

4<sup>th</sup> World Congress on

# MASS SPECTROMETRY

June 19-21, 2017 London, UK

## Role and place of mass spectrometry in medical elementology - a new scientific discipline

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Since the times of the alchemists, chemical elements have been investigated in human organs, tissues and fluids. During the last decades, the number of publications devoted to them increased considerably. Today, the number of published articles may be estimated at about twenty thousands, and the amount of monographs about hundred. This vast amount of data, dealing with the importance of elements acquired in different fields of scientific research and practical life, puts forward the need for a synthetic approach in element research. At the end of the 20th century, a new scientific discipline appeared, focused on the role of chemical elements in human body under physiological and pathological conditions. This new field of interdisciplinary study has been named as: Medical elementology (from lat. "medicina" and "elementum"). A lot of medical doctors, toxicologist, ecologist, chemists and physicist who were involved in the study of chemical elements in medicine and biology have the feeling that they are working in new self-sufficient scientific sphere. As a rule, all scientific disciplines are characterized, first of all: by the subject of study; by accepted postulates; by research methods; by methods of quality control and; by terms and definitions. Instrumental analytical methods such as non-destructive NAA and EDXRF as well as destructive AAS, ICP-AES and ICP-MS are the main research instruments in medical elementology. Role and place of ICP-MS will be discussed using our results obtained in the age-dependence studies of 67 chemical element contents in human bone, hair and prostate gland.

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