HPLC-UV/FD Methods for Scopoletin and Asiatic acid: Development, Validation and Application in WHO Recommended Stability Testing of Herbal Drug Products

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Abstract

WHO recommended accelerated stability study was conducted on commercially available herbal products containing Shankhpushpi along with Bacopa monnieri (A) or Centella asiatica (B) at a temperature of 40 ± 2°C and 75 ± 5% RH for six months. Control sample of each product was stored at 4°C. Stability samples were withdrawn after 1, 3 and 6 months. Each control and stability sample was analysed for the content of scopoletin, asiatic acid and bacoside A by HPLC methods because such methods prove more selective, sensitive, efficient, reproducible, and accurate than spectroscopic and chemical methods. These methods also have advantages of sample handling, cost effectiveness and versatility in analyzing chemically diverse compounds over other methods like GSC and GLC. New methods developed and validated for scopoletin and asiatic acid were proved sufficiently precise, accurate and robust for analysis of scopoletin (1-500 ng/ml) and asiatic acid (10-1000 µg/ml). Bacoside A was not detected in any of the control samples of products A, indicating that B. monnieri is either absent in A or the content of Bacoside A is too low to be detectable. Content of scopoletin and asiatic acid was found to vary widely among different batches as well as products (scopoletin 165.78-206.15 ng/ml in A and 2.61-28.78 ng/ml in B, and asiatic acid 30.14-44.92 µg/ml in B), which indicate a probable variability in therapeutic efficacy of the products. The content of markers decreased significantly after 6 months of storage under accelerated conditions, which implies that therapeutic efficacy of the product may also decrease substantially with storage. These findings further suggest real time stability studies as per the WHO and ICH guidelines involving marker’s quantification and evaluation of therapeutic effects through appropriate in vitratino vivo methods to establish actual shelf life of the products.

Keywords: Shankhpushpi; Centella asiatica; Brahmi; Convolvulus pluricaulis; Stability studies

Introduction

Central nervous system (CNS) active herbal drug products contribute significantly to global herbal drug market [1]. These are consumed indiscriminately by population of all age groups without any prescription in developing countries. Centella asiatica, Bacopa monnieri and Convolvulus pluricaulis are amongst the most widely used CNS active herbs. C. asiatica exert significant neuroprotective effect against oxidative damage due to derivatives of asiatic acid present in it. Clinical studies of its extracts justify its use as CNS active drug [2]. C. pluricaulis, commonly known as Shankhpushpi in Indian System of Medicine, is popularly used for its tranquillizing and memory enhancing properties. Evolvulus alsinoides, Clitorea ternatea and Canscoca decussate are the other herbs commonly named as Shankhpushpi in Indian System of Medicine. These plants contain several different alkaloids, flavanoids and coumarins as active chemicals that bring about their different biological effects [3]. Scopoletin is one of the active constituents present in C. pluricaulis, E. alsinoides and C. decussata, and is reported to have memory enhancing properties [4]. Bacopa monniers, popularly known as Brahmi, is widely used CNS active herb. It is clinically proven to exhibit nootropic effect. One of the active constituents known for its CNS activity is bacoside A [5].

A large number of herbal products derived from these herbs (C. asiatica, B. monnieri and C. pluricaulis) are available in market. These products bear a shelf life of 2-3 years as suggested for different types of herbal formulations, irrespective of their constituent herbs, in Drugs and Cosmetic (Amendment) Rules in India [6]. The international drugs regulatory bodies such as World Health Organization (WHO), European Medicines Agency (EMEA) and United States Food and Drug Administration (US-FDA) have laid down specific guidelines for establishing safety and efficacy of herbal products through systematic standardization and stability studies [7-15]. All these guidelines consensually recommend conduct of stability studies on any herbal drug product under the conditions as recommended in ICH guidelines for stability testing of drug substances and products [16]. Despite these guidelines, stability testing of herbal drug products is not carried out under the recommended conditions and as per the recommended time schedule. To the best of our knowledge from the literature search, there is no report on any stability testing of any of the four herbs commonly known as Shankhpushpi. Inamdar et al. [17] conducted a stability study on different formulations of C. asiatica under different conditions of temperature and humidity (air conditioned, 25°C, room temperature, 30°C, 40°C, and 40°C + 80% RH) and evaluated their stability in terms of the percent decrease in content of asiatic acid and asiaticoside (the CNS active markers), and madecassic acid and madecassoside (the CNS inactive markers). Nonetheless, the conditions and duration for this study are not in compliance with regulatory guidelines. Phrompittayarat et al. [18] have reported a study on stability testing on

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Received: July 15, 2015; Accepted: September 12, 2015; Published September 14, 2015


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B. monnieri, but conditions for testing are not in line with guidelines, and also duration is just 28 days. Other accelerated and long term stability studies on crude plant material of B. monnieri revealed that content of Bacoside A and Bacopaside I under accelerated conditions decreased by about 74% and 69%, respectively after 6 months, and under long term conditions, it decreased by 75% and 80%, respectively after 12 months [19,20]. These results indicated that B. monnieri is very unstable drug, and products containing it may not have shelf life more than 3 months. Moreover, a large number of HPLC methods for quantitation of asiatic acid, Bacoside A and scopoletin individually are reported in literature, which are summarised in Tables 1 and 2. These literature analyses revealed that though reliable method is available for stability testing of B. monnieri [18], no method is available for stability testing of shankhpushpi and C. asiatica.

HPLC has become a primary technique for analysing analytes especially in biological and heterogeneous samples. It allows accurate quantification of any analyte, without being isolated in pure form, by appropriate selection of stationary and mobile phases (polar to non-polar, pH ranging from 2-10), and detector (non-specific to highly specific). These methods are more selective, sensitive, efficient, reproducible, and accurate than the spectroscopic and chemical methods. Coupling of HPLC with a mass detector can increase the sensitivity to as low as picograms per unit volume or mass of sample. HPLC methods also have advantages over GC (gas chromatographic) methods. These include ease of sample handling (no need to convert the sample into vapour phase), low analysis cost (ultra high pure gases as mobile phase cost more than HPLC solvents), versatility in analyzing different type of compounds (both volatile as well as high melting solids) [45]. Hence, the present study was designed to develop and validate isocratic HPLC method(s) for quantification of scopoletin, bacoside A and asiatic acid containing B. monnieri, C. asiatica and shankhpushpi, and for its application in stability testing of products of these herbs in accordance with WHO guidelines. In pursuance of this objective, we have developed and validated separate, efficient and sensitive isocratic HPLC methods for detection and quantification of scopoletin and asiatic acid in order to analyze samples of the drug products generated during their stability studies. Comparison of the present method with the methods reported for asiatic acid in literature revealed that the present method is as fast as Method no. 11 [30] (Rt of 9 min versus 8 min, Table 1), and has the advantages of employing simpler mobile phase with isocratic elution and using higher detection wavelength (200 nm versus 206 nm). Fluorescence detector is more detectable through fluorescence spectrum, and there are three HPLC methods employing fluorescent detector (FD as mentioned in Table 2). The present method has proved advantageous over the known HPLC-FD methods in terms of its speed (Rt 25-35 min versus 8.5 min) and mode of elution (Gradient versus Isocratic) (Table 2).

Materials and Methods

Materials

Three batches (designated as I, II and III) of each of the two types of Shankhpushpi syrups i.e., A (Shankhpushpi + B. monnieri) and B (C. pluricaulis + C. asiatica) were purchased from local pharmacy store. Methanol and acetoneitrile (HPLC grades) were obtained from Merck Specialist Pvt. Ltd. (Mumbai, India). Scopoletin and asiatic acid were procured from Sigma Aldrich, (Chandigarh, India). Bacoside A was obtained from Natural Remedies, (Bangalore, India). All other chemicals and solvents were procured from S.D. fine chemicals, (Mumbai, India). HPLC grade water obtained from Bio Age Direct Ultra water purification system (Bio-Age Equipments and Services, Mohali, India) was used for preparation of all reagents and solutions.

### Materials

**S.No.** | Detection wavelength (nm) | Mobile phase | Flow (ml/min) | Rt (min) | Reference
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
1. | 220 | ACN: H2O: Gradient | 1.4 | 26.87 | [17]
2. | 206 | ACN: CH3O (CH3): 0.1% TFA: Gradient | 1.0 | 50 | [21]
3. | 205 | H2O: ACN: 0.05% H3PO4 | 0.8 | 24.2 | [22]
4. | 205 | 0.05% H3PO4: ACN | 1.0 | 13.57 | [23]
5. | 217 | CH3OH:ACN:H2O: (5:5.7:3, v/v) | 1.0 | 19.6 | [24]
6. | 206 | ACN: H2O: Gradient | 1.0 | ~30 | [25]
7. | 214 | CH3OH:H2O=75:25 % v/v | 0.8 | 19 | [26]
8. | 210 | ACN: Phosphate buffer | 1.8 | 18.4 | [27]
9. | 205 | ACN: H2O: Gradient | 1.0 | 16.27 | [28]
10. | 205 | ACN: H2O: Gradient | 1.0 | 16.30 | [29]
11. | 200 | (a) ACN/CH3OH (7:2) and (b) d. w/H3PO4 (85%); premixed by 42:58. | 1.0 | 9.0 min | [30]
12. | 206 | ACN: Phosphate buffer (20 mM, pH 3.9) (55:45) | 1.0 | 8 min | Present Method

**Table 1:** Literature reports on HPLC-UV methods for asiatic acid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Detection wavelength (nm)</th>
<th>Mobile phase</th>
<th>Flow (ml/min)</th>
<th>Rt (min)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>344 nm</td>
<td>CH3OH: 0.05 mol/L KH2PO4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>14.52</td>
<td>[31]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>345 nm</td>
<td>CH3OH and H2O (49:51, v/v); 0.05% (v/v) H3PO4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>[32]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>345 nm</td>
<td>80% 0.05M NH4(CH3COO)- 4.25: 20% ACN</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>[33]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>366 nm</td>
<td>CH3OH:H2O= (0.1 %v/v HCOOH); 3:7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>19.58</td>
<td>[34]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>300 nm</td>
<td>55: 45 ( % v/v) CH3OH: H2O (0.1% CH3COOH)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>[35]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>220 nm</td>
<td>CH3OH: H2O (0.05% HCOOH)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>[36]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>345 nm</td>
<td>(A) CH3OH:H2O:PO4 (99.70.3 % v/v) (B) ACN:H2O;H2PO4 (79.9:20.1% v/v) Method A-B (75:25 %v/v)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>[37]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>380 nm</td>
<td>10% ACN (A), 50% ACN (B) and 90% ACN (C); Gradient</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>~26</td>
<td>[38]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>320 nm</td>
<td>0.1% HCOOH and ACN, Gradient</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>~27</td>
<td>[39]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>345 nm</td>
<td>(A) ACN:CH3OH:HO (15:5 %v/v) (B) 1.0% HCOOH (nv/v); Gradient Variable; 0.6-1.4 &gt;32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>[40]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>280 nm</td>
<td>CH3COOH and CH3OH, Gradient</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>~20</td>
<td>[41]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Lex-342 nm, αem-464 nm</td>
<td>CH3COOH: ACN; Gradient</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>~7.5</td>
<td>[42]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Lex-340 nm, αem-425 nm</td>
<td>H2O and ACN; 3% CH3COOH; Gradient</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>[43]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Lex-340 nm, αem-460 nm</td>
<td>50 mM NH4(CH3COO) (4.5); Gradient</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>&gt;35</td>
<td>[44]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 15. | Lex-357 nm, αem-425 nm | ACN:Phosphate buffer (20 mM, pH 3.5) (25:75 %v/v) | 1.0 | ~8.5 | Present Method

**Table 2:** Literature reports on HPLC methods for scopoletin.
**Instruments**

HPLC-UV and HPLC-fluorimetric analysis were carried out on a HPLC system consisting of a pump (515), Rheodyne manual injector, UV/Visible detector (2489) and multi wavelength fluorescence detector (2475) (Waters, MA, USA). The data were acquired and processed in EMPOWER 2 software (Waters, MA, USA). The LC-PDA analyses were carried out on Waters HPLC system consisting of pumps (515), Rheodyne manual injector (Waters, Milford, MA, USA) and PDA detector (2998) controlled by EMPOWER 3 software (Waters, MA, USA). The chromatographic separations of the samples were achieved on NUCLEODUR C18 (250 mm x 4.6 mm; 5 µm) column. Other columns used in the study included XTERRA C18 (250 mm x 4.6 mm; 5 µm) column, KROMASIL C18 (250 mm x 4.6 mm; 5 µm), YM TACK ODS-AQ (250 mm x 4.6 mm; 5 µm) column, INERTSIL C18 (250 mm x 4.6 mm; 5 µm) and CHROMOLITHIC HIGH RESOLUTION Column (100 mm x 4.6 mm). The mobile phase was filtered through nylon membrane (0.45 µm, 47 mm) using Millipore filtration assembly, and was degassed using transonic sonicator bath (570/H ELMA, Germany). Samples were lyophilized using lyophilizer (ALLIED FROST, Maclow Engineering, Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, India). UV spectrophotometer (DU 640 B series, Beckman, USA) was used for spectrophotometric analysis. Fluorometric analysis was carried out on SL-174 Spectrophotometer (ELICO, Andhra Pradesh, India). The pH was measured using Digital pH meter (FIVE EASY PLUS FEP 20-ATC KIT, Mettler Toledo AG, Analytical, Schwerzenbach, Switzerland). Stability studies were conducted in a stability chamber capable of controlling temperature and humidity within range of ±2°C and ±5% RH, respectively (Rolex Scientific Engineers, Ambala, India). The chamber was set at temperature of 40°C and 75% RH.

**HPLC methods**

Standard solutions of scopoletin (0.001 mg/ml), asiatic acid (0.1 mg/ml) and bacoside A (1 mg/ml) in methanol were used for HPLC method development. Asiatic acid was separated on a NUCLEODUR C18 with mobile phase consisting of acetonitrile and Phosphate buffer (20 mM, pH 3.5) (55:45% v/v) flowing at a rate of 1 ml/min using 206 nm as detection wavelength. Scopoletin was resolved on the same column with a mobile phase composed of acetonitrile and Phosphate buffer (20 mM, pH 3.5) (25:75% v/v) flowing at a rate of 1 ml/min using fluorescence detector with excitation wavelength of 255 nm and emission wavelength of 243 nm. Five major peaks, which are characteristic of Bacoside A as reported by Phrompittayarat et al. [18], were optimally resolved on XTERRA C18 (250 x 4.6 mm; 5 µm) column with a mobile phase consisting of acetonitrile and orthophosphoric acid in water (0.2%) (65:35% v/v) at flow rate of 1 ml/min. LC-PDA analyses of standard asiatic acid, scopoletin, and control samples of all six products were carried out to establish purity of asiatic acid and scopoletin peaks.

**Method validations**

HPLC methods for asiatic acid and scopoletin were validated by evaluating various validation parameters such as linearity, precision, accuracy, robustness, LOD and LOQ in accordance with ICH guidelines Q2(R1) [47]. Linearity was evaluated by analyzing standard solutions of asiatic acid (10-1000 µg/ml) and scopoletin (1-500 ng/ml) in increasing order of concentration. Calibration curves for each marker were plotted in triplicate to calculate slope, intercept and correlation coefficient (mean ± standard deviation). The intraday precision was determined by analyzing three different concentrations covering the linearity range of asiatic acid and scopoletin. The inter-day precision was evaluated by analyzing the same three concentrations of both the markers on three different days. Each concentration was analyzed six times consecutively, and precision was expressed as percent relative standard deviation (% RSD) of the calculated concentration. LOD and LOQ were determined by calibration curve method using following equations: LOD=3.3 σ/S; LOQ=10 σ/S; where σ and S are standard deviation of slope and mean intercept, respectively. Subsequently, solutions of asiatic acid and scopoletin having concentrations equal to their LOD and LOQ were prepared, analyzed (n=6), and%RSD of the concentration found were calculated. Robustness of the methods was determined by making small and deliberate changes in various parameters of optimized chromatographic conditions such as composition of mobile phase (content of acetonitrile or buffer varied by ± 1% v/v), pH (±0.1), detection wavelengths (±5 nm), flow rate (± 0.1 ml/min), and column brand. Standard solutions of markers were analyzed at each of varied chromatographic conditions. Content of markers and changes in their retention times (Rt) were determined vis-a-vis the optimized chromatographic conditions.

**Accelerated stability studies**

All six products (AI-AIII and BI-BIII) were placed in stability chamber maintained at accelerated stability conditions of 40 ± 2°C and 75 ± 5% RH. The control sample of each batch was stored at 4°C. The stability samples were withdrawn after 1, 3 and 6 months. Control and each stability sample of each product were processed for estimation of asiatic acid, bacoside A and scopoletin as following: A 5 ml portion of each control and stability sample was lyophilized. The resultant sticky mass was mixed with 5 ml of methanol and sonicated for 15 min. The methanolic solution was separated and transferred into an airtight sample vial. The residual sticky mass was again treated as before with fresh 5 ml of methanol. The two aliquots of methanolic solutions were mixed in airtight sample vial. This resultant solution was used for quantification of asiatic acid and bacoside A. For scopoletin estimation, the resultant solution was diluted up to five times with methanol. Each final solution was filtered through membrane filter (0.45 µ, 13 mm) before analysis.

**Results and Discussion**

In traditional system of medicine in India, Shankpushpi (any of the four herbs as mentioned in Introduction section) is used in combination with brahmi (B. monnieri) to enhance memory and improve CNS functioning [48]. C. asiatica, commonly known as mandukparni, is widely used as a substitute for brahmi due to mistaken identity that occurred in 16th century [49]. As a result of this mistaken identity, B. monnieri and C. asiatica are still used synonymously to produce products in combination with Shankpushpi. In addition, a vast majority of products claim to contain “Shankpushpi” on its label, but without any reference to its specific biological name. Hence, in the present study, we have selected two products i.e., A (label claim: Shankpushpi + B. monnieri) and B (label claim: C. parlicaudus + C. asiatica) for conducting stability studies in accordance with WHO and ICH guidelines. The studies were conducted on three batches (designated as I, II and III) of each of these two products as required by WHO guidelines. Scopoletin is a common CNS active marker for different botanical sources of shankhpushpi, bacoside A (composed of five components) is an active marker for B. monnieri, and asiatic acid is an active marker for C. asiatica. Hence, scopoletin, bacoside A and asiatic acid were used as markers to assess stability of the selected products.

**Development and optimization of HPLC methods**

Standard solution of each marker were scanned over 200-400 nm
to obtain a common wavelength for their simultaneous detection on HPLC. The three markers showed maximum absorbance at 206 nm. Hence, it was selected as detection wavelength for HPLC method of these markers. A comparative study of various HPLC methods (Tables 1 and 2) indicated no significant similarity among any of the methods for scopoletin, bacoside A and asiatic acid. Hence, we started the HPLC method development for the selected markers by using a mobile phase composed of acetonitrile and water (50:50% v/v) at a flow rate of 1 ml/min on a KROMASIL column (250 x 4.6 mm; 5 µm) using 206 nm as detection wavelength. Each of the three standard solutions was analyzed. Scopoletin and asiatic acid eluted at about 4 and 20 min, respectively but bacoside A was not observed in the chromatogram even up to 60 min of run time. Subsequently, each of the six products (AI-AIII and BI-BIII) was analysed using same chromatographic conditions. Both scopoletin and asiatic acid were detected in products BI-BIII and only scopoletin was detected in AI-AIII. However, the scopoletin peak was found interfered by other peaks in the products, and asiatic acid peak was found as in standard solution. In order to improve resolution of scopoletin peak in the products, content of acetonitrile was decreased in the mobile phase. It was observed that with decrease in acetonitrile content, Rt of scopoletin shifted insignificantly but that of asiatic acid shifted enormously. Numerous other changes in mobile phase composition (replacement of acetonitrile with methanol and/or water with buffer, pH, and various proportions of organic and aqueous components), and in analytical columns (YMC TACK ODS-AQ, CHROMOLITH and NUCLEODUR) produced no satisfactory resolution and elution pattern of the markers. The maximally improved resolution was observed on NUCLEODUR column. Using this column, different mobile phases were run in gradient mode to elute and resolve the three markers, but no success was achieved. After these exhaustive unsuccessful trials, it was understood that with the resources available, a single HPLC method for simultaneous elution of scopoletin, asiatic acid and bacoside A does not seem possible. Hence, we shifted our focus on development of separate but short HPLC methods for quantification of asiatic acid, scopoletin and bacoside A. Literature reports have revealed that scopoletin exhibits fluorescence and is efficiently detected in fluorescence detector [50-52]. Hence, standard standard solution of scopoletin was read on spectrofluorimeter to find the excitation and emission wavelengths (λex and λem) for it. These were found to be 357 nm and 425 nm, respectively. From the results of various trials carried out as revealed earlier, a mobile phase composed of acetonitrile and phosphate buffer (20 mM, pH 3.5) (25:75% v/v) was used at a flow rate of 1 ml/min to elute scopoletin on Nucleodur C18 column using fluorescence detector (FD) set at λex and λem of 357 nm and 425 nm, respectively. These chromatographic conditions eluted scopoletin at 8.4 min as a sharp peak, which was well resolved in each product (Figure 1). Incidentally, the mobile phase used is found quite similar to that reported by Muller-Enoch et al. for scopoletin [53], but the new method is found superior to the reported method in terms of detector (FD is more sensitive than UV detector) and buffer (Phosphate buffer is more stable than ammonium acetate buffer). Asiatic acid was eluted as a sharp peak at 7.9 min (Figure 2) with a mobile phase composed of acetonitrile and phosphate buffer (20 mM, pH 3.5) (55:45% v/v) flowing at a rate of 1 ml/min over NUCLEODUR C18 column using detection wavelength, this method is found more efficient (Rt 8 min) than all HPLC methods (Rt 13-50 min) known in the literature reports.
(Table 1). Moreover, it has the advantages of using simpler mobile phase with isocratic elution and using higher detection wavelength (200 nm versus 206 nm) that reduces signal to noise ratio. These methods were used for analyses of control and stability samples of each product to determine the content of scopoletin (Figure 1) and asiatic acid (Figure 2). For bacoside A, the method as reported by Phrompittayarat et al. [18] was used as such. Briefly, it was eluted as a set of five distinct peaks with acetonitrile and phosphoric acid (0.2%) (65:35 v/v) running at a rate of 1 ml/min on XTERRA C18 (250 x 4.6 mm; 5 µm) column. However, bacoside A was not detected even in concentrated control sample of any batch of product A. It suggested that B. monnieri is either not present in the product A (contrary to the label claim) or its concentration is so low that HPLC method is not useful for its detection.

**Method validation**

Results of evaluation of various parameters for validation of HPLC methods for scopoletin and asiatic acid proved that the methods are sufficiently sensitive (LOQ of 0.08 ng/ml and 7.7 µg/ml, respectively), repeatable (% RSD<2), reproducible (% RSD<2) and accurate (recovery of 98-102%) for their reliable quantification (Table 3) in the herbal products containing respective herbs. The method was found to be sufficiently robust as change in Rt (-0.45 to +0.80 min for scopoletin and -0.86 to +0.90 min for asiatic acid) as well as% change in content of scopoletin (-1.41 to +1.62%) and asiatic acid (-0.81 to +2.42%) was not significant after deliberate changes in chromatographic conditions made (Supplementary Data). The maximum change in Rt of scopoletin was brought by decrease in flow rate, which is an expected change whereas the maximum change in% content of scopoletin was brought about by detection at higher λem and λex (+1.62%) as well as change in mobile phase composition which resulted in decrease in contents of both scopoletin and asiatic acid.

Validation data of HPLC methods for scopoletin and asiatic acid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Validation parameter</th>
<th>Scopoletin</th>
<th>Asiatic acid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linearity</td>
<td>s=1000 mg/ml</td>
<td>1-500 mg/ml</td>
<td>10-1000 µg/ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD</td>
<td>0.026 mg/ml</td>
<td>2.7 µg/ml</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD (mean; % RSD)</td>
<td>0.030; 1.6</td>
<td>3.2; 1.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD (mean)</td>
<td>0.078 mg/ml</td>
<td>7.7 µg/ml</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD (mean; % RSD)</td>
<td>0.098; 1.02</td>
<td>10.2; 1.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision study*</td>
<td>Conc. tested</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision study*</td>
<td>Intraday precision*</td>
<td>49.12; 1.75</td>
<td>9.6; 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision study*</td>
<td>Interday precision*</td>
<td>48.67; 0.28</td>
<td>101.8; 1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision study*</td>
<td>Recovery studies*</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>984.5; 0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conc. added</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conc. found (mean; % RSD)</td>
<td>1.00; 1.00</td>
<td>250.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Recovery</td>
<td>100.34</td>
<td>99.58</td>
<td>101.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n = 6; all concentration of scopoletin in ng/ml and of asiatic acid in µg/ml

Table 3: Validation data of HPLC methods for scopoletin and asiatic acid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stability sample</th>
<th>Scopoletin (ng/ml)</th>
<th>Asiatic acid (µg/ml)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>185.06±0.11</td>
<td>165.70±0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS1</td>
<td>179.59±0.19</td>
<td>155.70±0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS2</td>
<td>169.33±0.20</td>
<td>147.31±0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS3</td>
<td>159.63±0.27</td>
<td>136.48±0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>30.14±0.14</td>
<td>32.68±0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS1</td>
<td>28.89±0.19</td>
<td>31.12±0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS2</td>
<td>27.22±0.18</td>
<td>28.19±0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS6</td>
<td>24.66±1.19</td>
<td>26.79±0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Scopoletin content in control and accelerated stability samples of products A and B after 1 month (AS1), 3 months (AS2) and 6 months (AS6).

Table 5: Asiatic acid content in control and accelerated stability samples of product B after 1 month (AS1), 3 months (AS2) and 6 months (AS6).

acid was most affected by detection at lower wavelength (+2.42% at 204 nm). Lower flow rates also affected the% content of asiatic acid.

**Accelerated stability study**

Comparison of LC-UV chromatograms of stability and control samples of each product through overlay revealed that there was no visible change in LC-UV fingerprint of any of the control sample with respect to its respective control sample of each product (Figures 1 and 2). It suggested that the phytochemical composition of the products remained grossly unaltered during accelerated stability testing. Content of scopoletin in control samples of products AI-AIII was found to be 185.08, 165.78 and 206.15 ng/ml of the product, whereas it was 6.87, 2.61 and 28.78 ng/ml in products BI-BIII, respectively (Table 4). It revealed that content of scopoletin varied significantly from batch to batch for the same product (165.78-206.15 ng/ml for A, and 2.61-28.78 ng/ml for B). Further, the variation was found enormous (about 6-60 times) between products by two different manufacturers (product A versus B), which implied that therapeutic efficacy of a product by different manufacturers is most likely to be widely variable. The content of asiatic acid in products BI – BIII was found to be 30.14, 32.68, 44.92 µg/ml of the product, respectively (Table 5), which also indicated significant batch to batch variation in the product.

Exposure of the products to accelerated stability conditions resulted in decrease in contents of both scopoletin and asiatic acid (Tables 4 and 5). The level of scopoletin decreased with respect to control by 4-6% in first month, 10-12% after three months, and by 14-17% after six months in products AI-AIII. In product B, the decrease with respect to its respective control was 3-4% during first month, 7-8% after three months, and 10.5-11.5% after six months of storage. Almost similar extent of decrease in content of asiatic acid was noted in stability samples of product B i.e., 7-8% decrease after one month, 10-15% decrease after three months and 17-22% after six months in...
comparison to the control. These results suggest that both the products lose active markers significantly over a period of six months under accelerated stability conditions, and hence their therapeutic efficacy is also suspected to decrease.

**LC-PDA studies**

Each of the control and stability sample was analyzed on LC-PDA to ascertain the purity of peaks of markers through UV spectra and purity data (in terms of purity angle and purity threshold). UV spectra of peaks corresponding to scopoletin and asiatic acid in all control and stability samples were found similar to, and overlapping with spectra of corresponding standard marker (Figures 3 and 4 for scopoletin and asiatic acid, respectively). Purity threshold of the marker peak in each control and stability sample was higher than its purity angle (Table 6). These data revealed that the marker peaks noted in control and stability samples were pure and no other peak co-eluted with any of the marker tested. It supported that the methods were highly selective for quantitative determination of the markers.

**Conclusion**

Accelerated stability study on three batches of two commercial products of shankhpushpi in combination with *B. monnieri* or *C. asiatica* was carried out for a period of six months in accordance with WHO and ICH guidelines. Samples were withdrawn after 1, 3 and 6 months, and analysed for content of active markers (scopoletin, asiatic acid and bacoside A) using separate HPLC methods. Scopoletin was determined by HPLC-fluorescent detection method whereas asiatic acid was quantified by HPLC-UV (206 nm) method. Both the methods were found more efficient than the methods known in literature, and were validated in accordance with ICH guidelines Q2 (R1). Bacoside A was not detected in any of the control sample. Content of scopoletin and asiatic acid varied widely among the different batches as well as the two products, which imply a wide therapeutic variability in the products available in the market. The content of markers decreased significantly after 6 months of storage under accelerated conditions, which suggested that therapeutic efficacy of a product decrease substantially with storage. So, there is need to carry out real time studies involving marker’s quantification as well as evaluation of therapeutic effects through appropriate in vitro/in vivo methods as per WHO guidelines to establish actual shelf life of the products.

**References**


