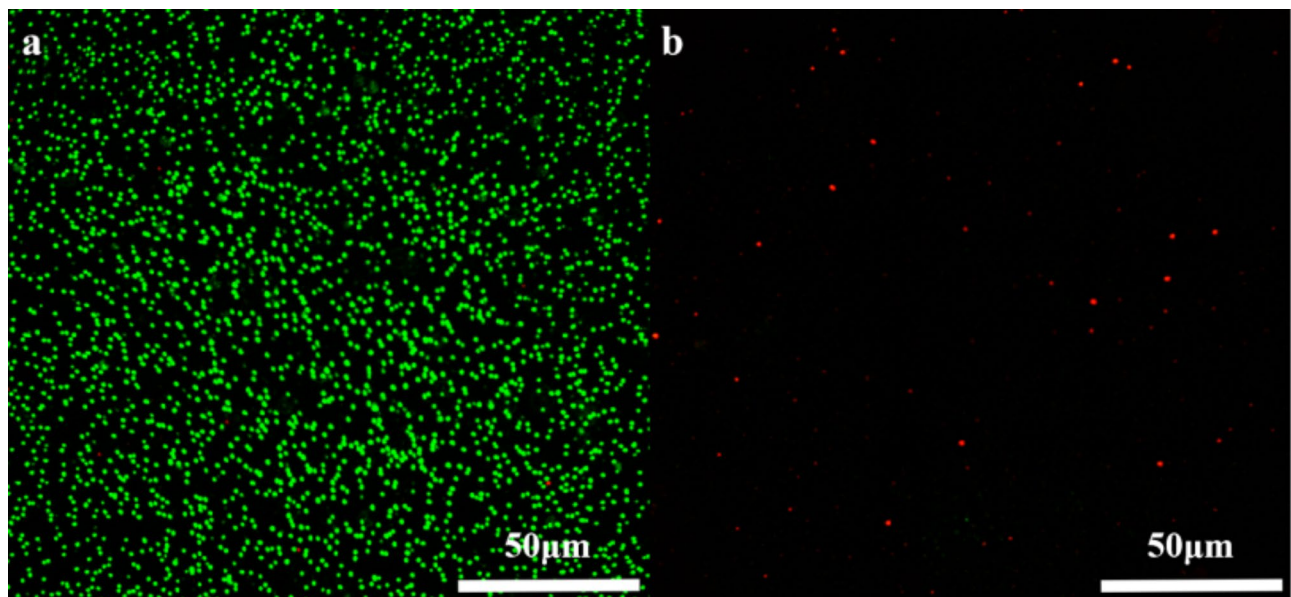


Fig. 7. Merged fluorescence-stained images of *S. aureus*; green and red indicate live and dead *S. aureus*, respectively.

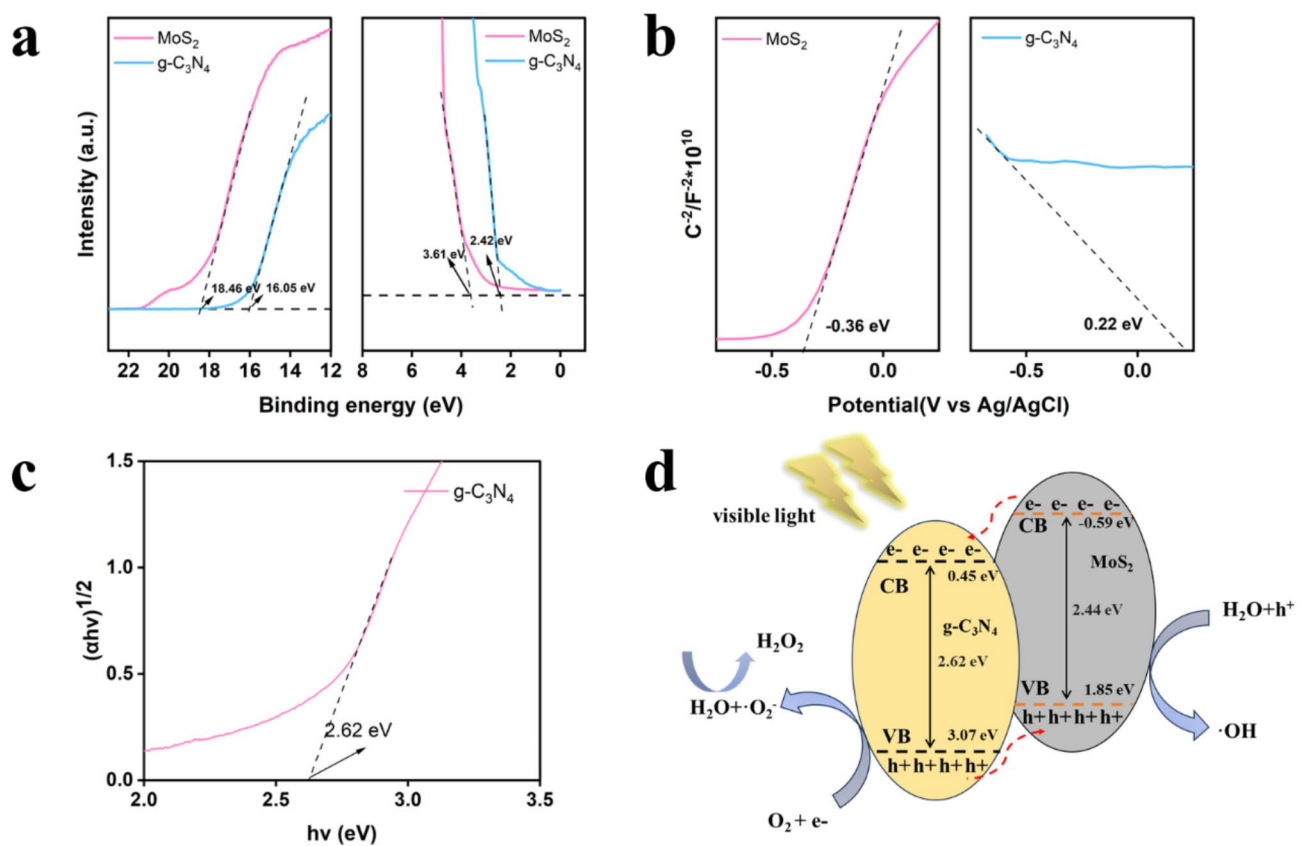


Fig. 8. (a) Tauc plots and work functions of MoS₂ and g-C₃N₄, (b) Mott-Schottky plots, (c) UV-Vis diffuse reflectance spectra, and (d) proposed mechanism for the photocatalytic bacterial inactivation by MoS₂/g-C₃N₄.

Data availability

All data generated or analysed during this study are included in this published article.

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Author contributions

P.L. and Y.Z. wrote the main manuscript text; J.L. experimented; Y.D. and D.L. were responsible for data analysis; S.Z. was responsible for editing and supervision; all authors contributed to the general discussion.

Declarations

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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