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NMR Regulatory analysis: enantiomeric purity determination for (*R*)-(-)-desoxyephedrine and antipode methamphetamine

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Regulatory enantiomeric purity direct determination for (*S*)-(+)-methamphetamine, the widely abused DEA schedule II controlled substance, and (*R*)-(-)-desoxyephedrine, over-the-counter nasal inhaler decongestant were developed using 400 MHz ^1H NMR spectroscopy. The efficient enantiomeric differentiation was obtained using a diamagnetic chiral solvating agent to dissimilarly perturb the NMR spectra of the enantiomeric solutes. Nonequivalence behavior was studied in terms of all variables that affect population and intrinsic spectra of the fast diastereomeric solvates. Assignment of enantiomer configuration was based on the relative field position of the resolved enantiomeric signals. Optimization of experimental conditions provided significant resolved enantiomeric signals suitable for quantification. Utilizing the relative intensities of the corresponding enantiomeric signals of the $\text{N}-\text{CH}_3$ assigned to (*S*)-(+)-methamphetamine and (*R*)-(-)-desoxyephedrine, the analysis of synthetic enantiomeric mixtures by the proposed methods demonstrated excellent agreements with the known values of the enantiomers present. The mean \pm SD recovery values for the (*R*)-(-)-enantiomer was $99.9 \pm 0.4\%$ of added antipode ($n = 7$). The optically pure enantiomer was used to establish the minimum amount detected by the proposed NMR spectroscopic method.

1. Introduction

Consistent with the current focus on issues of stereo selectivity, regulatory agencies have placed emphasis on safety and efficacy of stereo isomers in drug research and development (Rauus and Groen 1994). Therefore, there is a growing need for methods to determine drug enantiomeric configuration and purity. This has been one of the most difficult and challenging issues in analytical science, because the two enantiomers have identical chemical and physical properties, except for the opposing directions in which they rotate plane-polarized light. Development of new and improved methods suitable for chiral drugs is more than an academic exercise. Several important chiral drugs demonstrate stereo selective disposition in humans and large differences in therapeutic relevance and toxicity. Desoxyephedrine synthesis from ephedrine can lead to the formation of two enantiomers. (*S*)-(+)-Desoxyephedrine (methamphetamine) has a strong central nervous system activity. It is a schedule II drug of abuse. The antipode (*R*)-(-)-desoxyephedrine is used as an over-the-counter nasal inhalant decongestant exempted from control in many countries. (1*R*, 2*S*)-(-)-Ephedrine or (1*S*, 2*S*)-(+)-pseudoephedrine and their derivatives have the same absolute α -carbon configuration so that they can both be used as starting substances for methamphetamine manufacturing (Cho 1990). Other methods of synthesis are based on the condensation of phenylacetone with methylamine followed by reduction. Desoxyephedrine obtained by this approach

used to be rather less enantiomerically pure or racemic. The mechanism of stimulant effect persists for hours. The inhalation exposure to (*S*)-(+)-desoxyephedrine (methamphetamine) has similar pharmacological characteristics as the intravenous route of administration (Meng et al. 1999). It represents a dangerous agent for abuse by those seeking psycho stimulation (Cho 1990). Death due to overdose has been reported after inhalation intake of methamphetamine and its related compounds. Therefore, the development of convenient and reliable methods for detecting methamphetamine and its antipode (*R*)-(-)-desoxyephedrine for their enantiomeric purity is urgently required and has become an important safety subject in regulatory sciences. Several methods have been reported for the enantiomeric separation of racemic desoxyephedrine using GC or GC-MS coupled with chiral derivatization, for instance, with *N*-trifluoroacetyl-L-prolylchloride (Nakahara et al. 1991; Gunne 1967; Liu and Ku 1981; Eiceman et al. 1984; Fitzgerald 1988; Cody and Schwarzhoff 1993) and (*S*)- α -methoxy- α -trifluoromethylphenylacetyl chloride (Mori et al. 1991). Many methods previously reported for the enantiomeric separation of racemic desoxyephedrine by HPLC were carried out by derivatizing the analytes with a chiral reagent, and then separating the diastereomers formed on an achiral stationary phase (Sukbuntherng et al. 1995; Hutchaleelaha et al. 1994; Barksdale and Clark 1985; Miller et al. 1984; Zhou and Krull 1993; Desai and Gal 1993; Sukbuntherng et al. 1995; Gao and Krull 1989; Miller et al. 1984; Noggle Jr and Clark 1986; Matin et al. 1973; Rohl and Trager 1973; Nichols et al. 1973; Gal

1977; Kikura et al. 1992; Noggle Jr and Clark 1986; Noggle Jr et al. 1990; Noggle Jr et al. 1986; Foster and Gilbert 1998). These methods may cause serious error if any optical impurity in derivative reagents is present, since both the diastereomers of RS' and SR' have the same chromatographic character. Other chromatographic methods for the enantiomeric separation of racemic desoxyephedrine by HPLC were to derivatize desoxyephedrine with an achiral reagent and then separate the derivatives formed on a chiral stationary phase (Wainer et al. 1984; Lee et al. 1986; Hayes et al. 1987; Nagai et al. 1989; Nagai and Kamiyama 1990; Nagai et al. 1992; Lee and Henion 1986; Rizzi et al. 1994). Enantiomeric separation of desoxyephedrine by HPLC using β -cyclodextrin immobilized stationary phase with the addition of organic solvents such as methanol or acetonitrile during the procedure has been reported (Lemur et al. 1996; Katagi et al. 1996). Yukiko et al. (1998) separated desoxyephedrine enantiomers by HPLC on a chiral crown ether-coated stationary phase and mobile phase of pH 1.8 containing HClO₄. All the methods mentioned above however are time-consuming and tedious, with low sensitivity detection owing to the complicated procedures involved. Particularly in chiral derivatization, the difference in the rate of the derivatization and enantiomeric purity of the reagents are difficult problems that hamper accurate analysis. Therefore, in an improved stereo specific methodology derivatization and other problems should be avoided.

Nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy (NMR) could be used as a routine method for drug analyses. NMR has several advantages over other techniques, including stereo chemical differentiation and its ability to analyze volatile material. Furthermore, the need to use high temperature injectors with techniques may lead to problems such as the thermal decomposition of the components being analyzed. NMR spectroscopic approach enables the discrimination on the differential interactions of each enantiomer with a chiral probe. Chiral lanthanide shift reagents have been employed to resolve the ¹H NMR spectra of desoxyephedrine enantiomers for the determination of the enantiomeric composition (optical purity) (Liu et al. 1981). Salient favorable features of this method were economy of the reagents and procedural steps, non-reliance on reference standards, and freedom from potential racemization. However, it requires the use of absolutely anhydrous reagents, solvents of high purity, and completely anaerobic working environment.

The purpose of this report is to describe an alternative ¹H NMR spectroscopic method free from the stringent requirements imposed by the earlier method. The required resolution of the enantiomeric resonance lines is accomplished through interaction of the enantiomeric mixture with a chiral solvating agent. The NMR signals observed in these binary selector-solute solutions are the time-averaged signals of both the complexed and uncomplexed substances. Optimization of experimental conditions can give rise to the shift displacements coupled with shift nonequivalence. In addition to permitting further simplification of the analytical procedure, this approach is also suitable for establishing the absolute configuration of the enantiomers.

2. Investigations, results and discussion

The chemical shift difference in the NMR spectra between the diastereomeric solvates of corresponding enantiomers may be induced by a chiral solvating agent (CSA) through

combination of several factors. First, the diastereomeric solvates may have intrinsically non-identical spectra. Second, if a chemical shift perturbation occurs upon solvation, a difference in equilibrium constants such that one solute enantiomer is solvated to a greater extent than the other can also result in chemical shift nonequivalence. More convoluted situation might be encountered. The solute enantiomers might themselves associate, thus forming a different type of diastereomeric complex, various complexes possibly having no identical spectra or formation constants. Since solute-solute association is a second (or higher) order in solute concentration, whereas solute-CSA association is a first order in solute concentration, the extent to which these two processes compete depends on the concentration of solute enantiomer and the chiral solvating agent. In this study, the effect of solute-solute interaction was kept to a minimum and can be ignored by the combined use of an excess of strong solvating agent with a concentration of solutes that was just enough to produce adequate signal strength. In this situation, when there is enough excess of CSA present to drive the solvation essentially to completion, as contributions originating from a partially resolved solute or differential association constants become minimal. By evaluating nonequivalence under these conditions, one confines its origin to the intrinsic spectral differences of the diastereomeric solvates.

The acidic carbinol function of the chiral solvating agent is expected to interact strongly with a hydrogen bond receptor such as the unshared electron pairs of the nitrogen of the amino group in the enantiomeric solutes. The carbinyl hydrogen, also somewhat acidic because of the electronegative character of the perfluoroalkyl substituent, is predicted to seek interaction with a secondary basic site such as the π electrons clouds of the aromatic rings in the enantiomeric solutes (Alfred 1962). Evidence for conformational control by the intermolecular variation of this type of interactions has been reported (Pirkle et al. 1974). The spectral nonequivalence may be explained in the following way: rapid reversible simultaneous interactions with the hydroxyl and carbonyl hydrogens of the chiral solvating agent with the substrate enantiomers afford conformational mobile diastereomeric solvates. Accordingly, the diastereomer formed from (S)-TFAE and (R)-desoxyephedrine has the N-methyl group cis to the anthryl causing it to experience shielding relative to the trans position. In the related conformation the diastereomer formed from (S)-TFAE and (S)-desoxyephedrine (methamphetamine) solvate, the N-methyl position is reversed. Consequently, the N-CH₃ resonance of the (S)-(+)-desoxyephedrine (methamphetamine) solvated with (S)-(+)-TFAE appeared at lower field than in the (R)-(-)-desoxyephedrine solvated with (S)-(+)-TFAE. The opposite was observed for (R)-(-)-TFAE as shown in Table 1. The construction and

Table 1: Shift data of the N-CH₃ protons signals of the diastereomeric solvates of methamphetamine and (R)-(-)-desoxyephedrine solvated with 7 molar equivalents of CSA at 28 °C

CSA	(S)-(+)-Desoxyephedrine (Methamphetamine)		(R)-(-)-Desoxyephedrine		$\Delta\Delta\delta$
	δ	$\Delta\delta$	δ	$\Delta\delta$	
(R)-(-)-TFAE	1.727	-0.656	1.749	-0.634	0.022
(S)-(+)-TFAE	1.749	-0.634	1.727	-0.656	0.022

^a Enantiomeric mixture concentration in CDCl₃ was 0.02 M

examination of suitable ball-and-stick molecular models of the diastereomeric solvates formed can facilitate the assignments of the absolute configuration. In this fashion, the induced spectral nonequivalence arises from the formation of short-lived diastereomeric solvates that have non-identical spectra as a consequence of population of rather specific conformations. Knowledge of the structure of these conformations and the absolute configuration of the solvating agent allows assignment of absolute configuration to each of the solute enantiomers on the basis of the sense of nonequivalence induced by the chiral solvating agent. It is on this basis the configuration can be assigned. The NMR approach of absolute configuration determination is demonstrated to be reliable and positive.

The upfield region of the ^1H NMR spectra of a mixture of (–)-desoxyephedrine and (+)-methamphetamine with combined concentration of 0.02 M in CDCl_3 at 28 °C is shown without CSA and with 0.15 M (S)-(+)-TFAE in Fig. 1a and 1b, respectively. Selected expansion of the resolved N–CH₃ enantiomeric signal is shown in Fig. 2. The nonequivalence magnitude was found to depend upon the experimental conditions utilized. It is always desired to obtain nonequivalence magnitudes large enough for accurate quantitative measurements. The effect of varying CSA molar equivalents on the chemical shift, induced shift $\Delta\delta$ and the differential induced shift $\Delta\Delta\delta$ of the N–CH₃ signals of (S)-(+)-desoxyephedrine and its (R)-(–) antipode diastereomeric solvates is shown in Table 2. The induced shift $\Delta\delta$ and the differential induced shift, $\Delta\Delta\delta$, continued to increase with increasing CSA molar equivalents and then tended to level off at higher values. The plots of the induced shift $\Delta\delta$ and differential induced shift $\Delta\Delta\delta$, for the N–CH₃ signals of (S)-(+)-desoxyephedrine and its (R)-(–)antipode versus molar equivalents of (S)-(+)-TFAE are shown in Fig. 3a and 3b, respectively. The $\Delta\Delta\delta$ between the diastereomeric solvates might arise from at least two, (probably mutually dependent) interactions: (a) the differences in equilibrium constants for formation of the various possible diastereomeric solvates between enantiomeric solutes and the CSA and (b) the distinct geometry of resulted solvates. The data in Table 2

provide a qualitative support to conclude that there was only one main contribution of the two types of interactions to the observed $\Delta\Delta\delta$ values. The signal for the N–CH₃ of the (R)-(–)-enantiomer was shifted upfield to a greater extent than that of the (S)-(+)-enantiomer after solvation with (S)-(+)-TFAE. The nonequivalence was definitely a reflection of difference in the geometries of the solvates formed and not simply the result of difference in equilibrium constants. The sense of nonequivalence for this particular CSA-solute combination was mainly dependent on the configuration of each component.

The enantiomeric purity of the CSA was found to affect only the magnitude of spectral nonequivalence but not the relative size of the signals stemming from the diastereomeric solvates. No nonequivalence was observed when a racemic CSA was used. Since the CSA need not to be enantiomeric pure for nonequivalence to arise, enantiomeric purity determination by this method was found to be absolute in the sense that no reference to standard of known optical purity was required. Using more enantiomeric pure CSA than the one used, >98%, will contribute only a negligible effect to $\Delta\delta$ or $\Delta\Delta\delta$. Because the amount of intermolecular hydrogen bonding to the CSA-solute interaction is an important factor, dilution induced a dramatic effect on $\Delta\delta$ and $\Delta\Delta\delta$. Slopes of all curves were different at low CSA concentrations for different solute concentrations despite equal CSA/solute ratios. Addition of a small quantity of a polar material such as dimethyl sulfoxide or methanol severely reduced and eliminated nonequivalence. Obviously, the polar material competed with the solute for CSA and probably altered conformations of the solvates that give rise to nonequivalence.

The effect of varying the temperature on the enantiomeric separation was evaluated with a mixture of 0.02 M (S)-(+) and (R)-(–) enantiomers, solvated with 0.15 M (S)-(+)-TFAE in CDCl_3 . As shown in Fig. 3c and 3d, the degree of $\Delta\delta$ and $\Delta\Delta\delta$ of the N–CH₃ signals of the diastereomeric solvates respectively increased in a proportional manner by decreasing the temperature. However, at lower temperatures than –15 °C these signals started to broaden. As it can be seen in Table 3, sufficiently large $\Delta\Delta\delta$ values

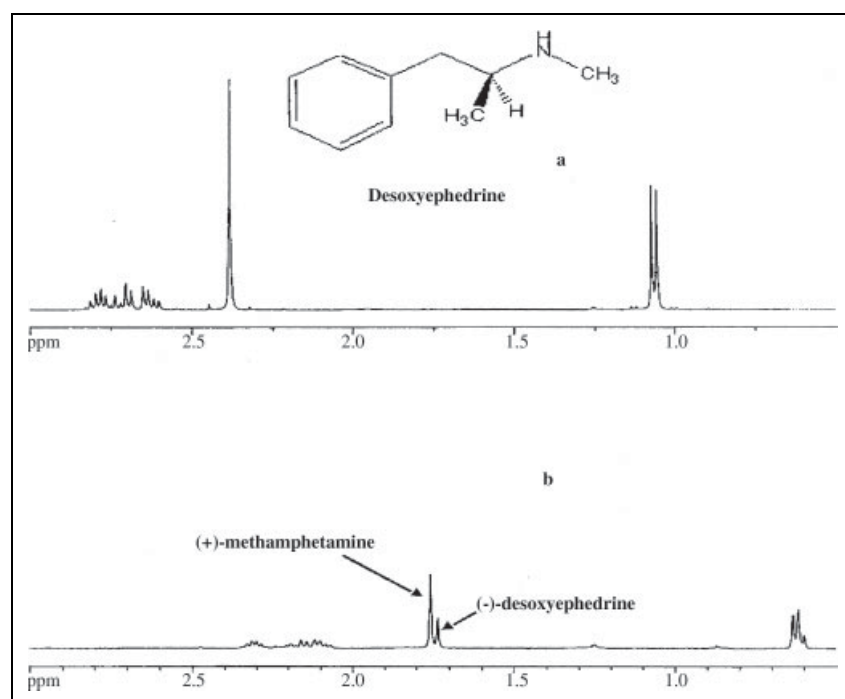


Fig. 1: Upfield region of the ^1H NMR spectra of a mixture of (–)-desoxyephedrine and (+)-methamphetamine (combined concentration 0.02 M) in CDCl_3 ; (a) without CSA and (b) with (S)-(+)-TFAE (0.15 M) at 30 °C

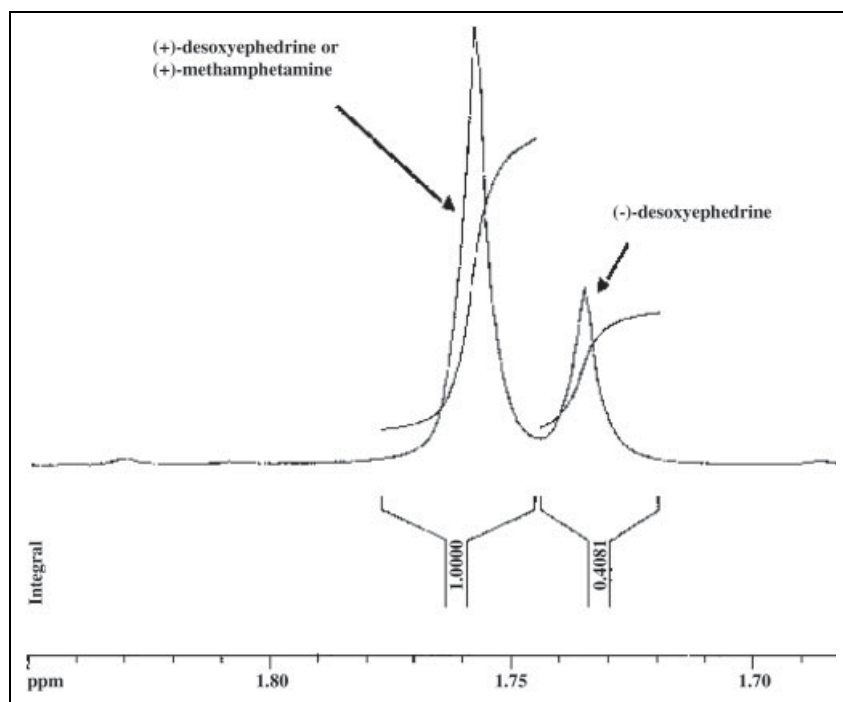


Fig. 2:
Selected expansion of the ^1H NMR spectra of a mixture of $(-)$ -desoxyephedrine and $(+)$ -desoxyephedrine (combined concentration 0.02 M) in CDCl_3 solvated with (S) - $(+)$ -TFAE (0.15 M) at 30°C

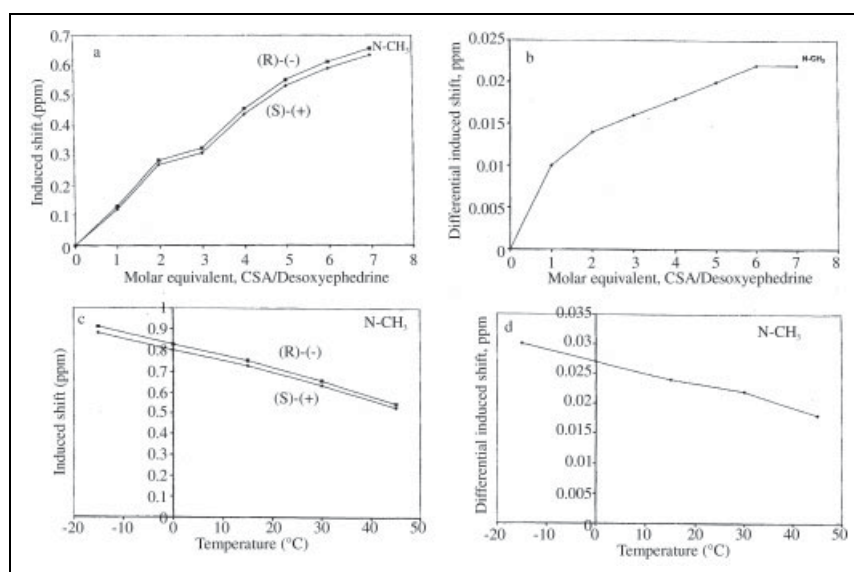


Fig. 3:
Plots of molar equivalent of CSA/desoxyephedrine and temperature versus induced and differential induced shift for (S) - $(+)$ -methamphetamine and (R) - $(-)$ -desoxyephedrine (combined concentration 0.02 M) in CDCl_3

Table 2: Influence of CSA^a molar equivalents on chemical shift, δ , induced shift, $\Delta\delta$, and differential induced shift, $\Delta\Delta\delta$, of the $\text{N}-\text{CH}_3$ protons signals of the diastereomeric solvates of methamphetamine and (R) - $(-)$ -desoxyephedrine at 28°C

CSA molar equivalents	(S) - $(+)$ -Desoxyephedrine Methamphetamine		(R) - $(-)$ -Desoxyephedrine		$\Delta\Delta\delta$
	δ	$\Delta\delta$	δ	$\Delta\delta$	
0	2.383	0	2.383	0	0
1	2.262	-0.121	2.253	-0.130	0.011
2	2.113	-0.270	2.100	-0.283	0.013
3	2.072	-0.311	2.056	-0.327	0.016
4	1.943	-0.440	1.925	-0.458	0.018
5	1.852	-0.531	1.831	-0.552	0.021
6	1.791	-0.592	1.769	-0.614	0.022
7	1.749	-0.634	1.727	-0.656	0.022

^a Chiral solvating agent (S) - $(+)$ -TFAE

^b Total enantiomeric mixture concentration in CDCl_3 was 0.04 M

were obtained in the temperature range between 30°C and -15°C . Although the increase in nonequivalence magnitude with reduction of temperature can be attributed to an increase in the equilibrium constants for CSA-solute association but not in this case where the CSA was present in such excess to cause essentially complete solvation. Accordingly, temperature reduction increased spectral difference of the diastereomeric solvates by increasing the populations of specific conformations that gave rise to nonequivalence.

^1H NMR spectra of 0.02 M solutes and 0.15 M CSA in CDCl_3 provided sufficient strength and well separated signals at probe temperature 28°C convenient for chiral recognition and optical purity determinations. Using (S) - $(+)$ -TFAE under the stated conditions, the enantiomeric $\text{N}-\text{CH}_3$ signals of the two enantiomers were clearly resolved into two singlets: the downfield signal was assigned to the $\text{N}-\text{CH}_3$ methamphetamine or (S) - $(+)$ -desoxyephedrine and the upfield signal was assigned to the corresponding $\text{N}-\text{CH}_3$ protons of (R) - $(-)$ -enantiomer. The

Table 3: Influence of probe temperature on the chemical shift, δ , the induced shift, $\Delta\delta$, and the differential induced shift, $\Delta\Delta\delta$, of the N—CH₃ protons of methamphetamine and its (*R*)-(–)-antipode^a solvated with 7.0 molar equivalents of (*S*)-(+)-TFAE

Temperature, (°C)	(S)-(+)-Desoxyephedrine, (Methamphetamine)		(R)-(–)-Desoxyephedrine		$\Delta\Delta\delta$
	δ	$\Delta\delta$	δ	$\Delta\delta$	
45	1.852	–0.531	1.841	–0.542	0.011
28	1.749	–0.634	1.727	–0.656	0.022
15	1.649	–0.734	1.626	–0.757	0.023
0	1.581	–0.802	1.551	–0.832	0.030
–15	1.502	–0.881	1.471	–0.912	0.031

^a Enantiomeric mixture concentration in CDCl₃ was 0.02 M**Table 4: Assay results of synthetic mixtures of (*S*)-(+)-desoxyephedrine (methamphetamine) and (*R*)-(–)-desoxyephedrine^a by ¹H NMR spectroscopy^b using solvating agent^c**

Mixture	(S)-(+), mg	(R)-(–), mg	(R)-(–), %		
			Added	Found	Recovered ^d
1	0	5.321	100.0	99.3	99.3
2	0.213	4.876	95.8	95.4	99.6
3	0.312	4.765	93.9	94.1	100.2
4	0.376	4.432	91.1	91.0	99.9
5	0.432	4.756	91.7	91.1	99.4
6	0.653	4.549	87.4	87.5	100.1
7	0.752	4.283	85.1	85.6	100.6
Av					99.9
SD					0.4

^a Total concentration of methamphetamine and its (*R*)-(–)-antipode was 0.02 M in CDCl₃^b Probe temperature 28 °C^c (*S*)-(+)-TFAE concentration was 0.14 M^d Recoveries were calculated from (amount found X 100)/amount added

advantages of using ¹H NMR spectroscopy for measuring enantiomeric composition lie in the high sensitivity of the ¹H nucleus and in the fact that relative signal intensities directly reflect the relative number of resonating nuclei and hence relative enantiomeric populations. Eight mixtures of methamphetamine and (*R*)-(–)-desoxyephedrine antipode, made up in proportions shown in Table 4 were mixed with the specific amounts of chiral solvating agent (*S*)-(+)-TFAE, and dissolved in CDCl₃, to yield solutions with ca 0.02 M and 0.15 M solute and CSA concentrations, respectively. The results of enantiomeric composition calculated based on the integrals of the N—CH₃ protons were found in close agreement with the known values. Average recovery \pm SD for the (*R*)-(–)-enantiomer was 99.9 \pm 0.4%. The optically pure was found to contain 0.7% of (*S*)-(+)-enantiomer.

3. Experimental

3.1. Apparatus

¹H NMR spectra were obtained on a Bruker AMX-400 spectrometer equipped with a carbon/proton 5 mm probe (Bruker Instruments, Inc., Billerica, MA, USA). The ¹H NMR spectra were obtained under the following conditions: acquisition time, 2.03 s; data point resolution, 0.492 Hz/point; pulse width, 7.0 μ s and tip angle 30°; relaxation delay, 2.0 s; number of scans, 32. Chemical shifts were referred to CHCl₃ (δ 7.26).

3.2. Materials

Deuteriochloroform (CDCl₃, 99.8 atom% D, stabilized with Ag foil), and (*R*)-(–)- and (*S*)-(+)-2,2,2-trifluoro-1-(9-anthryl) ethanol (TFAE; >99% chemical purity and >98% optical purity), (–)-desoxyephedrine and (+)-

methamphetamine HCl (>99%) were purchased from Aldrich Chemical Co. (Milwaukee, WI, USA). The samples were analyzed by polarimetry and the proposed NMR method.

3.3. Sample preparation

Salts were converted to the free base form as follows: a quantity of the drug, accurately weighed was dissolved to the extent of 1.5 ml of D₂O. Drop of 1.5 M NaOD was added to CDCl₃ (1.0 ml). Both solutions were bubbled with argon and then combined. The CDCl₃ layer was removed and evaporated to dryness. The sample was dried in vacuum at 50 °C for approximately 30 min and weighed.

3.4. Enantiomeric resolution studies

Conditions for the determination of the enantiomeric composition were explored by observing the N—CH₃ proton signal and study: (a) the effect of varying the chiral solvating agent, CSA, molar equivalents and (b) the effect of probe temperature on chemical shift δ , induced chemical shift $\Delta\delta$, and differential induced chemical shift $\Delta\Delta\delta$.

The required changes in CSA molar equivalents were obtained by first preparing stock solutions of enantiomeric mixture of desoxyephedrine sample (ca. 30.0 mg/ml) and (*S*)-(+)-TFAE (ca.110.6 mg/ml) in CDCl₃. A 0.1 ml of sample (3.0 mg) solution and the appropriate amount of (*S*)-(+)-TFAE solution (50, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, and 350 μ L) were added to a 5-mm NMR tube. The final volume was adjusted with CDCl₃ to 1.0 ml. The NMR tube was capped with a Teflon cap; its contents were mixed by inversion, allowed to stand for 10 min, and then placed in the spectrometer to obtain the ¹H NMR spectrum. The additions and spectral recording were repeated until an appropriate number of spectra were available for properly defining the effects of CSA molar equivalents on the enantiomeric spectral lines.

3.5. Determination of enantiomeric purity

A quantity of desoxyephedrine sample of approximately 5 mg was converted to the free base as described above. The dry residue was dissolved in 0.5 ml CDCl₃, and the solution was transferred to a dry NMR tube containing approximately 52 mg of (*S*)-(+)-TFAE. The final volume was adjusted to 1.0 ml and then the tube was capped, inverted several times to effect solution, allowed to stand for 10 min, and then used to obtain the ¹H NMR spectrum. The intensities of enantiomeric N—CH₃ protons enantiomeric signals at approximately δ 1.749 and δ 1.727 corresponding to methamphetamine and (*R*)-(–)-antipode, respectively, were measured and the percentage of each enantiomer was calculated based on the contribution of each resonance to the sum of both resonances as follows:

$$\%(\text{R})-(\text{--})\text{-desoxyephedrine} = \frac{100 \times A_{(-)}}{A_{(-)} + A_{(+)}} \quad (1)$$

$$\%(\text{S})+(\text{+})\text{-desoxyephedrine} = \frac{100 \times A_{(+)}}{A_{(+)} + A_{(-)}} \quad (2)$$

where $A_{(+)}$ = area of the resonance signal for the N—CH₃ of the (*S*)-(+)-enantiomer (methamphetamine), and $A_{(-)}$ = area of the resonance signal for the N—CH₃ protons of the (*R*)-(–)-enantiomer.

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