



26 August 2021
MEDIA RELEASE



Pill Testing Australia (PTA) working with The Australian National University (ANU) and [Waters Australia](#) have developed rapid and portable Ultra-Performance Liquid Chromatography-Photodiode Array (UPLC-PDA) analysis for pill testing applications.

The UPLC-PDA analysis can test the purity and identity of ten different drugs in under three minutes. This rapid analysis can be used to test substances and provide information directly to clients attending pill testing services.

"This is wonderful technology that can quickly identify drugs and also provide information on purity for a targeted list" said **Associate Professor Mal McLeod** from ANU.

"The speed of analysis is really important, as we can provide testing information directly to clients and medical personnel so that they can make more informed decisions."

The UPLC-PDA analysis uses chromatography to separate drug components which are then detected by spectroscopy. The analysis results are compared to a library of data to verify the drug identity. The signal intensity can be used to establish drug purity with the method being accurate and precise across a range of expected drug concentrations.

The method complements the Fourier Transformed Infra-Red (FTIR) analysis used by PTA in Australia's only two government-sanctioned, [front-of-house pill testing trials held earlier in the ACT](#).

Pill testing or drug checking is a medically supervised harm reduction measure that aims to reduce the adverse health consequences of drug consumption at music festivals, events, and other settings.

Ms Jen Ross-King, an Ambassador for PTA, said, *"quite simply the introduction of pill testing is an evidenced based way to reduce harm. The service achieves this via personal consultation, providing advice, a list of 'what can go wrong, and what do I do if it does'. No parent, friend or government can provide this information, or has access to a young person at that moment in time when they are considering taking an illicit drug that could kill them. The [Coroner's Report](#) and [Special Commission](#) both called for Pill Testing Australia services to be provided. We must educate and engage with young people and the community about drugs, and just like governments are doing with the pandemic, embrace the public health advice and expertise."*

Dr David Caldicott, as one of Australia's first and most prominent advocates for pill testing services added *"thankfully the ACT Government and Assembly understand the principles of public health and evidence and our qualified professional team at PTA is ready to start to deliver their much-needed services at Australia's first and only fixed site pill testing service in coming months. We continue to hope that other governments and parliamentarians take up our offer of a free pill testing trial before other families deal with consequences of belligerent inaction"*

The new UPLC-PDA opportunity complements the recent successful application for funding by **Dr Celine Kelso**, PTA adviser **Dr Jody Moller**, and the Pill Testing Australia team to provide a set of testing standards for illicit drugs, and a wide range of potential adulterants, as part of the development of a comprehensive database for our pill testing service analytics team. This is information that will benefit everyone utilising results and information from pill testing services.

The funding was provided by the University of Wollongong through the [RevITALise \(RITA\) Research Grants](#) scheme.

The President of Harm Reduction Australia and Convener of PTA, **Mr Gino Vumbaca OAM** concluded, *“Pill Testing Australia has not only delivered the only sanctioned and formally evaluated pill testing services in Australia, but thanks to its members, supporters and the assistance of many people and organisations across Australia, we continue to innovate and improve our public health service for the community.”*

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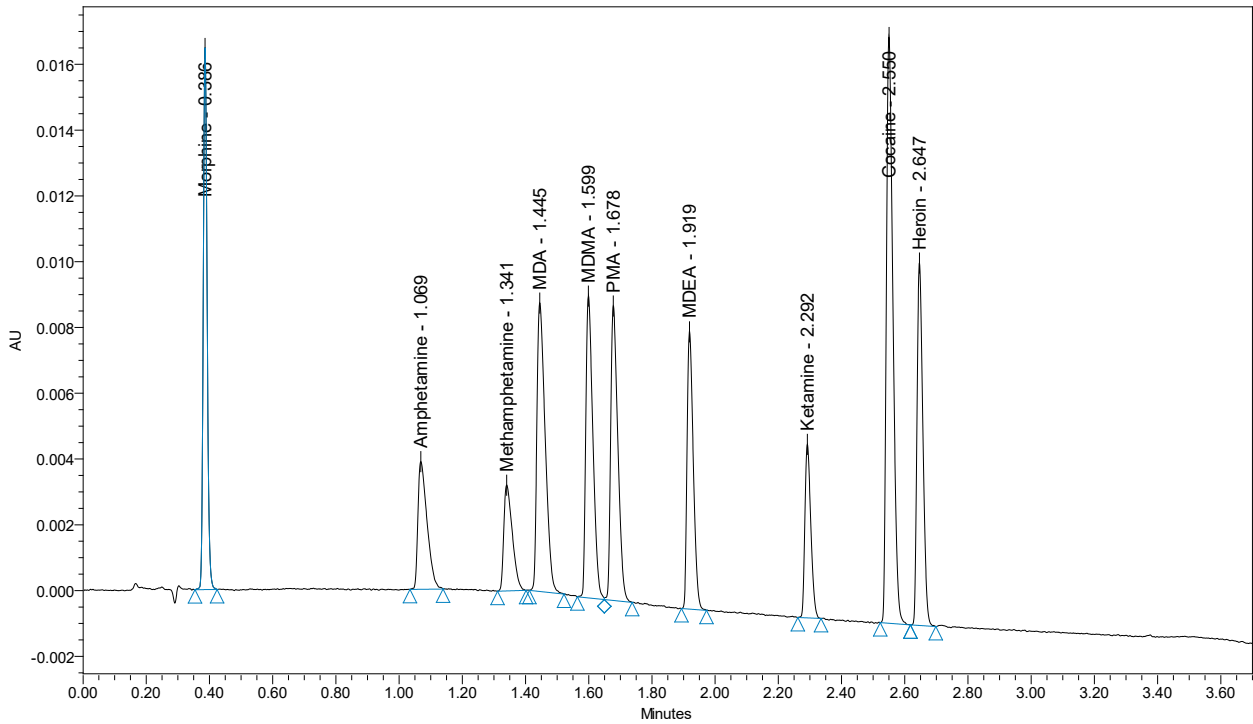


www.pilltestingaustralia.com.au
www.harmreductionaustralia.org.au

HRA is Australia's first national harm reduction organisation for individuals committed to reducing the health, social and economic harms potentially associated with drug use



The UPLC-PDA machine installed on a trolley for portability. Credit: Blake Curtis



The UPLC-PDA analysis can identify and assess the purity for ten drugs in under three minutes.

PILL TESTING AUSTRALIA

WHO WE ARE.



National Peak Bodies Supporting Pill Testing

1. Australian Medical Association
2. Public Health Association of Australia
3. Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
4. Royal Australian College of Physicians
5. Australasian College for Emergency Medicine
6. Rural Doctors Association of Australia
7. Australian Nursing Midwifery Association
8. National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association
9. Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
10. Forensic and Clinical Toxicology Association
11. College of Emergency Nursing
12. Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation
13. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
14. Paramedics Australasia
15. National LGBTI Health Alliance
16. Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association
17. Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council
18. Australian Lawyers Alliance
19. Australian Lawyers for Human Rights
20. Civil Liberties Australia