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Authors: Pablo Miralles, Alberto Chisvert, M. José Alonso, Sandra Hernandorena, Amparo Salvador

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Determination of free formaldehyde in cosmetics containing formaldehyde-releasing preservatives by reversed-phase dispersive liquid-liquid microextraction and liquid chromatography with post-column derivatization

Pablo Miralles, Alberto Chisvert*, M^a José Alonso, Sandra Hernandorena, Amparo Salvador

Department of Analytical Chemistry, University of Valencia, 46100 Burjassot, Valencia, Spain

* Corresponding author: Tel.: +34 963544900; Fax: +34 96544436
E-mail address: alberto.chisvert@uv.es (A. Chisvert)

Abstract

An analytical method for the determination of traces of formaldehyde in cosmetic products containing formaldehyde-releasing preservatives has been developed. The method is based on reversed-phase dispersive liquid-liquid microextraction (RP-DLLME), that allows the extraction of highly polar compounds, followed by liquid chromatography–ultraviolet/visible (LC-UV/Vis) determination with post-column derivatization. The variables involved in the RP-DLLME process were studied to provide the best enrichment factors. Under the selected conditions, a mixture of 500 μL of acetonitrile (disperser solvent) and 50 μL of water (extraction solvent) was rapidly injected into 5 mL of toluene sample solution. The extracts were injected into the LC-UV/Vis system using phosphate buffer 6 mmol L^{-1} at pH 2 as mobile phase. After chromatographic separation, the eluate merged with a flow stream of pentane-2,4-dione in ammonium acetate solution as derivatizing reagent and passed throughout a post-column reactor at 85 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ in order to derivatize formaldehyde into 3,5-diacetyl-1,4-dihydrolutidine, according to Hantzsch reaction, which was finally measured spectrophotometrically at 407 nm. The method was successfully validated showing good linearity, an enrichment factor of 86 ± 2 , limits of detection and quantification of 0.7 and 2.3 ng mL^{-1} , respectively, and good repeatability ($\text{RSD} < 9.2 \%$). Finally, the proposed analytical method was applied to the determination of formaldehyde in different commercial cosmetic samples containing formaldehyde-releasing preservatives, such as bronopol, diazolidinyl urea, imidazolidinyl urea, and DMDM hydantoin, with good relative recovery values (91 – 113 %) thus showing that matrix effects were negligible. The good analytical features of the proposed method besides

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