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Confirmation Testing

CONFIRMATION – OVERVIEW

- Detects individual drugs, a “targeted approach”
- GC/MS (better) or LC/MS/MS (best)
- Result based on molecular fingerprint of substance
- Quantitative results
- Threshold: <1 to 10 ng/mL

CONFIRMATION – PROS & CONS

Pros of Confirmation

- Sensitive: detects very small amounts of drug in a sample (<1-10 ng/mL).
- Specific: distinguishes individual drugs and related metabolites.
- State-of-the-art, viewed as “gold standard” for forensic laboratories.
- Objective, quantitative result.
- Can detect virtually any drug (not limited to an antibody) because test results are compared to databases: NIST, reference books, in-house libraries.

Cons of Confirmation

- **Time:** takes longer. Must complete sample preparation before beginning analysis.
- **Costs:** cost more. Sample prep, consumables, and equipment all cost more than an immunoassay screen.

WHEN IS A CONFIRMATION TEST NEEDED?

The required standard is determined by the use of the test result and potential sanction, fine, or punishment.

1. **Laboratory Screen**
   - Increased treatment, essay, juror box, or some other graduated sanction.
   - A Client that self-admits is on the right track to recovery, no confirmation is necessary.
   - If a Client adamantly denies use, then order a confirmation.
2. **Confirmation (LC-MS/MS or GC/MS)**
   - Jail, prison, loss of driving privileges, or any other loss of liberty.
   - Adjudication requires a high degree of certainty and precision.
   - Why not use chromatography for every test? (Time & Costs)