

Foreword

ExTech 2003, the Fifth International Symposium on Advances in Extraction Technologies, was held in St. Pete Beach, Florida, USA, on 5–7 March 2003. The preceding four meetings of this series took place in Waterloo, Canada (1999 and 2000, organized by Professor Janusz Pawliszyn), Barcelona, Spain (2001, organized by Dr. Josep M. Bayona), and Paris, France (2002, organized by Professor Marie-Claire Hennion). It was my distinct honor and privilege to have the opportunity to serve as the host of the fifth symposium of this international scientific forum and welcome the participants from around the globe (Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America) to the Sunshine State of Florida, USA.

Traditionally, the ExTech forum brings together a cross-disciplinary audience including analytical chemists, environmental and physical scientists, researchers, and engineers working in areas dedicated to methods and technologies for sample preparation. It aims at unveiling recent innovations in extraction and sample enrichment technologies for chemical, biochemical, environmental, forensic, biomedical and related analyses performed in the laboratory and the field settings. ExTech 2003 was no exception. The scientific program of this 3-day symposium included invited lectures, selected oral contributions, and poster presentations. It placed a major emphasis on emerging technologies and advanced materials for sample preparation to achieve new levels of sensitivity in analytical extraction and sample preconcentration that can be performed either on-line or off-line to facilitate analysis of ultra-trace impurities in a wide range of matrices. Among the highlighted topics were: (a) fundamental aspects of molecular level understanding of various extraction processes; (b) development of advanced extraction materials; (c) enhancement of selectivity and efficiency in analytical extractions; (d) extraction technologies for forensic analyses; (e) extraction technologies for the preparation of biological samples; (f) sample preparation for on-site environmental analyses; (g) sample preparation for microchip-based analytical systems; (h) nanotechnology-based extraction systems, and (i) on-line sample preconcentration.

ExTech 2003 presented a productive venue for an in-depth analysis of present state of the art and future directions in the development of novel extraction media for solvent-free

sample preparation, new methods for rapid and selective sample enrichment prior to analysis, micro sample preparation, environmental trace analysis, and chemometric aspects of field sampling. The symposium venue at the beautiful St. Pete Beach with its inherent natural beauty and warm March weather provided an ideal, friendly environment for the discussion and exchange of scientific information among the participants.

The scientific activities at ExTech 2003 have culminated in the publication of this special issue of *Journal of Chromatography A* that contains major scientific contributions made at the symposium. It will provide the wide audience involved in the field of sample preparation an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the recent developments in the field of sample preparation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the ExTech 2003 Scientific Committee for their valuable advice, help, cooperation, and support in organizing this international scientific event. I also want to express my appreciation to the sponsors of this meeting for their invaluable support, and to the attendees whose active participation in various events made this symposium a success. The organization of this symposium would not have been possible without the strong day-to-day support from the members of my research group. My wholehearted thanks go to them as well as to others whose physical, intellectual, and financial support contributed to the success of ExTech 2003.

Special words of appreciation go to Elsevier for this undertaking to produce a special, peer-reviewed issue of the *Journal of Chromatography A* devoted to the proceedings of ExTech 2003. I am confident that this special issue of the journal will greatly benefit a wide audience of analytical chemists, scientists, engineers, and researchers working in the areas of sample preparation, analytical separation, and environmental analysis.

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