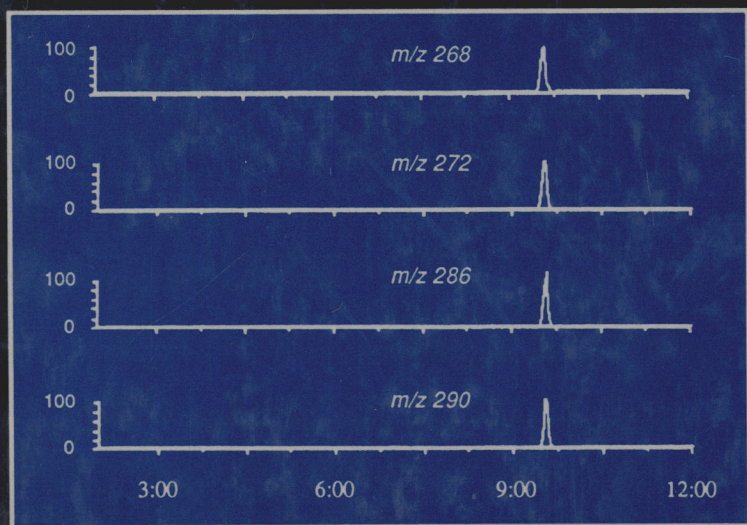


# Lipid Chromatographic Analysis



edited by  
Takayuki Shibamoto

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Takayuki Shibamoto

*Department of Environmental Toxicology  
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## **Preface**

It is well known that chromatography was introduced by Tswett in 1906. However, the technique was not truly utilized until Kuhn, Winterstein, and Lederer applied it in 1931; it has steadily improved since then. The introduction of gas chromatography (GC) by James and Martin in 1952 was one of the most revolutionary events to occur in the field of analytical chemistry. This invention, followed closely by the commercial development of the GC, has allowed us to isolate and identify tremendous numbers of unknown compounds. Today, the most advanced column possesses over 100,000 theoretical plates and can separate more than 1,000 compounds in one run. GC fails, however, in the analysis of nonvolatile compounds. In the 1970s, the high performance liquid chromatograph (HPLC) was developed and marketed to address this need; samples such as lipids, amino acids, and proteins can often be separated using this technique. Recently, supercritical fluid chromatography (SFC) using liquid carbon dioxide as a mobile phase has been developed to analyze some materials not separated by either GC or HPLC.

Analysis of lipids has been one of the most difficult processes in both chemical and biological research. It is particularly difficult to separate a lipid from a mixture because it is soluble in most organic solvents. Lipids are one of the essential components of living matter; they are associated with almost all biological activities including growth, aging, diseases, and protection from harmful agents. Even though recent chromatographic instruments including GC and HPLC can separate most fatty samples, conventional column chromatogra-



phy and thin layer chromatography are important and powerful methods of preparation of samples for analysis. Derivatization techniques are often required to analyze lipids by GC, whereas most lipids can be determined without derivatization by HPLC. On the other hand, GC has higher sensitivity and higher resolution than does HPLC. Obviously, it is extremely important to choose the best chromatographic method to obtain optimal results. This book is prepared with the hope that researchers in this field may be better assisted in choosing their analytical techniques.

*Takayuki Shibamoto*

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# ***Overview and Recent Developments in Solid-Phase Extraction for Separation of Lipid Classes***

**Susan E. Ebeler and Takayuki Shibamoto** University of California, Davis,  
California

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The analysis of lipids frequently involves initial separation of the sample into the various component lipid classes. The separation can either be simple, yielding nonpolar and polar fractions, or complex, resulting in separation and isolation of triglycerides (TG), free fatty acids (FFA), sterols (e.g., cholesterol), sterylesters (SE), glycolipids (GL), acidic phospholipids, neutral phospholipids, and so on. In addition, this preliminary preparation often removes matrix interferences and frequently results in concentration of the analyte(s).

Traditionally, fractionation, cleanup, and concentration of lipid extracts have been achieved through the use of liquid-liquid extraction, thin-layer chromatography (TLC), or liquid-solid column chromatography. Application of TLC for lipid analysis is the subject of Chapter 2 of this volume. Other methods, such as batch adsorption, centrifugation, dialysis, distillation, filtration, lyophilization, precipitation, and Soxhlet extraction, have also been employed (Majors, 1986).

Liquid-solid column chromatography, one of the more commonly used sample preparation methods, relies primarily on partitioning and/or adsorption of the lipid components between the solid and liquid (mobile) phases. Elution of the desired lipid classes is achieved by varying the polarity and strength of the mobile phase. Common stationary phases for column chromatography include silica, alumina, and ion-exchange resins. Application of liquid-solid column

chromatography to the fractionation of lipids has been reviewed extensively (Stein and Lawson, 1966; Litchfield, 1972; Aitzetmüller, 1975; Kuksis, 1977; Christie, 1982; Mangold, 1984).

In the late 1970s small, commercial columns prepacked with a variety of solid stationary phases were introduced. These solid-phase extraction (SPE) cartridges offered several advantages over other sample preparation methods, including traditional column chromatography. Due to their smaller sizes and volumes, SPE columns generally require less eluting solvent. Compared to other methods, reduced solvent use and disposal costs can result in a direct cost savings. According to Tippins (1987), SPE methods can be as much as five times less costly than liquid-liquid extractions. Sample capacities and solvent elution volumes may be appropriate for direct injection onto a gas or liquid chromatograph without further sample preparation, reducing contamination and sample losses incurred during transfer steps. When sample concentration is required, the small solvent volumes are evaporated easily and rapidly. Problems associated with emulsion formation, common with liquid-liquid extractions, are eliminated with SPE.

SPE is a simple, rapid technique and can be up to 12 times faster than liquid-liquid extractions (Tippins, 1987). Packing traditional liquid-solid columns is a time-consuming task and the need for homogeneous packing requires extensive operator skill and training. However, these problems are virtually eliminated with commercial prepacked SPE columns. In addition, the current availability of a wide variety of sorbent types has increased SPE flexibility and selectivity, allowing them to be applied to almost any separation problem. These advantages have allowed SPE to become an increasingly popular tool and often the method of choice in the modern analytical lab for a wide variety of applications, including fractionation of lipid classes.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the principles of SPE and the development of methods for the isolation and fractionation of lipids in a variety of biological, environmental, and food matrices. Traditional column chromatographic methods will be discussed only as they relate to the historical development of SPE methodologies. The SPE separation of oxygenated lipid metabolites (i.e., prostaglandins and leukotrienes), and steroid profiling, although important in a complete lipid analysis, is beyond the scope of this review.

## II. PRINCIPLES OF SPE

In general, the principles of traditional liquid-solid column chromatography and high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) apply to SPE (i.e., retention and elution depend on the interaction of the analyte with the liquid and solid phases). The relatively large particle sizes and pore sizes of SPE sorbents (generally, 30 to 60  $\mu\text{m}$ , 60  $\text{\AA}$ ) result in low back pressures so that analyte

elution is achieved simply via application of a vacuum (15 in. Hg or less) or a slight positive pressure with a hand-held syringe. These pressure requirements are significantly less than those required for HPLC.

SPE cartridges are generally packed into syringelike polyethylene or polypropylene tubes with 100 to 1000 mg of stationary phase sandwiched between two porous metal or plastic frits. Cartridge sizes vary with the manufacturer, generally ranging from 1 to 7 mL. Several samples can be handled simultaneously by inserting the columns into a pressure or vacuum manifold. Automated and on-line, precolumn SPE sample handling techniques for GC and HPLC are also available (Dimson et al., 1986; Liska et al., 1989; McDowall et al., 1989; Brinkman, 1990).

A number of solid phases are commercially available (Fig. 1). Choice of sorbent and elution solvent will depend on the sample matrix and analyte of interest. The following is a brief discussion of sorbent chemistry and solvent considerations. More detailed reviews are available (Harkey, 1989; Liska et al., 1989; Zief and Kiser, 1990) and several manufacturers provide excellent references and other resources for SPE information (Anon., 1984, 1992; McDonald, 1991).

## A. SPE Sorbents

### 1. Silica

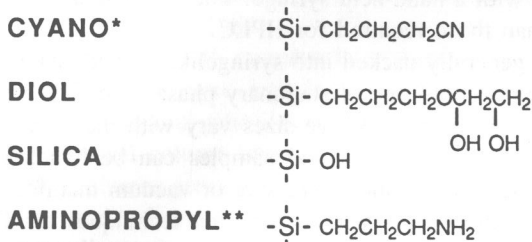
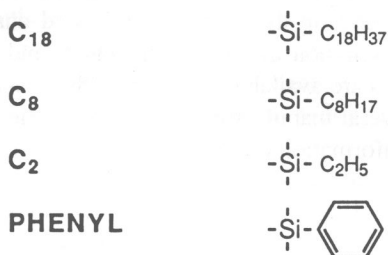
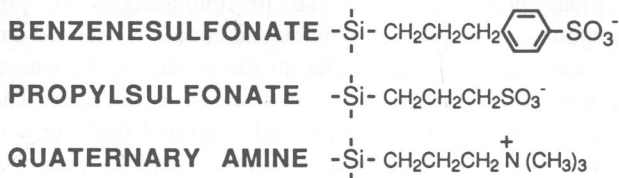
Silica-based stationary phases are widely used for lipid analysis. The polar sites adsorb polar compounds, and analyte retention and elution are related directly to solvent polarity. Ion-exchange effects, due to the mildly acidic nature of the silica particles, also influence separations on silica-based sorbents. Therefore, neutral and basic compounds are more strongly retained than are acids. For example, acidic phospholipids, such as phosphatidic acid (PA), phosphoinositol (PI), and phosphatidylethanolamine (PE), are not retained as strongly as uncharged phospholipids, such as phosphatidylcholine (PC) and sphingomyelin (SM). Highly polar, water-soluble organics adhere tightly and may be difficult to elute.

Silica adsorbs varying amounts of water to the highly active surface silanols. Therefore, the moisture content of the SPE column may affect separation in a given method and may require either drying the columns before use or using solvents with controlled moisture contents (Blunk and Steinhart, 1990).

### 2. Bonded Phases

Reaction of the surface silanols on silica with a variety of siloxane derivatives results in the formation of bonded silica phases (Fig. 2). As noted previously, a variety of bonded phases are available (Fig. 1) and are normally classified as nonpolar (reverse phase), polar (normal phase), or ion exchange. These classifications are based according to the functional group of the stationary phase. In



**NORMAL PHASE****REVERSE PHASE****ION EXCHANGE**

\* MAY ALSO BE USED AS A REVERSE PHASE

\*\* MAY ALSO BE USED AS AN ION EXCHANGE PHASE

**Figure 1** Some commercially available SPE solid phases. (Adapted from Anon., 1992, and Tippens, 1987.)

general, nonpolar phases will be used to retain nonpolar analytes and polar phases to retain polar analytes. Ion-exchange phases depend on ionic interactions as the primary retention mechanism.

**B. SPE Elution Solvents**

Analyte elution is achieved by selectively desorbing the compound of interest by changing the solvent polarity and/or eluotropic strength. "Strong" solvents match the chemical nature and polarity of the sorbent, whereas "weak" solvents