

# Liquid chromatography–tandem mass spectrometry

Mira Petrovic · Damià Barceló

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Over the last 20 years LC–MS techniques have advanced dramatically in their sensitivity, specificity, and reliability, mostly because of the development of hyphenated chromatography–mass spectrometry techniques. Currently one of the great challenges in environmental analysis and food safety is evaluation and control of the risks associated with the presence of mixtures of emerging contaminants; this has resulted in swift growth in the use of LC–MS–MS which is, today, the method of choice for determination of many polar and medium-polar classes of contaminants in environmental, biological, and food samples. Much effort has applied to the development of more efficient extraction and clean-up procedures by automation and coupling of sample-preparation and detection systems (for example, on-line SPE or dual LC column systems), application of advanced sorbents (e.g. nanoparticles as sorbents), and use of more environmentally sound approaches, for example solvent-reduced techniques. Moreover, there is a growing demand for high-throughput analysis, because of the growing number of samples, and shortening of analytical run times is often required in laboratories conducting environmental monitoring studies or food quality control. Run times of several tens of minutes are not acceptable, so the emphasis is on achievement of maximum chromatographic resolution in a drastically reduced time by application of fast and high-resolution LC systems (for example ultra-high pressure liquid chromatography (UHPLC), high-temperature liquid chromatography (HTLC), or monolithic and fused-core columns). Another

recent trend is the use of hydrophilic interaction chromatography (HILIC) for separation of polar compounds. With regard to mass analysers, hybrid instruments, for example QqTOF, QqLIT, and Orbitrap, are becoming more popular, because of their capabilities in achieving accurate mass measurements and acquiring indispensable qualitative information in the form of full-scan spectra. Another notable trend is a gradual shift from parent compound analysis to analysis of metabolites and transformation products. It is becoming evident that more research is needed to determine breakdown pathways and to evaluate the fate of transformation products formed by biotic and abiotic processes.

This issue of “Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry” contains selected papers presented at the 8th Annual Workshop on LC–MS–MS—Workshop on Environmental Applications and Food Safety, held on 2–4 July 2012 in Barcelona, Spain, and organized jointly by CSIC (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Barcelona, Spain), the Catalan Institute for Water Studies (ICRA), Waters Corporation (Manchester, UK), Environment Canada, and the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Barcelona, Spain), in collaboration with the Spanish Society for Mass Spectrometry (SEEM).

In the course of the workshop a total of 35 keynote lectures and 56 posters were presented in three main sections

- general aspects of LC–MS–MS analysis;
- environmental applications; and
- food applications

covering practical aspects of the usefulness of tandem mass spectrometric techniques for screening and quantification of organic contaminants in environmental and food samples.

The papers presented give an overview of the advantages of modern tandem and hybrid MS technology, and compare and contrast their use for quantitative and qualitative determination of complex environmental and food samples.

We would like to thank all the authors of this selection of articles for their participation in the workshop and for their

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M. Petrovic (✉) · D. Barceló  
Catalan Institute for Water Research ICRA, Parc Científic i  
Tecnològic de la UdG (Edifici H2O), c/ Emili Grahit,  
101 17003 Girona, Spain  
e-mail: mpetrovic@icra.cat

M. Petrovic  
ICREA - Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies,  
Barcelona, Spain

written contributions that made this collection of papers possible.



**Mira Petrovic** is an ICREA research professor at the Catalan Institute for Water Studies (ICRA) in Girona, Spain. Her main expertise is in analytical environmental chemistry, specifically analysis of organic micropollutants by use of advanced mass spectrometric techniques and study of their fate and behaviour in the aquatic environment and during treatment of wastewater and drinking water. She has published 136 papers in SCI journals (Hirsch Index 40,

4503 citations), edited six books, and written 34 book chapters. She is included in the ISI Highly Cited in the fields of Chemistry and Environment/Ecology.



**Damià Barceló** is Full Research Professor at the Institute of Environmental Assessment and Water Studies IDAEA-CSIC and has been Head of the Environmental Chemistry Department (Barcelona, Spain) since 1999 and Director of the Catalan Institute of Water Research (ICRA) (Girona, Spain) since May 2008. His scientific focus is on method development and monitoring of priority, new, and emerging pollutants, in particular in water-quality assessment

and management. In 2007 he was awarded the King Jaime I Prize for the Protection of Nature by the Generalitat of Valencia, Spain, for his outstanding scientific work. In 2011 he received the Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz International Prize for Water (PSIPW) 5th Award 2012 on Water Management and Protection, Saudi Arabia, and in 2012 the Recipharm Environmental Award, Sweden. Since 2011 he has been chairman of the Scientific and Technological Board (STB) of the European Union–Joint Programming Initiative on “Water Challenges for a Changing World”.