Health Canada Santé Canada

Therapeutic Products Programme /
Programme des produits
thérapeutiques
Holland Cross, Tower / tour “B”
1600,rue Scott Street
A.L. / L.A. # 3102D1
OTTAWA (Ontario)
K1A 1B6
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To: Associations,
Registrars of Medicine,
Registrars of Pharmacy

I am pleased to inform you of the release of the *International Conference on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for the Registration of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use*(ICH)/ Therapeutic Products Programme guideline, “Validation of Analytical Procedures: Methodology”. This guideline has been developed by an appropriate ICH Expert Working Group and has been subject to consultation by the regulatory parties, in accordance with the ICH Process. The ICH Steering Committee has endorsed the final draft and recommended its adoption by the regulatory bodies of the European Union, Japan and the United States.

Aux : Associations, Ordre des pharmaciens, Corporation professionnelle de médecins du Québec

J’ai le plaisir de vous annoncer la publication de la ligne directrice de la *Conférence internationale sur l’harmonisation des exigences techniques pour l’enregistrement des médicaments à usage humain* (CIH)/ Programme des produits thérapeutiques, intitulée “Validation des méthodes d’analyse : Méthodologie”. La directive présentée ici a été élaborée par un groupe d’experts de la CIH et a fait l’objet de consultations, menées par les organismes de réglementation, conformément au processus convenu à la CIH. Le Comité directeur de la CIH a approuvé la version finale et en a recommandé l’adoption aux organismes de réglementation de l’Union européenne, du Japon et des États-Unis.

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The Therapeutic Products Programme has adopted this international guideline. In accordance with ICH rules, the document was adopted verbatim. This guideline represents an approach that will be considered acceptable for the review of new drug substances and products. This document should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of other applicable Programme guidelines.

Le Programme des produits thérapeutiques a adopté cette ligne directrice internationale, textuellement comme l'exige la CIH. L'approche qu'on y recommande est considérée comme acceptable pour l'examen des nouvelles substances médicamenteuses et des nouveaux produits. Il convient de prendre connaissance du document présenté ci-après en se reportant, lorsqu'il y a lieu, aux autres sections pertinentes d'autres directives du Programme.

A separate annex will be developed to accompany the guidelines entitled "Text on Validation of Analytical Procedures" and "Validation of Analytical Procedures: Methodology" which will provide further guidance on the Programme's requirements regarding analytical methodology. This annex will apply to both new and "existing" drugs. In the context of the guidance document, an "existing" drug substance is one for which a Notice of Compliance has previously been issued pursuant to Division 8 of the *Food and Drug Regulations* (e.g., generics).

Nous ajouterons aux directives intitulées "Texte concernant la validation des méthodes d'analyse" et "Validation des méthodes d'analyse : méthodologie" un annexe séparé, présentement en préparation, contenant d'autres renseignements sur les exigences du Programme concernant la méthodologie analytique. Cette annexe s'appliquera autant aux nouveaux produits qu'aux médicaments « existants ». Dans le contexte de la directive, une substance médicamenteuse « existante » en est une pour laquelle un Avis de conformité a déjà été émis en vertu du Titre 8 du *Règlement sur les aliments et drogues* (p. ex. médicaments génériques).

The guideline is available through Internet at **www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpb-dgps/therapeut**. For those clients who do not have access to Internet, printed copies will be available through Health Canada Publications, telephone (613) 954-5995 or fax (613) 941-5366.

La ligne directrice est disponible sur Internet à **www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpb-dgps/therapeut**. Les clients qui n'ont pas accès à l'Internet peuvent obtenir le document en s'adressant au service des publications de Santé Canada, par téléphone au (613) 954-5995 ou par télécopieur au (613) 941-5366.

Should you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please contact:

Si vous avez des questions concernant cette ligne directrice, veuillez communiquer avec :

Sultan Ghani
A/Manager
Division of Pharmaceutical Quality
Bureau of Pharmaceutical Assessment
Therapeutic Products Programme
Health Canada
A.L. 0202A2
Finance Buidling
Tunney's Pasture
OTTAWA,Ontario
K1A 1B6

Telephone: (613)941-3184
Facsimile: (613)941-0571
E-mail: sultan_ghani@hc-sc.gc.ca

Sultan Ghani
Gestionnaire Int.
Division de la qualité des produits pharmaceutiques
Bureau de l'évaluation des produits pharmaceutiques
Programme des produits thérapeutiques
Santé Canada
I.A. 0202A2
Immeuble Finance
Pré Tunney
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 1B6

téléphone : (613)941-3184
télécopier : (613)941-0571
courrier électronique :
sultan_ghani@hc-sc.gc.ca

Original signed by / Original signé par

Dann M. Michols
Director General / Directeur général

Enclosure Pièce jointe

Health Canada Santé Canada

THERAPEUTIC PRODUCTS PROGRAMME GUIDELINE

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HARMONISATION OF TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE REGISTRATION OF PHARMACEUTICALS FOR HUMAN USE

VALIDATION OF ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES: METHODOLOGY

Published by authority of the
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For more information, please contact:

Therapeutic Products Programme
Health Canada
Tunney's Pasture
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0L2

Disclaimer

The material herein was prepared under the direction of the Therapeutic Products Programme, Health Canada. No changes are permitted.

Avertissement

Le document ci-joint a été préparé sous la direction de la Programme des produits thérapeutiques, Santé Canada. Aucune modification n'est permise

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Therapeutic Products Programme Webmaster : Pete Nilson
Telephone - (613) 941-1601
Facsimile - (613) 941-0825

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Health Canada
Publications
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Ottawa, Ontario
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Internet: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpb-dgps/therapeut
tp_webmaster@hc-sc.gc.ca

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FOREWORD

This guideline has been developed by the appropriate ICH Expert Working Group and has been subject to consultation by the regulatory parties, in accordance with the ICH Process. The ICH Steering Committee has endorsed the final draft and recommended its adoption by the regulatory bodies of the European Union, Japan and USA.

The Therapeutic Products Programme (TPP) has adopted this guideline and reproduced it in this document. This guideline represents an approach that will be considered acceptable for the review of new drug substances and products. This document should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of other applicable Directorate guidelines.

Alternate approaches to the principles and practices described in this document may be acceptable provided they are supported by adequate scientific justification. Submission sponsors may discuss, in advance, alternate approaches with the Directorate to avoid the withdrawal/ rejection of a submission. For example, the Directorate's guideline *Acceptable Methods* would be considered an acceptable alternate approach.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This document is complementary to the parent ICH guideline entitled "Text on Validation of Analytical Procedures," which presents a discussion of the characteristics that should be considered during the validation of analytical procedures. Its purpose is to provide some guidance and recommendations on how to consider the various validation characteristics for each analytical procedure. In some cases (for example, demonstration of specificity), the overall capabilities of a number of analytical procedures in combination may be investigated in order to ensure the quality of the drug substance or drug product. In addition, the document provides an indication of the data that should be presented in a registration application.

All relevant data collected during validation and formulae used for calculating validation characteristics should be submitted and discussed as appropriate.

Approaches other than those set forth in this guideline may be applicable and acceptable. It is the responsibility of the applicant to choose the validation procedure and protocol most suitable for their product. However, it is important to remember that the main objective of validation of an analytical procedure is to demonstrate that the procedure is suitable for its intended purpose. Due to their complex nature, analytical procedures for biological and biotechnological products in some cases may be approached differently than in this document.

Well-characterized reference materials, with documented purity, should be used throughout the validation study. The degree of purity necessary depends on the intended use.

In accordance with the parent document, and for the sake of clarity, this document considers the various validation characteristics in distinct sections. The arrangement of these sections reflects the process by which an analytical procedure may be developed and evaluated.

In practice, it is usually possible to design the experimental work such that the appropriate validation characteristics can be considered simultaneously to provide a sound, overall knowledge of the capabilities of the analytical procedure, for instance: specificity, linearity, range, accuracy, and precision.

1. SPECIFICITY

An investigation of specificity should be conducted during the validation of identification tests, the determination of impurities, and the assay. The procedures used to demonstrate specificity will depend on the intended objective of the analytical procedure.

It is not always possible to demonstrate that an analytical procedure is specific for a particular analyte (complete discrimination). In this case, a combination of two or more analytical procedures is recommended to achieve the necessary level of discrimination.

1.1. Identification

Suitable identification tests should be able to discriminate between compounds of closely related structures which are likely to be present. The discrimination of a procedure may be confirmed by obtaining positive results (perhaps by comparison with a known reference material) from samples containing the analyte, coupled with negative results from samples which do not contain the analyte. In addition, the identification test may be applied to materials structurally similar to or closely related to the analyte to confirm that a positive response is not obtained. The choice of such potentially interfering materials should be based on sensible scientific judgment with a consideration of the interferences that could occur.

1.2. Assay and Impurity Test(s)

For chromatographic procedures, representative chromatograms should be used to demonstrate specificity, and individual components should be appropriately labeled. Similar considerations should be given to other separation techniques.

Critical separations in chromatography should be investigated at an appropriate level. For critical separations, specificity can be demonstrated by the resolution of the two components which elute closest to each other.

In cases where a nonspecific assay is used, other supporting analytical procedures should be used to demonstrate overall specificity. For example, where a titration is adopted to assay the drug substance for release, the combination of the assay and a suitable test for impurities can be used.

The approach is similar for both assay and impurity tests:

1.2.1. Impurities Are Available

For the assay, this should involve demonstration of the discrimination of the analyte in the presence of impurities and/or excipients; practically, this can be done by spiking pure

substances (drug substance or drug product) with appropriate levels of impurities and/or excipients and demonstrating that the assay result is unaffected by the presence of these materials (by comparison with the assay result obtained on unspiked samples). For the impurity test, the discrimination may be established by spiking drug substance or drug product with appropriate levels of impurities and demonstrating the separation of these impurities individually and/or from other components in the sample matrix.

1.2.2. Impurities Are Not Available

If impurity or degradation product standards are unavailable, specificity may be demonstrated by comparing the test results of samples containing impurities or degradation products to a second well-characterized procedure, e.g., pharmacopoeial method or other validated analytical procedure (independent procedure). As appropriate, this should include samples stored under relevant stress conditions: Light, heat, humidity, acid/base hydrolysis, and oxidation.

- For the assay, the two results should be compared.
- For the impurity tests, the impurity profiles should be compared.

Peak purity tests may be useful to show that the analyte chromatographic peak is not attributable to more than one component (e.g., diode array, mass spectrometry).

2. LINEARITY

A linear relationship should be evaluated across the range (see section 3) of the analytical procedure. It may be demonstrated directly on the drug substance (by dilution of a standard stock solution) and/or separate weighings of synthetic mixtures of the drug product components, using the proposed procedure. The latter aspect can be studied during investigation of the range.

Linearity should be evaluated by visual inspection of a plot of signals as a function of analyte concentration or content. If there is a linear relationship, test results should be evaluated by appropriate statistical methods, for example, by calculation of a regression line by the method of least squares. In some cases, to obtain linearity between assays and sample concentrations, the test data may have to be subjected to a mathematical transformation prior to the regression analysis. Data from the regression line itself may be helpful to provide mathematical estimates of the degree of linearity.

The correlation coefficient, y-intercept, slope of the regression line, and residual sum of squares should be submitted. A plot of the data should be included. In addition, an analysis of the deviation of the actual data points from the regression line may also be helpful for evaluating linearity.

Some analytical procedures, such as immunoassays, do not demonstrate linearity after any transformation. In this case, the analytical response should be described by an appropriate function of the concentration (amount) of an analyte in a sample.

For the establishment of linearity, a minimum of five concentrations is recommended. Other approaches should be justified.

3. RANGE

The specified range is normally derived from linearity studies and depends on the intended application of the procedure. It is established by confirming that the analytical procedure provides an acceptable degree of linearity, accuracy, and precision when applied to samples containing amounts of analyte within or at the extremes of the specified range of the analytical procedure.

The following minimum specified ranges should be considered:

- For the assay of a drug substance or a finished (drug) product: Normally from 80 to 120 percent of the test concentration;
- For content uniformity: Covering a minimum of 70 to 130 percent of the test concentration, unless a wider, more appropriate range, based on the nature of the dosage form (e.g., metered dose inhalers), is justified;
- For dissolution testing: +/-20 percent over the specified range; e.g., if the specifications for a controlled released product cover a region from 20 percent, after 1 hour, up to 90 percent, after 24 hours, the validated range would be 0-110 percent of the label claim;
- For the determination of an impurity: From the reporting level of an impurity[1] to 120 percent of the specification;
- For impurities known to be unusually potent or to produce toxic or unexpected pharmacological effects, the detection/quantitation limit should be commensurate with the level at which the impurities must be controlled.
  Note: For validation of impurity test procedures carried out during development, it may be necessary to consider the range around a suggested (probable) limit;
- If assay and purity are performed together as one test and only a 100 percent standard is used, linearity should cover the range from the reporting level of the impurities[2] to 120 percent of the assay specification.

4. ACCURACY

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1 See chapters “Reporting Impurity Content of Batches” of the corresponding ICH guidelines entitled “Impurities in New Drug Substances” and “Impurities in New Drug Products”.

2 Ibid.

Accuracy should be established across the specified range of the analytical procedure.

4.1. Assay

4.1.1. Drug substance

Several methods of determining accuracy are available:

(a) Application of an analytical procedure to an analyte of known purity (e.g., reference material);
(b) Comparison of the results of the proposed analytical procedure with those of a second well-characterized procedure, the accuracy of which is stated and/or defined (independent procedure, see section 1.2.);
(c) Accuracy may be inferred once precision, linearity, and specificity have been established.

4.1.2. Drug product

Several methods for determining accuracy are available:

(a) Application of the analytical procedure to synthetic mixtures of the drug product components to which known quantities of the drug substance to be analyzed have been added;
(b) In cases where it is impossible to obtain samples of all drug product components, it may be acceptable either to add known quantities of the analyte to the drug product or to compare the results obtained from a second, well-characterized procedure, the accuracy of which is stated and/or defined (independent procedure, see section 1.2);
(c) Accuracy may be inferred once precision, linearity, and specificity have been established.

4.2. Impurities (Quantitation)

Accuracy should be assessed on samples (drug substance/drug product) spiked with known amounts of impurities.

In cases where it is impossible to obtain samples of certain impurities and/or degradation products, it is considered acceptable to compare results obtained by an independent procedure (see section 1.2.). The response factor of the drug substance can be used.
It should be clear how the individual or total impurities are to be determined, e.g., weight/weight or area percent, in all cases with respect to the major analyte.

4.3. Recommended Data

Accuracy should be assessed using a minimum of 9 determinations over a minimum of 3 concentration levels covering the specified range (e.g., 3 concentrations/3 replicates each of the total analytical procedure).

Accuracy should be reported as percent recovery by the assay of known added amount of analyte in the sample or as the difference between the mean and the accepted true value together with the confidence intervals.

5. PRECISION

Validation of tests for assay and for quantitative determination of impurities includes an investigation of precision.

5.1. Repeatability

Repeatability should be assessed using:

(a) A minimum of 9 determinations covering the specified range for the procedure (e.g., 3 concentrations/3 replicates each); or
(b) A minimum of 6 determinations at 100 percent of the test concentration.

5.2. Intermediate Precision

The extent to which intermediate precision should be established depends on the circumstances under which the procedure is intended to be used. The applicant should establish the effects of random events on the precision of the analytical procedure. Typical variations to be studied include days, analysts, equipment, etc. It is not necessary to study these effects individually. The use of an experimental design (matrix) is encouraged.

5.3. Reproducibility

Reproducibility is assessed by means of an interlaboratory trial. Reproducibility should be considered in case of the standardization of an analytical procedure, for instance, for inclusion of procedures in pharmacopoeias. These data are not part of the marketing authorization dossier.

5.4. Recommended Data

The standard deviation, relative standard deviation (coefficient of variation), and confidence interval should be reported for each type of precision investigated.

6. DETECTION LIMIT

Several approaches for determining the detection limit are possible, depending on whether the procedure is noninstrumental or instrumental. Approaches other than those listed below may be acceptable.

6.1. Based on Visual Evaluation

Visual evaluation may be used for noninstrumental methods but may also be used with instrumental methods.

The detection limit is determined by the analysis of samples with known concentrations of analyte and by establishing the minimum level at which the analyte can be reliably detected.

6.2. Based on Signal-to-Noise Approach

This approach can only be applied to analytical procedures which exhibit baseline noise.

Determination of the signal-to-noise ratio is performed by comparing measured signals from samples with known low concentrations of analyte with those of blank samples and establishing the minimum concentration at which the analyte can be reliably detected. A signal-to-noise ratio between 3 or 2:1 is generally considered acceptable for estimating the detection limit.

6.3. Based on the Standard Deviation of the Response and the Slope

The detection limit (DL) may be expressed as:

$$DL = \frac{3.3\sigma}{S}$$

where σ = the standard deviation of the response
S = the slope of the calibration curve

The slope S may be estimated from the calibration curve of the analyte. The estimate of σ may be carried out in a variety of ways, for example:

6.3.1. Based on the standard deviation of the blank

Measurement of the magnitude of analytical background response is performed by analyzing an appropriate number of blank samples and calculating the standard deviation of these responses.

6.3.2. Based on the calibration curve

A specific calibration curve should be studied using samples containing an analyte in the range of DL. The residual standard deviation of a regression line or the standard deviation of y-intercepts of regression lines may be used as the standard deviation.

6.4. Recommended Data

The detection limit and the method used for determining the detection limit should be presented. If DL is determined based on visual evaluation or based on signal-to-noise ratio, the presentation of the relevant chromatograms is considered acceptable for justification.

In cases where an estimated value for the detection limit is obtained by calculation or extrapolation, this estimate may subsequently be validated by the independent analysis of a suitable number of samples known to be near or prepared at the detection limit.

7. QUANTITATION LIMIT

Several approaches for determining the quantitation limit are possible, depending on whether the procedure is noninstrumental or instrumental. Approaches other than those listed below may be acceptable.

7.1. Based on Visual Evaluation

Visual evaluation may be used for noninstrumental methods, but may also be used with instrumental methods.

The quantitation limit is generally determined by the analysis of samples with known concentrations of analyte and by establishing the minimum level at which the analyte can be quantified with acceptable accuracy and precision.

7.2. Based on Signal-to-Noise

This approach can only be applied to analytical procedures that exhibit baseline noise.

Determination of the signal-to-noise ratio is performed by comparing measured signals from samples with known low concentrations of analyte with those of blank samples and by establishing the minimum concentration at which the analyte can be reliably quantified. A typical signal-to-noise ratio is 10:1.

7.3. Based on the Standard Deviation of the Response and the Slope

The quantitation limit (QL) may be expressed as:

$$QL = \frac{10\sigma}{S}$$

where

σ = the standard deviation of responses

S = the slope of the calibration curve

The slope S may be estimated from the calibration curve of the analyte. The estimate of σ may be carried out in a variety of ways, for example:

7.3.1. Based on standard deviation of the blank

Measurement of the magnitude of analytical background response is performed by analyzing an appropriate number of blank samples and calculating the standard deviation of these responses.

7.3.2. Based on the calibration curve

A specific calibration curve should be studied using samples containing an analyte in the range of QL. The residual standard deviation of a regression line or the standard deviation of y-intercepts of regression lines may be used as the standard deviation.

7.4 Recommended Data

The quantitation limit and the method used for determining the quantitation limit should be presented.

The limit should be subsequently validated by the analysis of a suitable number of samples known to be near or prepared at the quantitation limit.

8. ROBUSTNESS

The evaluation of robustness should be considered during the development phase and depends on the type of procedure under study. It should show the reliability of an analysis with respect to deliberate variations in method parameters.

If measurements are susceptible to variations in analytical conditions, the analytical conditions should be suitably controlled or a precautionary statement should be included in the procedure. One consequence of the evaluation of robustness should be that a series of system suitability parameters (e.g., resolution test) is established to ensure that the validity of the analytical procedure is maintained whenever used.

Examples of typical variations are:

- Stability of analytical solutions
- Extraction time

In the case of liquid chromatography, examples of typical variations are:

- Influence of variations of pH in a mobile phase
- Influence of variations in mobile phase composition
- Different columns (different lots and/or suppliers)
- Temperature
- Flow rate

In the case of gas-chromatography, examples of typical variations are:

- Different columns (different lots and/or suppliers)
- Temperature
- Flow rate

9. SYSTEM SUITABILITY TESTING

System suitability testing is an integral part of many analytical procedures. The tests are based on the concept that the equipment, electronics, analytical operations, and samples to be analyzed constitute an integral system that can be evaluated as such. System suitability test parameters to be established for a particular procedure depend on the type of procedure being validated. See pharmacopoeias for additional information.