

# Sample Preparation Strategies for Urine Panels with 50 or More Drugs and Metabolites Analyzed by LC-MS/MS



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Stephanie J. Marin, Jillian Neifeld, Dan Menasco, Elena Gairloch<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Biotage, 10430 Harris Oaks Blvd., Suite C, Charlotte North Carolina 28269, USA

## Overview/Introduction

Urine drug testing to support pain management is a mainstay of the clinical toxicology laboratory. Reduced reimbursement has continued to put increasing pressure on laboratories. Many toxicology labs are moving to larger drug panels to increase throughput and efficiency, while reducing turn-around-time and cost. Methods using LC-MS with 50 or more drugs and metabolites are increasingly common. These panels increase throughout and improve laboratory efficiency, but create many challenges. While “dilute and shoot” methods are easy and affordable, they can result in shortened LC column lifetimes and increased MS instrumentation downtime. Matrix effects can also effect sensitivity and overall method performance. Supported Liquid extraction (SLE) and Solid Phase Extraction (SPE) provide cleaner samples for LC-MS/MS and more robust clinical assays. Successful sample preparation method development requires understanding the retention mechanism of the analytes in the assay. The octanol-water partition coefficient (logP) and acid-dissociation constant (pKa) of the compounds of interest are important properties that can guide sample preparation strategy and optimization of method conditions.

## Methods

Three sample preparation methodologies were evaluated for 52 drug analytes:

### Supported Liquid Extraction ISOLUTE® SLE+

- Works for acidic, basic and neutral drugs
- EtOAc, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> or MTBE for elution
- Addition of IPA can increase partitioning of more hydrophilic compounds

### Polymeric Reverse Phase SPE EVOLUTE® EXPRESS ABN

- More hydrophilic compounds will exhibit poor retention
- Organic wash must be carefully controlled

### Mixed-Mode Polymeric Reverse Phase Cation Exchange SPE EVOLUTE® EXPRESS CX

- Compounds can be retained by ion exchange and reverse phase
- pH sample pretreatment controls ionization and retention
- Wash steps must be carefully selected based upon retention mechanism
- Must know retention mechanism of compounds! (see Table 3)

Hydrolyzed urine specimens fortified with 52 drugs and metabolites from multiple drug classes were treated with acid or base and extracted using three sample preparation methodologies. Wash and elution solvents were optimized for each extraction protocol. Samples were analyzed on a Sciex 5500 triple quadrupole MS coupled to a Shimadzu Nexera LC and autosampler. Two transitions were monitored for each analyte (see Table 3). Recovery, matrix effect, and process efficiency were evaluated (Matuszewski BK et al, *Anal. Chem.* 75, 3019-3030, 2003).

## Extraction Parameters

Table 1: Extraction Methods

	ISOLUTE SLE+	EVOLUTE EXPRESS ABN	EVOLUTE EXPRESS CX
Specimen volume	200 µL		
Ammonium acetate pH 4	200 µL		
enzyme	13 µL		
hydrolyze	55 °C for 30 minutes		
Sample Pretreatment	200 µL 0.1% NH <sub>4</sub> OH	200 µL 0.1% NH <sub>4</sub> OH	200 µL 4% H <sub>3</sub> PO <sub>4</sub>
Condition	-	1 mL MeOH	1 mL MeOH
Equilibrate	-	1 mL 0.1% NH <sub>4</sub> OH	1 mL 4% H <sub>3</sub> PO <sub>4</sub>
Load (µL)	400 µL	entire pretreated sample	
Wash 1	-	1 mL 0.1% NH <sub>4</sub> OH	1 mL 4% H <sub>3</sub> PO <sub>4</sub>
Wash 2	-	1 mL 10% MeOH in water	1 mL of 50% MeOH in water
Dry	-	dried 5 min under nitrogen 40 psi	
Elute option 1	2 x 0.75 mL 90:10 CH <sub>2</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub> :2-propanol	2 x 0.75 mL 78:20:2 CH <sub>2</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub> :2-propanol:NH <sub>4</sub> OH	
OR Elute option 2	-	OR 2 x 0.75 mL 78:20:2 CH <sub>2</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub> :MeOH:NH <sub>4</sub> OH	
Dry	-	dried under nitrogen at 40°C	
Reconstitute	150 µL 90:10 0.1% FA in water:0.1% FA in MeOH		

## LC Parameters

**Mobile phase A (MPA):** 0.1% formic acid (FA) in water  
**Mobile phase B (MPB):** 0.1% FA in MeOH, gradient separation  
**Flow Rate:** 0.6 mL/min  
**Column:** Restek RAPTOR biphenyl 2.7 µm, 50 x 3.0 mm  
**LC:** Shimadzu UPLC  
**Injection volume:** 2 µL

## Results and Discussion

### Supported Liquid Extraction ISOLUTE® SLE+

- 80 to >90% recovery for most compounds except:
- 70% recovery norhydrocodone and morphine
- 50% zolpidem-phenyl-4-COOH and amphetamine
- <20% recovery pregabalin and gabapentin

### Polymeric Reverse Phase SPE EVOLUTE® EXPRESS ABN

- 80 to >90% recovery for many compounds
- Poor recovery for opiates and some opioids:
- 30-60% for 6-AM, hydrocodone, norhydrocodone, codeine, dihydrocodeine and oxycodone
- <10% morphine, hydromorphone, oxymorphone
- 50-60% recovery for norbuprenorphine, norfentanyl, tapentadol, n-desmethyltapentadol
- 25 % recovery for naloxone
- 50% recovery 7-aminoclonazepam 30% amphetamine and methamphetamine and ritalinic acid
- 70% recovery 9-carboxy-THC, amitriptyline and nortriptyline
- <20% recovery pregabalin and gabapentin

### Mixed mode polymeric reverse phase cation exchange SPE EVOLUTE® EXPRESS CX

- 80 to >90% recovery for most compounds using CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>:2-propanol:NH<sub>4</sub>OH except:
- Poor recovery for barbiturates
- 30% recovery for ritalinic acid
- <20% recovery pregabalin, gabapentin, meprobamate and carisoprodol
- Lowering organic wash to 10% improved recovery of carisoprodol and barbiturates
- Recovery improved for pregabalin (100%), meprobamate (30%), gabapentin and ritalinic acid (80%) and using CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>:MeOH:NH<sub>4</sub>OH, but samples were not as clean

## Conclusions

- Supported liquid extraction and mixed-mode SPE worked best for the most compounds
- Compromises in recovery and sample cleanliness are necessary with large drug panels in urine that have analytes with very different properties
- Knowing the logP and pK<sub>a</sub> of your compounds is essential for successful method development

Table 2. Summary of Sample Preparation Results

Drug Class	CX	SLE+	ABN	Comment
Opiates	+++	++	+	low recoveries for most drugs on ABN
Opioids	+++	+++	++	low recoveries for a few drugs on ABN
Benzodiazepines	+++	+++	++	most variability; 7-AC, zolpidem metabolite lower
Barbiturates	+	+++	+++	recovery on CX requires 10% organic wash
Stimulants	+++	++	++	lower recovery ritalinic acid for most options
Illicit Drugs	+++	+++	+++	
Pregabalin and Gabapentin	++	++	++	must add MeOH to elution solvent on CX - samples not as clean
Carisoprodol and Meprobamate	++	+++	++	lower organic wash on CX for meprobamate

Table 3: Properties, MS/MS Transitions and Collision Energies (CE)

Compound	Properties			MS/MS Transitions				
	logP	pKa 1	pKa 2	Q1	Q3	CE	Q3	CE
11-Nor-delta-9-carboxy-THC	5.1	4.2	9.3	343.0	299.0	-30	245.0	-40
6-monoacetylmorphine	0.6	8.7	9.7	328.1	165.2	60	211.2	30
7-aminoclonazepam	0.5	3.0	5.0	286.0	121.2	50	222.2	30
alpha-hydroxy-alprazolam	1.5	5.0	13.7	325.1	297.0	40	216.1	60
alprazolam	3.0	5.1	18.3	309.1	281.1	40	205.1	60
amitriptyline	4.8	9.8		278.1	105.1	50	202.2	70
amphetamine	1.8	10.0		136.1	119.0	20	91.0	20
benzoylcegonine	-0.6	3.2	9.5	290.2	168.1	30	105.0	50
buprenorphine	3.6	9.6		468.3	396.2	60	414.2	50
butalbital	1.6	8.5		223.0	42.0	-70	179.8	-20
carisoprodol	1.9	15.0		261.2	97.2	20	176.2	10
chlordiazepoxide (Librium)	3.1	6.5		299.9	226.9	10	241.0	10
clonazepam	3.2	1.9	11.7	316.1	102.1	32	123.3	7
cocaine	2.3	8.9		304.1	182.1	30	77.0	70
codeine	1.3	9.2		300.1	152.1	70	115.1	80
dihydrododeine	1.6	9.3		302.1	201.1	40	145.1	60
diazepam	3.1	2.9		285.1	154.1	40	193.0	40
EDDP	4.6	9.6		278.3	234.2	40	186.2	50
fentanyl	3.8	8.8		337.2	105.1	50	188.1	40
gabapentin	-1.3	4.6	9.9	172.1	154.1	30	137.1	20
hydrocodone	2.0	8.6		300.1	199.1	40	128.1	70
hydromorphone	1.6	8.6	10.1	286.2	185.1	40	128.0	70
ketamine	3.4	7.5		238.1	125.1	50	179.2	40
lorazepam	3.5	10.6	12.5	321.0	275.1	50	229.1	40
MDMA	1.9	10.1		194.1	163.2	20	105.2	40
mepredine	2.5	8.2		248.2	220.0	30	174.1	30
meprobamate	0.9	>12.0		219.2	158.2	10	97.1	20
methadone	5.0	9.1		310.2	265.2	20	105.0	20
methamphetamine	2.2	10.2		150.1	91.2	20	119.2	10
morphine	0.9	9.1	10.3	286.2	152.0	80	165.0	60
naloxone	1.6	7.8	10.7	328.0	128.2	80	115.0	80
n-desmethyltapentadol	2.3	10.6		208.2	107.1	50	121.1	20
norbuprenorphine	2.3	10.5		414.3	83.1	70	101.1	50
nordiazepam	3.2	2.9	12.3	271.1	140.0	50	165.1	50
norfentanyl	1.4	10.0		233.2	84.1	20	150.1	20
norhydrocodone	1.6	10.0		286.1	199.1	40	128.1	70
norketamine	2.9	7.5		224.2	125.1	50	179.2	20
normeperidine	2.1	9.3		234.2	160.1	20	188.1	20
nortriptyline	4.4	10.5		264.2	91.1	60	117.1	20
oxazepam	2.9	10.6	12.5	287.1	241.0	30	269.1	20
oxycodone	1.0	8.1		316.2	241.0	50	256.0	30
oxymorphone	0.8	8.2	10.0	302.1	227.0	50	198.1	60
phenacyclidine	4.5	10.6		244.3	91.0	60	159.3	20
phenobarbital	1.4	8.1		230.9	42.0	-70	187.9	-10
pregabalin	-1.4	4.8	10.2	160.2	142.2	15	55.0	35
ritalinic acid	-0.4	3.7	10.1	220.1	84.1	50	56.1	60
secobarbital	2.0	8.5		237.0	42.0	-70	193.8	-20
tapentadol	3.0	10.2		222.2	107.1	50	121.1	30
temazepam	2.8	4.7		301.1	255.1	50	177.1	60
tramadol	2.5	9.3		264.2	58.1	60	42.1	80
zolpidem	3.0	5.7		308.1	235.1	50	236.2	40
zolpidem-4-phenyl-COOH	0.6	3.4	5.7	338.1	265.1	50	266.1	40