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Analytical Techniques In Drug Quality Control

[1]Ayush Khairnar, [2]Mohini Mane, [3]Dr. Tushar Shelke

[1]Final Year B Pharmacy, [2]Assistant Professor, [3]Pricipal

Genba Sopanrao Moze college of pharmacy, Wagholi ,Pune, Maharashtra

Abstract: Pharmaceuticals can acquire impurities during different phases of their development, transportation, and storage, rendering them potentially hazardous for administration. Therefore, it is essential to identify and quantify these impurities. In this context, analytical instrumentation and methodologies are crucial. It has been demonstrated that sophisticated analytical methods for ensuring pharmaceutical quality have significantly transformed public health and contributed to the ongoing enhancement of healthcare delivery. This review emphasizes the most recent analytical techniques, such as mass spectrometry (MS), spectroscopy and chromatography method aimed at enhancing drug quality. These methods are used in quality control laboratories to ensure the identity, purity, safety, efficacy and performance of drug products

Index Terms **–** Drug quality control, Pharmaceutical analysis, Analytical techniques, Quality Assurance

I. INTRODUCTION

The creation of a drug molecule that has demonstrated therapeutic value to combat, regulate, prevent, or cure diseases is the first step in the drug development process. The synthesis and characterization of such molecules which are also called active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and their analysis to create preliminary safety and therapeutic efficacy data are prerequisites to identification of drug candidates for further detailed investigations.[1]

Pharmaceutical quality control has traditionally depended on established techniques such as high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), gas chromatography (GC), and titrimetric methods. Although these methods have formed the foundation for quality control in the pharmaceutical sector, they are frequently time-intensive, necessitate considerable sample preparation, and may be restricted in their capacity to deliver thorough evaluations of a drug's quality characteristics. With the emergence of contemporary technologies and a deeper comprehension of chemical and biological mechanisms, the realm of analytical techniques has experienced significant transformations. Innovative approaches such as mass spectrometry (MS) and nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR)[2]. A primary endeavor of researchers engaged in the field of chromatography in recent years has predominantly centered on enhancing the separation efficiency of chromatographic techniques[3].

II. CHROMATOGRAPHY TECHNIQUES

Chromatography remains the gold standard in pharmaceutical quality assurance offering unparalleled precision, accuracy and flexibility. Its ability to separate, identify and quantitate components in complex mixtures is essential to impurity profiling, solubility testing, and stability experimentation.

1. THIN LAYER CHROMATOGRAPHY

Despite being an established technique, it continues to have numerous applications in pharmaceutical analysis. In thin layer chromatography, a solid phase known as the adsorbent is applied as a thin layer onto a solid support, typically made of glass, plastic, or aluminum. The effectiveness of this chromatographic separation method is influenced by several factors. Primarily, the adsorbent must exhibit a high degree of selectivity towards the substances being separated, ensuring that the differences in their elution rates are significant. When separating a specific mixture, certain adsorbents may either adsorb too strongly or too weakly. Thin

layer chromatography is a longstanding method utilized for the analysis of pharmaceuticals and their drug components. This technique employs two distinct phases: the mobile phase and the stationary phase.[4]

In the preparation of samples, the phases consist of a solid phase, an adsorbent, and a thin layer of silica gel that is spread over a glass plate, supported by aluminum. This technique has been extensively utilized for the analysis of both inorganic and organic compounds. The compounds were examined using Thin Layer Chromatography (TLC) due to its advantages, which include minimal cleaning requirements, a variety of mobile phase options, flexibility, the ability to load large sample amounts, and cost-effectiveness. This method is particularly employed for analyzing bulk drug components.[5]

2. HIGH PERFORMANCE THIN LAYER CHROMATOGRAPHY

This method has been widely employed for the identification, estimation, and verification of the analytical profiles of pharmaceutical compounds. It is a highly advanced technique and is expected to be acknowledged as a significant instrumental method for drug analysis.

Owing to its rapid separation capabilities and adaptable characteristics, this method can effectively assess the quantity of drug components across the pharmaceutical sector. The primary benefit of this technique lies in its ability to analyze drugs within a brief timeframe, facilitating straightforward handling and efficient cleaning of crude drug samples. Utilizing this technique allows for the characterization of chromatograms without any time constraints for numerous parameters.[6]

3. HIGH PERFORMANCE LIQUID CHROMATOGRAPHY

HPLC is an advanced form of liquid chromatography used in separating the complex mixture of molecules encountered in chemical and biological systems, in order to recognize better the role of individual molecules. It was in the year 1980, HPLC methods appeared for the first time for the assay of bulk drug materials[7]

In the course of reviewing the literature, it was noted that High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) stands out as the most commonly employed chromatographic technique. In the realm of liquid chromatography, selecting the appropriate detection method is essential to ensure the detection of all components. A frequently utilized detector in HPLC is the UV detector, which can simultaneously monitor multiple wavelengths; this capability is achieved through the implementation of a multiple wavelength scanning program. When present in sufficient amounts, the UV detector guarantees the detection of all UV-absorbing components.[8]

At its essence, HPLC is a technique that entails the separation of solutes within a liquid sample as it traverses a stationary phase, which is generally housed within a column. This method depends on the varying interactions among the mixture's components and both the stationary and mobile phases. The mobile phase, which is in liquid form, aids in propelling the sample through the column, whereas the stationary phase, typically composed of silica or polymer particles, serves as the medium for separation according to polarity and size. [9]

When a sample is introduced into the HPLC system, its constituents engage with the stationary phase to varying extents based on their chemical characteristics. Those that exhibit stronger retention on the stationary phase will require a longer duration to traverse the column in comparison to those with weaker interactions. Consequently, the components elute from the column at distinct times, a phenomenon referred to as retention time. Quantitative analysis is performed by assessing the area beneath the peaks in the generated chromatogram, which corresponds to the concentration of the components.[10]

COMPONENTS OF HPLC

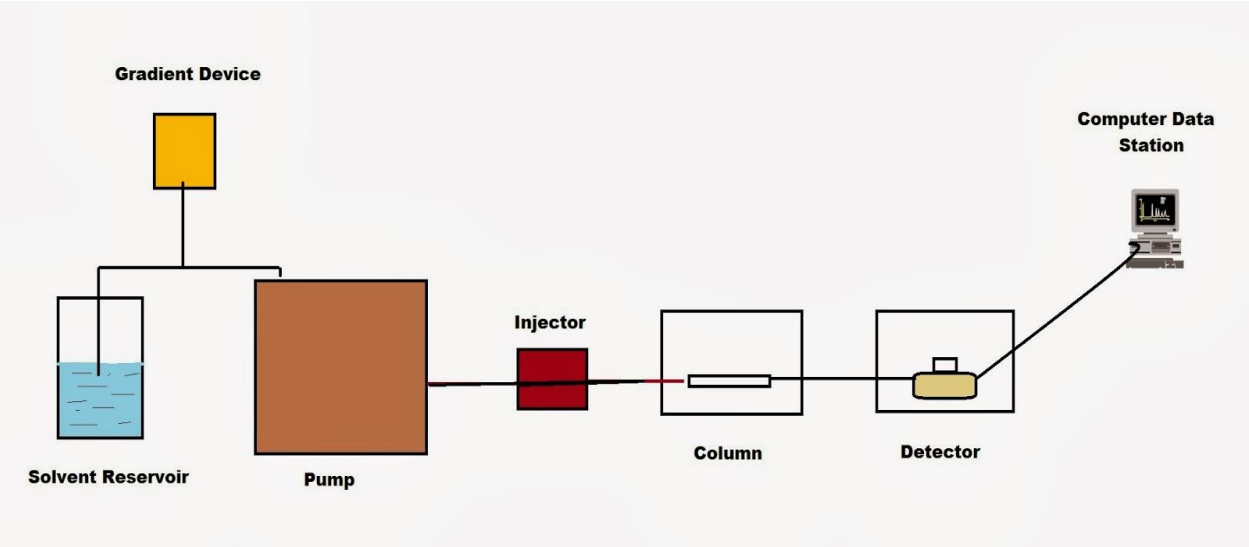
1. Solvent Delivery System: The solvent delivery system plays a crucial role in transporting the mobile phase through the column. Typically, it consists of one or more pumps capable of delivering solvents at exact flow rates and pressures, thereby guaranteeing consistent and reproducible results.[10]

2. Injector: The injector facilitates the introduction of samples into the HPLC system. Contemporary HPLC systems frequently employ an automated sample injector capable of managing multiple samples while offering enhanced precision.[11]

3. Column: The core component of the HPLC system is the column, which houses the stationary phase. The dimensions of columns, including their length, diameter, and particle size, can differ, thereby affecting the resolution and efficiency of the separation process.[12]

4. Detector: Following the separation process, the components are directed through a detector that produces a signal corresponding to their concentration levels. Typical detectors utilized in this context comprise ultraviolet-visible (UV-Vis) spectrophotometers, fluorescence detectors, and mass spectrometers.[13]

5. Data Management System: Ultimately, a data management system (software) is employed to document, analyze, and interpret the data produced by the detector, resulting in a chromatogram that illustrates the components of the sample.[14]



APPLICATIONS OF CHROMATOGRAPHY TECHNIQUES

1. Pharmaceutical Sector

-Employed for the purification of pharmaceuticals, the separation of isomers, and the assurance of quality.
-High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) is commonly utilized in pharmacokinetics (studies of drug metabolism).[15]

2. Forensic Science

-Employed in the analysis of drugs, the identification of explosives, and the examination of inks and pigments in disputed documents.
-Thin-Layer Chromatography (TLC) frequently serves as a rapid screening method within forensic laboratories.[16]

III. SPECTROSCOPIC TECHNIQUES

Qualitative and quantitative analyses in pharmaceutical quality assurance are significant factors for the utilization of spectroscopic techniques. Spectroscopy serves as a non invasive, swift, and exceptionally sensitive method for the analysis of pharmaceuticals by facilitating interactions between electromagnetic radiation and matter.

1. ULTRAVIOLET-VISIBLE SPECTROSCOPY

The technique of ultraviolet-visible spectroscopy relies on the energy and the radiation or excitation of electrons. In the UV-Visible method, the excitation of electrons is caused by light energy, and the region used to ascertain the sample's wavelength and absorbance lies within the range of 200 to 800 nm. Absorption occurs solely in the presence of conjugated pi electrons.

-Principle of UV–Visible Spectroscopy

UV–Vis spectroscopy is based on the **absorption of ultraviolet (200–400 nm) and visible (400–800 nm) light** by molecules. The absorbed energy corresponds to electronic transitions between molecular orbitals ($\pi \rightarrow \pi^*$, $n \rightarrow \pi^*$). Each compound has a characteristic absorption spectrum, enabling both identification and quantification.

-Benefits of UV–Vis in Pharmaceutical Quality Control

Requires Straightforward, quick, and cost-effective.
Little sample preparation.
Non-invasive for numerous drug solutions.[17]

2. MASS SPECTROMETRY

Mass spectrometry serves as an essential instrument in pharmaceutical analysis, providing unparalleled sensitivity, specificity, and versatility. It enables the detailed structural analysis of drug compounds, facilitating the identification, quantification, and characterization of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), impurities, and metabolites. [18]

Mass spectrometry (MS) has become an essential instrument in pharmaceutical analysis, significantly altering the methodologies employed by researchers and industry experts in drug development, quality assurance, and the comprehension of pharmacokinetics. This advanced analytical method, initially developed in the early 20th century, has undergone considerable evolution over the years and currently occupies a leading position in analytical chemistry, providing unmatched sensitivity, specificity, and adaptability in the evaluation of pharmaceutical compounds.[19]

At its essence, mass spectrometry is a method employed to determine the mass-to-charge ratio (m/z) of ions. This procedure typically encompasses three fundamental phases: ionization, mass analysis, and detection. During the ionization phase, the sample—whether a pharmaceutical compound or a biological matrix—is transformed into charged particles, known as ions.[19]

Once ions are produced, they are fed into the mass analyzer, which categorizes the ions according to their mass-to-charge ratios. Various mass analyzers, including Quadrupole, Time-of-Flight (TOF), and Orbitrap, possess distinct operational principles and performance attributes, allowing for the selection of the most suitable one based on the specific analytical requirements. Ultimately, the detector captures the abundance of each ion, generating a mass spectrum that delivers essential information regarding the compounds found in the sample, encompassing their molecular weights and structural details.[20]

3. NEAR-INFRARED SPECTROSCOPY

NIR spectroscopy measures overtones and combinations of fundamental vibrational transitions in molecular bonds. This technique is particularly effective for quantitative analysis of solid and liquid pharmaceutical samples. Its speed and ability to analyze samples without extensive preparation have made it a valuable tool for process analytical technology (PAT).NIR can be employed for the analysis of moisture content, tablet uniformity, and even in the detection of counterfelt pharmaceuticals[21]

The rapid and non destructive evaluation of pharmaceutical formulations, including tablets, capsules, and liquids, can be accomplished through the use of NIR spectroscopy, a method that has been widely applied. [22]

NIR examines the vibrational overtones and combination bands of molecular bonds to assess blend uniformity, moisture content, and the concentration of active ingredients without causing any damage to the sample.[23]

-PRINCIPLE OF NEAR INFRARED SPECTROSCOPY

NIR spectroscopy functions within the near-infrared segment of the electromagnetic spectrum, generally spanning from 780 to 2500nanometers. This segment aligns with wavelengths that are marginally longer than those of visible light yet shorter than mid-infrared radiation.

The interaction between near-infrared light and molecular bonds leads to the absorption and scattering of photons, which yields distinctive spectral signatures that are indicative of the molecular composition and structure of the sample.[24]

In contrast to other spectroscopic methods like infrared (IR) spectroscopy, which mainly investigate fundamental molecular vibrations, NIR spectroscopy focuses on detecting overtones and combinations of vibrational modes, in addition to electronic transitions. The spectral characteristics observed in NIR arise from the existence of overtones and combinations of fundamental vibrations, resulting in NIR spectra that are intricate yet rich in information.[25]

-APPLICATIONS OF MS & NIR SPECTROSCOPY

Drug Development: In the realm of pharmaceutical research and development, mass spectrometry (MS) is essential for the characterization of novel drug candidates. It enables researchers to assess the purity of compounds, recognize structural isomers, and clarify metabolic pathways.[26]

Quality Control and Assurance: The pharmaceutical sector is subject to rigorous regulations, which require stringent quality control protocols to guarantee that products are safe, effective, and consistently high in quality. Mass spectrometry is widely employed in the evaluation of raw materials, intermediates, and finished products.[27]

Environmental and Forensic Applications: In addition to conventional pharmaceutical analysis, mass spectrometry is utilized in environmental monitoring and forensic science. It is capable of identifying pharmaceutical residues in water sources and assessing the presence of drugs in biological samples related to criminal investigations.[28]

In the pharmaceutical sector, NIR spectroscopy is utilized for the swift assessment of drug formulations, which encompasses content uniformity, blend uniformity, and the determination of moisture content.[29]

In the food and beverage sector, NIR spectroscopy is utilized for the examination of different components, such as moisture,
protein, and sugar levels, in raw materials, ingredients, and end products. This allows food producers to guarantee product quality, adhere to regulatory requirements, and satisfy consumer demands.[29]

IV. HYPHENATED TECHNIQUES

A primary focus of scientists working in the field of chromatography in recent years has been to enhance the separation capabilities of chromatographic techniques. A significant advancement was achieved by Golay in 1958, who replaced packed columns with capillary columns, resulting in nearly a tenfold improvement in separation power.[30]
The hyphenated technique integrates two distinct analytical methods, thereby realizing the advantages of both. Recently, this technique has garnered increasing attention as a viable solution for complex analytical challenges. In order to gain a structural understanding of the identification of compounds present in crude samples, liquid chromatography (LC), typically high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) is employed are related to spectroscopic detection[31]
A hyphenated technique refers to the integration or coupling of two distinct analytical methods through an appropriate interface. Typically, chromatographic techniques are combined with spectroscopic techniques.[32]

1. LC – MS

LC-MS refers to the technique of liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry. This method has now established itself as a standard approach that offers a straightforward and reliable interface for the design of electrospray ionization (ESI). LC-MS combines the chemical separation capabilities of liquid chromatography with the mass spectrometry's ability to selectively identify and confirm molecular identities.[33]

INSTURMENTATION AND WORKING

LC-MS is a method that combines the physical separation of liquid chromatography (or HPLC) with mass spectroscopy. Typically, an automated LC-MS system includes a double three-way diverter in line with an autosampler, LC system, and mass spectrometer. The diverter functions as an automatic switching valve to redirect undesirable portions of the eluent from the LC system to waste prior to the sample entering the mass spectrometer. The ionization techniques employed in LC-MS are generally straightforward methods that primarily reveal the molecular ion species along with a few fragmented ions. The information acquired from a single LC-MS analysis is insufficient to definitively establish the identity of the compound.[34]

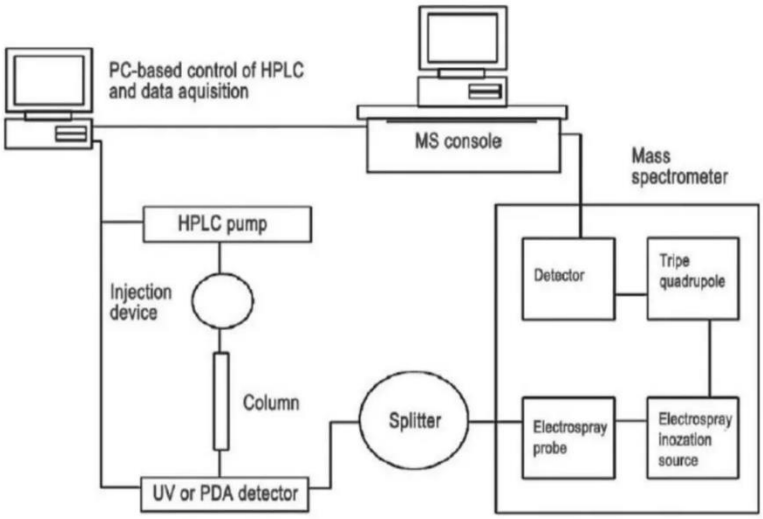


Fig: LC-MS (electrospray ionization interface) system

2. LC-IR

The hyphenated technique that arises from the integration of an LC with the detection method of infrared spectrometry (IR) or FTIR is referred to as LC-IR or HPLC-IR (Figure 5). Although HPLC stands as one of the most effective separation techniques currently available, IR or FTIR serves as a valuable spectroscopic method for identifying organic compounds. This is due to the presence of numerous absorption bands in the mid-IR region that are characteristic of specific functionalities, such as -OH, -COOH, and others. Nevertheless, the combination of HPLC and IR presents challenges, and advancements in this hyphenated technique are progressing at a notably slow pace. This is primarily because the 237 absorption bands of the mobile phase solvent in the mid-IR region are so extensive that they frequently obscure the faint signals produced by the sample components.[35] Since FT-IR operates on the principle of absorbance, the configuration of the sample during measurement is crucial. When the mass or volume of the analyte remains constant, halving the diameter results in a deposit that is four times thicker and has four times the optical density. Given that the IR detector is limited by total light, this reduction in deposit diameter enhances the signal-to-noise ratio by a factor of four. Consequently, to develop an effective instrument capable of generating complete mid-infrared spectra, the LC–IR hyphenation process is essential.[36]

3. LC-NMR

Liquid chromatography, commonly referred to as HPLC, is integrated with nuclear magnetic resonance to create LC-NMR. NMR offers the most significant structural insights necessary for elucidating the structures of natural compounds, despite its relatively low sensitivity. Advances in technology have enabled the direct parallel connection of HPLC systems to NMR, resulting in the emergence of the innovative practical method known as HPLC-NMR or LC-NMR which has been recognized for more than 15 years. The initial HPLC-NMR research utilizing superconducting magnets was reported in the mid-1970s. The analysis of intricate mixtures of different types, especially the exploration of natural products and drug-related metabolites in biofluids, would certainly gain significantly from the application of LC NMR.[37]

-INSTRUMENTATION AND WORKING

An autosampler, an LC pump, a column, and a non-NMR detector are generally part of the LC unit within an LC-NMR system. This detector transmits the flow through the LC-NMR interface, which contains additional loops for temporarily storing selected LC peaks. The flow from the LC-NMR interface is subsequently directed either to the flow cell NMR probe-head or to waste. After passing through the probe-head, the flow is then directed to a fraction collector for the recovery and further analysis of the various fractions. The primary requirements for online LC-NMR, as opposed to the NMR and HPLC equipment, include extended probes and a valve placed before the probe to collect either continuous flow or stopped-flow NMR spectra.[38] Furthermore, the primary detector utilized for LC operations is a UV-vis detector. In a standard HPLC-NMR coupling, it is recommended to use magnetic field strengths exceeding 9.4 T—or a 1H resonance frequency of 400 MHz. The analytical flow cell was specifically designed for continuous NMR detection.

Conversely, the necessity for complete structural identification of unknown compounds, particularly novel natural products, has led to the adoption of the stopped flow mode. Subsequently, the flow from the LC-NMR

interface is routed either to the flow-cell NMR probe head or discarded. The flow is then channel to a fraction collector for recovery and further analysis of the individual fractions assessed by NMR after traversing the probe head. The mobile phase solvent protons present significant challenges in obtaining are liable NMR spectrum.[39]

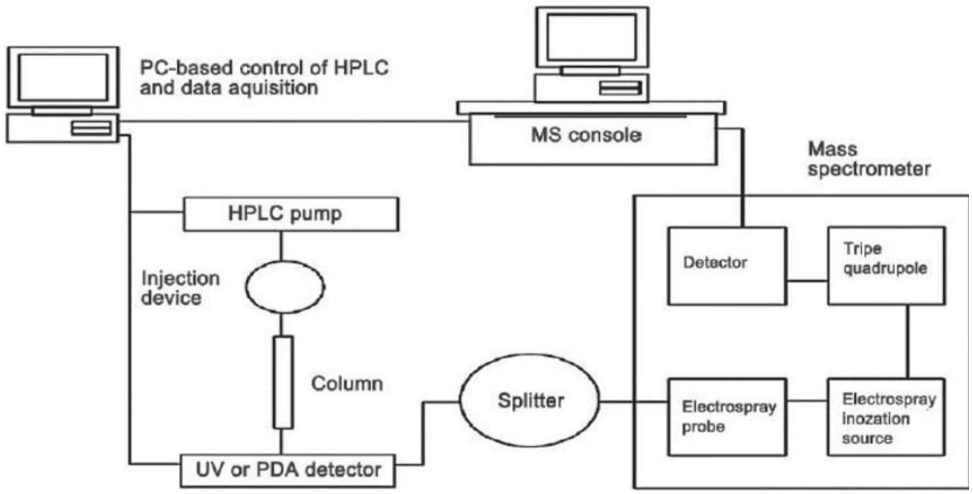


fig. LC- NMR

3.LC-NMR-MS

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NMR probe head or discarded. The flow is then channel to a fraction collector for recovery and further analysis of the individual fractions assessed by NMR after traversing the probe head. The mobile phase solvent protons present significant challenges in obtaining are liable NMR spectrum. If the mass spectrometer is required for various investigations, it is relatively straightforward to remove it from the NMR spectrometer in both series and parallel configurations. Disconnection may be necessary as a specialized LC/NMR/MS system can be considered as a The presence of luxury in certain laboratories. The installation of a UV detector subsequent to the HPLC column offers further advantages. Upon the detection of an analyte, the UV cell, if positioned prior to the splitter, can be employed to initiate NMR or MS detection, or to synchronize the delivery of peaks to the MS and NMR detectors.[40]

The eluent can be directed to the mass spectrometer, allowing for a peak to be detected prior to its arrival at the UV cell, provided that the UV detector is situated after the splitter. This identical peak can be employed to initiate a stopped-flow experiment on the peak within the NMR instrument once it is subsequently identified at the cell. Aqueous trifluoroacetic acid serves as an alternative solvent modifier; however, it presents challenges in the mass spectrometer by hindering the ionization of acidic analytes. In contrast, formic acid, which is pH-adjusted using ammonium format is favoured in numerous experiments due to its provision of a single proton resonance in NMR, located away from the majority of analytes (approximately 9 ppm), and its ability to not impede the ionization of acids in the mass spectrometer.[41]

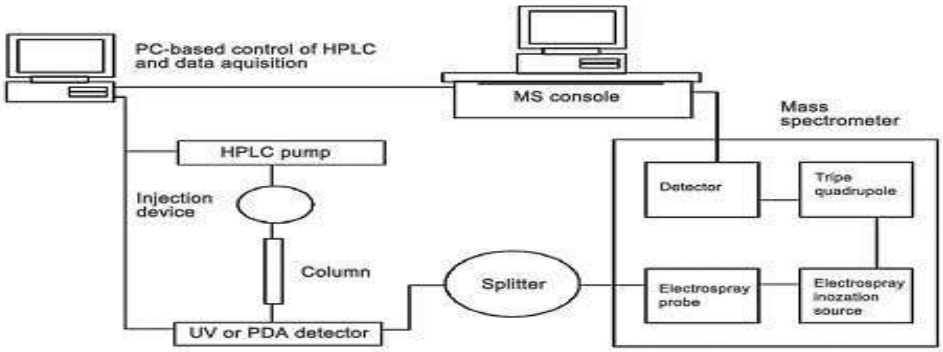

Fig. LC-NMR-MS

V. Conclusion:

The development of analytical methods for pharmaceutical quality control is a major step forward in guaranteeing the efficacy, safety, and quality of pharmaceuticals. In addition to improving the precision and accuracy of analyses, the ongoing development of techniques like High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC), Mass Spectrometry (MS), and spectroscopic methods has made it easier to monitor and assess pharmaceutical processes in real time.

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