



Hair testing for drugs – applications. 1. in drug-facilitated crimes; and, 2. in doping challenges

Prof Pascal KINTZ ^{1,2}

(1) *Institut de médecine légale, Strasbourg, France*

(2) *X-Pertise Consulting, Mittelhausbergen, France.*

Testing for drugs is important for most clinical and forensic toxicological situations, both for assessing the reality of the exposure / intoxication and for evaluation of the level of drug circulating in the body over a determined period of time. This presentation will focus on the perspectives of hair analysis science.

The advantages of hair over traditional matrices, like urine and blood, are obvious: collection is noninvasive, relatively easy to perform, and in forensic situations it may be achieved under close supervision of the collector to prevent adulteration or substitution. The window of drug detection is dramatically extended to weeks, months or even years when testing hair. It appears that the value of alternative specimen analysis for the identification of drug users is steadily gaining recognition. This can be seen from its growing use in pre-employment screening, in forensic sciences, in clinical applications and for doping control. The aim is to document toxicological applications of hair analysis in 2 major situations, including drug-facilitated crimes and challenges of doping violation, particularly in case of contamination. The detection of a single drug exposure in hair will also be addressed by the speaker, who has more than 35-year experience in the field.

Because hair testing for drugs increases the window of detection and permits the differentiation of long-term use from a single exposure when performing segmental analyses, this matrix should be considered as a suitable complement, and not an alternative, to standard investigations.

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