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Drug analysis in hair: Case of the Brazilian legislation

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Testing for drugs in hair, urine or oral fluid is important in several situations as clinical and forensic toxicological area, for assessing the exposure/intoxication and also for evaluation of the level of drug circulating in the body over a determined period of time.

Urine or oral fluid drug levels show transient changes in levels of drugs in the body over a short period (hours), the analysis of hair samples provides an integrated picture of drug use or abstinence over a much more extended time frame (weeks, months and years). This has led to the big increase in the use of hair samples in the detection of drug use.

The levels of drugs detected in hair are currently best used as a guide to changes of use in the individual when sectional analysis is performed, or two different periods are compared in the same individual. This attribute can be used to monitor drug use patterns, demonstrating increasing or decreasing doses being used by the same individual over longer time periods. Another advantage of hair testing is that a subsequent sample could be taken and similar period being re-tested, provided the hair has not been cut short. A hair test can provide useful information after positive urine or oral fluid, on the drug habit of an individual, particularly in the workplace setting or for cause testing

Biography

Maristela Andraus is a pharmacist, started professional life in 1991 in the Antidoping Laboratory in São Paulo. She has a Master of Science degree in Analytical Toxicology from Faculty of Pharmacy and Biochemistry at USP, Brazil. Maristela was the co-founder in 1999 of Chromanalysis, a laboratory providing support in bioequivalence studies and in 2010 set up the animal antidoping laboratory. In 2011, in a joint venture with Cansford, Cardiff, UK, Maristela played a key role in establishing ChromaTox and was Managing Director since then until 2019, when the lab was bought by Dasa. Now she is Toxicology Advisor. She is a member of the SoHT since 2010, TIAFT since 2014 and SBTox since 2013. She has been a Board member of the SoHT since 2014 and recently was reelected as a Secretary of the Board, being involved in the Revision of the Consensus on Alcohol Markers and Drug of abuse.

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