



**toxics**



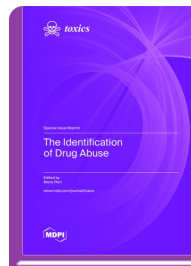
*Special Issue Reprint*

## The Identification of Drug Abuse

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Over the last decades, interest in forensic toxicology has continually increased. Consequently, the discipline assumed a leading role, becoming one of the reference sciences for elucidating events of judicial importance. The need to reconcile analytical problems (e.g., relating to the qualitative/quantitative analysis of substances of abuse in complex biological matrices) with judicial requirements (i.e., providing data that can be used as documentary evidence in proceedings) makes the discipline unique among all "analytical" sciences. Thus, the availability of validated procedures, the constant monitoring of analytical performance through quality assurance protocols, the availability of certified "in matrix" standards, and the analytical problems underlying the analysis of new psychoactive substances in the blood and other biological fluids represent the challenges of modern forensic toxicology. The correct interpretation of analytical data, especially to elucidate the extent of impairment induced by a certain substance, and "old" issues related to the correct interpretation of post-mortem data (given the impossibility of translating the therapeutic ranges defined in vivo) represent further areas of research and debate among scientists. Finally, the possibility of interacting with other disciplines (such as proteomics and social sciences) allows for extending the concept of analytical data acquisition/interpretation beyond the classical limits of forensic toxicology (for example, considering the influence of gender when interpreting the effect of a substance).



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